

Lydia Heidrich  
Yasemin Karakaşoğlu  
Paul Mecheril  
Saphira Shure *Editors*

# Regimes of Belonging – Schools – Migrations

Teaching in (Trans)National Constellations



Springer VS

---

# Regimes of Belonging – Schools – Migrations

---

Lydia Heidrich · Yasemin Karakaşoğlu ·  
Paul Mecheril · Saphira Shure  
Editors

# Regimes of Belonging – Schools – Migrations

Teaching in (Trans)National  
Constellations

 Springer VS

*Editors*

Lydia Heidrich  
University of Bremen  
Bremen, Germany

Yasemin Karakaşoğlu  
University of Bremen  
Bremen, Germany

Paul Mecheril  
Bielefeld University  
Bielefeld, Germany

Saphira Shure  
Bielefeld University  
Bielefeld, Germany

ISBN 978-3-658-29188-4      ISBN 978-3-658-29189-1 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-29189-1>

© Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH, part of Springer Nature 2021

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Responsible Editor: Stefanie Laux

This Springer VS imprint is published by the registered company Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH part of Springer Nature.

The registered company address is: Abraham-Lincoln-Str. 46, 65189 Wiesbaden, Germany

---

## Preface

This edited volume is in large part the product of an international conference titled “Failing Identities, Schools and Migrations. Teaching in Trans(National) Constellations”, which we held from 26–28 October 2018 at the University of Bremen. The volume includes revised and updated forms of many of the presentations at the conference but also take up several new contributions that fit especially well.

At the conference, scholars from many different nation-state contexts discussed how education in general and teacher education in particular can and should be re-thought in a global migration society. Stimulating and sometimes controversial discussions took place among representatives from a range of education scientific research traditions, experienced pedagogical practitioners and, not least, various perspective of scholars from several academic generations and different regions of the world. The participants unanimously agreed that the ideas for these discussions, which even led to the establishment of a now active research network for racism-critical school pedagogy in the German-speaking space, should also be made available to the broader international public.

This edited volume has now achieved that goal.

A two-year process that was instructive, inspiring and fruitful for everyone involved now concludes with the publication of this volume, full of different voices. This is certainly a reason for us to express our heartfelt thanks to everyone whose generous support has enabled us to realise this international publication project.

As the editors, we would first like to thank Stiftung Mercator for its financial support and the long-standing, productive cooperation that was not limited to planning and carrying out the conference. A research project on pedagogical professionalism in the migration society preceded the conference and was also funded by Stiftung Mercator.

We would also like to thank the German Research Foundation (DFG), whose support enabled us to invite renowned international experts to the conference.

Our gratitude goes to Dr. Anna Aleksandra Wojciechowicz (now at the University of Potsdam) and Dr. Aysun Dođmuş (now at the Helmut Schmidt University Hamburg), who made important contributions to the research projects that preceded the conference and in the early phases of the preparatory work. The success of the conference is due to their hard work.

Scott Martingell, who is affiliated with the Hauptstadtstudio Freier Lektoren Berlin, was a great asset in reviewing all the chapters of this volume. The support he has given is really appreciated.

Last but not least, we want to thank our student assistants Bettina Hauke, Nora Keykan, Ana Rovai, Holger Steffen and Moritz vom Ende for their sense of personal responsibility and creativity as well as their dedicated and reliable support of the work on this publication.

We hope that readers find many stimulating ideas in these pages and look forward to feedback as well as to many more discussions with everyone interested in this fundamental change in schools and teacher education – changes that ensure they take the realities of migration and transnationality into account.

Bremen and Bielefeld  
April 2021

The Editors

---

# Contents

<b>Schools and Teacher Education Challenged by Transnational Constellations. An Introduction</b> . . . . .	1
Lydia Heidrich, Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, Paul Mecheril and Saphira Shure	
<b>I Migration, Transnationalities and Regimes of Belongings</b>	
<b>Countering the Trivialisation of Violence: Postcolonial Critique and the Contours of an Ethical Pedagogy</b> . . . . .	27
María do Mar Castro Varela	
<b>Is There a Transnational Right to Self-Determination? Thoughts on an Ethics of Movement</b> . . . . .	41
Paul Mecheril	
<b>Subjectification, the Politics of Recognition and Identities in (Trans)National Classrooms</b> . . . . .	65
Ann Phoenix	
<b>Dynamic Identities and Varying Belongings: Migration, Transnationalism and Education</b> . . . . .	77
Ludger Pries and Natalia Bekassow	
<b>II Education in Transnational Constellations</b>	
<b>The Colour of Schooling: Whiteness and the Mainstreaming of Racism</b> . . . . .	97
David Gillborn	

<b>Education and Integration: Some Secular and Religious Considerations</b> . . . . .	111
Yotam Hotam	
<b>Schools as the Terrain for Struggles Over Hegemony</b> . . . . .	125
Natascha Khakpour	
<b>Social Orders and the Political Dimension of Literacy</b> . . . . .	145
Daniel Krenz-Dewe and Matthias Rangger	
<b>Great Transition and World Collective: Global Citizenship Education as Education for Transformation Within School</b> . . . . .	161
Gregor Lang-Wojtasik	
<b>Education and Multi-Dimensional Belonging: The Significance of Organizational and Professional Practices</b> . . . . .	181
Arnd-Michael Nohl	
<b>The Discussion About Racism and Anti-Racism in Schools and Teacher Education in Germany: Some Short Remarks</b> . . . . .	193
Ewald Terhart	
<b>Transnationally Mobile Students and the ‘Grammar’ of Schooling</b> . . . . .	203
Dita Vogel and Yasemin Karakaşoğlu	
<b>III Migration, Transnationalities and Schools in National Contexts</b>	
<b>Teachers in the Midst of a Global Financial Crisis: Mapping the Impact in the Case of Greece</b> . . . . .	223
Polina-Theopoula Chrysochou	
<b>The Ambiguity of ‘Us’ Between Reality and Educational Policy in Japan</b> . . . . .	239
Akiko Ito	
<b>Deconstructing the Dropout Factory: Redesigning Secondary Schools to Better Serve Immigrant Youth – Examples from the US Context</b> . . . . .	257
Marguerite Lukes	
<b>Deconstructing Race: Prerequisite to Belonging in US Society and Schools</b> . . . . .	275
Jabari Mahiri	



<b>Foreign Students in the Nationalist-Homogenizing Schools of a Neoliberal and Unequal Society: The Case of Chile. . . . .</b>	291
Andrea Riedemann and Muriel Armijo-Cabrera	
<b>Teachers' Constructions of Students' Transnational Biographies: Analyses in German and US Schools . . . . .</b>	307
Dorothee Schwendowius and Saskia Terstegen	
<b>Understanding Solidarity in Differently (Trans)National Settings: A Study of Europe-Oriented Schools in Germany. . . . .</b>	325
Simona Szakács-Behling	
<b>IV Teacher Training: Knowing How, Knowing That</b>	
<b>Teachers for Refugee Students in Turkey: Results of an Action Research on an In-Service Training Course . . . . .</b>	347
Ş.Erhan Bağcı	
<b>Using Migrant Pupils' Experiences in Teacher Training. . . . .</b>	363
Beatrix Bukus	
<b>Symbolic Orders of a Society Shaped by Migration and Their Relevance for the (Re)Production of Racism in Pre-Service Teacher Training in Germany . . . . .</b>	375
Aysun Doğmuş	
<b>Questioning Cultural and Power Relations as well as Debates on Disability and Migration: Concepts for Contemporary Inclusive Teacher Education . . . . .</b>	387
Susanne Gottuck, Nicolle Pfaff and Anja Tervooren	
<b>Critical Reflexivity: Theoretical Considerations on Subjection and Postcoloniality for Teacher Education . . . . .</b>	405
Oxana Ivanova-Chessex, Anja Steinbach and Jan Wolter	
<b>Hopeful or Hopeless? Teacher Education in Turbulent Times. . . . .</b>	419
Vini Lander	
<b>Teacher Education for Social Justice in the Canadian Context . . . . .</b>	437
Clea Schmidt	
<b>Editors and Contributors . . . . .</b>	449



# Schools and Teacher Education Challenged by Transnational Constellations. An Introduction

Lydia Heidrich, Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, Paul Mecheril and  
Saphira Shure

## Abstract

This introductory chapter presents general lines of thought that guided the compilation of the contributions of this volume. The idea of ‘challenge’ from the title of this chapter sets the tone, as this introduction will outline the challenges that both global and local contradictory conditions represent for schools and the education of teachers, which are closely linked fields. Perspectives focus on the world growing closer together in viral, climatic, political, economic and cultural processes of globalisation, and their significance and impact on the national constitution of schools as a central institution of formal education which exists almost everywhere in the world. The chapter then discusses pedagogical concepts that claim to adequately take into account transnational and migratory processes of change. Finally, it concludes with some suggestions for a further discussion of schools and teacher education in transnational relations of contemporary migration societies.

---

L. Heidrich (✉) · Y. Karakaşoğlu  
Faculty of Pedagogy and Educational Sciences, University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany  
e-mail: [heidrich@uni-bremen.de](mailto:heidrich@uni-bremen.de)

Y. Karakaşoğlu  
e-mail: [karakasoglu@uni-bremen.de](mailto:karakasoglu@uni-bremen.de)

P. Mecheril · S. Shure  
Faculty of Education, Bielefeld University, Bielefeld, Germany  
e-mail: [paul.mecheril@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:paul.mecheril@uni-bielefeld.de)

S. Shure  
e-mail: [saphira.shure@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:saphira.shure@uni-bielefeld.de)

---

**Keywords**

School education · Transnationalism · Migration · Nation-State ·  
Teacher education · Belonging

---

## 1 Opening Remarks

The world is drawing closer together in terms of communication and transportation technologies, and local events are giving rise to trans-local effects. This link has gained great, sometimes even threatening, but always differentially threatening significance on the global scale. The nation-state is thus no longer the unquestioned point of reference for individual and collective ways of life.

This becomes particularly clear when looking at the deep economic, ecological, medial, toxicological, social, political, technological and cultural entanglements of the various regions, nation-states and continents of the world. The process of transnationalising the social world is progressing not solely, but also, due to intensive migration movements (Katigbak 2020; Pries 1999). This transnationalisation is not completely negating the nation-state as a reference point for state and intellectual actions, but the importance of the nation-state is decreasing significantly and taking on other forms. Pedagogy and education are also affected by this. The unquestionably legitimate dominance of the orientation on nation-states and thus the fixation on national contexts, which are considered a matter of course, as a presupposition for perspectives on school education is challenged by transnational realities and perspectives. In this edited volume, the contributions examine how this problem can be seen in various regions and national contexts and traditions, and the ways in which the problem can be addressed at the level of school education, teacher education and the corresponding discourses in differing national and social contexts.

As the editors of this volume, we are conscious of the situatedness, as described by Haraway (1988), of our perspectives and our knowledge, whereby this consciousness also remains relative to our situation. Our reflections arise from particular knowledge traditions and are presumably enabled and supported by these specific traditions. This then gives rise to a double bias: on the one hand our reflections are a result of certain prevalent epistemological concepts (including ‘Bildung’, a German notion that cannot be translated easily), and on the other hand these reflections are themselves framed by the way our thinking is embedded in particular empirical reference spaces. For example, when we speak of ‘school’, then we think of certain school conditions and ignore others based on

our experiences, literature, discourses and our own research projects, and this bias might be ‘unintentional’ or not always entirely evident to us. Discourses, perspectives that are taken as axiomatic, terminology, theory traditions and historical as well as current empirical issues that are predominant in the German and English language educational sciences can also direct our focus, sometimes even counter to our intentions. For this edited volume, as well as the conference “Failing Identities, Schools and Migrations” (October 2018, University of Bremen) on which it is based, we deliberately sought out perspectives on teacher and school education from various national and continental contexts. This edited volume is truly more than the sum of its parts. The ‘self-evident facts’ brought in by habits of thinking, perceiving and knowing are relativised and problematised in reference to each other. The chapters of this volume therefore form a cross-, or even trans-contextual unit which – at least this was our intention – allow us to recognise the specific context and situatedness of each contribution, including this introduction.

---

## 2 Nation-State and Belonging

Nation-states as “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983, p. 6) and the state organisations that create them are of global significance in a variety of diachronic and synchronic forms (Bielefeld 2008; Goldberg 2002, 2009; Lentin and Lentin 2006). This is the case even though the idea of the nation as an ordering, regulating principle of societal structure is still relatively new: it was not until the late nineteenth century that many nation-states arose in Europe. This form of order prevailed worldwide, although neither its origin nor the current structures are globally uniform, but instead have taken on different forms based on regional and local as well as political, administrative and economic conditions (for further details see Hobsbawm 1990).

With its historical beginnings in Europe, the nation-state as a political principle was ultimately exported as an expression of a ‘modern social order’ (see amongst others Mamdani 2001). This is – with all its contradictions – both an expression of colonial power relations and a reference point for global emancipatory processes in which a large part of the world was able to free itself from colonial rule. Even processes of decolonisation, however, took place largely against the backdrop of claims to nation-statehood (Chatterjee 1986). Yet the nation-state’s claim to universal validity did not go uncontested. In her article “Why the nation-state is wrong for Africa”, Amira Kheir (2010) calls the concept of the nation-state an “inherited system” that is an “exogenous model of governance carried on from European occupation”. Furthermore, Kheir (2010) states “[t]his is

an inheritance that is often overlooked as a norm and that is taken for granted as the natural and certain structure of governance: The nation-state”.

The history of the European nation-state formation (Schulze 2004) can be understood not solely, *but also* as a history and story of civic emancipation in which individuals’ identity and rights were granted (if not practically then at least rhetorically) not on the basis of their class but on their status of belonging to a particular nation.

At the same time, a hallmark of the democratic nation-state is the contradiction between the claimed equality of all citizens and the actual inequalities among them (see for example Yuval-Davis 1997). After all, the nation-state’s principal of inclusion goes hand in hand with new forms and mechanisms of exclusion. Democratic nation-states can be seen to have a paradoxical structure in that they are characterised by the idea of universality (of human dignity and equality), and yet at the same time grant significant priority to a specific ‘We’, that is, the citizens of the state (for more on this democratic paradox, see Benhabib 2006). When emphasising the general public interests that are, or are deemed to be, relevant in a nation-state’s structures, the concept of a community that is both imaginary and exclusionary becomes dominant. Over the course of time, various practices of unification and constructs of belonging were used to define the borders of the nation-states. In line with Hobsbawm (1990), starting around the 1880s one can begin to see the dominance of ethnic and linguistic criteria for nations: “in the consequence of [...] [the] multiplication of potential ‘unhistorical’ nations, ethnicity and language became the central, increasingly the decisive or even the only criteria of potential nationhood” (Hobsbawm 1990, p. 102).

For a nation-state defined in this way, a binary concept of belonging is required that differentiates between those who belong and those who do not. The sense of primacy felt by some members of the nation-state’s ‘imagined community’ (seen, for example, in the exclusion of non-citizens from the ‘privilege’ of voting in national elections<sup>1</sup>) is taken for granted, and this must also be accompanied by an imagining of the Other. Alana and Ronit Lentin (2006) describe how this imaginative conception was supported (pseudo-)scientifically by *race*<sup>2</sup> theories:

---

<sup>1</sup>Brubaker (1992) speaks of the axiomatic status of nationalism in the modern state (p. 28).

<sup>2</sup>We are aware of the fact that in Anglophone regions the term *race* is commonly used in official contexts (like the US census) to designate groups (Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Caucasians, for instance, whose designations are subject to historical changes; on this, see Mahiri 2021) as well as for analysis in the social sciences. *Race*-related categories are also used either to categorise groups or as self-designators by

So too, the success of a racialized vision of the nation, made up of individuals with a common heritage and shared destiny, made it necessary to order populations, sorting between insiders and outsiders, between us and them. The scientific legitimation that came with racial science by the mid-nineteenth century led to a perfect marriage between science and politics, uniting theory and practice in the body of the modern, rational, territorially-bound and unified nation-state. (p. 5)

In this context, Lentin and Lentin also refer to the works of David Theo Goldberg (2002, 2009), who examines various social contexts with regard to the meaning of *race* as it is used as a principle to structure these contexts. In his analyses, he elucidates different manifestations that continually change through space and time, enabling him to map out the global importance of *race* for shaping social structures and practices, even statehood itself. When it comes to the relationship between the nation and racial constructs, he emphasises that “*nation* has both a conceptual and social history intersecting with that of *race*” (Goldberg 1993, p. 78). The link between the idea of nation and the construct of *race* has its roots in the phantasm of ‘We’ that is emphasised in national matters, claiming for itself a priority of unquestioned legitimacy over the ‘non-We’ since it unavoidably goes hand in hand with the devaluation of those who do not belong.

From this perspective, *race* can be described as a “foundational code” (Goldberg 2009, p. 4) of social institutions, thus also including schools as well as their structures and practices (Steinbach et al. 2020). In “The Racial State”, Goldberg (2002) speaks of a “racial definition of the apparatus, the projects, the institutions” arising from the “racial conception of the state” (p. 24) which he derived. As an idea of the unifying and standardising national identity, this “racial conception” also rests on aspects that vary according to the historical and regional context and can include the assumption of a common language and/or common ‘ethnic’ heritage and/or belief in a history shared by all members of the ‘imagined community’.<sup>3</sup>

It is the element of imagination that enables the feeling of belonging to and loyalty to a certain nation-state due to a shared language, ‘ethnic’ background or common history to be reinforced with upbringing and education, thereby

---

groups. By italicising this we aim at expressing a certain unease about the casual use of the term *race* as it is the product and central conceptual instrument of racism.

<sup>3</sup>On the effects of the racialising link among language, ethnicity and nation for excluding national minorities using the educational system, see the example of the Kurds in Turkey (on this, see İnce 2017).

contributing to the nation's manifestation. The relationship between the nation-state and schools can be shown particularly incisively using the example of language. The nation-state derives its stability from raising and educating individuals, turning them into subjects in state institutions (Walby 2003). Striving for national solidarity is not expressed through an emphasised importance on the national language(s) of communication in all nation-state contexts, but certainly in the context of school and lessons (regarding Germany, see Fend 2009; Wenning 1999). Conversely, it was not until schooling was made compulsory that a common language understood as the national language could develop in the territory claimed by the nation-state. Before schooling was compulsory, there was no single national language, as this was simply impossible (see Hobsbawm 1990). Current academic analyses also point out the continued effect of schools as an institution of unification due to their reinforcing of the natio-racial-cultural<sup>4</sup> 'We' that refers to national principles and interests shared by the society (for Germany see Dirim and Mecheril 2018; zur Nieden and Karakayalı 2016; for UK see Shain 2013; for Turkey see Ceyhan 2016; current contributions on further national contexts can be found in this volume). Along with this, it has been noted that the nation-state, and with it the state schools, are undergoing crisis (Machold et al. 2020). This is the case because increasing global patterns of movement linked to globalisation, neo-liberalism and global inequalities question the legitimacy of borders, which can also be understood as boundaries that limit open access to education.

---

### 3 Migration and the Nation-State – Questions of Borders and Belonging

Movements of people across borders have taken place almost everywhere and in every historical era. Migration is a universal human activity. In this sense, it exhibits a dimension relating to time and space, as Castles (2000) points out:

---

<sup>4</sup>The expression natio-racial-cultural (in German 'natio-ethno-kulturell', see Mecheril 2003, pp. 118–251) refers on the one hand to the fact that the concepts of nation, ethnicity, *race*, and culture are often used in a diffuse and undifferentiated way, both in research and everyday communication. On the other hand, this term reflects the fact that concepts of nation, ethnicity, *race*, and culture are manifested formally in laws and regulations, materially through border controls and identity documents, and also socially through symbolic practices that generate blurred meanings and ambiguous outcomes that are subsequently used for political ends (for more detail see Mecheril 2018).

“migration means crossing the boundary of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period” (p. 269). Although human history as a whole can be seen as a history of migration, current migration flows are particularly significant, for nation-states, institutions and individuals. At no point in history were so many people worldwide *prepared* to migrate, *compelled* to migrate due to environmental disasters, (civil) wars, and other threats, and *able* to shift their location of work and daily life across great distances thanks to technological changes that mitigate the limits of space and time: we are living in an “age of migration” (Castles and Miller 2009). In recent times, cross-border movements of people have attained a particular significance for individuals and societies worldwide. This is connected to at least three main factors:

- a) Migration increases with the proliferation of modern ideas about what human beings are or should be and vice versa. The characteristically ‘modern’ idea of the right to self-determination is increasing in importance due to migration phenomena. Migration can be understood as the attempt in a very basic sense to change one’s own life with regard to geographical, ecological, political, and cultural location, and it thus serves as a model of a modern lifestyle – with all of its ambivalences, illusions, and questionable incidental consequences.
- b) Migration increases, to put it in general terms, with global inequalities and the awareness and experience of injustice. Due primarily to the brutality of modern warfare on account of its weapons technologies, the uneven distribution of poverty and wealth in the world, and varying degrees of ecological change and the associated destruction of natural resources, the intensity of global inequality is growing. Given this manifestation of inequality, the total number of people living in this world, and given the spread of global knowledge (increasing representation of the world in people’s minds through information technologies such as television and computers), global maladjustment and inequality has never been so pronounced as in the present.
- c) The modification of time and space: the temporal and spatial ‘shrinking’ of the world due to technological developments in transport and communications is characteristic of the present, particularly with regard to economic resources. This is significant for people’s understanding and perception of themselves and their opportunities in this world of transformed time and space relations. Furthermore, this facilitates movements across borders, or at least encourages attempts to cross borders.

The social significance of the crossing of borders is not simply given, but rather generated in complex processes in which social reality is affirmed, negotiated,



and changed. Phenomena of crossing borders have long been and are currently significant drivers of societal change and modernisation. The consequences of movements that cross, constitute, and weaken borders can be studied and understood as phenomena in which new knowledge, experiences, languages, and perspectives are introduced into different social contexts and orders, which have to be rearranged and revised in turn. From this perspective, migrants can be seen as social actors who bring new knowledge, experiences, languages and different perspectives to a variety of social contexts and thereby contribute to social development. As a result, they also challenge the stability of beliefs, worldviews, and nation-oriented paradigms.

However, migration as the act of crossing borders goes hand in hand with the transformation and confirmation of existing conditions. Thus, in any political and broader societal discussion about migration, one of the key questions is how a given imaginary (such as ‘the West’), national (for instance, Indonesia) or supra-national social unit (like the EU) defines (or even defends) its borders and how it deals with difference and inequality within those borders. Migration calls borders into question (Hess and Kasparek 2017). Not only territorial borders are meant, but also, and more importantly, symbolic borders which define belonging. Migration also questions individual, social and societal belonging. This is not only true for the sense of belonging or exclusion felt by ‘newcomers’ and migrants, but must be understood in a wider sense that encompasses also those who consider themselves ‘natives’. The question of belonging, of how ‘we’ want to live relates to all and thereby affects a fundamental aspect of social cohesion. Discourses concerning ‘migration’, ‘immigrants’, ‘multi-culturalism’, for example, are therefore not least an emotional matter and as such are always highly ideologised and politicised.

Borders, such as those of nation-states, become visible in a particular way as they are crossed; they become weak and modified while at the same time their power and claim to validity is reinforced. Migration is the object of discourses and the subject of political and societal conflicts. The term discourse is particularly meaningful here, as migration does not simply happen as the physical movement of bodies. Rather, phenomena arising from the crossing of borders are generated by discourses (on the concept of discourse see Foucault 1969/1973), understood here as socially constructed systems of knowledge and understanding. It is these very discourses that label migration politically, aesthetically, educationally and in the everyday life of a specific national unit for example as forced migration, illegal migration, as labour migration or simply as mobility. While this kind of ‘sorting’ can be defined as the outcome of hierarchical orders, it also has effects on how migrants belonging to one or another group are granted access to the education system in a given national context.

When looking at this, we must also consider that there are states around the world whose founding myths and understanding of themselves as a nation are based in various ways on border-crossing migration. While ‘classic’ immigration states such as the USA, Canada and Australia have declared migration to be a constituting moment, an identity-creating ‘conjunctive space of experience’ (as meant by Karl Mannheim) for the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation in the process of being founded,<sup>5</sup> in other nation-states, migration is not only politically undesirable, but its relevance for important changes in society is ignored, for example for a long period of time in Germany (Heckmann and Schnapper 2003) or in Japan until the end of the twentieth century (Hollifield and Sharpe 2017). No matter which role is assigned to migration in national myths (‘We are all migrants’ vs. ‘We are not migrants’), the principle of the nation-state requires a differentiation between ‘We’ and ‘not-We’ in order to justify legitimacy based on belonging and thus also a right to claim state protection and benefits.

Especially in light of the global migration society, we must take a critical look at the nation-state and the idea of a nation or a national community as the central point of reference for today’s schools (understood both as an institution and as a social or pedagogical practice). Where the nation-state is used unquestioningly as an entity and a reference point for explaining certain phenomena, we can speak of methodological nationalism. The term “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) is used to criticise those studies and ways of thinking that apply the concept of the nation as a matter of course. They use it as a ‘natural’ category for analysing, structuring and describing social aspects, thus thinking of society exclusively and automatically as a nation or nation-state. In light of the importance of transnational migration, equating society with the nation-state does not provide convincing descriptions of the transformation of current global conditions or of the conditions in nation-states.

Society’s significant transnational and global dimensions and the related foundational transformation of many aspects of society is thus a serious challenge for school traditions whose explicit or ‘secret’ task lies primarily in preserving and reproducing the nation. The subject of interest that links the chapters in this volume is thus the extent to which processes of transnationalisation are leading to a changed understanding of school and the education of teachers.

---

<sup>5</sup>For example, see the Canadian model of multiculturalism by Taylor (1994) and Rex’s thoughts (1995) on ethnic identities in nation-states with respect to the USA, Canada and Australia.

To the extent to which questioning the national ‘We’ as a consequence of migration arises as a crisis of the legitimacy and functioning of the schools, which are legitimised by the nation-state or are at least bound to that state in their policies (Tröhler 2020), this is also a crisis of teacher education. After all, in their education, teachers are prepared for their task as a key actor in interpreting and carrying out state policy in the task of upbringing and education in schools (see Banks 2017; Karakaşoğlu and Vogel 2019; Machold et al. 2020; Pushpanadham 2020).

---

## 4 Transnational Perspectives

As early as the 1990s, transnationalism was discussed in the social sciences as a new analytical perspective (see Glick Schiller et al. 1992). The many different theoretical approaches are more or less united in describing *transnational* as those social relationships, identifications, educational pathways, communication channels and economic modes that are established across nation-state borders and include both migrants and non-migrants in two or more nation-states (Nieswand 2011, p. 32; see also Adick 2018). Taking a transnational perspective, forms of the social are emerging in which geographic-physical spaces and social spaces are entangled, not least due to the migration of individuals. Social spaces open up that make everyday contexts of life able to be experienced across borders and in multiple locations. Transnational phenomena can be seen between and beyond the borders of the nation-state.

With regard to migration, a transnational perspective reminds us that migration cannot exclusively be conceptualised in the mode of immigration, that is, a form of immigration into a ‘container’-like nation-state which is meant to be then the place of integration. People who live in transnational spaces have significant ties with several national contexts at the same time. “Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, pp. 1–2). This simultaneous belonging to two or more national contexts – which cannot be expressed in the simplistic, cut and dried language of the assimilation and integration approaches to migration – necessarily has implications for the kind of identity which typifies transmigrants. “Within their complex web of social relations, transmigrants draw upon and create fluid and multiple identities grounded both in their society of origin and in the host societies” (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, p. 11).

While the experience of change from one national system to another one is central to the classic model (‘immigration’, ‘integration’), the main characteristic

of trans migratory experiences is that change itself, oscillation between two or more nation-states, either de facto or imagined movement from one context of belonging to another one, becomes the main form of existence. The term 'transnational' refers to the social, material and subjective realities which take shape and are generated during migration processes, and which differ from traditional, national contexts. Unlike 'classic' approaches to migration, it does not emphasise the unidirectionality of migratory phenomena.

In their diverse explorations of the transnational variety of social life, especially in the context of learning, the scholars and researchers in this edited volume are contributing to a richer, more varied and more detailed perspective on education and school that makes explicit the institutions' continued effective reference to national categories, thereby offering them up for critical reflection. It is about using the perspective of migration and transnationality to fundamentally question the national paradigms in schools and teacher education and the way in which these paradigms are taken as given. When looking in particular at the constellations of migration(s), school and the nation-state, the focus of the discussion should not be placed primarily on migrants and their paths, actions or attitudes. Instead, it is about researching the global interconnectedness and entanglements – each embedded in their specific national and global social power and hierarchical relationships – and the country-specific and transnational structures and contextual conditions of schools and teacher education. The volume therefore draws attention primarily to the migration-societal composition of the respective national context and of its systems of teacher education and schooling – and not to the migrants themselves.

---

## **5 Teaching in Transnational Constellations Within Nation-States**

If schools are to be understood based on their historical function as a kind of tool for consolidating national order and identity, a function which is often still effective in the present, then teachers are given the task of not only maintaining the identity-creating narrative, but also continuing to develop it across national, class, gender or generational boundaries. After all, they are usually entrusted with the particular task of state education (usually as civil servants), which includes familiarising pupils with the division of the world and social life in national and nation-state categories with the help of textbooks and corresponding knowledge ('life in France', 'the capital of Peru', 'the people in India', or similar). Teachers, additional pedagogical personnel, teaching and learning materials and in-class

practices present a certain natio-racial-cultural ‘We’ to the pupils (*our* country, *our* history, *our* language) that can only be constituted by differentiating it from the ‘not-We’. Metaphorically, the “thread of the nation” (Duval 2016, trans. by authors) continues to be woven in the school structures and practices, in part by schools functioning as places of subjectification *in the* ‘imagined community’ of the nation and not only teaching children that Germany, for example, exists (as a country, a tradition), but making children into Germans who differentiate themselves from non-Germans. In Germany, examples of this can be seen in the separate organisational structures found in many places (for example ‘German learning classes’; see Füllekruss and Dirim 2020) and in more or less subtle practices of teachers addressing ‘migrantised’ pupils and suggesting that they view themselves as a German or a foreigner, as ‘limited in their language’ or having ‘normal language abilities’ (Flores and Rosa 2015; Ivanova-Chessex and Steinbach 2017; Rose 2012). The nation-state development of educational institutions is linked to a series of specific symbols, ideas, national perspectives of historical events (with an emphasis on some facts while ignoring others), expectations of normality and thus exclusion practices. “The normal”, wrote Judith Butler (2014) on the school context, “is very often derived from the national norm, which sometimes quite explicitly punishes those who do not conform to its ideals” (p. 178). With the increasing movement of people across national borders, movements that are not only restricted to short periods of time (Castles et al. 2015; Oltmer 2012), teacher education for nation-state schools is challenged to question the foundation of its knowledge and values, the validity and appropriateness of the knowledge conveyed, and its educational policy goals.

Educational science in various national or regional contexts has specifically looked at the question of how schools and teacher education, that was previously oriented strongly towards the nation-state, can do more justice to migration-societal changes in society and society’s transnational entanglements. Corresponding approaches and perspectives have been developed (see for example Banks 2017; Pushpanadham 2020) that are also reflected in the contributions to this volume. In light of the diversity of these approaches, in the following we would like to undertake a rough, ideal-typical differentiation: On the one hand, there are approaches that focus on overcoming an educational perspective that uses the nation-state as a point of reference (a), and on the other hand there are approaches that aim to promote anti-discrimination strategies and also to recognise diversity, including migration-related diversity, and recognise minority groups, including indigenous groups and their cultural forms of life and practices (b).

- a) Approaches that attempt to appeal to the individual's political conscience and global responsibility, with concepts such as 'global citizenship' as a school subject or a cross-cutting aspect in the curriculum that goes beyond national identities, aim to weaken or overcome a strongly national perspective of education. One example of this is the definition of 'global citizenship education' from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

While the world may be increasingly interconnected, human rights violations, inequality and poverty still threaten peace and sustainability. Global Citizenship Education (GCED) is UNESCO's response to these challenges. It works by empowering learners of all ages to understand that these are global, not local issues and to become active promoters of more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable societies. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], n.d.)

The educational goal of understanding oneself as a global citizen is also meant to enable pupils to reflect on the complexity of transnational interactions (see for example Soong, 2018). It is also about enabling an awareness of a holistic perspective of global and individual relations, and the various social worlds and practices of individuals in a global context. Yet another important goal is to spark an interaction with, for example, the post-colonial conditions of global inequality and their effects in the context of education (see amongst other Reyes 2019; Sharma-Brymer 2009). Among these approaches, we include:

- Global citizenship education
- Critical global citizenship education
- Transformative education
- Postcolonial education
- Human rights education
- Critical pedagogy
- ...

- b) Pedagogical theories and concepts respond to the rather internal natio-racial-cultural pluralisation of societal contexts constituted by the nation-state. These theories and concepts are intended to relate the pedagogical professionalisation of teachers and pedagogues to these conditions and, in doing so, to sustainably change the established structures and practices of school and out-of-school education. These theories and concepts advocate recognising

diversity. For example, they emphasise the necessity of sensitising teachers for multilingualism or interreligious dialogue, and they work in particular on cultivating the individual's accepting attitude just as did older approaches of diversity education, anti-bias education, intercultural/multicultural education and interfaith education. Another stream of theories and concepts reflects on positionings, privileges and disadvantaging while professionally examining the involvement of educational actors in social power relations. These approaches can be seen, for example, in critical race theory and in approaches of decolonising knowledge (on critical race theory in teacher training see for example Aronson and Meyers 2020). The focus in this context is on giving attention to institutional racism and racist practices at schools and other educational and childcare institutions. Among these approaches, we include:

- (Critical) Intercultural/multicultural education
- Transcultural education
- Interfaith education
- Decolonising/Indigenisation of knowledge
- Antiracist education
- Critical whiteness
- ...

What many of the approaches in (a) and/or (b) have in common is that they are expanded by referring to diversity education (for example Czollek et al. 2012; European Commission 2017; Young 1990) and intersectionality (Crenshaw 1994; Walgenbach 2012). The approaches listed here as examples for modern pedagogical perspectives on education in migration societies can hardly avoid the pitfall of reproducing methodological nationalism due to being embedded in specific national contexts, even though they go beyond these by referencing transnational social spaces. The basic problem of schools as an institution and of teacher education continues to be a strong national orientation and dependency on nationalised education systems and the corresponding administrations. For us as editors, this also describes a dilemma that we have noted in the beginning of this chapter, that is, that confronting the topic of teacher education and situating this topic in transnational contexts is continually influenced and sometimes also limited by the national framework – even for our own academic activities. While acknowledging this danger of a nationally restricted perspective, in the final section of our introduction, we would like to present several thoughts on teacher education and teacher professionalism in transnational constellations that we view as starting points for further discussion in national and transnational constellations.

## 6 Professional Pedagogical Actions in Transnational Constellations

The hallmarks of educational relationships in global migration societies include phenomena such as the translation and mixing of languages as a consequence of migration, dealing with a lack of or unclear rights of residency and uncertain prospects for the future, the emergence of a state of limbo and hybrid identities, phenomena of ascribing 'strangeness', structures and processes of racism, or even creating new forms of belonging and forms of re-ethnicisation or re-religionisation (Akbaba and Bob 2017; Casanova 2019; Karakaşoğlu and Klinkhammer 2016; Klinkhammer 2000; Mecheril 2018). Particularly the increase of racist statements and attacks and the enormous influx of supporters for political parties that express nationalist and racist ideas and positions in Europe and the world, the increasing acceptability of racist remarks, including those against refugees and asylum-seekers, migrants and those who are migrationalised, makes clear how important the tasks and responsibilities are of school education and thus the actions of teachers as a way of self-empowering all people (Giroux 2020).

At the same time, school as a social space and a place in which sociality is shaped has certain mechanisms of differentiation and discrimination ingrained, for example discriminating against pupils whose first language is not the common lingua franca, or stereotype threat (Steele and Aronson 1995). These mechanisms of discrimination are not always present, but they can be activated at any time. For this reason, it is important that teachers are able to recognise these discriminatory mechanisms and routines in the school structure as well as in their own actions and those of their colleagues and, just as importantly, are able to change them. Professional practices are based on the knowledge of the existence of discriminatory mechanisms in pedagogical organisations rather than on the defensive stance against accusations of discrimination, that are perceived as uncomfortable or hurtful. Professionalism is shown when teachers have an interest in recognising the conditions that impede appropriate learning, consider their own role in these conditions, and are interested in changing them. This also includes their own ways of thinking, feeling and acting that may be bound to certain traditions.

The (global) migration society is an important reality for educational institutions and for the professionals working in them. Many children and adolescents today have contact with a plurality of languages, religions, cultural systems of meaning, and with the related positive effects of diversity, but also with inequality and hardship. This solidarity with incidents that take place long distances away



often arises from family connections, but also from media attention. The world and its people are thus increasingly in close contact with one another. Current experiences of fleeing from dangerous situations and of asylum make it clear that globalisation now has a local pedagogical dimension that can be directly experienced. All aspects of this dimension must be taken up in education in order to follow the pedagogical principle of making the everyday lives of children and adolescents the starting point for their educational processes (see for example Freire 1968/1970; Kaplan 2013).

In teacher education, as well, there is a growing awareness that school structures and practices do not yet take sufficient account of the fact that migration is diverse, does not always represent a short-term interruption in a settled lifestyle, and does not have to end with becoming settled in one place (Bukus 2015; Skerrett 2015). In addition to comprehensively recognising and promoting migration society's multilingualism in regular lessons, a range of subjects that reflects students' lives, and corresponding learning content, the focus should also be on recognising knowledge and degrees obtained elsewhere in the world as well as distancing from the idea that schools must convey a kind of historical, nationally dominant culture. Instead, the focus should be on conveying awareness of multiple perspectives of world knowledge in history, geography and politics while recognising the contribution of knowledge production in all regions of the world.

If the result of questioning established school structures and content is recognising the reality of migration society, this comes with the opportunity to take responsibility for one's own actions, as these can have effects on the lives of people who live thousands of kilometres away. With this in mind, we need innovative ideas for opening up the structures, content and orientation of all subjects towards more transnational and migration-society perspectives as well as a corresponding education of pedagogical personnel. It is a matter of the school reality that must largely be constructed by professionals (teachers and other educators) – a reality that does not stop at the imaginary borders of the nation-state, instead taking seriously the fact that the world has always been closely connected but that these connections are continually increasing and deepening.

The teaching profession is in many respects a complicated and even impossible profession, as it is characterised by a multitude of sometimes contradictory requirements, for example the need to design educational processes and curricula such that children can flourish – whatever that might mean – while at the same time ensuring they obtain the structurally required competences that are important or required in the respective society (Ben-Peretz 2001). Teachers are ever more frequently confronted with the question of how much they should direct children's learning processes and the extent to which offering confidence and support

as children acquire competences on their own is more constructive. They also work while being pulled in two often completely contradictory directions: orientation on individual children and orientation on the entire learning group. When teachers should account for differences and when this would be linked to racist, stereotypical attributions is a question that arises generally.

This means that professional actions in schools take place in a space of structural contradictions. The basis for professional actions on the part of teachers would be the ability to acquire a reflective professionalism (Erlandson and Beach 2008; Schön 1983) that would also need to be understood as a process. Since pedagogical practices take place on a case-by-case basis and cannot be carried out according to a certain formula, teachers cannot be expected to always act 'correctly'. However, a culture can be created in which teachers systematically learn from what they do and don't do. Schools that learn in a migration society also and especially include teachers who learn. For this, two conditions need to be fulfilled: a reflective teachers' habitus (Schön 1983) and a reflective, learning school (Argyris and Schön 1996; Schratz and Steiner-Löffler 1998).

In order to enable a reflective teacher habitus, we need teacher education that systematically and sustainably allows for reflective and self-critical approaches to one's own actions. Students in teacher training should be familiarised with the difficult 'impossibility' of their profession and permit them to practically grapple with the case-specific consequences of the contradictions, imponderables and uncertainties of the field (see for example Ben-Peretz 2001; Helsper 2008). This is also linked to the task of recognising that schools are embedded in their respective societal circumstances. Based on a solid foundation of education science and social theory, teachers should be enabled to reflect on their actions, pupils' situations, the school as a social institution and the institution's embeddedness in a global migration society such that they can pursue their highly challenging tasks professionally and not be primarily guided by common or intuitive knowledge. The theoretical and self-reflective analysis of prejudices, discriminatory routines and acts of racism, the history of the 'national school' and the responsibility for changing these relations, are also relevant moments of professionalisation: "If educators are not critically literate to engage with assumptions and implications/limitations of their approaches, they run the risk of (indirectly and unintentionally) reproducing the systems of belief and practices that harm those they want to support" (Andreotti 2014, p. 50). A reflective habitus can only contribute to tackling the pedagogical demands of schools in an appropriate way if the educational-institutional field is structured accordingly. That is, if it has a reflective structure that is error-friendly and is familiar with case discussions and supervision, provides the necessary time and personnel resources for this purpose, and does not

interpret the request for further training as indications of weakness or even failure. Reflection is a fruitful foundation for productive and constructive pedagogical action if this reflection has an equivalent in the places where action occurs.

Ultimately, the goal should be to query the validity of the fundamental principles of schools and teacher education in awareness of global entanglements and transnational constellations, and to work towards a fundamental reform movement by using these questions and by learning and implementing a process of systematic query. In accordance with Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez (1989), we could speak of the pedagogical principle of ‘learning to question’ as a key moment from the perspective of professionalisation theory. Here, teachers’ actions are to be understood as political activities, in which they actively help to shape society without overwhelming young people with their own views, instead offering them a framework based on human rights and a responsible perspective – a framework in which they can think about the burning questions of our (migration societal) times.

---

## 7 Concept and Structure of the Volume

The contributions collected in this volume contain theoretical and conceptual thoughts on education and teacher education in transnational constellations. They provide food for thought and ideas for education-scientific and pedagogical discussions. The chapters offer international ideas from teacher education research and school pedagogical practice in different historical and political nation-state contexts such as Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Israel, Japan, Switzerland, Turkey, the UK, and the USA. What they have in common is that they address the question of which empirical and theoretical approaches are suitable for describing the phenomena found in schools and teacher education of how to tackle migration-related and transnational demands placed on the school in a pedagogically professional way. However, they all have different emphases as well as theoretical and empirical perspectives on what the “age of migration” (Castles and Miller 2009) means for schools and teacher education. Practices in schools and teacher education are analysed on this basis. With a view to the further development of schools and teacher education, individual contributions also formulate possible options for suitable, professional action in migration societies characterised by transnationality.

This edited volume is divided into four sections.

In section I “**Migration, Transnationalities and Regimes of Belongings**”, there are theoretical contributions that emphasise the relevance of transnational,

post-colonial and migration-society perspectives when analysing education (processes, structures and practices). Current global conditions are analysed especially with a view to their power dimensions as relationships between transnationalisation and renationalisation. In this field of tension, social orders that structure belonging and not-belonging are visible and negotiated. These orders are also important for the context of education and pedagogy, as they frame processes of subjectification. In this first section, there are contributions from Maríado Mar Castro Varela; Paul Mecheril; Ann Phoenix; and Ludger Pries and Natalia Bekassow.

Under the heading **“Education in Transnational Constellations”**, the second section of this volume includes chapters that look at teacher education and schools from the perspectives of racism, power and difference theories. They present critical reflections and organisational-theoretical thoughts on educational terms, pedagogical concepts, the interactional level of teacher education and lessons as well as the structures of national schools. The authors, David Gillborn; Yotam Hotam; Natascha Khakpour; Daniel Krenz-Dewe and Matthias Rangger; Gregor Lang-Wojtasik; Ewald Terhart; and Dita Vogel and Yasemin Karakaşoğlu also refer to empirical work to support their theoretical arguments.

In the third section of the volume, **“Migration, Transnationalities and Schools in National Contexts”**, the chapters analyse the consequences that arise for teacher education and schools amidst the tension of the importance of the nation-state on the one hand and transnational connections on the other. This tension is made clear in empirical analyses of education systems shaped by the nation-state and the limitations of this nation-state orientation when confronted with migration and transnational realities. One of the main focal points of the contributions is on analysing educational inequalities. In this third section, there are chapters by Polina-Theopoula Chrysochou; Akiko Ito; Marguerite Lukes; Jabari Mahiri; Andrea Riedemann and Muriel Armijo-Cabrera; Dorothee Schwendowius and Saskia Terstegen; and Simona Szakács-Behling.

In the final section IV **“Teacher Training: Knowing How, Knowing That”**, there are chapters that look at teachers’ actions and the topic of professionalising teachers from transnational perspectives. Theoretical thoughts on appropriate teacher training in various phases (university and practical training phases) are presented. For many of the contributions, racism-theoretical analyses and racism-critical approaches are the primary foundation for their arguments. The chapters were written by Şükrü Erhan Bağcı; Beatrix Bukus; Aysun Doğmuş; Susanne Gottuck, Nicolle Pfaff and Anja Tervooren; Oxana Ivanova-Chessex, Anja Steinbach and Jan Wolter; Vini Lander; and Clea Schmidt.

## References

- Adick, C. (2018). Transnational education in schools, universities, and beyond: definitions and research areas. *Transnational Social Review*, 8(2), 124–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21931674.2018.1463057>
- Akbaba, Y., & Jeffrey, B. (Eds.). (2017). *The Implications of 'New Populism' for Education*. Stroud: E & E Publishing.
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Andreotti, V. O. (2014). Soft Versus Critical Global Citizenship Education. In S. McCloskey (Ed.), *Development Education in Policy and Practice* (pp. 21–31). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1996). *Organizational learning II. Theory, method and practice Reading*. Boston: Addison-Wesley.
- Aronson, B., & Meyers, L. (2020). Critical race theory and the teacher education curriculum: challenging understandings of racism, whiteness, and white supremacy. *Whiteness and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23793406.2020.1812109>
- Banks, J. A. (Ed.). (2017). *Citizenship Education and Global Migration: Implications for Theory, Research and Teaching*. Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.
- Benhabib, S. (2006). Another cosmopolitanism. Hospitality, Sovereignty and Democratic Iterations. (R. Post, Ed.). Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ben-Peretz, M. (2001). The Impossible Role of Teacher Educators in a Changing World. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(1), 48–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/022487101052001005>
- Bielefeld, U. (2008). Nation & Nationalstaat. In N. Baur, H. Korte, M. Löw, & M. Schroer (Eds.), *Handbuch Soziologie* (pp. 319–336). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Brubaker, R. (1992). *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bukus, B. (2015). The concept of transnationalism in educational science: Educational biographies of school-age children involved in multiple and multidirectional migration. *Transnational Social Review*, 5(1), 79–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21931674.2014.998462>
- Butler, J. (2014). Epilogue. In B. Kleiner & N. Rose (Eds.), *(Re-)Produktion von Ungleichheiten im Schulalltag. Judith Butlers Konzept der Subjektivierung in der erziehungswissenschaftlichen Forschung* (pp. 175–187). Opladen, Berlin, & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Casanova, J. (2019). *Global Religious and Secular Dynamics. The Modern System of Classification*. Leiden: Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004411982>
- Castles, S. (2000). International migration at the beginning of the twenty-first century: global trends and issues. *International Social Science Journal*, 52, 269–281
- Castles, S., de Haas, H., & Miller, M. J. (2015). *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World* (5th ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Castles, S., & Miller, M. J. (2009). *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Ceyhan, M. A. (2016). Co-creating transnational spaces for multilingual practices in Turkey's state-run monolingual educational system: Sabiha Necipoğlu school

- ethnography. In A. Küppers, B. Pusch, & P. Uyan Semerci (Eds.), *Education in transnational spaces: Theory, practice and research based on German-Turkish examples* (pp. 149–162). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Chatterjee, P. (1986). *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. A Derivative Discourse?* London: Zed Books.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1994). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.
- Czollek, L. C., Perko, G., & Weinbach, H. (2012). *Praxishandbuch Social Justice und Diversity. Theorien, Training, Methoden, Übungen* [Handbook on Social Justice and Diversity. Theories, training, methods, exercises]. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Dirim, İ., & Mecheril, P. (with A. Heinemann et al.). (2018). *Heterogenität, Sprache(n), Bildung. Die Schule der Migrationsgesellschaft* [Heterogeneity, Language(s), Education. School in migration society]. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Duval, P. (2016). Die undefinierbare Nation: Themen und Perspektiven [The indefinable nation: issues and perspectives]. In S. Kronberger, C. Kühberger, & M. Oberlechner (Eds.), *Diversitätskategorien in der Lehramtsausbildung: ein Handbuch* (pp. 201–216). Innsbruck & Vienna: Studienverlag.
- Erlanson, P., & Beach, D. (2008). The ambivalence of reflection – rereading Schön. *Reflective Practice*, 9(4), 409–421. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940802475843>
- European Commission. (2017). *Preparing Teachers for Diversity. The role of Initial Teacher Education* (Final Report NC-06–16–296-EN-N). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2766/637002>
- Fend, H. (2009). *Neue Theorie der Schule. Einführung in das Verstehen von Bildungssystemen* [New Theory of Schooling. Introduction to understanding educational systems] (2nd ed.). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Flores, N., & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing Appropriateness: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Language Diversity in Education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 85(2), 149–171. <https://doi.org/10.17763/0017-8055.85.2.149>
- Foucault, M. (1973). *Archäologie des Wissens* [The Archaeology of Knowledge]. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. (Original work published 1969)
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Trans. M. Bergman Ramos). New York: Herder & Herder. (Original work published 1968)
- Freire, P., & Faundez, A. (1989). *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation*. New York & London: Continuum.
- Füllekruss, D., & Dirim, İ. (2020). Zugehörigkeitstheoretische und sprachdidaktische Reflexionen separierter Deutschfördermaßnahmen [Theoretical reflections on belonging and language didactics of separate German language programmes]. In J. Karakayalı (Ed.), *Unterscheiden und Trennen: Die Herstellung von natio-ethno-kultureller Differenz und Segregation in der Schule* (pp. 68–84). Weinheim & Basel: Beltz Juventa.
- Giroux, H. A. (2020). *On Critical Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). New York & London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L., & Szanton Blanc, C. (Eds.). (1992). *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.
- Goldberg, D. T. (1993). *Racist culture. Philosophy and the politics of meaning*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Goldberg, D. T. (2002). *The racial state*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Goldberg, D. T. (2009). *The threat of race. Reflections on racial neoliberalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599.
- Heckmann, F., & Schnapper, D. (Eds.). (2003). *The Integration of Immigrants in European Societies: National Differences and Trends of Convergence*. Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius.
- Helsper, W. (2008). Ungewissheit und pädagogische Professionalität [Uncertainty and pedagogical professionalism]. In Bielefelder Arbeitsgruppe 8 (Ed.), *Soziale Arbeit in Gesellschaft*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-90960-8\\_18](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-90960-8_18)
- Hess, S., & Kasperek, B. (2017). Under Control? Or Border (as) Conflict: Reflections on the European Border Regime. *Social Inclusion*, 5(3), 58–68. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v5i3.1004>
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1990). *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth and Reality*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Hollifield, J. F., & Sharpe, M. O. (2017, September). Japan as an ‘Emerging Migration State’. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 17(3), 371–400. <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcx013>
- İnce, A. (2017). *Turkey’s Kurdish question from an educational perspective*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Ivanova-Chessex, O., & Steinbach, A. (2017). Anrufungen als subjektbildende Unterscheidungspraktiken. Zur Rolle der Lehrperson in Prozessen der (Re)Produktion migrationsgesellschaftlicher Dominanzverhältnisse [Interpellations as subject-forming differentiation practices – on the role of teacher processes of the (re)production of migration society dominance relations]. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie der Erziehung und Sozialisation*, 37(1), 55–69.
- Kaplan, A. (2013). Reconstructing Progressive Education. *Schools: Studies in Education*, 10(1), 122–131. <https://doi.org/10.1086/670004>
- Karakaşoğlu, Y., & Klinkhammer, G. (2016). Religionsverhältnisse [Religion relations]. In P. Mecheril (Ed.), *Handbuch Migrationspädagogik* (pp. 294–310). Weinheim & Basel: Beltz.
- Karakaşoğlu, Y., & Vogel, D. (2019). Transnationale Mobilität als Transformationsanlass für Schulen – ein professionskritischer Beitrag aus der Interkulturellen Bildung [Transnational Mobility as a Transformation Occasion for Schools – a Contribution Critical of the Profession from Intercultural Education]. In G. Lang-Wojtasik (Ed.), *Bildung für eine Welt in Transformation. Global Citizenship Education als Chance für die Weltgesellschaft* (pp. 89–106). Opladen, Berlin, & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Katıgbak, E. O. (2020). Transnationalism. In *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (2nd ed., pp. 395–400). Amsterdam: Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102295-5.10320-8>
- Kheir, A. (2010, January 28). Why the nation-state is wrong for Africa. *Pambazuka News*. Retrieved February 26, 2021, from <https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/why-nation-state-wrong-africa>
- Klinkhammer, G. (2000). *Moderne Formen islamischer Lebensführung. Eine qualitativ-empirische Untersuchung zur Religiosität sunnitisch geprägter Türkinnen der zweiten Generation in Deutschland* [Modern Forms of Islamic Lifestyle. A Qualitative-Empirical Study of the Religiosity of Second-Generation Sunni Turkish Women in Germany]



- (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tübingen). Retrieved February 26, 2021, from <https://publikationen.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/handle/10900/111778>
- Lentin, A., & Lentin, R. (2006). *Race and State*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Machold, C., Messerschmidt, A., & Hornberg, S. (Eds.). (2020). *Jenseits des Nationalen? Erziehungswissenschaftliche Perspektiven* [Beyond the national? Perspectives from education sciences]. Opladen, Berlin, & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Mahiri, J. (2021). Deconstructing race: Prerequisite to belonging in US society and schools. In L. Heidrich, Y. Karakaşoğlu, P. Mecheril, & S. Shure (Eds.), *Regimes of Belonging – Schools – Migrations. Teaching in (Trans)National Constellations* (see in this volume). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Mamdani, M. (2001, October). Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism. *Comparative Study of Society and History*, 43(4), 651–664.
- Mecheril, P. (2003). *Prekäre Verhältnisse. Über nation-ethno-kulturelle (Mehrfach-)Zugehörigkeit* [Precarious relations. On natio-racial-cultural (multiple) belonging]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Mecheril, P. (2018). Orders of Belonging and Education: Migration Pedagogy as Criticism. In D. Bachmann-Medick & J. Kugele (Eds.), *Migration. Changing Concepts, Critical Approaches* (pp. 121–138). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Nieswand, B. (2011). *Theorising Transnational Migration. The Status Paradox of Migration*. London: Routledge.
- Oltmer, J. (2012). *Globale Migration. Geschichte und Gegenwart* [Global migration. History and present]. Munich: C. H. Beck.
- Pries, L. (1999). New Migration in Transnational Space. In L. Pries (Ed.), *Migration and transnational social spaces* (pp. 1–35). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Pushpanadham, K. (Ed.). (2020). *Teacher Education in the Global Era. Perspectives and Practices*. Singapore: Springer.
- Rex, J. (1995). Ethnic identity and the nation state: The political sociology of multi-cultural societies. *Social Identities*, 1(1), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.1995.9959424>
- Reyes, G. T. (2019). Pedagogy of and Towards Decoloniality. In M. Peters (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Teacher Education*. Singapore: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1179-6\\_220-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1179-6_220-1)
- Rose, N. (2012). *Migration als Bildungsherausforderung. Subjektivierung und Diskriminierung im Spiegel von Migrationsbiographien* [Migration as an educational challenge. Subjectification and discrimination in the mirror of migration biographies]. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schratz, M., & Steiner-Löffler, U. (1998). *Die Lernende Schule. Arbeitsbuch pädagogische Schulentwicklung* [The Learning School. Workbook of pedagogical school development]. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz.
- Schulze, H. (2004). *Staat und Nation in der europäischen Geschichte* [State and Nation in European History] (2nd ed.). Münster: C. H. Beck.
- Shain, F. (2013). Race, nation and education. An overview of British attempts to ‘manage diversity’ since the 1950s. *Education Inquiry*, 4(1), 63–85.
- Sharma-Brymer, V. (2009). Reflecting On Postcolonialism and Education: Tensions and Dilemmas of an Insider. In R. Cowen & A. M. Kazamias (Eds.), *International*



- Handbook of Comparative Education* (Vol. 22, pp. 655–668). Dordrecht: Springer.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-6403-6\\_42](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-6403-6_42)
- Skerret, A. (2015). *Teaching Transnational Youth – Literacy and Education in a Changing World*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Soong, H. (2018). Transnationalism in education: Theoretical discussions and the implications for teaching global citizenship education. In I. Davies et al. (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of global citizenship and education* (pp. 165–177). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5), 797–811.
- Steinbach, A., Shure, S., & Mecheril, P. (2020). The racial school. Die nationale Schule und ihre Rassekonstruktionen [The racial school. The national school and its race constructions]. In J. Karakayalı (Ed.), *Unterscheiden und Trennen. Die Herstellung von natio-ethno-kultureller Differenz und Segregation in der Schule*. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz.
- Taylor, C. (1994). ‘The Politics of Recognition’. In A. Gutmann (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (pp. 25–73). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tröhler, D. (2020). National literacies, or modern education and the art of fabricating national minds. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52(5), 620–635. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1786727>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO]. (n.d.). *Global citizenship education*. Retrieved January 6, 2021, from <https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced>
- Walby, S. (2003, August 1). The Myth of the Nation-State: Theorizing Society and Politics in a Global Era. *Sociology*, 37(3), 529–546. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385030373008>
- Walgenbach, K. (2012). *Intersektionalität – eine Einführung* [Intersectionality – an Introduction]. Portal Intersektionalität. Retrieved February 26, 2021, from <http://portal-intersektionalitaet.de/theoriebildung/ueberblickstexte/walgenbach-einfuehrung/>
- Wenning, N. (1999). *Vereinheitlichung und Differenzierung: Zu den “wirklichen” gesellschaftlichen Funktionen des Bildungswesens im Umgang mit Gleichheit und Verschiedenheit* [Unification and differentiation: On the “real” societal functions of the education system dealing with equality and diversity]. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- Wimmer, A., & Glick Schiller, N. (2002). Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global Networks*, 2(4), 301–334.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (1997). Mitglied einer Gemeinschaft oder einzelnes Individuum? Zur Citizenship-Debatte [Member of a community or isolated individual? On the Citizenship Debate]. *Das Argument – Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Sozialwissenschaften*, 39(218), 59–70.
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton & New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Zur Nieden, B., & Karakayalı, J. (2016). Harte Tür. Schulische Segregation nach Herkunft in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft [Hard Door. School segregation by origin in the post-migrant society]. In T. Geier & K. U. Zaborowski (Eds.), *Migration: Auflösungen und Grenzziehungen* (pp. 81–97). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

---

# I Migration, Transnationalities and Regimes of Belongings



---

# Countering the Trivialisation of Violence: Postcolonial Critique and the Contours of an Ethical Pedagogy

María do Mar Castro Varela

---

## Abstract

Among other reasons, the current rise in racist and antisemitic ideas and practices means we must ensure that this violence is not trivialised or played down due to ignorance. Pedagogy plays an important role in this. The following contribution, therefore, takes a postcolonial perspective to first look at how general matters are viewed in pedagogy. In the age of neoliberalism and the economising of education, pedagogy is often only assigned functional tasks in education. The humanities are increasingly being trivialised, and hence general pedagogy must be protected from being crowded out until it is considered insignificant. The following will show that this can only be accomplished if general pedagogy can take a self-critical look at itself. As a critical intervention, I believe postcolonial theory is important for current discussions about education policy and education science – especially when looking at the less than peaceful global and political-ethical situation and critically examining educational institutions such as school as an ideological state apparatus. This will be outlined in the second section, after which I will conclude by introducing a discussion about an ethical pedagogy following Adorno and Spivak.

---

## Keywords

Postcolonial theory · Ethics · Pedagogy · Schools · Ideological state apparatus · Education after Auschwitz

---

M.d.M. Castro Varela (✉)

Alice Salomon University of Applied Science Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: [castrovarela@posteo.de](mailto:castrovarela@posteo.de)

---

## 1 Introduction

It is still a matter of common opinion that critical discussions of racism are not widespread in Germany because Germany supposedly was never a colonial power, or at least never a significant actor. Some claim that a critique of racism is ideological and therefore not academic (on this, see the critical perspective of Castro Varela and Mecheril 2016). Others state that it is simply not the most urgent critique to be made of society. We must, therefore, continue to conclude that ‘racism’ and ‘migration’ are intentionally neglected as a topic of pedagogical discourse in Germany (and for that matter also in Austria). In debates in the field of pedagogy, it is sometimes claimed that racism is not a ‘German problem’ or there are complaints that critique of the West in general is unwarranted because so-called Western values are sacrosanct. It has to be said that the *asymmetric ignorance*<sup>1</sup> often described in postcolonial theory is without a doubt not uncommon even among professors of pedagogy in Germany and Austria, as these are all statements that I regularly hear at conferences and after presentations that focus on the critique of racism or on postcolonial perspectives. At a time when racist and antisemitic ideas and practices are once again on the rise and racist violence and discourses are being gradually normalised, it appears urgently necessary to ensure that the ongoing barbarisation of society is not trivialised further or played down due to common ignorance.

In this article, I will first consider general pedagogy from a distinctly postcolonial perspective<sup>2</sup> before using this background to outline a critique of school as an ideological state apparatus, followed by a discussion of an ethical pedagogy based on Adorno and Spivak.

---

## 2 General Pedagogy

General pedagogy addresses both non-specific and overarching issues. It demarcates and outlines the reasons behind a discipline’s way of thinking, thereby also norming its practices. According to Stangl (2018), general pedagogy can

---

<sup>1</sup>In postcolonial theory, “asymmetric ignorance” is a lack of knowledge directly related to the idea of the supremacy of Western knowledge. Ignorance is asymmetric because intellectuals from countries that were former colonies do not have the luxury of the same ignorance vis-à-vis the West and/or colonial rule (see Castro Varela and Dhawan 2013).

<sup>2</sup>I am well aware that there is not only *one single* postcolonial perspective and ask the reader to understand this as a metaphor for a perspective that attempts to critique a Eurocentric way of thinking.

be understood as the field which looks into and explains the basic questions of upbringing and education and determines both the development as well as the justification of theoretical models of educational practices that aim to be generally valid. Stangl claims that general pedagogy examines education in its double role as experience-based practice on the one hand and as a science based on knowledge and research, on the other. Pedagogical practice and theory are thus focused on in equal measure, analysed and normatively described. Within pedagogical and educational science, general pedagogy is subject to ongoing criticism. For example, it is argued that it is obsolete because educational science has split into distinctive fields. Others have remarked that empirical educational research has rightly superseded merely theoretical research. Lothar Wigger comments that judgements such as distance to research and meaningless content, a lack of responsibility for certain areas and a lack of commitment do not only come from outside the field. And neither are these judgements untenable (Wigger 2002, p. 6). This diagnosis led to the recognition that something had to be done about the reputation of general pedagogy. I believe it is not the case that general pedagogy must continue to exist alongside the empirical fields. Instead, I believe that the problem is a more fundamental one and that condemnations of general pedagogy are attacks against pedagogy in particular. In the age of neoliberalism and the economising of education, pedagogy is only assigned a functional task. Pedagogy's task is to *educate*. But taking into consideration that the humanities are increasingly being trivialised, general pedagogy must be protected from being crowded out until it is considered insignificant. However, this can only be accomplished if general pedagogy can be self-critical.

A critical approach to general pedagogy requires careful consideration of *how* normative ideas are produced and taught. At the same time, an analysis must also determine *who* profits from the normative values and educational perspectives and who does not.

In light of the violent imperial rule that was inextricably tied to the establishment of Western educational institutions in Europe (as well as in the colonial territories), the thesis is that the canon of educational science and the practices of liberal education must be persistently questioned (Castro Varela 2015a, 2018). The overarching function of general pedagogy is to be understood in two ways. On the one hand, areas of education are covered that are not distinct fields but deal with the fundamentals of education and upbringing that are tangentially related to all specific fields of the discipline. On the other hand, a claim to universalisation is made, that is, principles and values are formulated that purport to have global validity. This means that both the (general) pedagogical canon as well as the established didactics and predominantly taught content (for example the content of textbooks) must be considered.

If criticism is understood, as described by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2006), as “a careful description of the structures that produce an object of knowledge” (Spivak 2006, p. 61), then a critical understanding of general pedagogy must also examine the question of knowledge production in and of itself: Which object of knowledge is produced within general pedagogy? Who is responsible for qualifying the pedagogical insights as knowledge? Who is excluded from this knowledge? Who is the subject and who is the object of this knowledge? What does it mean when Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose writings still serve as a role model for many humanistic pedagogues today, championed negative education in the eighteenth century? According to Rousseau (1971), the initial stage of education “ought to be purely negative. It consists [...] in securing the heart from vice and the mind from error” (Rousseau 1971, p. 93). Educational practice should aim to help avoid evils, as a child’s original nature is good. How does this description fit with the idea of pedagogy as an intervention meant to prevent the subject from becoming tasteless and crude?

In contrast to empirical educational research, general pedagogy aims to outline and develop conceptualisations and theories that lead, or at least should lead, to a better understanding of what pedagogy and upbringing are in general. According to Jürgen Oelkers (1997), the claim that education will ineluctably result in emancipation is preposterous. Here he is following the poststructuralists, who contest super-causality and pronouncements of universal truths. Instead of being a threat to general pedagogy, poststructuralism opens up a ‘beneficial process of learning’ by offering contingent truth-claims instead of absolute platitudes. Influenced by poststructuralism, postcolonial interventions question Eurocentric assumptions of ‘general truths’, subjecting them to a fundamental examination (Oelkers 1997, pp. 237–238). The claim to universality, which can only be maintained based on asymmetric ignorance, is rejected as risky hubris. Sigmund Freud’s description seems sensible to me. In his 1937 essay “Analysis Terminable and Interminable”, he writes:

It almost looks as if analysis were the third of those ‘impossible’ professions in which one can be sure only of unsatisfying results. The other two, as has long been agreed, are the bringing-up of children and the government of nations. (Freud 1937, p. 400)

Freud’s assessment seems quite correct. Pedagogy will never be able to achieve what it professes to achieve. Instead, education must be understood as a tightrope act of uncertain outcome. All times find a way to deal with the paradoxes of education as an impossible professional practice. All times have also reacted to the

public's expectations of education. Since the Enlightenment, the key concepts in the debate in Europe have always been emancipation and rationality, which continue to be core concepts of educational science today. But how does the goal of wanting to produce mature and rational subjects match the apparent diagnosis that racist and antisemitic ideas and practices continue to be found in places in which a humanistic education plan was followed?

---

### **3 School as an Ideological State Apparatus**

For Louis Althusser, schools are part of the ideological state apparatus that generates the qualification of workers according to the mode of production. Schools not only teach reading and writing, but they also train their students to perceive the social place assigned to them as the right place and consequently to accept it without resistance. For some, this means accepting submission and believing social inequality is natural. Meanwhile, schools seem to be feudal enclaves within a democratic system that continue to promise that everyone has access to the same opportunities. "The reproduction of labour-power requires not only the reproduction of its skills but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order" (Althusser 1971).

Following the rules means accepting the hierarchy dictated by society. Exceptions are of course always necessary to stabilise the hegemony, which is why the horizontal and vertical mobility of a few individuals is highly desired. Equal opportunity is prevented, however. Pedagogical interventions are powerful and permeated by violent moments. The well-meaning pedagogical explanation always implies that someone is explicitly 'put in their place'. The friendly pedagogical account not only expands the acquired knowledge but also marks out the direction in which learners should think in the future. Pedagogical institutions interfere particularly in the production of imagination. Taking this seriously, the political consequences of pedagogical practices become visible, in particular via the social effects for socially vulnerable groups. Does a specific pedagogical practice create opportunities or does it block paths? Who is permitted to have which future? Is the pedagogical goal the integration into a class-specific labour market, or is the aim to produce thinking subjects who can intervene politically? If pedagogy is a tool to protect hegemony, as described by Antonio Gramsci (Sternfeld 2009, p. 62), then it can also be a tool of counter-hegemony. And if educational processes are understood as possible engines of social transformation and not only as sites of assimilation, this requires the mental linking of migration pedagogy with considerations about the role of borders. This relates

not only to the question of belonging but also explores direct access to education, as education opportunities are constantly limited for some, as not everyone has the same opportunities to acquire access to education. The quality of education varies significantly according to social background. While some people have access to bilingual, private and/or so called free schools, children and young people from proletarian-migrant families have to make do with the worst of the worst state schools. This translates into overcrowded classrooms, a lack of resources and teachers who are both poorly trained and out of their depth. Discriminatory and hurtful behaviour are part of the pupils' everyday life, and bullying is often the preferred method for asserting oneself. Fights are hard and unfair when it comes to achieving a favourable place in the hierarchy within marginalised spaces, wherein intellectual development is only possible for those who receive inspiration and support outside of school or who are extraordinarily resilient. For proletarian-migrant pupils, failing at school is often the norm and success is a celebrated exception.

In the context of migration, pedagogy can only be understood if other mechanisms of exclusion are also included in the analysis of schooling: for example, class, gender or body. This is not a trite demand for intersectional research but a call to review single-issue models. Migration alone does not explain the 'failure', which is why merely intercultural models miss the mark. Also, according to Peter Mayo, an effective strategy of counter-hegemony should place education in as many different social practices as possible (Mayo 2006, p. 36).

Postcolonial perspectives can provide meaningful approaches for the analysis of pedagogical practices in migration contexts. Spivak, who talks of herself as a teacher, describes pedagogy in subaltern spaces as the "uncoercive re-arrangement of desires" (Spivak 2012). Before I go into more detail about this description, I will digress briefly into postcolonial educational issues in general, to provide the necessary background to better follow the subsequent discussion on postcolonial pedagogy.

Edward Said (1978) pointed out that education is never harmless, as it is always closely interwoven with the political and social. In contrast, it is precisely the invisibility of these links that turn educational institutions into an important ideological arena. Imperial governments have always claimed to have a metaphysical right to violently appropriate colonised spaces. The naturalisation of this claim is achieved by creating a gradual acceptance of the colonial situation. For instance, the universal validity of Eurocentric cultural practices was pushed, which went hand-in-hand with a devaluation of the mindsets of the colonised (Said 1993). The role of education as a supporting pillar of imperialism cannot be underestimated here. Education and cultural knowledge affect ideological



appeasement on the one hand, while on the other they recode knowledge, practices and notions that have existed for centuries. At the same time, Eurocentric historical narratives establish the European perspective as generally valid and true, as the languages of the coloniser become the language of instruction, which is disseminated especially through massive missionary efforts. The missionary schools and later colonial schools contributed a great deal to the enforcement of the languages of the colonial powers. Language competence and spiritual salvation were propagated as a single unit. In this context, literary scholar Gauri Viswanathan (1989) shows how the teaching of Christian morals and morality in the British colonies was reinforced by the introduction of English literature as a school subject. Although classics were taught in Great Britain, English literature as a subject was first introduced in *British India*. One of the goals was to promote the 'moral betterment' of the colonised. In some ways, literature functioned as a secular substitute for religion. This established a colonial educational system that was intended to create a class of anglicised colonised people who were to act as cultural mediators between the British and the colonised. Even if there were repeated instances of resistance and uprisings in colonial spaces, a broad consensus was nevertheless gradually achieved that helped to suppress resistance movements and stabilised colonial rule. In line with Gramsci's well-known considerations, a rule was maintained through coercion *and* consensus. Teaching hegemonic knowledge served to stabilise rule by providing commonly accepted knowledge. Hence, conversely, the de-universalisation of the imperial culture represents an important resistance strategy that could be translated into epistemic sabotage. This is achieved on the one hand by radical contextualisation that effectively undermines the assumption of the universal character of knowledge. On the other hand, postcolonial pedagogy was intended to attack the learned oblivion as well as to reveal the complicity of educational institutions with the (neo-)colonial projects. It does not seem possible to think about the decolonisation of education without also analysing the social structures in which education is embedded.

---

#### **4 Ethical Pedagogy in the Light of Adorno and Spivak**

A responsible pedagogy that emphasises ethical subjects who desire democratic and fair structures and, therefore, intervene when they observe violent practices can only be successful if the discipline takes a critical look at itself to reveal its links with and the violent history of humanism. The possibility of an emancipatory pedagogy lies precisely in its impossibility. If this contradiction is revealed

using a deconstructionist approach, then every pedagogy that is formulated in a normative-utopian way must be considered problematic.

Educational science in German-speaking contexts has as yet not been particularly concerned with investigating how violent social relationships are maintained using education and a Eurocentric and bourgeois (that is, humanistic) understanding of pedagogy. Even fields such as migration pedagogy or memorial pedagogy, which assume important counter-hegemonic perspectives and by their very nature look into the question of historical violence, are only moderately critical of the Eurocentric paradigms which run through the general pedagogical approaches, and upon which they too are based.

It should be noted here, however, that the educational policy debates held after the end of National Socialism certainly permitted important renegotiations – or, perhaps one should say, would have permitted. After Germany’s liberation, the question was asked as to how it had become possible for even well-educated (young) people to follow fascist ideologies and support murderous practices. Had pedagogy been instrumentalised, or had pedagogical practice, as well as its fundamental premises, created the foundations upon which an entire generation obediently and steadfastly followed a murderous clique? Adorno’s essay “Education after Auschwitz” (1966/1998) is a key text in this debate. One wonders why it is rarely brought up in connection with postcolonial approaches. I believe this would be fruitful in several ways. Let us recall one of the central passages:

What is necessary is what I once in this respect called the turn to the subject. One must come to know the mechanisms that render people capable of such deeds, must reveal these mechanisms to them, and strive, by awakening a general awareness of those mechanisms, to prevent people from becoming so again. (Adorno 1966/1998, p. 193)

A great deal of thinking has been done on the topic of prevention. Films such as “The White Ribbon” (2009) by Austrian director Michael Haneke are also remarkable. The movie successfully shows the violence of education in the era before the First World War and how the sadistic upbringing led to even more violence. The cold interpersonal relationships are delicately shown, as are the effects that sadistic methods of education have on the soul. The (*world*) war that will shortly sweep into and consume daily life has already captured bodies and minds. Before the first bomb is dropped, before the first shot is fired, millions of children have already been formed into supporters of acts of war. Before the eyes of the audience, Haneke shows how social coldness and an upbringing that relies simply on discipline and not questioning what is said, is hardly useful when it comes to

defending a democratic society (Brumlik 2007). After all, being able to articulate oneself in civil society, including making controversial statements, requires an education that not only tolerates objections but also teaches how to withstand them. In his essay on the “Theory of Half-education”, Adorno (1959/2006) convincingly shows how excluding the lower-middle class from a foundational education that does not end with literacy and the ability to solve mathematical and technical problems ultimately leads to brutalised subjects. These subjects, according to Adorno, are easily manipulated and susceptible to (unscrutinised) ideologies. Education that separates itself from real life, he states, and sets itself as standard has already become what he calls ‘half-education’ (Adorno 1959/2006). An education that is merely utilitarian aims at adaptation and not maturity. It is dangerous because it creates subjects who just follow orders instead of thinking for themselves. It is hardly a coincidence that similar thoughts can be found in Spivak’s work. Additionally, comparable assumptions can be seen in almost all postcolonial works on education and post-National Socialist approaches to Holocaust education or memorial pedagogy (Castro Varela 2015b).

Without questioning the basic historical premises of educational theories, it would hardly be possible to design an ethical pedagogy. Adorno commented that “this disastrous state of conscious and unconscious thought includes the erroneous idea that one’s particular way of being – that one is just so and not otherwise – is nature, an unalterable given, and not a historical evolution” (Adorno 1966/1998, p. 200). At the same time, it is risky to speak of reason and emancipation without discussing the epistemic violence that accompanied the Enlightenment from the very beginning. To this end, it seems appropriate and prudent to look at the paradigms of the Enlightenment, the modern and bourgeois humanism in the context of imperialism and colonialism – as suggested by postcolonial theory (Dhawan 2014) – as well as the works that informed *re-education*.

One of the theses of postcolonial theory is that academic disciplines and their production of knowledge should be provoked because they perpetuate the violence of imperial rule. In his book “Provincializing Europe” (2000), historian Dipesh Chakrabarty describes how it was the Europe of the early-modern era and the Enlightenment that gifted the world with many of the key political ideas of modern times such as rights, citizenship and the concepts of liberalism, socialism and democracy, but at the same time used these ideas to oppress and diminish ‘others’.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno’s diagnosis of National Socialism in “Dialectic of Enlightenment” (1944/2002) was no different. The two philosophers viewed the book, which was written in exile in the United States, as a self-assurance. In the work, among other objectives, they attempt to answer the question of how it could come to that incomprehensible crime against humanity.

They hypothesise that the Enlightenment did not fail because it was understood incorrectly or was prevented from blossoming, but that the seeds for its failure lay in itself. Instrumental rationality, which aims primarily at self-preservation and rule, turns into a myth: “Just as myths already entail enlightenment, with every step enlightenment entangles itself more deeply in mythology” (Horkheimer and Adorno 1944/2002, p. 8).

As shown, postcolonial studies focus on the epistemic violence that enabled and justified colonial rule. Education, upbringing and the production of knowledge are viewed as taking place within a matrix of domination and power. Spivak pointedly calls for a re-reading of the canonical texts of the Enlightenment abusing them for transformative politics. She believes it is essential to learn from the Enlightenment because it does not seem possible to develop ethical reflexes without these texts (in more detail, see Spivak 2012). Instead, she believes that it is necessary to study the texts to use them to work towards global justice. For this endeavour to be successful, however, the works must first be submitted to a ruthless critique. A critique that reveals that humanist education was never intended for *everyone* but always went hand-in-hand with elitism, which it actually wanted to overcome.

The attempt to challenge the epistemic violence of the modern era cannot avoid adopting those very philosophical traditions that provided modernity with the narratives of legitimacy for domination and oppression (Dhawan 2014). In part because the basic premises of humanist pedagogy hardly seem possible without giving due consideration to emancipation and reason, simply rejecting the Enlightenment is not only risky but also nonsensical. As Horkheimer and Adorno state, a critique of the Enlightenment should be viewed as an attempt to “prepare a positive concept of enlightenment which liberates it from its entanglement in blind domination” (Horkheimer and Adorno 1944/2002, p. xviii).

---

## 5 Closing Remark

A pedagogy that only aims to convey knowledge and thinks of global relationships and relations as ‘intercultural encounters’ in a de-historicised form, if at all, has missed the point. In my view, part of the reason that this is still a typical pedagogical approach is that the general political premises allow this. In many cases, they are formulated such that migration, for example, is described as an exception that is a disruption (see Mecheril et al. 2010). Klaus Zierer (2016), for example, remarks in his introduction to pedagogy “*Conditio Humana*” that “[e]specially in a time that is characterised by diverse and far-reaching changes, by insecurity and

unpredictability and unfortunately also by intermittent periods of war and peace” (Zierer 2016, p. 83, trans. by author), trust plays an important role. To support his claim that trust is always “accompanied by uncertainty” (Zierer 2016, p. 84), however, he does not point to a pedagogical work but instead to Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (Zierer 2016, p. 84). Bismarck, who long spoke out against colonial adventures for political reasons, but under whose rule Togo, Cameroon, German South-West Africa, German East Africa and German New Guinea were declared to be protectorates, and who is therefore considered to be the father of German colonialism (on this, see also Speitkamp 2005). Of course, neither colonialism nor postcolonialism or globalisation are mentioned, but he argues against Adorno and remarks that in “modern society, [half-education] is not only unavoidable, but it is also indispensable” (Zierer 2016, p. 66). If this is how students, who will become teachers, are introduced to pedagogy, then we should not be surprised that, as Adorno would say, the question of “What should be done?” is followed only by words and not deeds.

Like the educational institutions, pedagogy as a discipline did not remain untouched by imperial violence. Postcolonial theory encourages critical analysis of the processes of construction and formation which gave rise to both ‘Europe’ and the ‘Others’. Especially in rather violent times, it seems to me that we need to first take a look at the micropolitics that allow for right-wing violence, racism and antisemitism<sup>3</sup> and we should create spaces in which thinking is taught and cogitation made possible.

Postcolonial perspectives help us understand how those subjects labelled as ‘Others’, those who are not white, who are not German, who are not Christian, are being marginalised and disadvantaged in educational institutions.

According to Spivak (2004), a *new* kind of pedagogy should be imagined that pursues an epistemic change. This requires transforming the understanding of responsibility as a duty of the stronger for the others toward a responsibility vis-à-vis the other. A pedagogy that educates people to have an “agency of responsibility in radical alterity” (Spivak 2004, p. 540). In “Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet” (1999), Spivak introduces the Islamic concept of *al-haq* (law in the service of humankind), which she describes as “para-individual structural responsibility” (p. 54). Spivak views *al-haq*’s dual meaning of law on the one hand and responsibility on the other as an imperative shared by pre-capitalist contexts that should not be understood in a Eurocentric manner but instead opens up a space

---

<sup>3</sup>For an example, see Vergès’ outstanding study (1999) on colonial policies and resistance movements in the Caribbean.

for the impossible task of enabling collectivity between the givers and receivers of rights (Spivak 1999, pp. 55–56). As Spivak (1999) states: “Our right or truth is to be responsible, in structurally specific ways” (p. 56). Only a self-critical pedagogy will enable an ethical subject constitution that is indispensable for emancipatory politics and epistemic change.

---

## References

- Adorno, T. W. (1998). Education after Auschwitz. In *Critical Models: interventions and catchwords* (pp. 191–204). New York: Columbia University Press. (Original work published 1966)
- Adorno, T. W. (2006). *Theorie der Halbbildung* [The Theory of Half-education]. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. (Original work published 1959)
- Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. Notes towards an Investigation. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Monthly Review Press. Retrieved February 21, 2020, from <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>
- Brumlik, M. (2007). *Vom Missbrauch der Disziplin. Antworten der Wissenschaft auf Bernhard Bueb* [The abuse of discipline. Science's answers to Bernhard Bueb]. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Castro Varela, M. (2015a). Koloniale Wissensproduktionen. Edwards Saids »interpretative Wachsamkeit« als Ausgangspunkt einer kritischen Migrationsforschung [Colonial knowledge production. Edwards Said's “interpretative vigilance” as a starting point for critical migration research]. In J. Reuter & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Schlüsselwerke der Migrationsforschung. Pionierstudien und Referenztheorien* (pp. 307–322). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Castro Varela, M. (2015b). Bildung im Postnazismus und Postkolonialismus [Education in post-nazism and post-colonialism]. In A. Hechler & Olaf Stuve (Eds.), *Geschlechterreflektierte Pädagogik gegen Rechts* (pp. 343–364). Opladen, Berlin, & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Castro Varela, M. (2018). Imperiale Didaktiken. Unterrichten als Unterwerfungsmethode [Imperial Didactics. Teaching as a Method of Submission]. In T. v. Becker, R. Hawlik, & M. Sertl (Eds.), *Praxis des Unterrichtens. Theoretische Auseinandersetzungen. Schulhefte*, (170)2, 57–71. Vienna: Studienverlag.
- Castro Varela, M., & Dhawan, N. (2013). *Postkoloniale Theorie. Eine kritische Einführung* [Postcolonial theory. A critical introduction] (Rev. suppl. 3rd ed.). Bielefeld: transcript/UTB.
- Castro Varela, M., & Mecheril, P. (Eds.). (2016). *Die Dämonisierung der Anderen. Rassismuskritik der Gegenwart* [The demonization of others. Racism Critique of the Present Time]. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2000). *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Dhawan, N. (2014). *Decolonizing Enlightenment. Transnational Justice, Human Rights and Democracy in a Postcolonial World*. Opladen, Berlin, & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Freud, S. (1999). Die endliche und die unendliche Analyse [Analysis of the finite and infinite]. In S. Freud, *Gesammelte Werke* (Vol. 14, pp. 59–99). Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. (Original work published 1937)
- Freud, S. (1937). Analysis Terminable and Interminable. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 18(4), 373–405.
- Haneke, M. (Director). (2009). *Das weiße Band – Eine deutsche Kindergeschichte* [The White Ribbon – A German Children’s Story] [Motion picture]. Austria, Germany, France, & Italy: Wega Film, X-Filme, Les films du Losange, Lucky Red.
- Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. W. (2002). *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical fragments*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. (Original work published 1944)
- Mayo, P. (2006). *Politische Bildung bei Antonio Gramsci und Paulo Freire. Perspektiven einer verändernden Praxis*. Hamburg: Argument.
- Mecheril, P., Castro Varela, M., Dirim, İ., Kalpaka, A., & Melter, C. (2010). *Migration-spädagogik* [Migration Pedagogy]. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Oelkers, J. (1997). Allgemeine Pädagogik [General pedagogy]. Supplement to *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, 36, 237–267. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from [https://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2014/9523/pdf/Oelkers\\_1997\\_Allgemeine\\_Paedagogik.pdf](https://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2014/9523/pdf/Oelkers_1997_Allgemeine_Paedagogik.pdf)
- Rousseau, J.-J. (1971). *Emile: Or, On Education*. New York: Basic Books. (Original work published 1762)
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.
- Said, E. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage.
- Speitkamp, W. (2005). *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte* [German Colonial History]. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Spivak, G. C. (1999). *Imperative zur Neuerfindung des Planeten./Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet*. Vienna: Passagen.
- Spivak, G. C. (2004). Righting Wrongs. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103(2/3), 523–581.
- Spivak, G. C. (2006). Resistance that can not be Recognized as such. Interview von Suzana Milevska. In C. Swapan, S. Milevska, & T. E. Barlow (Eds.), *Conversations with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (pp. 57–85). Calcutta: Seagull.
- Spivak, G. C. (2012). *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Stangl, W. (2018). Allgemeine Pädagogik [General pedagogy]. In *Online Lexikon für Psychologie und Pädagogik*. Retrieved November 20, 2018, from <http://lexikon.stangl.eu/13737/allgemeine-paedagogik/>
- Sternfeld, N. (2009). *Das pädagogische Unverhältnis. Lehren und lernen bei Rancière, Gramsci und Foucault* [The pedagogical disproportion. Teaching and learning with Rancière, Gramsci and Foucault]. Vienna: Turia+Kant.
- Vergès, F. (1999). *Monsters and Revolutionaries. Colonial Family Romance and Métissage*. London: Duke University Press.
- Viswanathan, G. (1989). *Masks of Conquest. Literary Study and British Rule in India*. London: Faber.

- Wigger, L. (2002). Ein Neubeginn der Allgemeinen Erziehungswissenschaft. Die 1. Tagung der Sektion „Allgemeine Erziehungswissenschaft“ der DGfE [A new beginning for general educational science. The 1st conference of the division “General Educational Science” of GERA]. Supplement to *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 1, 5–8. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from [https://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2012/5633/pdf/ZfE\\_Beiheft\\_2002\\_1\\_Wigger\\_Neubeginn\\_der\\_allgemeinen\\_Erziehungswissenschaft\\_D\\_A.pdf](https://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2012/5633/pdf/ZfE_Beiheft_2002_1_Wigger_Neubeginn_der_allgemeinen_Erziehungswissenschaft_D_A.pdf)
- Zierer, K. (2016). *Conditio Humana. Eine Einführung in pädagogisches Denken und Handeln* [Conditio Humana. An introduction to pedagogical thinking and acting]. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren.





---

# Is There a Transnational Right to Self-Determination? Thoughts on an Ethics of Movement

Paul Mecheril

---

## Abstract

Under current conditions, the understanding and practices of the nation-state that are based on a certain way of constructing space as territory and of constructing people who have referential links as a natio-racial-culturally encoded ‘We’ are in a deep and fundamental crisis both in terms of practical functionality and legitimacy. This crisis leads to some fundamental ethical questions, not least to the question of whether there is a transnational right to self-determination. In this article three arguments are pointed out that a complete prevention of a general transnational right to self-determination is not ethically justifiable: a) a large number of border crossings are taking place, and the moral costs of preventing them are immense, b) if we understand freedom of movement (even relative) as a human right, then this right must be applicable to the entire globe, c) insisting on the priority of an imagined ‘We’ to legitimately own a piece of territory is based on racism and strengthens racist practices and schemata.

---

## Keywords

Crisis of the nation-state · Ethics of migration · Racism · Transnational right to self-determination

---

P. Mecheril (✉)

Faculty of Education, Bielefeld University, Bielefeld, Germany

e-mail: [paul.mecheril@uni-bremen.de](mailto:paul.mecheril@uni-bremen.de)

## 1 Introduction

It has often been shown that the idea of a nation becoming a state refers to the process of a nation-state developing its own myths. “In reality”, writes Georg Kneer (1997), “the opposite is true: states ‘bring forth’ nations and ethnicities. This occurs as the process of establishing states is described as the work of national communities, regardless of whether these communities are imagined or not” (p. 95). According to Benedict Anderson (1983), nations are “imagined communities”, because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). Nations enable relationships and the feeling of connection to people whom we would not know if we met them face-to-face. The ‘national’ can therefore be understood as an imagined concept tied to spatial aspects with a territorial reference. In his classic work “Nations and Nationalism since 1780” Eric J. Hobsbawm (1990) describes this as follows:

Like most serious students, I do not regard the ‘nation’ as a primary nor as an unchanging social entity. It belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period. It is a social entity only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state, the ‘nation-state’, and it is pointless to discuss nation and nationality except insofar as both relate to it. (pp. 9–10)

Under current conditions, the understanding and practices of the nation-state that are based on a certain way of constructing space as territory, and of constructing people who have referential links as a natio-racial-culturally encoded ‘We’, are in a deep and fundamental crisis both in terms of practical functionality and legitimacy. In the foreword to the German edition of his book on nations and nationalism first published in 1990, Hobsbawm (2004) writes: “the process that allowed farmers to be turned into Frenchmen and immigrants into American citizens is currently being reversed” (p. xii, trans. by author), and he closes the foreword with the question of what, if anything, will replace the general model of the relationship between a state and its people in the twenty-first century. His response: “We don’t know” (Hobsbawm 2004, p. xii, trans. by author).

In contrast to what the predominant semantics of crises suggest, we are currently dealing not so much with a migration or refugee crisis but instead with a crisis of legitimacy and functionality of the nation-state, a crisis that is intensified

not only, but certainly in also, by transnational migration. In this article, I would like to show that this crisis of practical functionality and legitimacy represents an opportunity for transforming existing relationships into those that are more normatively desirable. This is the case because the concept of the nation-state inherently includes an irrefutable, symbolic and factual violence against those who are natio-racial-culturally encoded as Other, a violence that becomes particularly visible in its constitutive deficit of legitimacy under the conditions of what can be termed the social shrinking of the world. The aim must be to minimise this violence without immediately calling for the necessity of ending the nation-state.

The paradox of democratic legitimacy and sovereignty is what Seyla Benhabib (2011, p. 143) calls the fact that, in the logic of modern democratic revolutions, civil rights are based on human rights and yet civil rights are only granted to an exclusive 'We'-group.<sup>1</sup> Under current conditions, the dubious nature of this democratic paradox becomes particularly apparent.

Even though Jörn Rüsen points out in a debate with Bärbel Völkel (Rüsen and Völkel 2017, p. 251) that traditionally the European idea of nations has always represented the image of a specifically defined humanity, the programme of a universal humanity, which has only been realised specifically and is therefore exclusionary, was only able to emerge in the European national practice by factually and symbolically instrumentalising and objectifying the Other.

David Theo Goldberg (2002) describes this in a particularly clear way that shows how the formation and nature of modern statehood is conveyed using concepts of *race*. According to Goldberg (2002), the idea and practical forms of *race* make up a key element of the epistemic, philosophical and material development of the modern nation-state and how it is governed.

This background helps to clarify what was set out in the 2018 coalition agreement between Germany's Christian Democratic (CDU and CSU) and Social Democratic parties (SPD): "To ensure the freedom of movement within Europe, effective protection of the European external borders is necessary. For

---

<sup>1</sup> However, even Benhabib (2011) does not mention the revolution that led to the independence of Saint-Domingue in 1804 and its renaming as Haiti, leading to the ending of the most important slave market in America and the liberation of around 500,000 people from slavery; Bhabra (2016) describes the neglect of this revolution in the West's intellectual discourses as an epistemic denial.

this purpose, we want to develop Frontex into a true border police force” (CDU, CSU and SPD 2018, p. 104, trans. by author). In other words, for our idea of the human in a specific humanity to remain true, we need a border police force and automatic weapons systems, we need an Other (and the civilisational demonisation of this Other, see below) who is willing to risk death to come here. This tension between paradox and hypocrisy is currently becoming especially clear, not least because post-colonial knowledge, corresponding epistemic instruments, and perspectives of analysis have started focusing on Europe (see the contributions in Conrad and Randeria 2002) and have also become concerned with analysing the political, epistemic and structural conditions, forms and subjectifying consequences of the continued effects of a binary differentiation between colonisers and colonised, such as in the figure of the person to be integrated versus the person integrating (Ha and Schmitz 2006). Approaches inspired by postcolonialism, in particular, are focusing their attention on the forms of producing knowledge, including the educational production of knowledge, relating to ethnic-racially or culturally encoded Others and the consequences of these forms for policies relevant to daily life and society, which result from this confrontation between ‘Enlightenment’ values and epistemic violence.

Space precludes me from discussing the question of statehood – as part of the already mentioned criticism of the nation-state – to an adequate degree here. However, it is clear that post-colonial and racism-critical reflection is about a kind of ‘stateness’ or, to put it more generally, about a political formation of social relationships that does not link membership in a state structure in the same way or to the same degree to concepts of a natio-racial-culturally encoded ‘We’. Here there will be no further discussion on whether the transition from an ethnic state to a civic state<sup>2</sup> is sufficient or whether this kind of transition would be able to loosen the close links between the bourgeois state and the global implementation and continual refinement of capitalist production methods (Brand 2018) as part of taking back the political. In reference to Nicos Poulantzas (1978), though, I can point out the dual nature of the social relationship that is called the state: it is both a power relationship and at the same time the arena for social and political battles for other relationships.

---

<sup>2</sup>“It is assumed that the concept of an ethnic nation emphasising common ancestors and culture demands the assimilation of newcomers, whereas the concept of a civic nation embraces all people who live in a particular territory and show common allegiance to a political unit” (Bruce and Yearley 2006, pp. 206–207).

The use of these other state relationships that are more permeable not only for goods and capital but also for people within the state is done with the aim of carrying out a manoeuvre that seems to be extremely urgent in the current political situation – not only in Europe – that is, freeing statehood from the monopolising grasp of actors who use nationalist and patriotic arguments and feel libidinally connected to a natio-racial-culturally encoded ‘We’. These protagonists can be encountered everywhere, including in academia. Here we do not even need to recall the Heidelberg Manifesto (Schröcke 1981), a reactionary tract written by professors warning of migrants’ destruction of culturally understood German political characteristics.<sup>3</sup> Of course, one could object that this was 35 years ago. A more current example: in the debate mentioned above, Jörn Rüsen, professor emeritus of history and esteemed historian, went so far as to make the following statement:

Let us take the example of slavery. [...] That is an excellent example for non-Western intellectuals giving us a guilty conscience. [...] I would like to ask now: Who actually made the slaves? They did not just come out of the blue. It was not the Western traders, it was the Blacks themselves. And who abolished slavery? The West! (Rüsen and Völkel 2017, p. 228, trans. by author)

The statement that turns slavery into a practice by Black people that was ended by the West – and not at least in part also due to the political momentum that came from the Haitian Revolution – should be viewed here as an expression of the fact that in Europe it is still not easy to speak about violent acts in modern European history (Castro Varela 2014) – and this includes the middle-class, nationally influenced academic world.

In reference to and as a continuation of the reflexive anthropology recommended by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), which attempts to seek out that which is unknown to science, the insights above can be examined methodologically as follows: defending the nation-state and the nation, but also defending constructs such as Europe or the West, which has been done intensively in the course of

---

<sup>3</sup>The manifesto was written in June 1981 by Schröcke, a professor of mineralogy, and signed by 15 professors. It was published in November/December 1981 by right-wing magazines, namely *Deutsche Wochenzeitung* (November 6, 1981), *Nation & Europa* (December 1981) and *Deutschland in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (December 1981) and also distributed as a leaflet in various major university cities in Germany.

recent years by European and Western scientists as well,<sup>4</sup> should encompass taking a closer look at the possible emotional-affective foundation of its one-sidedness. Many people are directly affected, and there seems to be no certainty as to whether those who are biographically connected to the large collective imaginings of modern Europe and who are neither able nor willing to take a closer look at this entanglement are easily able to carry out an objective analysis.

So what is the answer to the question of whether there is a transnational right to self-determination from a perspective that is not necessarily obligated to the project and idea of the nation-state but is also not explicitly against it? At first, the answer is: the more well-off I am, the more rights I am granted, including rights to move freely. When we think of the readers of this volume, we are likely dealing with a group of people who have more rights to freedom of movement than the average global population. This has to do with the symbolic status of their respective passports, but also the economic, cultural and globalised social capital that many readers have to a disproportionately high degree.

The key question here is not to be reflected on empirically, however, but from the perspective of an *ethics* of movement. In recent months, German academia has articulated a great interest in questions of migration and ethics in its publications. The occasion was certainly the “long summer of migration” in 2015, to pick up on a term used by Sabine Hess et al. (2017), which could possibly also be called the ‘short summer of compassion’. But limiting the moral reflection to the situation of those who are fleeing their country of origin to find a more hospitable location for themselves and their families does not touch on the entirety of the question of transnational rights. It is therefore misleading when Julian Nida-Rümelin (2017)

---

<sup>4</sup>However, the positions of scientists are not always so clearly formulated as was done by journalists reporting on the workshop discussion on migration hosted by Germany’s Christian Democratic party the CDU at the beginning of February 2019: “Legal scholar Christian Hillgruber defended the idea that we must deal more harshly with refugees. In principle, he argued for abolishing the individual’s basic right to asylum. He also criticised the fact that refugees receive any kind of integration measures at all since they should be forced to leave again. As long as this integration takes place, it becomes a pull factor that encourages additional migration. Political scientist Egbert Jahn also argued along these lines when he suggested that the people should ‘not get anything to eat’ in Germany – he meant that they should ‘not get any work’. Everyone who enters Germany from other EU states, that is, who should have to stay in another EU country according to the Dublin Agreement, should be subject to this harsh treatment. Contradicting this, Jahn stated that the refugee camps could be made permanent, in other words that they could be turned into ‘permanent refugee settlements’, in effect ‘making cities’” (Vitzthum 2019, trans. by author).

rejects the right to immigration in his book on migration and ethics with the argument that the fate of many refugees shows how important it is to improve the situation in their home countries; granting the right to immigration is not a feasible way to fight poverty. Regardless of whether this argument is accurate, the issue of the right to immigration or, even more fundamentally, the issue of a transnational right to self-determination, cannot be discussed solely by recourse to the situation of refugees. Instead, it must first be linked to general, current global relations as well as the constitutive logic of the global structure of nation-states and thus the logic of the national. I would like now to tackle this issue in more depth.

First, however, let me make a brief remark about the expression ‘ethics of movement’. If ethics is a reflection on moral norms<sup>5</sup> and if ethics represents the reflection on universal moral obligations that can be especially found when traditional lifestyles and institutions lose their unquestioned and self-evident status, as described by Otfried Höffe (1977/2008, p. 10), then it makes sense that there is so much current discussion around ethics and migration. These debates are taking place not only in philosophical circles but also in public, on the streets and in classrooms, because natio-racial-cultural boundaries have lost their unquestioned and self-evident status, or at the very least this status is now a matter of debate. This loss of legitimacy and functional efficacy of what used to be self-evident simultaneously generates, sometimes with great vehemence, practices to secure borders and impose control based on nationalist and racist arguments that originate even in academia (Kuria 2015).

Ethics of movement would therefore be a reflection on what should be generally desired regarding movement, certainly also with reference to and based on current conditions. Being forced to move on the one hand and being prevented or prohibited from moving on the other represent the poles between which the reflection based on an ethics of movement – between the right to stay where one is and the right to move – occurs.

To borrow an expression often and fruitfully used by María do Mar Castro Varela (2015) with reference to Gayatri Spivak, an ethics of movement is about reflecting on the gap between law and justice, in this case the gap between the positivised right to movement and movement justice. Thinking about the gap between what is considered a right and what is justice would also be the task of a type of education that does not focus exclusively on what is given, such as those education philosophies of migration societies that primarily work toward integrating the

---

<sup>5</sup>According to Ernst Tugendhat (1995), this refers to those norms relating to social prescriptions that claim to have universal validity, in contrast to conventions.

Other into the previously existing environment (Castro Varela 2015). In my view, this gap is none other than the space where education takes place and is possible.

Ethical demands can be neither falsified nor confirmed empirically, but are especially convincing when they are related to the current and foreseeable future reality of people's lives and can therefore claim to be empirically plausible. Ethical demands that can be made plausible using current and foreseeable future realities in the fight for rights, for example by social movements, represent an important driver of the development of rights, which cannot be considered to move simply in a linear direction. In a famous work, Thomas H. Marshall (1950) published a description of the historical profiling of citizenship as a successive accumulation of civil, that is, political and social rights. The decoupling of individual claims to rights and attributions of social status that is characteristic for post-conventional politics is made concrete in this development. The progression of the legal order's development can be interpreted as an attempt to realise a universal principle of equality at the level of civil rights (for citizens). When I read Seyla Benhabib's text (2011, pp. 1–19) on cosmopolitanism without illusions, Andreas Casse's work (2016) on global freedom of movement and Antoine Pécoud and Paul de Guchteneire's study (2007) on migration without borders, I understand the call for a transnational, cosmopolitan right to self-determination as a commitment to further legal development toward minimising the gap between law and justice (the texts mentioned played an important role in writing this contribution).

---

## **2 Three Arguments for a Transnational Right to Self-Determination Based on an Ethics of Movement**

Here I will briefly discuss three arguments that I believe make clear why the ethics of movement answers the question of a transnational right to self-determination with a 'yes'.

1. Around the world, we are observing an increase in transnational practices and the related development of an unambiguous logic of transnational lifestyles that transcend the national. The number of transnational migrants continues to grow worldwide. In 2000, around 175 million people lived in a country other than the one in which they were born, and by the end of 2017 it was around 260 million and continues to rise (ZEIT ONLINE 2017). Around a billion people globally are considered migrants (Benhabib 2016, p. 170); this number also continues to rise.



Migration is not only a modern phenomenon (Bade et al. 2010), but conditions specific to the modern age can currently be witnessed: there have never been as many people *willing, forced* due to natural disasters, (civil) wars and other threats, or *able* due to technologically based changes in space and time, to change where they work or live even over great distances. The fact that transnational migration movements are nowadays particularly important for societies and individuals worldwide is also related to the expansion of the idea of ‘modernity’. That is, that people are permitted and able to influence their own destinies, which is also linked to their respective geographical, ecological, political and cultural location. The current global reality also coincides with the fact that people are therefore increasingly crossing borders of political orders because they not only assume that they can do so but also that they have the right to do so – although some of this is based on false beliefs or deceptions and can have consequences.

We are living in an “age of migration” (Castles and Miller 2009). A right to global mobility must correspond to this, and this right, according to Pécoud and Guchteneire (2007), “stems from the increasingly global and multicultural nature of today’s world: in a world of flows, mobility becomes a central resource to which all human beings should have access” (p. 11). Sociality, and that also means subjectivity (for example, memories, desires, concepts, wishes), is not limited to the space within the territorial container of the nation-state or the space of the *imagined community* of the natio-racial-culturally encoded ‘We’. Empirically, sociality and subjectivity are both more (larger) and less (smaller) than nation and nation-state.

According to Benhabib (2011), the boundaries of the “Westphalian state” (p. 102), that is, the model of Western modernity that links territorial integrity based on the territorialisation of space with standardised legal jurisdiction (p. 99) which came to dominate the world not least due to colonial imperialism, have become “porous” (p. 102). The permeability of borders is something that can only (and even this is not certain) be stopped by an intensification of violence on the part of border security entities. An increase in the transnational movement of people can be observed due to the shrinking global space, a phenomenon which is in part due to communication and transport technology, and this gives rise to two principles: either recognise the movement or intensify practices of border security and the use and development of corresponding technologies, thereby increasing the costs of border security.

However, I believe that these costs cannot be morally justified. Here I am not speaking primarily about the economic costs, although these can certainly be significant: the American Immigration Council (2020) explains with reference to the US context: “since 1993, when the current strategy of concentrated border enforcement was first rolled out along the U.S.-Mexico border, the annual budget of the U.S. Border Patrol has increased more than ten-fold, from \$363 million

to nearly \$4.9 billion” (p. 2). Miller (2019) points out that an intensively prospering, “limitless market for border-security corporations” (p. 2) has emerged worldwide – for example, “for the broader global homeland security market, MarketAndMarkets forecasts a jump from \$526.10 billion in 2017 to \$740.06 billion by 2023” (p. 26). The global regulation of migration is not only financially expensive as well as illusionary because its efficiency is only limited, but it also incurs a high cost in terms of human lives. Here we are talking about the moral costs of preventing the global right to self-determination as a result of global patterns of movement where, for example, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2019), in 2018 more than 2200 refugees died in the Mediterranean (or, it could be said, were killed). In the first seven months of Donald Trump’s presidency, the number of migrants killed at the Mexican–American border rose by 17% (Neue Zürcher Zeitung 2017). According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2017, 412 people died attempting to cross this border (IOM 2018). And the focus of this contribution is not appropriate for highlighting the tortures, rape and killing in the Libyan camps ringing the southern borders of Europe that are enabled to a significant extent by the European refugee regime (Castro Varela 2015, 2017; Ratfisch and Schwiertz 2015).

The first argument supporting an ethics of movement is that the global increase in transnational practices, the related emergence of transnational lifestyles (that cannot be depicted in the simplistic and reductionist either–or models of integration policies and pedagogy), and the increasingly deadly effects of border security measures that are not morally legitimised, suggest that there is a strong argument for initiating a global transnational right to self-determination. Under the conditions that likely characterise the reality of life for many people and which will do so even more in future, recognising transnational lifestyles responds to realities on the ground and represents an appropriate step toward further legal development.

2. Joseph H. Carens (2014) writes:

In many ways, citizenship in Western democracies is the modern equivalent of feudal class privilege [...]. To be born a citizen of a rich state in Europe or North America is like being born into the nobility (even though many of us belong to the lesser nobility). (p. 226)

Consequently, we are currently looking at a mechanism that consists of two parts. Great global inequality, a world order that distributes and locates hardship very differently around the globe, is the first part. Poverty and unevenly distributed

resources as well as financial means perpetuate this order of difference: according to the first of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 'No Poverty', more than 736 million people, or around 10% of the world's population, lived below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day in 2015. They struggle to meet their most basic needs such as health, education, and access to water and sanitation, to name just a few major difficulties in this globally unjust disparity. In addition, in 2018 nearly 8% of workers and their families lived on less than \$1.90 per person per day. At the same time, around 55% of the world's population does not have access to at least one social protection benefit. It is estimated that 167 million children will be living in extreme poverty and deprivation by 2030 if global efforts are not made to improve access to health and education systems (United Nations, n.d.).

Most of the people living below the poverty line live in two regions: southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. With reference to the UN SDG report from 2020, it is expected that extreme poverty will increase the most in southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations Statistics Division 2020).

The income gap between the richest and poorest countries has greatly increased in recent decades (see for example Keeley 2015, p. 10).<sup>6</sup> From an economic perspective, the industrialised countries especially have been able to benefit most from globalisation, although even here the gap between rich and poor has grown larger (see for example Jungbluth and Petersen 2018). And we have thus named the most important predictor among birth circumstances for a person's position and their access to resources such as drinkable water, medical care, food, a semi-functioning state infrastructure and authority, education, and so on: the most important predictor is the individual's geopolitical position. To put it briefly, my place of birth or passport indicates stochastically what will become of me. The fact that the global mobility regime to a large extent prevents especially those who have the least amount of resources from bettering their position – and this is the second part of the feudal mechanism discussed by Carens (2014) – further

---

<sup>6</sup>Covid-19 can even be seen as a catalyst for further worsening this global poverty gap. Even before the pandemic, baseline projections suggested that 6% of the global population would still be living in extreme poverty in 2030, missing the common target of ending poverty by 2030 as set out in the Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015. The fallout from the pandemic threatens to push more than 70 million people into extreme poverty (on Sustainable Development Goal 1 'End poverty in all its forms everywhere' see the UN's SDG infographic and report (2020) retrieved November 27th 2020, from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>).

strengthens the argument for introducing a transnational right to self-determination.

The origins of these global conditions of the unequal distribution of hardship and resources could be explained diachronically with reference to colonialism and synchronously with reference to what Ullrich Brand and Markus Wissen (2021) call the “Imperial Mode of Living”, that is, the lifestyle of a global minority that can only maintain its prosperity and its mobility and consumption needs at the cost of the social and ecological resources of a global majority. This global minority does not live only in the West, but most of the areas are still found in the West on the map of this new imperial landscape, which often does so completely without imperial ideology and may often even be anti-imperialistic – as is presumably the case in educational science contexts in the present.

Against this background, transnational and transcontinental migration can be viewed as the attempt to influence one’s own life in a fundamental sense and is therefore representative of a prototype of the modern lifestyle – with all its ambivalences, illusions and dubious consequences. Be brave, use your reason and free yourself from the position that was forced upon you by the geopolitical order – drawing on a reference to Immanuel Kant, this is the credo of the new transnational modernity that is formed and formulated by migrants without an intention or programme necessarily underlying it.

If we assume that people should have the right to reasonably exercise influence on their lives with respect to the fundamental issues that affect them, and if we relate this to the condition of global inequality, then this relation makes the importance of a right to global freedom of movement plausible. Its significance applies, however, regardless of hardships and inequalities and must also apply in a utopian world of relative equality simply because, as Andreas Casse (2016, p. 211) writes, in this ideal world, every person would have the opportunity to lead a respectable life in their country of origin but this would not negate their right to transfer their place of residence and work to another country. For Casse, this is a negative right; it is not about demanding that the state finances travel but instead about those people who live in relative global security, the poor and less poor global nobility, having got used to the existence of border fortifications, entry requirements, and deportation centres in the modern world, and it is also about the fact that these measures cannot be morally justified because they prevent people from exercising their right to move. It is already a guaranteed human right that at least no citizen may be prevented from moving within a nation-state. This freedom of movement is important (Casse 2016, p. 218) and is a catalyst for exercising other freedoms such as the right to assemble or the right to have close relationships outside the immediate locality. It is also important because,

secondly, it enables access to material resources: “you have to be able to move to where the opportunities are in order to take advantage of them”, writes Carens (2014, p. 228), and thirdly, because freedom of movement is a constitutive element of what it means to have self-determination. For at least these three reasons, there is a right to freedom of movement within the nation-state’s territory, and because there is no ethical argument for withholding this freedom of movement at a global level, there is a right to transnational movement. Of course, this does not mean that this is an absolute right. The global right to freedom of movement is just as relative as the within-state right to freedom of movement: for example, on my way to the university I must adapt my movement if there is an emergency and an ambulance is blocking the street. Or, as an example with regard to private property, if I am moving from Berlin to Hamburg, I cannot just settle in the front garden of a family in Hamburg, and the same applies if I emigrate from Berlin to Boston. I cannot just find a particularly nice garden to stay in there, either. And at the same time, the normative appropriateness of these private property rights could be questioned and raised as a problem if they represent an imbalance, for example by the fact that individual gardens reach sizes that make it very difficult or even impossible for others to have the opportunity to live a respectable life. Transnational freedom of movement therefore does not necessarily lead to chaos and lawlessness, anomie and confusion. These are fantasies and feelings that do not have any general normative substance but instead reflect a desire to hold onto a contingent system of belonging, that is, the system of the natio-racial-cultural. This already hints at the third argument for an ethics of movement.

3. As mentioned in the introduction, we must remember that the institution of the nation-state needs and therefore produces the illusion of the nation. In line with Renata Salecl (1994), the nation can be understood as something “that defines us but at the same time remains indefinable” (p. 14). Here we are dealing with a symbolic gap that could become a problem under certain conditions. At the latest when these problems arise, concepts of *race* are a tried-and-true method of closing the symbolic gap. The more important this difficulty of determining the boundary is, the more attractive it becomes to secure and iterate the illusionary ‘We’. This also and especially applies for more cumbersome natio-racial-culturally encoded constructions with territorial references such as Europe or the West. Here I will limit myself to the construct of the nation.

In his “Modernity and Ambivalence”, Zygmunt Bauman (1991) pointed to the link between the institutionalisation of racist thinking and the project of European

modernity. A structural relationship thus exists between the practices of racism, which disambiguate, and the logic of the nation-state. *Race* and nation are not identical, but there is a close relationship between the two. The practice of membership in nation-states' classification systems is characterised and constituted by the intention, supported by all nation-states, of preventing multiple citizenship as much as possible and of disambiguating orders of belonging and national identities.

The nation-state system depends on certain questions being able to be answered definitively to produce certainty, especially regarding the modern question of who is a citizen of a country and who is not. Because the modern state has wanted to have this certainty since the nineteenth century, Rudolf Stichweh (1995) states that "techniques of physical identification using photographs, information about physical particularities (scars, hair colour, eye colour) have become important" (p. 180, trans. by author). And these techniques are currently being intensified with all the possibilities provided by biotechnological monitoring and identification.

The nation-state is therefore organised by the binary system 'We/not We' or, in the words of Bauman (1991), "friend and enemy" (p. 55). According to Bauman (1991), the stranger causes a great deal of confusion for the nation-state, because in this case it is not clear whether the person is a "friend" or an "enemy". whether they are 'We' or 'not We'. 'Physiognomising' the difference between foreign and non-foreign as well as 'culturalising' difference is a normal part of the principle of the nation-state as it works to create order, as a 'We' must be obsessively referred to for the principle to be realised.

Besides creating a 'We', the second significant illusion of the nation-state is the idea that this imagined 'We' has the right to a territory. And according to Hobbes (1651/2006) in his work "Leviathan", considered one of the foundational texts of Western political theory, only states can articulate and secure this territorial claim, which is why Hobbes believed it to be justified that the Europeans annexed and exploited America as they pleased, as the natural state of the indigenous peoples of the continent was their wildness, making them unable to formulate any claim to ownership (for more detail, see Kooroshy and Mecheril 2019). This means that from the very beginning, the theoretical and political construction of nation-state was implemented with images and practices of *race*.

Linking a state's territory marked by state borders with the imaginary nation and the belief in the legitimate right of the We-belonging people to the territory is constitutive for the nation-state. To enforce the legitimacy of this construction and to believe in the legitimacy of this fantasy, that is, in a national identity with a territorial reference, particularly in times of crisis, a proven method of overcoming

the crisis is the racist coding of the Other. This coding works by introducing a *race* difference (hidden in the language of culture, ethnicity, and once again more recently, religion (Leiprecht 2001)) and attributing a difference to the Other that proves the primacy or superiority of the ‘We’, either universally (this is the pattern of colonialism and missions) or depending on context (namely, cultural racism).

The staging of emotions, as we could observe in the discourse about the New Year’s Eve events in Cologne (for example, Dietze 2019; Hark and Villa 2017), the intensity with which the threat from the Other in the migration society is felt, can be understood when we realise that it is about the territorial and superiority claims of the ‘We’, and that calling up images and visions of the Other that rely on racial constructions are suited to enforcing this claim of the dominant culture’s communitarising threats.

It is not the number of the ‘Other’ that increases racism – this must be brought up in relation to the New Year’s Eve events in Cologne mentioned above, the collective fright, and the imaginary communitarising fear. Instead, insisting on the legality of restricting the Other’s freedom of movement necessarily mobilises racism. Many of these racist practices are a result of border security measures in the nation-states and natio-racial-culturally encoded overarching contexts such as Europe that were formally and programmatically anti-racist starting from the mid-twentieth century. It is in this sense that the statement is to be understood that the “discourse and practice of western states are both racist and anti-racist” (Lentin and Lentin 2006, p. 7).

---

### 3 Conclusion

In conclusion, one final thought should be added to the previous discussion from an educational perspective. These arguments have pointed out that a complete prevention of a general transnational right to self-determination is not ethically justifiable. I have introduced three lines of argument: a) a large number of border crossings take place, and the moral costs of preventing them are immense, b) if we view freedom of movement (even relative) as a human right, then this right must be applicable to the entire globe, and c) insisting on the priority of an imagined ‘We’ to legitimately own a particular territory is based on racism and strengthens racist practices and schemata.

Ethical reflection provides standards with which political but also pedagogical actions can be developed and discussed. If a transnational right to self-determination is ethically plausible – and I think that this is the case – then this

has fundamental consequences, and we, if we are bound by moral values, would need to stand up for this right and use space for thoughts, experiments, research projects and publications to make it more tangible and discuss what exactly this means within the existing global context.

Here I would like to highlight only a few possible, guiding principles in a rough outline with no particular system in mind:

- a) Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of movement within state borders as well as the right to leave and return,<sup>7</sup> “somehow stopped” half-way, according to Pécoud and Guchteneire (2007, p. 8), and should therefore be amended to include a general right to immigrate. Heiner Bielefeldt (2019) pointed out that a first, important step to establishing a right to immigration could be a reversal of the requirement to give justification: it is not the desire (for instance, of family members) to immigrate that must be justified but the state’s rejection of this right.
- b) The fundamental meaning of the transnational right to self-determination is not to be found in taking the legal option to flee totalitarian states or other circumstances inhospitable to life to live in relative security and freedom, but instead is to be found in the fact that the ability to move relatively freely around the world is the basis for exercising other rights. This will require rules and instances that would decide on questions of which freedom is a legitimate freedom, and these rules and instances should not be at the level of the nation-states but would need to be at the global level. Exercising rights to freedoms must be regulated by the question of the extent to which immigration is linked to a significant intensification of social inequality in the nation-state that is being left and to inequality in the nation-state to which the person wishes to move. This also makes clear that transparent and accountable global governance structures are needed: global governance as part of a federalist world of republics. According to Seyla Benhabib (2011),

some of these structures [of global governance] are already in place through the networking of experts working on economics, judicial, military, immigration, health, and communication issues, they observe. These form horizontally networked sites of

---

<sup>7</sup>According to Article 13 of the Declaration: “(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country” (UN 1948).



information, coordination, and regulation. The future of global citizenship depends on becoming actively involved in such transnational organizations and working toward global governance. Whether this implies world government or not is at this stage beside the point: what matters is to increase structures of global accountability and regulation. (pp. 109-110)

- c) Besides the right to immigration included in global governance structures, a structural foundation for the transnational right to self-determination is a potentially multiple and flexible (Ong 1999) citizenship of a place of residency, which decouples the status of citizen from nationality and recognises positive and negative stages of civil rights up to or arising from rights of full citizenship. In other words, the level of my civil rights would decrease if I were absent for a longer period of time.
- d) Finally, a transnational right to self-determination also means that, as political subjects, people should be able to politically influence the decisions of other states that significantly influence the existential situation of the respective people. In the world migration society, the demos (as in Greek 'the people') can be neither ethnicity nor a particular collection of citizens; the seamstress in Bangladesh who works for the textile company Kick would be able to have a political say when the German federal government draws up its foreign trade policies, or at least that is what is implied in her transnational right to self-determination. The 18-year-old Egyptian should be able to object to German arms policies and transactions that the German weapons industry makes with arms deliveries to Egypt.

This means that what I have discussed under the title of a transnational right to self-determination is more than just a question of the right to immigrate. I have attempted to sketch out a reflection on the forms of violence and dysfunctionality inherent in insisting on the moral legitimacy and lack of political alternatives to nation-state or natio-racial-culturally encoded borders and differences among people.

The aim was to show that the legitimacy of the natio-racial-culturally encoded logic of differentiation is weak, resulting in the following observation as a measure of the political but also the pedagogical: it is worth identifying practices and ways of life that cannot be determined and ordered with this intensity or in this way by natio-racial-cultural regimes of differentiation. It is also worth recognising them structurally and enabling others to adopt them.

The aspects described here do not need to be completely rediscovered, and we can point to approaches such as diversity education, global citizenship education,

human rights education, peace education, cosmopolitan education, sustainable education, and others. The wheel does not need to be reinvented, but the education approach suggested here requires a critical reference to implicit and explicit categories of *race* with a better theoretical foundation and more decisively than can be found in the approaches described above. These categories of *race* are used to enforce and legitimise people's inequality, which then also links into what Bauman (2004) calls adiaphorisation, that is, a moral neutralisation and the everyday culture of an accountancy-minded and administrative indifference that hinders empathy with the fate and suffering of others and thus also blunts the political imagination necessary to think politically and educationally of human-kind not in the particular and only tangible, but in the concrete and general.

Before this criticism can be directed outwards, however, it would need to be directed at the location in which it is discussed, that is, education science. In light of the reactionary tendencies in Europe and Germany even in official migration policy, it remains open as to whether this will occur. In the 2018 Coalition Agreement between the CDU, CSU and SPD, the section on migration was entitled "Demanding and Supporting Integration" (in other words, promoting integration is no longer the order of the day, and the leadership has now started openly demanding it), and there it says: "We will continue our efforts to control and limit the migration movements to Germany and Europe appropriately with a view to society's ability to integrate so the situation like that in 2015 does not repeat itself" (p. 103, trans. by author). Never again 2015! That sounds disturbingly like an echo of the first lines of Adorno's "Education after Auschwitz" (Adorno 1971). Never again 2015! The primacy of our desires and our routines may never again be questioned. This programme of "never again 2015" also finds its echoes in the section of the Coalition Agreement dealing with education and sets integration of the Other – largely conceptualised as assimilation – into the nation-state as the first goal of education, also offering financial support for a corresponding educational practice and characterising educational research that supports this as integration research. This state of affairs does not increase confidence that education science will adopt a critical stance towards its own racism.

Still, and especially for that reason, it is particularly important to point out the necessity of criticising education science regarding racism. Racism-critical research does not aim to identify racists and pass judgement on them. Academic criticism is not a moral judgement on what is unjustifiable and wrong but a practice of analysing and giving a name to the effects of dominance and power relationships, the conditions whereby they become effective and their interactive, institutional and subjectifying consequences. Criticism of education science with respect to racism is about getting to the bottom of pathways, locations and

opportunities underpinning the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of *race* categories in times of programmatic post-racism, categories that are often unintentionally called up by the actors involved, and also about investigating questions of whether and how the effectiveness of racial thinking can be changed. A racism-critical look at classic texts (examining, for example, lectures by Hegel, Humboldt and Kant, not with the goal of proving that Kant was racist, whatever that means, but in order to read the Kant who advocated perpetual peace in tandem with the Kant who devised a racist anthropology and to recognise what otherwise might remain unrecognised), at contemporary texts (like those on promoting the German language and integration of the Other) and at the practices and forms of institutionalisation, is a work that aims to reduce the gap between existing rights and those absolute justices that cannot be achieved.

**Acknowledgements** This text is based on the manuscript of a lecture entitled “Gibt es ein transnationales Selbstbestimmungsrecht? Bewegungsethische Erkundungen” held on March 21, 2018 at a conference of the German Educational Research Association (GERA) in Essen, Germany. The style of the lecture was largely retained when revising the manuscript. The text is also available in German (see Mecheril 2020).

---

## References

- Adorno, T. W. (1971). *Erziehung nach Auschwitz* [Education after Auschwitz]. In G. Kadelbach (Ed.), *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit. Vorträge und Gespräche mit Helmut Becker 1959–1969* (pp. 92–109). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- American Immigration Council. (2020, July 7). *The Cost Immigration Enforcement and Border Security* (Fact sheet). Washington, D.C. Retrieved November 17, 2020, from [https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/the\\_cost\\_of\\_immigration\\_enforcement\\_and\\_border\\_security.pdf](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/the_cost_of_immigration_enforcement_and_border_security.pdf)
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Bade, K., Emmer, P. C., Lucassen, L., & Oltmer, J. (Eds.). (2010). *Enzyklopädie Migration in Europa vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* [Encyclopaedia of Migration in Europe from the 17th century to the present day] (3rd. ed.). Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Bauman, Z. (1991). *Modernity and ambivalence. The end of clarity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2004). *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Benhabib, S. (2011). *Dignity in adversity: human rights in troubled times*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Benhabib, S. (2016). *Kosmopolitismus ohne Illusionen – Menschenrechte in unruhigen Zeiten* [Cosmopolitanism without illusion – human rights in troubled times]. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

- Bhambra, G. K. (2016). Undoing the Epistemic Disavowal of the Haitian Revolution: A Contribution to Global Social Thought. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 37(1), 1–16.
- Bielefeldt, H. (2019, February 21). *Jenseits leitkultureller Verengungen: Plädoyer für einen menschenrechtlichen Umgang mit Vielfalt* [Beyond the constraints of conductive culture: Plea for a human rights approach to diversity]. Lecture at the annual conference of the section Intercultural and International Comparative Educational Science of the German Society for Educational Science (GERA) on the topic “Beyond the National? Perspectives of Education Science”. University of Wuppertal.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant L. J. D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Brand, U. (2018). Der Staat in der kapitalistischen Globalisierung. Nationaler Wettbewerbsstaat und die Internationalisierung des Staates bei Joachim Hirsch [The State in Capitalist Globalisation. National Competition State and the Internalization of the State by Joachim Hirsch]. In U. Brand & C. Görg (Eds.), *Zur Aktualität der Staatsform. Die materialistische Staatstheorie von Joachim Hirsch* (pp. 137–160). Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Brand, U., & Wissen, M. (2021). *The Imperial Mode of Living. Everyday Life and the Ecological Crisis of Capitalism*. London: Verso.
- Bruce, S., & Yearley, S. (2006). *The SAGE Dictionary of Sociology*. London: SAGE.
- Carens, J. H. (2014). The Case for Open Borders. In J. H. Carens (Ed.), *The Ethics of Immigration*. (1st ed., pp. 225–254). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Casse, A. (2016). *Globale Bewegungsfreiheit. Ein philosophisches Plädoyer für offene Grenzen* [Global freedom of movement. A philosophical plea for open borders]. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Castles, S., & Miller, M. J. (2009). *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Castro Varela, M. (2014). Uncanny entanglements. Holocaust, colonialism, and enlightenment. In N. Dhawan (Ed.), *Decolonizing enlightenment* (pp. 115–135). Opladen, Berlin, & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Castro Varela, M. (2015). Europa – Ein Gespenst geht um [Europe – A ghost is going around]. In G. M. Hoff (Ed.), *Europa Entgrenzungen* (pp. 49–82). Innsbruck & Vienna: Tyrolia.
- Castro Varela, M. (2017). „Das Leiden der Anderen betrachten“. Flucht, Solidarität und Postkoloniale Soziale Arbeit [“To contemplate the suffering of others.” Flight, Solidarity and Postcolonial Social Work]. In J. Bröse, S. Faas, & B. Stauber (Eds.), *Flucht. Herausforderungen für Soziale Arbeit* (pp. 3–20). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Christlich Demokratische Union [CDU], Christlich-Soziale Union [CSU], Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands [SPD]. (2018). *Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa. Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland. Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land* [A new emergence/ departure for Europe. A new dynamic for Germany. A new cohesion for our country] (Coalition agreement). Retrieved March 25, 2019, from [https://www.cdu.de/system/tdf/media/dokumente/koalitionsvertrag\\_2018.pdf?file=1](https://www.cdu.de/system/tdf/media/dokumente/koalitionsvertrag_2018.pdf?file=1)
- Conrad, S., & Randeria, S. (Ed.). (2002). *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* [Beyond Eurocentrism. Postcolonial perspectives in history and cultural studies]. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

- Dietze, G. (2019). *Sexueller Exzeptionalismus. Überlegenheitsnarrative in Migration-sabwehr und Rechtspopulismus* [Sexual Exceptionalism. Superiority narratives in migration defence and right-wing populism]. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Goldberg, D. T. (2002). *The racial state*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Ha, K. N., & Schmitz, M. (2006). Der nationalpädagogische Impetus der deutschen Integrations(dis)kurse im Spiegel post-/kolonialer Kritik [The National Pedagogical Impetus of German Integration (Dis)Courses in the Reflection of Post-Colonial Critique]. In P. Mecheril & M. Witsch (Eds.), *Cultural Studies und Pädagogik* (pp. 226–266). Bielefeld: transcript.
- Hark, S., & Villa, P.-I. (2017). *Unterscheiden und herrschen. Ein Essay zu den ambivalenten Verflechtungen von Rassismus, Sexismus und Feminismus in der Gegenwart* [Distinguish and rule. An essay on the ambivalent interweaving of racism, sexism and feminism in the present]. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Hess, S., Kasperek, B., Kron, S., Rodatz, M., Schwertl, M., & Sontowski, S. (2017). *Der lange Sommer der Migration* [The long summer of migration]. Berlin: Assoziation A.
- Hobbes, T. (2006). *Leviathan oder Stoff, Form und Gewalt eines kirchlichen und bürgerlichen Staates* [Leviathan or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil]. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. (Original work published 1651)
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1990). *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth and Reality*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (2004). *Nationen und Nationalismus. Mythos und Realität seit 1780* [Nations and nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth and Reality]. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
- Höffe, O. (2008). Vorwort [Preface]. In O. Höffe (Ed.), *Lexikon der Ethik* (pp. 9–10). Munich: C. H. Beck. (Original work published 1977)
- International Organization for Migration [IOM]. (2018, June 2). *Migrant Deaths Remain High Despite Sharp Fall in US-Mexico Border Crossings in 2017*. Retrieved March 31, 2019, from <https://www.iom.int/news/migrant-deaths-remain-high-despite-sharp-fall-us-mexico-border-crossings-2017>
- Jungbluth, C. F., & Petersen, T. (2018). *Industrielländer sind die Gewinner der Globalisierung* [Industrialised countries are the winners of globalisation]. Retrieved March 31, 2019, from <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/themen/aktuelle-meldungen/2018/juni/industrielaender-sind-die-gewinner-der-globalisierung/>
- Keeley, B. (2015). *Income Inequality. The Gap between Rich and Poor*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved March 31, 2019, from <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264246010-en.pdf?expires=1554128072&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=A72508DE755834D10965EDA86DF5E4F3>
- Kneer, G. (1997). Nationalstaat, Migration und Minderheiten. Ein Beitrag zur Soziogenese von ethnischen Minoritäten [Nation state, migration and minorities. A contribution to the sociogenesis of ethnic minorities]. In A. Nassehi (Ed.), *Nation, Ethnie, Minderheit. Beiträge zur Aktualität ethnischer Konflikte* (pp. 85–102). Cologne: Böhlau.
- Kooroshy, S., & Mecheril, P. (2019). Wir sind das Volk. Zur Verbobenheit von race und state [We are the people. On the interdependence of race and state]. In B. Hafenecker, K. Unkelbach, & B. Widmaier (Eds.), *Rassismuskritische Politische Bildung* (pp. 78–91). Frankfurt am Main: Wochenschau Verlag.

- Kuria, E. N. (2015). *Eingeschrieben. Zeichen setzen gegen Rassismus an deutschen Hochschulen* [Registered. Setting an example against racism at German universities]. Berlin: w\_orten & meer.
- Leiprecht, R. (2001). „Kultur“ als Sprachversteck für „Rasse“. Die soziale Konstruktion fremder Kultur als ein Element kulturalisierenden Rassismus [“Culture” as a language hiding place for “race”. The social construction of foreign culture as an element of culturalising racism]. In M. Johannsen (Ed.), *Schwarzweissheiten. Vom Umgang mit fremden Menschen* (pp. 170–177). Oldenburg: Isensee.
- Lentin, A., & Lentin, R. (2006). *Race and State*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Marshall, T. H. (1950). *Citizenship and Social Class and other essays*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Mecheril, Paul (2020): Gibt es ein transnationales Selbstbestimmungsrecht? Bewegungsethische Erkundungen [Is there a transnational right to self-determination? Thoughts on an ethics of movement]. In I. v. Ackeren, H. Bremer, F. Kessel, H.-C. Koller, N. Pfaff, C. Rotter, E. D. Klein, & U. Salaschek (Eds.), *Bewegungen. Beiträge zum 26. Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft* (pp. 101–117). Opladen, Berlin, & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Miller, T. (2019, September 16). *More Than a Wall. Corporate Profiteering and the Militarization of US Borders* (Report). Amsterdam: Transnational Institute. Retrieved November 17, 2020, from <https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/more-than-a-wall-report.pdf>
- Neue Zürcher Zeitung (2017, August 4). *17 Prozent mehr Tote an der Grenze USA–Mexiko* [17 percent more deaths on the US American–Mexican border]. Retrieved March 31, 2019, from <https://www.nzz.ch/international/migration-in-die-usa-mehr-tote-an-der-grenze-usa-mexiko-ld.1309362>
- Nida-Rümelin, J. (2017). *Über Grenzen denken. Eine Ethik der Migration* [Thinking about boundaries. An ethic of migration]. Hamburg: Edition Körber-Stiftung.
- Ong, Aihwa. (1999). *Flexible Citizenship. The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Pécoud, A. & Guchteneire, P. d. (2007). Introduction: the migration without borders scenario. In A. Pécoud & P. d. Guchteneire (Eds.), *Migration without Borders. Essays on the Free Movement of People* (pp. 1–30). New York: Berghahn Books.
- Poulantzas, N. (1978). *Staatstheorie. Politischer Überbau, Ideologie, Autoritärer Etatismus* [State theory. Political Superstructure, Ideology, Authoritarian Etatism]. Hamburg: VSA.
- Ratfisch, P., & Schwiertz, H. (2015). Konsequenzen anti-migrantischer Politik. Von den europäischen Außengrenzen bis in die deutsche Provinz [Consequences of anti-migrant policies. From the European external borders to the German province]. *PERIPHERIE. Zeitschrift für Politik und Ökonomie in der Dritten Welt*, 138/139, 327–335.
- Rüsen, J., & Völkel, B. (2017). Historische Orientierung: Was uns wichtig war und wichtig ist: Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme. Streitgespräch mit Jörn Rüsen am 9.5.16. [Historical orientation: What was and is important to us: a critical review of the situation. Discussion with Jörn Rüsen on May 9th 2016] In B. Völkel & T. Pacyna (Eds.), *Neorassismus in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft: Eine Herausforderung für die Bildung* (pp. 213–254). Bielefeld: transcript.

- Salecl, R. (1994). *Politik des Phantasmas. Nationalismus, Feminismus und Psychoanalyse* [Politics of the Phantasmas. Nationalism, Feminism and Psychoanalysis]. Vienna: Turia + Kant.
- Schröcke, H. (1981). *Heidelberger Manifest* [Heidelberg Manifesto]. Retrieved September 30, 2020, from <http://www.nadeshda.org/archiv/antifa/hmanwo.pdf>
- Stichweh, R. (1995). Der Körper des Fremden [The body of the stranger]. In M. Hagner (Ed.), *Der falsche Körper. Beiträge zu einer Geschichte der Monstrositäten* (pp. 174–186). Göttingen: Wallstein.
- Tugendhat, E. (1995). *Vorlesung über Ethik* [Lecture on ethics] (3rd ed.). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- United Nations. (1948, December 10). *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly 217 A (III). Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <http://www.un-documents.net/a3r217a.htm>
- United Nations. (n.d.). *Global Issues. Ending poverty*. Retrieved November 27, 2020, from <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/poverty/>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2019). *Desperate Journeys. Refugees and migrants arriving in Europe and at Europe's borders*. Retrieved March 31, 2019, from [https://www.unhcr.org/desperatejourneys/#\\_ga=2.78177300.1607535398.1553846573-1948468749.1552548000](https://www.unhcr.org/desperatejourneys/#_ga=2.78177300.1607535398.1553846573-1948468749.1552548000)
- United Nations Statistics Division. (2020). *End poverty in all its forms everywhere*. Retrieved November 27, 2020, from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/goal-01/>
- Vitzthum, T. (2019, February 2). Die Praktiker der Migrationspolitik verzweifeln an den Experten-Ideen [Migration policy practitioners' despair of expert ideas]. *WELT*. Retrieved March 31, 2020, from <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article188564975/Werkstattgesprach-Die-Praktiker-der-Migrationspolitik-verzweifeln-an-den-Experten-Ideen.html>
- ZEIT ONLINE. (2017, December 19). *Mehr als 250 Millionen Migranten weltweit* [More than 250 million migrants worldwide]. Retrieved March 31, 2019, from <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2017-12/vereinte-nationen-migration-weltweit-zuwachs>



---

# Subjectification, the Politics of Recognition and Identities in (Trans)National Classrooms

Ann Phoenix

---

## Abstract

Classrooms have long been understood to be about much more than academic learning. They contribute to the normalisation of some identities and, by contrast, construct others as non-normative. Children and young people are interlinked with their teachers in a process that involves both the politics of recognition and the ways in which identities and subjectivities are (re-)produced as valued or disparaged. This chapter uses an example from a study of Somali Muslim young women and their teachers in Finnish schools to examine the ways in which teachers misrecognised the Somali girls' identities by taking for granted that they are problematic in being traditional in opposition to 'modern' white Finnish girls. This misrecognition had an impact on the futures the teachers envisaged for the girls and on how they constructed their prospects. It was central to processes of racialised/gendered subjectification for the young women.

---

## Keywords

Epistemic violence · Identities · Intersectionality · Politics of recognition · Subjectification · Somali young women

---

A. Phoenix (✉)

Thomas Coram Research Unit, Social Research Institute,  
University College London, Institute of Education, London, UK  
e-mail: [a.phoenix@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:a.phoenix@ucl.ac.uk)



## 1 Implicit Othering in the (Trans)National Classroom

While the main reason for going to school is about academic learning, theorisations of the ‘hidden curriculum’ have long indicated that children and teachers learn to reproduce unspoken inequalities in the classroom and that children’s attainment is affected by their social positioning (Apple 1971; Porterfield 2017). Classrooms also serve to legitimate some identities as part of the norm. Norms as evaluative standards endorse some actions and outcomes as good, desirable and permissible and render those that do not fit with the norm as ‘non-normative’, constructing them negatively as undesirable and illegitimate. Children and young people are interlinked with their teachers in normative processes that legitimate some identities and stigmatise others. These processes involve the politics of recognition and the processes by which young people develop identities and subjectivities.

Iris Marion Young, a leading political philosopher, suggested that all public spaces, policies and societies are structured around understandings and practices that prioritise some cultural values and behaviours and marginalise others (Young 1990). In other words, some cultural values and behaviours are implicitly given public recognition and recognised while others are misrecognised or unrecognised. Non-recognition and misrecognition can limit our identities and be highly damaging (Taylor 1992). In these processes of normative recognition and non-normative lack of recognition, some bodies are constructed as ‘out of place’, as ‘space invaders’, while others are taken for granted as normative (Puwar 2004). Teachers are central to the power relations that produce these interlinked processes of othering and normalisation. This chapter presents an example that illuminates this process. It examines the ways in which, for children and young people constructed as non-normative because they are negatively racialised, teachers’ everyday practices can produce a tension between subjectification and recognition of identity.

In this chapter the process of normative construction in the classroom will be analysed by drawing on empirical material from a study by Tuuli Kurki (2019) in Finland to show that Somali young women are misrecognised by their teachers as not having educational promise. This has a negative impact both on the futures the teachers envisage and enable for the girls and their prospects and on the young women’s racialised/gendered subjectification. The use of a Finnish example serves to illustrate commonalities across countries in the affluent minority world (where a minority of the world’s children live).

The chapter is divided into two main parts. This section considers the ways in which intersectional racialised/gendered othering can be implicit in (trans) national classrooms. The second main section discusses the misrecognition of girls from minoritised ethnic groups and the tensions between subjectification and recognition of identity.

The extract below comes from an interview study conducted by Tuuli Kurki (2008) with five Muslim young women (between the ages of 15 and 17) who were migrants to Finland and four of their teachers. The research was conducted initially for a Master's thesis and later analysed in her PhD dissertation (Kurki 2019).

While talking about the educational futures of young women with immigrant backgrounds, interviewed teachers talked about the impact of culture and religion on the educational opportunities for 'traditional girls' (such as Muslim girls in general and Somali girls in particular) but not for 'modern girls' (such as Estonians, who were described as 'not quite, yet close to' the Finnish-like girls) [...]. Teachers' understanding of 'traditional girls' was connected with home and full-time motherhood and interpreted as something problematic, even negative, in contrast to the idea of 'modern womanhood', which was considered as desirable, something all women should aim for [...]. Consequently, 'traditional girls' were assumed to need liberation in their struggles between the liberal Finnish 'freedom' and the authoritarian and restrictive Somali culture and religion of Islam [...]. The use of a headscarf was considered problematic [...]. If some of the Muslim girls took off their headscarf that was a moment of joy and celebration in school. If some of them started to wear jeans or short skirts, this was interpreted as worrisome, as 'too Western', leading to amazement, even contempt. From the young women's point of view, the situation seemed hopeless: dressing one way or the other was interpreted in any case as 'wrong' in comparison to the 'right' kind of (Finnish) girl- and womanhood. Therefore, if one wanted to avoid racialised criticism, they had to avoid both over-covering and over-revealing clothes. (Kurki 2019, pp. 45–46)

Kurki's analysis shows two issues central to a consideration of regimes of belonging and power relations in the classroom and society. First, teachers constructed their students in complex ways in that they made different categorisations of Muslim, and specifically Somali, Estonian and Finnish, girls. In this differentiation, Finnish girls were implicitly taken for granted as the norm, requiring no explanation. Estonia, as a near neighbour of Finland where the population is almost exclusively white, were treated as "'not quite, yet close to' the Finnish-like girls" and black Somali girls were essentialised as "'traditional girls'" and constructed as binary opposites of "modern" white Finnish girls (Kurki 2019, p. 45). Their teachers did not think of them as Finnish, despite their having settled in Finland and attending the same school. 'Tradition' was both ethnicised and racialised.

Second, the teachers' constructions of the Somali girls were complex because they involved multiple, all-encompassing categorisations. The essentialist fixing of the girls was not, therefore, unitary, but instead linked together culture, religion, prospects and clothing in ways that racialised them as not belonging and as negatively non-normative. The teachers' constructions curtailed the girls' freedoms, even as they identified freedom as an issue. As Kurki points out, the girls' headscarves were considered signifiers of a 'tradition' that was counterposed to "liberal Finnish 'freedom'" (Kurki 2019, p. 46). Yet if the Muslim girls changed their clothing style too much, the teachers considered this "too Western" (Kurki 2019, p. 46) and refused to admit the Muslim girls to normative Finnish girlhood. However they dressed, the girls were excluded from full belonging in the classroom. This was also found in a UK study of Muslim girls and their teachers in a UK secondary school (Meeto 2020).

It is striking that it is teachers who both have and expect to have the power to set the parameters of inclusion in Kurki's example and that they expected the girls to behave in ways that kept them in their ascribed places. It was through the accretion of apparently trivial moments in educational settings that pupils who had migrated to Finland came to be constituted as ideal for care work and were guided to it, rather than into higher education or professional work. The students Kurki interviewed had

various dreams and plans for their future, but slowly started to realise that certain professions were not considered realistic or ideal for them as immigrants. They had been told, for instance, that 'you cannot become a medical doctor' while another student had given up on her dream to become a psychologist or social worker as she was told that 'university is not for immigrants'. Through these kinds of everyday practices in the education sector, immigrants become seen as not qualified for something they aim for, instead, they are expected to learn willingness to start from zero. Consequently, the subject position of 'immigrant care workers' becomes part of one's subjectivity, of the understanding of the self, regardless of the multiple subject positions available. (Kurki et al. 2019, p. 340)

Kurki (2019) explains that the Somali girls were guided into "suitable choices" (p. 46) based on stereotypical, racialised assumptions about the effects of culture and religion on girls' education. Their Somali background was thought, by their teachers, to limit their freedom of movement. Teachers commonly engaged in 'worry talk' about the typical Somali girl in relation to their positioning in relation to home, marriage and young motherhood (Kurki 2008). Since they were expected to marry and have children early, the teachers considered that the Somali girls were particularly suited to care work. The process by which this

happened could be seen in teachers' interview accounts such as from a teacher at a lower secondary school who says: "I think they [young Somali Muslim women] suit well for care work as they have this certain skill because they have had to take care of their brothers and sisters at home" (Kurki, Brunila, and Lahelma 2019, p. 336).

These decisions bring together intersections of gender, culture, religion and racialisation. While the girls did not view themselves as limited to care work, Kurki (2019) found that they did consider that going into that field would provide them with a safe study environment where they could study "with 'others like me' instead of being afraid and feeling like lonely outsiders" (p. 46). Their considerations of their employment possibilities thus aimed to avoid contact with racist/sexist teachers and hostile study environments. While they may, therefore, come to decisions about their future employment that are apparently consistent with those of their teachers, they do so in recognition of their racialised/gendered socio-structural positioning and the associated power relations. In contrast, their teachers racialised the girls' cultures as deficient and signifiers of limitations in the girls themselves.

As the analysis of the above example illustrates, the teachers in Kurki's study placed young Somali women in a double bind. They were assumed to lack freedom whatever they wore and whatever they did because their backgrounds and home lives were assumed by the teachers to prepare them for caring careers. According to Kurki (2019), the teachers' narratives of immigrants and 'Muslims' served as 'distorting', invisible, intersectional and racialising mechanisms of power. Her finding, that the Finnish teachers she interviewed considered that Somali girls were destined for marriage and early motherhood rather than education, was an example of gendered and racialised construction of educational routes and of how such constructions limited the possibilities the teachers were likely to afford Somali girls. This was something also found in a study of how South Asian girls were positioned by teachers and positioned themselves within a London multicultural school. The teachers Meetoo (2020) interviewed enacted a range of everyday practices, which perpetuated "micro-processes of racialisation" and treated Asian and Muslim girls as educationally limited. In the Finnish context, but in studies of younger children, Heidi Layne (2016) found that young migrant children are often viewed by both wider society and teachers as problems within Finnish classrooms and as embodying lack, particularly because they are viewed as lacking linguistic and cultural skills because they do not speak fluent Finnish. In all these examples, the politics of recognition at play marginalise children and young people who are perceived, for example, as Somali or South Asian migrants by the teachers. They are, therefore, misrecognised as deficient

and non-normative ‘others’ in relation to Finnish children and young people. This misrecognition is intersectional in that, as is clear in Kurki’s and Meetoo’s studies, Muslim girls are viewed as particularly educationally unpromising.

---

## **2 Misrecognition of Muslim Girls: Tensions Between Subjectification and Recognition of Identity**

Kurki’s research demonstrates the ways in which the teachers misrecognised the Somali girls’ identities by taking for granted that they are problematic in being ‘traditional’ in opposition to ‘modern’ white Finnish girls. This misrecognition has an impact on the processes of subjectification by which the young women came to recognise themselves as racialised/gendered subjects. The ways in which others give recognition to our identities affect the ways in which we come to understand ourselves and this, in turn, affects our quality of life and well-being. Non-recognition or misrecognition can limit our identities, demean our social groups (Fraser 2008), produce oppressive relations (Taylor 1994) and serve to marginalise cultural values and behaviours in public spaces (Young 1990). In Kurki’s example, the teachers’ misrecognition of the Finnish Muslim girls who had migrated from Somalia for lacking ambition and being culturally fitted for care careers that do not require qualifications, marginalised their Somali, Muslim and gendered identities. In misrecognising them in this way, the teachers implicitly subjected them to oppressive and inferiorising power relations in the classroom. Reicher and Hopkins (2013) found that the experience of being viewed as ‘other’ was experienced as profoundly negative by the Muslim adults in their sample because it involved denying their valued identities. Stuart Hall (1996) suggests that “Identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render ‘outside’, abjected” (p. 5). Zygmunt Bauman (1996) suggests that identity comes to the fore when we are not certain that other people would accept our claims to belong. The teachers’ misrecognition of the Somali young women in their classrooms foreclosed possibilities for their future lives. However, it also rendered them as non-normative and excluded them from belonging in school and hence in Finnish society (Yuval-Davis 2011). It is arguably because their experiences of schooling help them to understand that they are not accepted as belonging to the nation that they said in their interviews that they would consider doing care work in the future. This was because the “social and health care sector would be a safe study environment where one could study with friends and relatives, with ‘others like me’ instead of being afraid and feeling like lonely outsiders” (Kurki 2019, p. 45).

Kurki's research illustrates the tension between subjectification and other people's recognition of identity. In the quote above, the Somali young women's focus on "'others like me'" (Kurki 2019, p. 46) indicates their subjectification to racialised positioning and their (implicit) understanding that their teachers do not recognise them within normative categories.

Recognition is vital to the processes involved in subjectification in that becoming a subject and taking up particular identities entail becoming subjected to power relations whether we recognise this or not (Butler 1997; Fanon 1967; Foucault 1980). Taking up identities as our own means that we become subject to power relations and normalising processes which, as Butler (2004) suggests, constrain people's autonomy and subjectivity. People come to experience themselves as subjects through processes of subjectification that involve normalisation and representation. Frantz Fanon (1967, 1963) was one of the first to theorise links between recognition and subjectification. In thinking about French colonisation of Algeria, Fanon (1967) theorised the ways in which the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is normalised in the psyche. He argued that the social structure is the real source of the black man's conflict and speaking the coloniser's language leads many black men to don a 'white mask' because the collective consciousness of the coloniser becomes part of their psychology. Fanon (1963) argued that representations are central to successful colonisation because the colonisers have to impose their representations so that the only ways in which the colonised gain recognition from others, and recognise themselves, are within the images constructed by the colonisers. These justify colonialism through the perpetuation of images of the colonised as inferior and, in the process, 'racialise' both the colonised and the coloniser (since they are necessarily relationally linked). Applying Fanon's theorisation to Kurki's study, the representations that the teachers show that they hold of the Somali young women in their classrooms are not simply individual, but part of normative structures that subject the young women to devalued ways of seeing themselves and so affects their identities and racialises them and the teachers.

Fanon's theories prefigured later theorisation of subjectification where the subject is viewed as a product of power, of apparatuses of normalisation and of subjection (Foucault 1980). Judith Butler (1990), for example, suggests that "the subjects regulated by such structures [juridical systems of power] are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures" (p. 2). This subjection, as Fanon indicated, also produces subjectification. According to Althusser (1971), people are 'interpellated' as subjects when they recognise themselves to have been 'hailed' by ideology. Metaphorically, this process is akin to what happens when someone

recognises that they are being stopped by a police officer. For Althusser, in everyday life, institutions such as families, churches and schools 'hail' people by including them in categories that prescribe and enforce particular ways of thinking about themselves and of acting as subjects. In these processes people self-define in ways they consider independent and autonomous although they are produced through interpellation. Subjectivity is produced through processes of subjectification. Avtar Brah (1999) illustrates how interpellation can involve processes of othering:

One 'white' mother whom I interviewed in 1976 [in Southall] had said to me: 'Where did *they* come from?', my father used to say, 'they were here, and then the shops opened up'. The 'they' in this locution signified 'Asians'. 'She means people like me', I had thought to myself, feeling acutely 'othered' [...]. I could not be a disinterested listener, although I listened attentively. My intellect, feelings, and emotions had all been galvanized by my respondent's discourse. I was framed within it, whether I liked it or not. What was it that made her referent 'they' instantly recognizable as 'Asians' to us both? (p. 7)

Brah clearly explains the process by which she is subjected to exclusionary racialisation and it becomes part of her subjectification. In a parallel way, the young Somali women in Kurki's study showed their understanding that they were implicated in the relationship between subjection and subjectification. Among students, the experiences of otherness were, however, strongly related to being named as an immigrant. Naming as such was considered to be stigmatising, because as immigrants, they were positioned as outsiders, as others. As immigrants, they felt they were being treated as representatives of the abstract category of immigrants, and not as individuals. Being named as an immigrant was like a stamp, which stayed on them regardless of them having been born in Finland or being Finnish citizens.

Importantly, being recognised as Finnish was not considered desirable either. If one had to choose an ethnic group to belong to, and which to represent, it was often the ethnic group of their parents or Blackness in general. Among 'others like me', one could consider the self as an ordinary member of the community rather than as marginal and different. Students did not call themselves immigrants, but if the distinction was made between the self (or us) and the Finns, students called themselves 'foreigners' or 'fugees' which was a term allowed only in the inner circle of racialised others. Using the terms they had chosen themselves emphasised the solidarity among the excluded, which was the driving force in the middle of the experiences of otherness. They took up the names 'foreigner' and 'refugee' for redeployment to make them mean something different in places where they normally are injurious. (Kurki 2019, p. 45–46)

For the Finnish Somali girls above, the process of subjectification is one where they learn that they are positioned in ways that exclude them from belonging on equal terms in the classroom and to the Finnish nation. They dealt with this in dynamic and creative ways, taking up a collective racialised identity with ‘others like me’, while resisting some outsider ascriptions such as ‘immigrant’. It is in this context that their negotiation of their potential future careers thus involves struggles with belonging.

The processes of subjectification in which the Somali young women in Kurki’s study were positioned is not unusual. There is ample evidence that young children are aware of their social positioning and how others perceive them and that, if this is negative, it impacts negatively on their views of themselves (Henward and Grace 2016; Reay 2007). Schools are thus important sites for (racialised) subjectification where children and young people come to understand which identities confer belonging and how they themselves are positioned with respect to these power relations. For the Somali young women, the misrecognition they experience is epistemically violent in that they are treated and encouraged to see themselves in ways that construct them as ‘other’ to their white Finnish peers (Spivak 1999) who are, in contrast, epistemically privileged. One implication is that white Finnish young women can take for granted that they belong to their schools and the nation, while the Finnish Somali young women are obliged to negotiate their prospects in the context of understanding their socially devalued status.

---

### 3 Conclusion

In order to shift regimes of belonging into directions that promote social justice, it is important to understand teachers’ contributions to, and understanding of, the ways in which exclusionary processes are produced. Kurki’s study of Somali girls in Finnish classrooms shows how young people are differentiated by their social positioning in transnational classrooms and that treatment by teachers is related to intersections of racialisation, social class and gender and that this has deleterious consequences that are implicit. Those negative consequences are both part of the present and have an impact on the young women’s imagined, and so possible, futures. Kurki’s research was conducted in Finland. However, discrimination and negative positioning, of the kinds she reports, have been found in large-scale UK analyses to have negative emotional and mental health consequences (Nandi et al. 2016). Such findings are reiterated in a US literature review on ‘stereotype threat’ produced by Howard Steele (2011), who coined the term. Stereotype threat occurs when people are in situations where they realise that there are negative



stereotypes of their group and are negatively affected by this recognition, often doing less well on tests than they do if they consider that these stereotypes are not held. In his review, Steele (2011) found that stereotype threat consistently reduces results on tests and attainment and produces a great deal of anxiety and feelings of lack of control.

Such findings underline the importance of teachers understanding the prevalence of stereotyping of, and discrimination against, children who, because they are from minoritised groups, are perceived to embody difference in the classroom and teachers' own contributions to this. A focus on social relations in the classroom is not intended to minimise the importance of structural dynamics of power in reproducing inequalities. Rather, it highlights the fact that everyday practices, social relations and the politics of recognition are equally important. Indeed, the interpersonal construction of intersectional racialised/gendered politics of recognition is implicated in processes of subjectification that are produced within the power relations of classrooms and nations (Althusser 1971; Butler 1997; Fanon 1967; Foucault 1980). They are, therefore, a crucial site where identities, subjectivities and prospects are negotiated. For this reason, it is important that pedagogic practices should consciously seek to promote social justice rather than treating unequal outcomes as simply the result of individual failings, while ignoring the intersectional patterning of the ways in which recognition and subjectification are produced and reproduced in classrooms (Fine 2018). This is something that teachers can be helped to understand (D'warte 2014, 2018; Luttrell 2012). Given the longstanding reluctance to admit that schools reproduce inequalities, however, this requires long-term and sustained engagement with findings such as Kurki's.

---

## References

- Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and ideological state apparatuses: Notes towards an investigation. In L. Althusser, *Lenin and philosophy and other essays* (B. Brewster Trans., pp. 142–147, 166–176). New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Apple, M. W. (1971). The hidden curriculum and the nature of conflict. *Interchange*, 2(4), 27–40.
- Bauman, Z. (1996). From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity. *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 1, 18–36.
- Brah, A. (1999). The scent of memory: Strangers, our own, and others. *Feminist Review*, 61(1), 4–26.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

- Butler, J. (1997). *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing Gender*. New York & London: Routledge.
- D'warte, J. (2014). Exploring Linguistic Repertoires: Multiple Language Use and Multi-modal Literacy Activity in Five Classrooms. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 37(1), 21–30.
- D'warte, J. (2018). Creating Space for a Shared Repertoire. Re-imagining Pedagogies to cultivate Transcultural and Translingual Competencies. In S. Gannon, R. Hattam, & W. Sawyer (Eds.), *Resisting Educational Inequality: Reframing Policy and Practice in Schools Serving Vulnerable Communities* (pp. 110–121). New York & London: Routledge.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth* (C. Farrington Trans.). New York: Grove Weidenfeld. (Original work published 1961)
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks* (C. L. Markmann, Trans.). New York: Grove Press. (Original work published 1952)
- Fine, M. (2018). *Just Research in Contentious Times: Widening the Methodological Imagination*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. New York: Vintage. (Original work published 1977)
- Fraser, N. (2008). *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hall, S. (1996). Who Needs Identity. *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 16(2), 1–17.
- Henward, A. S., & Grace, D. J. (2016). Kindergartners' Development of Privileged Subjectivities within an Elite School. *Children & Society*, 30(6), 488–498.
- Kurki, T. (2008). Sukupuolittuneita Ja Rodullistettuja Koulutusreiteitä. Maahanmuuttajataustaiset Tytöt Siirtymässä Toisen Asteen Koulutuksiin [Gendered and Racialised Educational Routes: Transitions to Upper Secondary Education of Young Women with Immigration Backgrounds]. *Nuorisotutkimus*, 26(4), 26–51.
- Kurki, T. (2019). *Immigrant-ness as (Mis)fortune. Immigrantisation through integration policies and practices in education* (Doctoral Dissertation). Helsinki: HELDA, University Digital Repository. Retrieved September 7, 2020, from <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/294719>
- Kurki, T., Brunila, K., & Lahelma, E. (2019). Constituting Immigrant Care Workers Through Gendering and Racialising Practices in Education. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 9(3), 329–345.
- Layne, H. (2016). “Contact Zones” in Finnish (intercultural) education (Doctoral Dissertation). Helsinki: HELDA, University Digital Repository. Retrieved October 20, 2020, from <http://hdl.handle.net/10138/165072>
- Luttrell, W. (2012). Making Boys' Care Worlds Visible. *Boyhood Studies*, 6(2), 186–202.
- Meetoo, V. (2020). Negotiating the Diversity of ‘Everyday’ Multiculturalism: Teachers' Enactments in an Inner City Secondary School. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 23(2), 261–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2018.1497962>
- Nandi, A., Luthra, R. R., & Benzeval, M. (2016, December 2). *Ethnic and Racial Harassment and Mental Health: Identifying Sources of Resilience* (ISER Working Paper Series No. 2016–14). Colchester: Institute for Social and Economic Research, University

- of Essex. Retrieved September 7, 2020, from <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/publications/working-papers/iser/2016-14.pdf>
- Porterfield, L. K. (2017). (Re)Seeing Black girls: intersections of liberalism, difference, and the hidden curriculum. *Visual Studies*, 32(4), 301–312.
- Puwar, N. (2004). *Space invaders: Race, gender and bodies out of place*. Oxford & New York: Berg.
- Reay, D. (2007). “Unruly Places”: Inner-City Comprehensives, Middle-Class Imaginaries and Working-Class Children. *Urban Studies*, 44(7), 1191–1201.
- Reicher, S., & Hopkins, N. (2013, January). *Future Identities: Changing identities in the UK – the next 10 years DR10: How will issues of power, conflict, and prejudice and discrimination impact upon notions of identity?* London: Government Office for Science. Retrieved September 7, 2020, from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/275768/13-512-power-conflict-prejudice-discrimination-impact-identity.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/275768/13-512-power-conflict-prejudice-discrimination-impact-identity.pdf)
- Spivak, G. C. (1999). *A critique of postcolonial reason: Toward a history of the vanishing present*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Steele, C. M. (2011). *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Taylor, C. (1992). *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”*: An Essay (A. Gutmann, Ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Taylor, C. (1994). ‘The Politics of Recognition’. In A. Gutmann (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (pp. 25–73). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2011). *The politics of belonging: Intersectional contestations*. London: SAGE.



---

# Dynamic Identities and Varying Belongings: Migration, Transnationalism and Education

Ludger Pries and Natalia Bekassow

---

## Abstract

In this chapter we describe and explain the dynamics of globalization and transnationalization of social spaces and – as the other side of the same process – the development of super-diversities and even more complex mechanisms of belongings and identities in a historical perspective. Further on, we discuss how these processes have influenced the German education system. We revise potentials and limitations of theoretical perspectives for understanding the current situation in German schools. Finally, some general comments on the role of schools in a super-diverse immigration society are made. Three main issues are addressed in this respect. First, the large share of students with a migrant background. Second, the still existing inequality based on cultural and ethnic background as well as institutional discrimination in German schools. Third, the disproportionately low share of teachers with a migrant background.

---

## Keywords

Transnationalism · Identity · Belonging · Ethnic and cultural diversity · Education

---

L. Pries · N. Bekassow (✉)  
Faculty of Social Sciences, Ruhr-University Bochum, Bochum, Germany  
e-mail: [ludger.pries@rub.de](mailto:ludger.pries@rub.de)

N. Bekassow  
e-mail: [natalia.bekassow@rub.de](mailto:natalia.bekassow@rub.de)

## 1 Introduction

We live in turbulent times in which social identities increasingly vary in some aspects, while in other aspects they are rather standardized. Taking music preferences as an example, there are ever more styles and subgroups of genre, which at the same time define identities of ever smaller social groups. In a similar way, political beliefs, for example the old divisions of left and right, of the working class or liberal-bourgeois identities, get more and more punctured and lead to multiple layers of political identities. On the contrary, mechanisms for constructing and reflecting social identities are becoming increasingly homogenized all over the world: on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram the worldwide mechanisms of expressing recognition and appreciation by simply clicking ‘likes’ and commenting on video clips or music titles that spread globally.

In a similar vein, social belongings get gradually more differentiated while at the same time they become more homogenized. For instance, many individuals feel their belonging to ever more and specialized categories. Referring to gender, the old binary distinction between men and women splits into many more divisions of belonging like masculinity, feminist, gays, lesbians and transgender. While for some people ethnic belongings may be of less relevance, for others it could be more important for defining ‘us’ and ‘them’. Thus, a student may feel a belonging to his or her family, a social class, local community, peer group, sports club as well as to a religious or ethnic community. Additionally, these groups may vary in importance and may be intersected in each individual case. The opposite tendency can be noted in the Fridays for Future movement, where activists define themselves as belonging to the one and only humankind and planet that should guide our norms and behavior. Furthermore, those people active in the transnational movement for refugee protection express their feelings of worldwide belonging and responsibility.

Are these shifting boundaries of identities and belongings something completely new? Or can we identify dynamic identities and varying belongings also, for instance, two centuries ago? What are the features of changes in identities and belongings in the twenty-first century? How are these ambiguities of identity and belonging related to globalization and transnationalization? Is migration a cause or an effect of these ambivalences? These questions are not just of academic but also of practical relevance. The European education system, from primary schools to universities, has to cope with a ‘super-diversity’ of students’ cultural and language background.<sup>1</sup> This potpourri of belongings and identities goes hand in hand

---

<sup>1</sup>Following OECD reports in this chapter we use the term ‘students’ as pupils, that means someone who is learning at school.

with accentuated mechanisms of marginalization and discrimination, of defining the established and the outsiders. While even fifty years ago ‘the newcomers’ represented just a small minority in a classroom, now they stand for the overwhelming majority, thus shifting power relations. Educational systems mirror all these developments. Therefore, educational and pedagogical strategies have to adapt in terms of content and methods.

In order to deal with these questions, a brief overview of existing sociological theories of identity, belonging and the transnationalization of social spaces might help us to grasp what these new challenges are. In light of this, second, challenges of the German school system are presented. Finally, some critical comments on school education in Germany are made.

---

## 2 Identities and Belongings in Sociological Perspective

The distinction between ‘I and Me’, or between ‘the Self and the Other’ respectively, is at the beginning of transcending from humanoids to human beings. The Self as human consciousness is a product and, at the same time, a condition for sociability. Collective identities are built on the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘the others’. Based on Erikson’s classic work (1946), identities can be defined by three basic elements:

Men who share an ethnic area, an historical era, or an economic pursuit are guided by common images of good and evil. Infinitely varied, these images reflect the elusive nature of historical change; yet in the form of contemporary social models, of compelling prototypes of good and evil, they assume decisive concreteness in every individual’s ego development. (p. 359)

According to Erikson (1946), the distinction between good and evil – or in a less conflicted way, the opposition between ‘us’ and ‘the others’ – is defined by a shared “ethnic area”, “historical era” or “economic pursuit” (p. 359). So collective identity could be based on space, time or common interests. In this classic view there are four elements of identity: continuity in time, homogeneity of values, fixed methods of integration and ambiguity in claiming rights for ‘us’ and admitting the same rights for ‘others’.

Historically, for centuries belonging to a religious group and to a nation has been the strongest defining criterion of ‘us’ and ‘them’. In Europe, for example, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, conflicts between Catholic and Protestant groups were quite frequent. The French Revolution put social class on

the main agenda, but even in the First World War national feelings worked as a driving force. The Nazi regime and the Second World War were dominated by nationalist and racist categories. Hereby, it was the *belief* in continuity, homogeneity and fixed methods of integration that mainly constituted perceived identities – often against social reality and evidence. For instance, empires and states have always been multi-cultural and multi-ethnic, but the political project of nation-state building was that of homogenization of national identities. Substantial social change occurred during the second half of the twentieth century. Since then, the main layers of collective belongings pluralized in substance and also in societal perceptions. Identities differentiated according to class, race or ethnicity, as well as gender and lifestyles. Most countries experienced migration that additionally changed the dynamics of collective belongings and identities.

Many European countries, like France, Germany, the Netherlands or Sweden, signed bilateral agreements mainly with Mediterranean countries with respect to so-called guest workers. Labor migrants were ‘invited’ to work for a limited time in the prospering industries of north-western Europe. At the dawn of these guest worker programs, neither the societies of origin and arrival nor the labor migrants themselves intensively reflected on what consequences this development would bring for long-term identity and belonging – although there existed scientific insights about the dynamics of labor migration processes, for example, the experiences of the Bracero program between Mexico and the USA (Massey et al. 1993).

Despite the fact that millions of guest workers changed their life plans and decided, often step by step in an iterative and sequential way, to stay in the country where they arrived as temporary labor migrants, there was little or no infrastructure to integrate these groups actively (Herbert 1986; Luft 2009). This situation also hindered substantial discussions about collective identities and belongings – for those social groups that had arrived as well as for those social groups that felt themselves ‘autochthonous’ or ‘majority’ people.

As the countries of migrants’ arrival got more diverse in terms of religion, ethnic self-ascription, nationality landscape and languages, it became more and more difficult to define collective belongings only in terms of ‘national container societies’ (Pries 2001). Since the 1990s the approach of transnationalization of social spaces has gained influence. As many immigrants maintained dense social bonds with the country of origin *and* in the place of arrival, science and society learned that social ties and intensive social spaces could extend and span between places in different countries. Conversely, in the same geographic territory of a country like Germany there live together social groups with quite different socio-cultural belongings. Social sciences addressed more explicitly the relation between geographic and social spaces.

Based on a complex understanding of the relations between geographic space and social space, we can distinguish four ideal types of how migrants negotiate and cope with their experiences and trajectories in different places and develop projects for their future life. Concerning their lifeworld, stocks of knowledge, interpretative patterns, collective identities and belongings, migrants could ideal-typically, first, refer to their place of origin and/or to their place of arrival as frames of reference. And, second, their belonging and ties to both social spaces could be either strong or weak. In classic migration theory immigration was mainly considered as a gradual, long-term shifting from the national container space of the country of origin to that of the country of arrival. In such a model, integration in the new place of arrival is considered as distancing from the country of origin and assimilating to the country of arrival. Alternative conceptual models and empirical studies have revealed that belongings to the country of origin or of the ancestors *and* to the country of arrival could stay quite strong or be rather weak (Berry 1997; Berry et al. 2006). Based on the work of Berry and our own empirical studies, this leads to the four combinations of belongings and social spaces summarized in Table 1.

We could speak of migrants as *immigrants*, and respectively emigrants, when they have resolutely decided to leave their former life behind and begin a different one with new social entanglements and shifting collective belongings, attained in a process of ‘second socialization’, redefining their collective identities and expectations. Millions of Europeans left their countries at the turn of the 19th to the twentieth century as emigrants towards the USA in pursuit of better economic and socio-cultural conditions. They integrated into their new homeland with a long-term and unlimited perspective. Although they preserved manifold ties to their regions of origin, these were considered as spaces of ancestry, historical reminiscence and of farewell.

**Table 1** Strong or weak belonging to the social space of origin and the social space of arrival. *Source* authors’ own elaboration based on Berry (1997)

		Belonging to social spaces of arrival	
		strong	weak
Belonging to social spaces of departure	strong	Double integration in both spaces as transnational migrant	Being on mission and/or suffering as diaspora or return migrant
	weak	Emigrant saying good-bye and assimilating as immigrant	Double marginalization as uprooted and not arriving migrant



A second ideal type is the *return-migrant* who is strongly motivated to return to their country of origin and their former life. They maintain social entanglements mainly in the place of origin and stick to their former experiences and socialization. They are not willing to shift their preferences and expectations and focus on resources in their old homeland. For instance, millions of so-called 'guest workers' in Europe, who for decades lived for instance in Germany or France as their 'host country', keeping their distance, emphasizing their 'difference' and dreaming to return to their places of origin, which they thought would remain as they know them.

While emigration or return-migration is characterized by a strong and clear orientation to either the country of arrival or the country of origin as a basic frame of reference, this is not the case for the two ideal types of diaspora migrants or transnational migrants. *Diaspora migrants* define their belongings in the frame of a specific 'land of promise', but are open to accept or negotiate living in other places. They manage social entanglements and experiences and socialize in different places. They develop hybrid identities and combine resources of different places. The classic example is a religious community like the Jewish or the Alevi diasporas distributed all over the world. But we could think also of diplomatic corps or business organizations in which envoys and expatriates maintain strong social ties to their home country or headquarters to which they plan to return. Diaspora migrants perceive of their lives in the countries of arrival as a suffering, painful experience or as a mission.

Finally, *transnational migrants* or *transmigrants* typically do not distinguish in this way between the country of origin and that of arrival, but develop an ambiguous and hybrid mixture of adherence and collective belonging and identity. Transmigrants live – mentally and often physically – between and span places in different countries. They preserve quite strong adherence and belongings to the countries of origin (their own or that of their ancestors) and, at the same time, they extend new entanglements and expectations, mixed or hybrid identities and belongings. Examples of such transmigrants are frequent in social groups of artists, sportspeople, managers or politicians, but also in transnational families of labor migrants between Mexico or the Dominican Republic and the USA, or between Poland and Germany (see Pries 2001, 2010). The four ideal types are based only on people's belongings to spaces of origin and arrival. Many other dimensions (like local, national and transnational migration regimes or regional and global opportunity structures) might have an influence on their identities and lead to super-diversity.

### 3 Shifting Identities and Belongings and Super-Diversity

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, globalization, transnationalization and increasing international migration led to what Vertovec (2007) has coined super-diversity. According to this term, in almost all countries of the world, and especially in western European cities with large shares of immigrants, the diversity of populations is substantially increasing in terms of languages, religious beliefs, cultural habits and customs, citizenship and nationality, ethnic self-ascriptions etc. Individuals identify and define themselves by an increasing number of markers of preferences, tastes and lifestyles. Especially in cities like Brussels or Amsterdam (but also parts of London or Paris), where the 'old' dominant ethnic majority group becomes minority, the concept of super-diversity could shed light on the current dynamics of shifting identity patterns (Crul 2016).

In times of globalization and transnationalization, of migration and individualization, all people around the world increasingly define themselves in a highly differentiated way. Additional to the process of self-ascription, ascription and classification by other groups or by the state are also of great importance. In the official population census in the UK the number of dimensions and corresponding values for each of these dimensions increased from 1990 to 2010. Ethnicity, religion, language, citizenship, national identity, and country of birth are raised, and each of these categories got more and more values (like the ethnic group ascription differentiated according to five skin colors and more than twenty geographic origins). There are similar processes in countries like Canada or the USA where the so-called minority groups grow stronger in the dynamics of identifying, perceiving and acknowledging these groups in the processes of political representations and claims making (Pries 2013). Herein, sometimes identity is defined by self-ascription, in other occasions by ascription via other social groups or through the political and administrative system. In Germany, for example the introduction of the statistical category of the 'person with a migrant background' in the micro census law of 2005 gave rise to critical debates about the discriminating effects of such an attribution by others (Pries 2018).

The latter mechanism – discrimination and marginalization of certain social groups based on attributed categories – led some scientists and political activists to reject any kind of integration concept and wording. In 2010 a group of around 3,800 people – intellectuals, scientists, artists etc. – published the document "Democracy in spite of Integration!" and declared: "We live in a society of immigration. That

means: if we want to speak about the relationship and living together in this society, we have to stop speaking of integration” (trans. by authors) (Netzwerk für Kritische Migrations- und Grenzregimeforschung 2010). The authors make an understandable effort to criticize assimilationist concepts of integration. However, by radically tabooing the topics and even the very terms of arriving and integration, they risk neglecting those unavoidable challenges related to the topics of arriving, integration and negotiation of identities and belonging in transnational contexts. Abandoning the term ‘integration’ would delete a category of great analytical value in the scientific discourse on identities and belonging. That would be similar to mechanisms of tabooing religious issues in public life and the official census in France and will most certainly have similar consequences for social science (Pries 2013).

More recently, in a similar way some colleagues invent new terms with ‘post-migration society’ and the need for ‘post-migrant perspectives’. Their aim is to describe migration-induced societal changes that follow societal negotiation processes on identities *after* the official political acknowledgment of Germany being a country of Immigration (Foroutan 2019, p.18). By using these terms Foroutan intends to describe a status that “overcomes binary categories of migrants and locals”. Although the critique of xenophobia, discrimination, social exclusion, populist or assimilationist framing of the migration and integration discourse that come along with this are understandable, we do not consider the limited concept of ‘post-migration’ as needed and helpful to describe social dynamics in societies shaped by migration. It is a fact that we live in a society of immigration where belonging and participation have always been subject to processes of negotiation and for almost half a century we have known about the ambivalence of social ascriptions and attributions (Hollinger 2005).

We should be aware that human development and culture are always based on socially produced distinctions, concepts, and symbolic communication as well as on experiences of belonging. Collective identities and social belongings rest on socially constructed characteristics and on attributions of oneself and others. Attributions of belonging are related to power relations and social conflicts over resources, interests and recognition. They always are and have to be negotiated. Attributions of belonging are stabilized and essentialized through legal, normative and cognitive institutionalization of social spaces. The predominant categories and concepts of belongings vary between (social) spaces as well as in time. Based on these basic insights on the dynamics of globalization and transnationalization of social spaces and – as the other side of the same processes – the development of super-diversities and ever more complex mechanisms of belongings and identities, we can now ask: How do these processes manifest in the education system? What does it mean in terms of specific challenges and opportunities for schools in Germany?

## 4 Shifting Identities and Belongings as Challenges for the German Education System

Not only in Germany, but in many European countries the predominant idea of a nation state based on ethnic, cultural and linguistic homogeneity of people, which we discussed previously, has been increasingly challenged by transnational migration and the ‘diversification of diversity’. Transnational migration as well as increasing heterogeneity and cultural diversity represent significant challenges for contemporary educational systems, in Germany and elsewhere. However, according to Gogolin (2011), the dominant pedagogical discourse still follows the logic of a binary construction of reality, operating with notions like immigrant or native, allochthon or autochthon, monolingual or bilingual, integrated or unintegrated, assimilated or marginalized. Such bifurcations are widespread in societies as well as in schools as their ‘mirrors’. This ‘diversification of diversity’, especially since the 1990s, can be observed in the German school system and helps us understand the ‘normal’ or ‘typical’ student and teacher.

As a result of various migration waves of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the German education system has witnessed a steadily increasing diversity among students. In fact, according to the Mikrozensus 2018, 37% of all students in Germany had a migrant background (see Statistisches Bundesamt 2019b).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in some big culturally diverse cities like Hamburg, Berlin or in cities of the Rhine-Ruhr area, students with a migrant background constitute the majority in the classrooms (Statistisches Bundesamt 2019b). However, despite the high general significance of a migrant background for the educational system, which was also recognized at the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in 2005, the decision to record migrant background in nationwide school statistics is waiting for its implementation, since only the status of current nationality is recorded there (Statistisches Bundesamt 2019a).

Nevertheless, 2001 was the first year when school achievement studies like the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) delivered empirical evidence that the German education system had not managed to adapt to the new societal reality of super-diversity so far. The results of PISA 2000, known as “PISA shock” in public and scientific discourse, clearly showed that students with

---

<sup>2</sup>The category ‘migrant background’ was first introduced in Mikrozensus 2005, due to the Mikrozensus Act of 2004. A person is determined to have a migrant background if he or she or at least one parent was not born with German citizenship.

a migrant background are considerably disadvantaged (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2001). Germany was revealed to have the highest correlation between the migrant background and the educational achievement of students among industrialized countries (Auernheimer 2006). Before this PISA study, German educational researchers and practitioners had not seriously considered the ethnic or cultural backgrounds of students nor the topics of identity and belonging – except for some experts on intercultural or (qualitative) migration studies who were marginal in the broader landscape of (quantitative) empirical educational research and school practice. However, when the first results of the PISA study were published, intercultural educational research grew more and more important (Gogolin 2002). At the level of federal states, for instance in North Rhine-Westphalia, statistical approaches were developed in order to capture students' migrant background, thus enabling analysis of their educational performance or possible educational disadvantages (Kemper 2017; Kühne 2015; Schräpler and Jeworutzki 2016).

The education system in Germany has been unanimously considered as deeply unequal, 'hierarchical' and 'exclusive' with a strong tendency to reproduce social inequality due to the institutional mechanisms (Fernandez-Kelly 2012; Gogolin 2008). Furthermore, Gomolla and Radtke (2009), after analyzing established practices in internal school organizations, identified various modes of institutional discrimination of students, either direct or indirect. There are multiple structural reasons for educational inequalities. First, the German education system could be considered as highly selective, although Germany signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2006) in 2009 and despite attempts by some federal states to implement integrated schools that offer extended learning times and different certificates including the German high school certificate (*Abitur*). Despite the fact that federal states are responsible for school and higher education and that there are actually 16 school education systems in which different attempts have been made to smooth the selective nature and discriminating effects, the common three-tier school system has been the subject of controversy. On the one hand, there is a recommendation system for a secondary school decision at a very young age of 10 to 11 years, based on parents' wishes and recommendations given by primary school teachers. On the other hand, enrolment in one of the secondary school types gives access to academic education, whereby the lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*) has been considered as the so-called 'school for the rest' – that is, for children from socially disadvantaged families and/or students with a migrant background (Fernandez-Kelly 2012; Miera 2007). This stratification of German secondary school education was increasingly criticized as a consequence of the PISA results in 2001 and – starting

with the city states of Bremen, Hamburg and Berlin, was reshaped into a more inclusive one since then by abandoning the three-tier system, especially the type of *Hauptschule*.

Second, until 1996 German educational policies reflected the general idea of Germany as a non-immigration country – which to a great extent contributed to migrants' separation from the society of arrival. Only in 1996 the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz KMK 1996/2013) published the recommendation “Intercultural Education at School” (trans. by authors), acknowledging cultural diversity in the classroom and understanding intercultural education as a task both for ethnic and cultural minorities and for the society of arrival as a whole. This agreement could be interpreted as a paradigm shift, a first answer to challenges of the increasingly diverse society and a step towards creating an ethnically and culturally diverse school culture without institutional discrimination (Faas 2008; Karakaşoğlu et al. 2019; Miera 2007).

Another element of the German education system, which has recently received a lot of attention in political discourse on diversity at schools, is the lack of teachers with a migrant background. In 2017 only 8% of German teachers were estimated to have a migrant background, whereas in other academic professions this number was about three times higher (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018). In light of the increasing cultural diversity as well as rising numbers of students with a migrant background on the one hand and the obvious lack of teachers with a migrant background on the other, Chancellor Angela Merkel stated in 2015 that we need more teachers with a migrant background. At the same time, some studies are concerned not only with institutional discrimination of students with migration roots, but also with the discrimination of teachers with a migrant background (Fereidooni 2015; Georgi et al. 2011). In his quantitative and qualitative study, Fereidooni (2015) describes the German school as a highly monolingual space, which has a “specific idea of what the teachers working in it look like” (p. 304).

Many scholars acknowledge the ongoing existence of the ‘monolingual’ and ‘monocultural’ habitus of the German education system (Fereidooni 2015; Georgi et al. 2011; Gogolin 2008). In other words, the school as an institution still puts pressure on its actors, students as well as teachers, to assimilate towards an imagined ‘majority culture’. However, such a concept does not correspond to the reality of a super-diverse society and a super-diverse school. Such a forced assimilation idea contrasts with children’s ethnic and cultural roots, hinders the process of appropriate identity building and may weaken the sense of belonging. Students as well as teachers with migrant backgrounds are as diverse as the four different ideal types of migrant sketched out above. They could successfully arrive and integrate in Germany only if their preferred balance between identity

and belonging to the country of origin and to that of arrival is understood and respected (OECD 2017).

The high number of refugee children, who arrived in Germany during the 2010s, represents a more recent challenge for the German educational system, which demands an ad hoc but also sustainable institutional response. Some tendencies in this respect are already visible. Namely, while school as an institution is learning the lessons of the past in terms of recognition of ethnic-cultural differences, in the case of refugees some scholars still argue that separation should be preferred over inclusion (Koehler and Schneider 2019). Recent PISA results also emphasize that there is much more to be done to promote equal opportunities in German schools (OECD 2019).

Finally, the long tradition of neglecting the fact that Germany is a country of immigration is reflected in significant stratification of students with and without migrant background according to school types on the one hand and in the very low number of teachers with a migrant background on the other. In other words, the German reality of a super-diverse society goes hand in hand with a still highly segregated education system. In this respect Auernheimer (2006) even since the early 1990s has highlighted the dysfunctionality of the German school system for the immigration society.

However, many scholars argue that, to successfully manage all the challenges of the German system of education discussed above, the German school needs a fundamental reorientation to break up patterns of ethnocentric thought and action. There is a need for a reorientation at the level of teacher training, the curriculum level, and at the level of school organization. After recognizing the increasing heterogeneity, the German education system has to reconsider its contribution to avoiding institutional discrimination by offering equal opportunities for participation (Dirim and Mecheril 2018).

Furthermore, some scholars hold that the momentum and inertia of the educational system are partly due to an exaggerated federalism. Namely, the fact that all educational issues are structured and decided at the level of the federal states hinders a joint and substantial reform (Hepp 2011; Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration 2012).

---

## 5 Conclusion

There is no way to escape the need to distinguish between ‘us’ and ‘them’ – whatever the markers and layers of belonging might be. Social life and its perceptions are differentiated according to socially constructed categories like class, ethnicity,

culture, nation, age, gender etc. On the one hand, the borders of belonging are based on historical events and collective experiences, on interests and cognitive maps, on social institutions as sediments of former conflicts and contentious politics of belonging. There actually exist stereotypes about what 'Britishness' is, in what aspects Germans, Dutch people or French are alike, along with prejudices about typical behavior and habits of Turks, Surinamese or Muslims, about men and women, high- and low-qualified persons, old and young people. Such patterns of belonging are ascribed by 'us' and/or by 'them', they appear as durable and stable as rocks and they are actually inscribed into institutions as legal entitlements, education system, labor markets and a structure of public opinion. The long history of promoting the idea of national identities, of antisemitism, of gender roles or of class stereotypes are examples of the durability of patterns of belonging.

On the other side, belongings are always the outcome of active processes of remembering as ex-post reconstruction; belongings have to be created and recreated from generation to generation, they are adapted and changed according to new situations, power relations, interests and beliefs. During the last decades the social construction of gender roles has been revealed and analyzed in myriad ways. Also, national identities and nations have been studied as "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983). In a similar way, race and ethnicity were detailed as nothing fixed and 'objective' or 'biological', but as socially constructed categories of belonging. Boundaries of belonging in the field of migration and migrants' labor-market participation are shifting and being shifted. Concerning the question of collective identities, the increasingly multi-dimensional and multi-level aspects of belongings have led to the idea of super-diversity.

Transnational migration, increasing heterogeneity and cultural diversity as well as related shifts in identity and belonging represent significant challenges for the contemporary system of education in Germany. These tasks are now acknowledged in science and society. However, to successfully deal with the reality of super-diversity and complex mechanisms of identity formation and belonging in German classrooms, the German education system has to overcome its 'monocultural' and 'monolingual' habitus, which still continues to exist (Georgi et al. 2011; Gogolin 2008; Fereidooni 2015).

Since the process of forming identity and belonging should be considered an open-ended one, the crucial role of school in that process should not be underestimated. Yet the German education system, facing multiple orientations and belongings of students as well as increasing diversity, obviously still fails to offer equal opportunities of participation. In other words, first, we are witnessing a gap between diversification of identity and belonging on the one hand and continuity of an idea of a homogenous 'majority culture' on the other, and second, there still



exists structural inequality due to a school system that despite the federal government's signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2006) is still failing to implement an inclusionary system across the different German *Länder*.

Finally, it is crucial to address the topic of shifting identities and belonging in the education context in order to manage the given increasing cultural diversity in German schools both as a considerable challenge and as an opportunity for generations ahead.

---

## References

- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Auernheimer, G. (2006). Das deutsche Bildungssystem – für die Einwanderungsgesellschaft disfunktional [The German education system – dysfunctional for the immigration society]. In A. Tanner, H. Badertscher, R. Holzer, A. Schindler, & U. Streckeisen (Eds.), *Heterogenität und Integration. Umgang mit Ungleichheit und Differenz in Schule und Kindergarten* (pp. 109–122). Zürich: Seismo.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46(1), 5–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>
- Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L., & Vedder, P. (Eds.). (2006). *Immigrant Youth in Transition: Acculturation, Identity, and Adaption across National Contexts*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Crul, M. (2016). Super-diversity vs. assimilation: how complex diversity in majority–minority cities challenges the assumptions of assimilation. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42(1), 54–68.
- Dirim, İ., & Mecheril, P. (with A. Heinemann et al.). (2018). *Heterogenität, Sprache(n), Bildung. Die Schule der Migrationsgesellschaft* [Heterogeneity, Language(s), Education. School in migration society]. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Erikson, E. H. (1946). Ego development and historical change. *The psychoanalytic study of the child*, 2(1), 359–396. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.1946.11823553>
- Faas, D. (2008). From Foreigner Pedagogy to Intercultural Education: an analysis of the German responses to diversity and its impact on schools and students. *European Educational Research Journal*, 7(1), 108–123.
- Fereidooni, K. (2015). *Diskriminierungs- und Rassismuserfahrungen von Referendar\*innen und Lehrer\*innen ‚mit Migrationshintergrund‘ im deutschen Schulwesen. Eine quantitative und qualitative Studie zu subjektiv bedeutsamen Ungleichheitspraxen im Berufskontext* [Discrimination and racism experiences of trainee teachers and teachers ‘with a migrant background’ in the German school system. A quantitative and qualitative study of subjectively significant practices of inequality in the occupational context] (Doctoral Dissertation). Heidelberg: heiDOK, University library publication server. Retrieved November 3, 2019, from <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/20203/1/Dissertation%20Karim%20Fereidooni%281%29.pdf>

- Fernandez-Kelly, P. (2012). The Unequal Structure of the German Education System: Structural Reasons for Educational Failures of Turkish Youth in Germany. *Spaces Flows*, 2(2), 93–112.
- Foroutan, N. (2019). *Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft. Ein Versprechen der pluralen Demokratie* [Post-migrant society. A pledge of plural democracy]. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Georgi, V. B., Ackermann, L., & Karakaş, N. (Eds.). (2011). *Vielfalt im Lehrerzimmer. Selbstverständnis und schulische Integration von Lehrenden mit Migrationshintergrund in Deutschland* [Diversity in the teachers' room. Self-concept and school integration of teachers with migration background in Germany]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Gogolin, I. (2002). Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Europe: A Challenge for Educational Research and Practice. *European Educational Research Journal*, 1(1), 123–138.
- Gogolin, I. (2008). *Der monolinguale Habitus der multilingualen Schule* [The monolingual habitus of the multilingual school] (2nd ed.). Münster: Waxmann.
- Gogolin, I. (2011). The Challenge of Super Diversity for Education in Europe. *Education Inquiry*, 2(2), 239–249.
- Gomolla, M., & Radtke, F.-O. (2009). *Institutionelle Diskriminierung. Die Herstellung ethnischer Differenz in der Schule* [Institutional discrimination. The creation of ethnic difference in school] (3rd ed.). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Hepp, G. F. (2011). *Bildungspolitik in Deutschland: Eine Einführung* [Education Policy in Germany: Introduction]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Herbert, U. (1986). *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung in Deutschland 1880–1980. Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter* [History of employment of foreigners in Germany 1880–1980. Seasonal workers, forced laborers, guest workers]. Berlin & Bonn: Dietz.
- Hollinger, D. A. (2005). *Postethnic America. Beyond Multiculturalism* (10th rev. ed). New York: Basic Perseus Books.
- Karakaşoğlu, Y., Linnemann, M., & Vogel, D. (2019). *Schulischer Umgang mit transnationaler Migration und Mobilität: Rückschlüsse aus Empfehlungen der Kultusministerkonferenz seit den 1950er-Jahren* [Dealing with transnational migration and mobility at school: Conclusions from recommendations of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs since the 1950s] (TraMiS Working Paper No. 2). Bremen: Universität Bremen, Fachbereich 12, Arbeitsbereich Interkulturelle Bildung. <https://doi.org/10.26092/elib/228>
- Kemper, T. (2017). Bildungsbeteiligung von Schülerinnen und Schülern mit Migrationshintergrund – in Abhängigkeit von der schulstatistischen Operationalisierung [Educational participation of pupils with a migrant background – depending on the operationalization of school statistics]. *Die deutsche Schule*, 109(1), 91–115.
- Koehler, C., & Schneider, J. (2019). Young refugees in education: the particular challenges of school systems in Europe. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 7(28). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0129-3>
- Kühne, S. (2015). Möglichkeiten der Schulstatistik zur Rekonstruktion von Bildungsläufen [Possibilities of school statistics for the reconstruction of educational trajectories]. *Die deutsche Schule*, 107(4), 324–340.
- Kultusministerkonferenz (1996/2013). *Interkulturelle Bildung und Erziehung in der Schule* [Intercultural Education in Schools]. Resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of October 25, 1996 as amended on December 5, 2013.

- Retrieved July 28, 2020, from [http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen\\_beschluesse/1996/1996\\_10\\_25-Interkulturelle-Bildung.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/1996/1996_10_25-Interkulturelle-Bildung.pdf)
- Luft, S. (2009). *Staat und Migration. Zur Steuerbarkeit von Zuwanderung und Integration* [State and migration. On the controllability of immigration and integration]. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
- Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, 19, 432–466.
- Miera, F. (2007). *German Education Policy and the Challenge of Migration* (Working Paper). Frankfurt an der Oder: Europa-Universität Viadrina. Retrieved January 29, 2020, from [http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/en/2008/10/german\\_education\\_policy\\_and\\_the\\_challenge\\_of\\_migration.pdf](http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/en/2008/10/german_education_policy_and_the_challenge_of_migration.pdf)
- Netzwerk für Kritische Migrations- und Grenzregimeforschung. (2010, September 30). Nein zur Ausgrenzung. Appell zum 20. Jahrestag der Einheit [No to exclusion. Appeal for the 20th anniversary of German reunification]. *taz, die tageszeitung*. Retrieved July 28, 2020, from <https://taz.de/Appell-zum-20-Jahrestag-der-Einheit/15134775/>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2001). *Knowledge and skills for life: First results from PISA 2000* (Brochure). Paris. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/programmeforinternationalstudentassessment-pisa/33691620.pdf>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2017, April 19). *PISA 2015 Results: Students' Well-Being (Report, Vol. 3)*. Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2019, December 3). *PISA 2018 Results: What School Life Means for Students' Lives (Report, Vol. 3)*. Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/acd78851-en>
- Pries, L. (2001). The disruption of social and geographic space. US Mexican migration and the emergence of transnational social spaces. *International Sociology*, 16(1), 55–74.
- Pries, L. (2010). *Transnationalisierung. Theorie und Empirie grenzüberschreitender Vergesellschaftung* [Transnationalization. Theory and empiricism of cross-border socialization]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Pries, L. (Ed.). (2013). *Shifting boundaries of belonging. New migration dynamics in Europe and China*. Houndmills: Palgrave
- Pries, L. (2018). Vielfalt und Zusammenhalt vor den Herausforderungen des 21. Jahrhunderts [Diversity and facing the challenges of the 21st century]. *Archiv für Wissenschaft und Praxis der sozialen Arbeit*, 49(1), 4–16.
- Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration. (Ed.). (2012). *Integration im föderalen System: Bund, Länder und die Rolle der Kommunen. Jahresgutachten 2012 mit Integrationsbarometer* [Integration in the federal system: federal government, federal states and the role of municipal authorities] (Annual report). Berlin. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from [https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/SVR\\_Jahresgutachten\\_2012.pdf](https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/SVR_Jahresgutachten_2012.pdf)
- Schräpler, J.-P., & Jeworutzki, S. (2016). Der Sozialindex für NRW – Die Bildung von Schulstandortentypen über SGB-II-Dichten und Migrationshintergrund [The Social Index for NRW – The formation of school location types via SGB-II densities and migrant background]. In B. Groot-Wilken, K. Isaac, & J.-P. Schräpler (Eds.),

- Sozialindices für Schulen. Hintergründe, Methoden und Anwendung* (pp. 27–56). Münster & New York: Waxmann.
- Statistisches Bundesamt. (2018, September 17). *Bildungsstand der Bevölkerung. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2017* [Educational level of the population. Results of the 2017 microcensus] (Statistical Publication No. 5210002177004). Wiesbaden. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bildung-Forschung-Kultur/Bildungsstand/Publikationen/Downloads-Bildungsstand/bildungsstand-bevoelkerung-5210002177004.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bildung-Forschung-Kultur/Bildungsstand/Publikationen/Downloads-Bildungsstand/bildungsstand-bevoelkerung-5210002177004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile)
- Statistisches Bundesamt. (2019a, March 12). *Schülerzahl im Schuljahr 2018/2019 um 0,5 % gesunken* [Number of students decreased by 0.5% in the 2018/2019 school year] (Press release No. 090). Retrieved January 8, 2020, from [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2019/03/PD19\\_090\\_211.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2019/03/PD19_090_211.html)
- Statistisches Bundesamt. (2019b, August 21). *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018* [Population and employment. Population with migrant background. Results of the 2018 microcensus] (Statistical Publication Series 1 Number 2.2). Corrected version of July 17, 2020. Wiesbaden. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/migrationshintergrund-2010220187004.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/migrationshintergrund-2010220187004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile)
- United Nations (2006, December 13): Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Retrieved September 30, 2020 from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>
- Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(6), 1024–1054.

---

## **II Education in Transnational Constellations**



---

# The Colour of Schooling: Whiteness and the Mainstreaming of Racism

David Gillborn

---

## Abstract

This chapter applies Critical Race Theory (CRT) to an analysis of racism in contemporary education. I explore the ‘business-as-usual’ forms of racism that saturate the everyday world of schools; and show how so-called colour-blindness closes down critical discussion and denies the significance of racism. Finally, the chapter reflects on the nature of White supremacy in contemporary European societies.

---

## Keywords

Critical Race Theory · Discrimination · Whiteness · Colour evasion · Schooling · Education policy

---

## 1 Thinking Critically About Race

Critical Race Theory (CRT) began in US law schools in the 1970s and 1980s, and has grown to become an international and interdisciplinary movement (Delgado and Stefancic 2000; Taylor et al. 2016). There is no single unchanging statement that defines CRT; the approach is constantly developing. Nevertheless, there are key

---

D. Gillborn (✉)

School of Education, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

e-mail: [d.gillborn@bham.ac.uk](mailto:d.gillborn@bham.ac.uk)

signature themes (sometimes called tenets) that characterize CRT and, in particular, set the approach apart from traditional perspectives on ethnic diversity. One of the earliest descriptions, focusing on six ‘defining elements’, was co-authored by four of the foundational figures in legal CRT; Charles Lawrence III, Mari Matsuda, Richard Delgado and Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1993, pp. 6–7):

1. Critical race theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
2. Critical race theory expresses scepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colour-blindness and meritocracy.
3. Critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law.
4. Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of colour.
5. Critical race theory is interdisciplinary and eclectic.
6. Critical race theory works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression.

Underlying all CRT is an understanding of ‘race’ as a social construct, a recognition that the things that human beings typically use as signifiers of race are entirely superficial – skin colour, hair texture, facial features and the like. These are arbitrary markers in the sense that they have no inherent significance – rather, they have become endowed with meaning through social processes. Contrary to ‘common-sense’ assumptions, ‘race’ is not based on a fixed and natural system of genetic difference; in fact, ‘race’ is a system of socially constructed and enforced categories that are constantly recreated and modified through human interaction. This is why different societies have contrasting beliefs about how many groups are thought to exist and how they are identified; in each case these assumptions reflect the societies’ particular histories of slavery, colonialism and racism. As Warmington (2014) notes, CRT adopts a position that views race “as both unreal (as a scientific category) and real (as a social tool)” (p. 10). CRT is not alone in understanding race as a social construct. However, it does not view racism as merely a complicating factor, derived from another more fundamental social division (such as class) – rather CRT views race and racism as major fault lines in society; becoming more and less prominent at different times but always operating with brutal material force, in ways that may intersect with other divisions, but which deserve to be placed at the very centre of analysis in their own right.

## 2 Racism in the Everyday World of Schools

As several studies have shown, over the last half-century issues of racism, ‘race relations’ and ‘race’ equity have featured differently in English education policy. From early post-war ignorance and neglect, through periods of overt assimilationist and integrationist policies (Tomlinson 1977, 2008; Mullard 1982). Despite superficial changes in language and tone, for most of the time a constant feature is that race equity has been largely absent from flagship education policy. Superficially there have been significant changes. For example, during much of the 1980s and ’90s successive Conservative administrations – reflecting Margaret Thatcher’s famous assertion that there is “no such thing as society” (Thatcher 1993 p. 626) – insisted that the only fair approach was a ‘colour-blind’ perspective that denied any legitimacy to group-based analyses and claims. In a stark reversal of this language, Tony Blair’s incoming New Labour administration of 1997 openly named race inequity as an unacceptable feature of the education system and even cited critical research that had raised questions about teachers’ role in producing raced inequities in school (Department for Education and Employment [DfEE] 1997). Unfortunately, the tangible outcomes of this approach mostly concerned granting funding to a handful of minority ethnic schools on the basis of a distinctive religious identity, for example creating the first state-funded Muslim schools (Figuroa 2004).

The early 2000s saw a flurry of apparent activity following “The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report” (Macpherson 1999), which identified institutional racism as a serious problem that required urgent action across public services (including the criminal justice system and education). Unfortunately, this focus was soon abandoned; the Department for Education’s “five year strategy”, for example, was published amid great publicity in the summer of 2004. Running to more than 100 pages, the document set out Labour’s proposals for the next five years of education policy. ‘Minority ethnic’ pupils were granted a single mention in the text; a 25-word paragraph headed ‘*low achieving minority ethnic groups*’ (Department for Education and Skills [DfES] 2004, p. 60). The word ‘racism’ did not appear at all; neither did the more sanitized concepts of ‘prejudice’ and ‘discrimination’. In contrast, ‘business’ and ‘businesses’ appeared 36 times, and ‘standards’ appeared on 65 separate occasions: the latter equates to an average reiteration of ‘standards’ once every page and a half. Clearly, the five-year strategy prioritized an official version of ‘standards’ in education, but one could legitimately ask ‘standards for whom’?

Following a general election in 2010, UK politics shifted to the right and race equity was further demoted. Indeed, a concerted campaign (involving politicians,



media and right-wing think tanks) has largely erased race inequity as an educational concern. One of the most powerful policy and media tropes now presents ‘*White working class*’ students as the most disadvantaged group. Based on a systematic mis-representation of official data (see Gillborn 2010, 2013), this view of White people as an excluded group has continued to gather momentum.

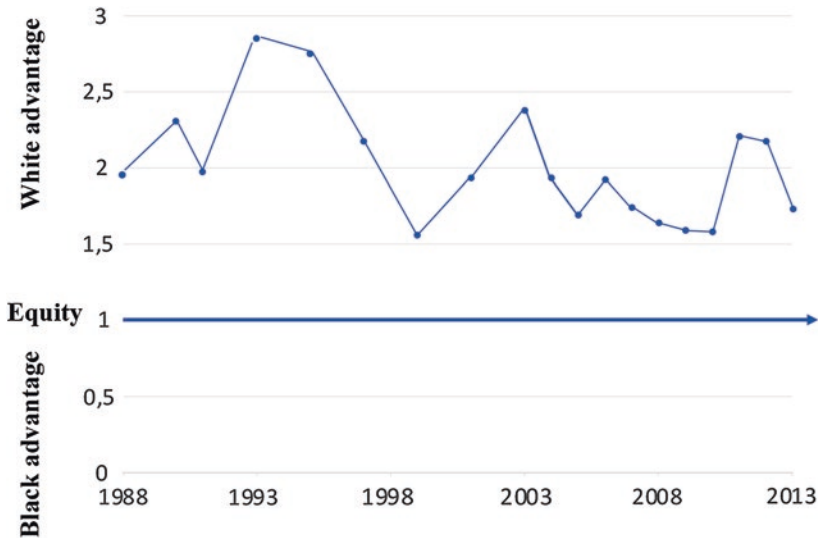
Regardless of the political persuasion of the incumbent political party, therefore, race equity has constantly to fight for legitimacy as a significant topic for education policymakers. This is a key part of the way in which education policy is implicated in White supremacy.

Traditionally, racism is seen as a relatively rare occurrence, usually associated with crude and obvious acts of race hatred and discrimination. But critical researchers have shown that racism also operates in ways that are quite subtle and extremely common, what Delgado and Stefancic (2000) term “business-as-usual forms of racism” (p. xvi). The people involved in racist acts might be completely unaware of their role; indeed, they may be well intentioned. White teachers often find themselves implicated in a series of practices that actively reinforce and remake race inequity, e.g. through their teaching styles, selection of curricular materials, testing regimes and routine decisions about what constitute signs of ability and disorder (see Ladson-Billings 1998).

There is a wide range of qualitative research that documents everyday life inside multi-ethnic schools and universities. Although the studies have been conducted by critical scholars from different ethnic backgrounds, working in a variety of educational systems, the findings are remarkably consistent (Gillborn 2008; Irvine 2018; Lynn and Dixson 2013). Classroom research shows that White people tend to have very different stereotypes of different minority groups. For example, some ‘Asian’ groups (especially Chinese and Indian students) are usually assumed to be hard working, respectful, quiet high achievers; they are more likely to be placed in high-ranked teaching groups, where they access the best resources and are taught by the most experienced teachers. In contrast, Black students (with family backgrounds in Africa and/or the Caribbean) experience the opposite stereotype. White teachers generally expect Black students to present disciplinary problems rather than excel academically. In school, Black students are often placed in lower-ranked teaching groups than White peers with similar test scores; this leads to them covering less of the curriculum, they are frequently taught by less experienced teachers, and they tend to be disciplined more severely than White peers engaged in the same acts. Black adults have complained about similar problems in numerous professions, including education, the criminal justice system, and the health service. Black staff are more likely to be on temporary contracts, more likely to be disciplined, but less likely to be promoted to

senior ranks (Bhopal 2016; Rollock 2019). These problems typically arise from the mundane everyday life of educational institutions. Often the interactions are not at all dramatic, simply *'business-as-usual'* small, routine decisions that keep favouring White people over Black people. Sometimes described as *'micro-aggressions'* (Yosso et al. 2009), the incidents might appear small in isolation but their cumulative effect is extraordinarily powerful and destructive. For example, data on school achievement frequently show systematic inequalities of outcome for certain minoritized groups.

Figure 1 illustrates 25 years of race inequity in examination achievement in England. The data compare the success of students who are categorized as *'White British'* and *'Black Caribbean'* (a term used in the UK census by people with family heritage in the Caribbean). It is important to note that in the UK, ethnic origin does not necessarily denote any difference in citizenship status; both White and Black Caribbean students share many key characteristics; they are overwhelmingly British citizens, born and raised in the UK, and they speak English as their first language. The inequity in achievement, therefore, cannot be simply



**Fig. 1** The odds of success: White students relative to Black Caribbean peers (England, 1988–2013). *Source* odds ratios taken from Gillborn et al. (2017), based on official statistics 1988–2013

explained in terms of deficit analyses that view Black students as outsiders to the society and education system.

Figure 1 uses a calculation of ‘*odds ratios*’, which compare the chance of success for White students relative to their Black peers: an odds ratio of 1 would denote that the two groups had an equal chance of success; a score *less* than 1 would indicate that White children had less chance of success, and a score *greater* than 1 shows how much *more* likely White students are to achieve the required grades. *The data indicate a consistent and significant pattern of White racial advantage.* During the quarter century covered by the data, White students have always enjoyed a greater chance of success, sometimes at more than twice the Black level. Mainstream commentators and policymakers often try to explain such disparities by invoking supposed deficits on the part of Black students; a common argument is that the disparity really measures *class* not *race* disadvantage, that is, that Black students are more likely to live in economic disadvantage and this depresses their attainment. However, recent studies have shown that Black achievement inequities are actually *greater* when comparing students from relatively advantaged economic backgrounds (Rollock et al. 2015). It is not the case, therefore, that race inequity is simply a reflection of socioeconomic differences.

The English education system has a long-established track record of producing outcomes marked by Black racial disadvantage. Despite successive governments claiming to value equality of opportunity, it is clear from the evidence that policy has failed to eradicate race inequity in education. In part this reflects policymakers’ unwillingness to focus on the needs of minoritized students in general, and Black students in particular. This is because policymakers’ first and overwhelming concern is to protect the interests of White people, especially White elites. Of course, this strategy is not presented in such bold terms; indeed, policymakers frequently excuse their inaction on race inequity as a principled stand reflecting a so-called ‘colour-blind’ approach.

---

### 3 Whiteness and White People

It is useful to remind ourselves that Whiteness and White people are different things. In general terms, *Whiteness* refers to a system of beliefs, practices, and assumptions that constantly centre the interests of White people, especially White elites. People who identify or are identified by others as *White* often act in the interests of Whiteness, but that is not automatic nor inevitable. White-identified people can challenge Whiteness, just as people of colour can sometimes become

vocal advocates for Whiteness. As Zeus Leonardo (2002) notes, “‘Whiteness’ is a racial discourse, whereas the category ‘white people’ represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color” (p. 31).

---

## 4 From Colour-Blind to Colour Evasion and Racism Denial

“I think that the true racist sees everything in terms of race, or colour. Surely what we should be aiming to be is colour blind.” Philip Davies, Member of Parliament (as cited in Sweney 2014)

This statement was made by a Conservative politician criticizing a company’s moves to increase the diversity of its employees. His comments are a perfect example of a long-standing attack on measures that seek to directly address race inequity; the position argues that a focus on race is by definition racist; therefore, the only legitimate way ahead is to refuse to recognize race – to be ‘colour-blind’.

Numerous studies have shown that a claim to be blind to colour – to simply treat all people alike – tends to benefit the already powerful by defending and extending White racial advantage (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Burke 2019; Haney-Lopez 2007). Advocates of colour-blindness often portray themselves as occupying the moral high ground by rising above petty racialized disputes in order to see the worth of people as *individuals*. In practice, however, colour-blindness has become an argument to *ignore* race inequality and *silence* critical discussion of racism in all but its most crude and obvious forms. Indeed, Annamma et al. (2017) argue that we should abandon the term ‘colour-blind’ and replace it with the more accurate colour-*evasiveness*:

Color-evasiveness as an expanded racial ideology acknowledges that to avoid talking about race is a way to willfully ignore the experiences of people of color, and makes the goal of erasure more fully discernible. In other words, to use the term ‘evade’ highlights an attempt to obliterate. (p. 156)

As a challenge to so-called colour-blindness, the term *colour evasion* has several advantages; it makes clear that adopting this stance is a deliberate and destructive act. Colour evasion is neither innocent nor passive; it is an active refusal to engage with race inequality. Regardless of the moral, theoretical, or practical arguments that might be used to defend colour-blind ideology, in practice the position is an assertion that the experiences of minoritized groups are not important enough to be considered or acted on. In essence, colour-blindness acts

as both *colour evasion* (we should not talk about race) and *racism denial* (racism isn't a serious enough problem to justify such attention). The new term also avoids feeding into patronizing and discriminatory assumptions about people with visual impairments. Blind and partially-sighted people are able to perceive the world in great complexity, but the term colour-blindness equates a disability with a kind of ignorance or lack of perception.

---

## 5 White People: Not just Another Ethnic Group

A Whiteness trope that is growing in popularity, on both sides of the Atlantic, trades on the assertion that White people are just another ethnic group. This is an unusual tactic because historically Whiteness has gained a great deal of its strength from asserting the absence of ethnicity, as if an ethnic identity is something that Other people have; for example *ethnic* is often used as a code for non-White, and *White* is synonymous with “normal” (Delgado and Stefancic 1997). White racism is quick to morph to new conditions and opportunities (Gillborn 2018); CRT suggests, therefore, that when White people seek to embrace the status of an ethnic group, we should examine how this might serve the interests of White powerholders. Current advocates of Whiteness as an ethnic identity, in the United States and the United Kingdom, construct a worldview where White racism is presented as merely a natural preference for one's own people. Most tellingly, this tactic presents White people's actions in defence of their existing advantages (and their continued oppression of others) as a legitimate form of identity politics. In 2017, for example, Policy Exchange (a London-based rightist think tank) published a report entitled '*Racial Self-Interest*' is not Racism, authored by Eric Kaufmann, Professor of Politics at Birkbeck College, University of London. Kaufmann (2019) subsequently expanded the arguments into his book "Whiteshift: Populism, Immigration and the Future of White Majorities". The latter begins: “We need to talk about white identity. Not as a fabrication designed to maintain power, but as a set of myths and symbols to which people are attached: an ethnic identity like any other” (p. 1).

And so, the second line of the book sets out one of its dominant themes: White identity deserves the same respect and understanding as “any other” (non-majority) identity. The book's release was covered in *The Times* newspaper with the stunningly insensitive (or perhaps deliberately crass and provocative) title “Don't lynch me for spelling out what immigration means” (Hemming 2018). Kaufmann's argument is that commentators have been too quick to denounce White group interests as racist and that this has closed down debate and forced White people towards extremist nationalist positions. Launching Kaufmann's (2017)

report, Policy Exchange's Head of Demography, Integration and Immigration David Goodhart argued:

The challenge here is to distinguish between white racism and white identity politics. The latter may be clannish and insular, but it is not the same as irrational hatred, fear or contempt for another group - the normal definition of racism. [...] The liberal reflex to tar legitimate majority grievances with the brush of racism risks deepening western societies' cultural divides. (Kaufmann 2017)

Note that a false distinction is drawn here between White racism (limited to the most extreme and obvious forms of "irrational hatred, fear or contempt for another group") and White "identity politics" (which is described as "legitimate" grievances). In this way, racism is redefined in the narrowest way possible as "irrational hatred". This means that systemic inequities that persistently and significantly favour White people (for example in the economy, health, the criminal justice system, and education) are simply ruled out of bounds. Such differences cannot be racist in the Goodhart/Kaufmann universe (even though they favour one group at the expense of others) because they do not arise from plain, simple, deliberate, and overtly fascist politics. In this way, such arguments close down critical discussion of pernicious and widespread structural racism. The move is disguised as thoughtful, even academic, but the consequence of this argument is that White people would be free to say and do almost anything (short of violence) to protect their own racial self-interest. From a CRT perspective White people (in the US, UK, Europe and Australasia) are *not* "an ethnic identity like any other". They are the dominant holders of power, and their move to protect their existing slice of the cake is not a romantic strategy to protect some folkloric image of red-cheeked children in an innocent past; it is an attempt to safeguard an oppressive and racist status quo. Whiteness enforces its power in numerous ways, sometimes subtly, sometimes less so. Kaufmann (2019) strikes an ominous tone early and often:

The loss of white ethno-cultural confidence manifests itself in other ways. Among the most important is a growing unwillingness to indulge the anti-white ideology of the cultural left. When whites were an overwhelming majority, empirically unsupported generalizations about whites could be brushed off as amusing and mischievous but ultimately harmless. As whites decline, fewer are willing to abide such attacks. (p. 2)

And so, the view of White people as just another ethnic group (which happens to control the levers of power across society) is married to an implicit threat: *Don't*

*call us racist because you'll make us angry, and you won't like White people when we're frightened and angry.*

White people exert disproportionate power and influence. They cannot merely look out for their own interests because, in contrast to Black, Latinx, Roma and other minoritized groups, White movements are not pursuing equity and social justice; they are generally seeking to preserve inequity and injustice.

---

## 6 Europe and the Mainstreaming of Race Hatred

The global economic crisis of 2008 sparked a wave of regressive social policies across major 'Western' economies that provided a potent breeding ground for ever more vocal and extreme racist sentiment. No European state has been immune to the rise in populism, indeed many have seen electoral gains by right-wing (sometimes far-right/neo-fascist) parties and witnessed growing racist violence, often linked to the so-called 'migration crisis' arising from wars in the Middle East and parts of Africa (Amnesty International 2018; Rankin 2018). The rise in racist street violence is an obvious indication of the worsening state of race and racism in Europe and North America, but, as I have already noted, racism also takes more subtle and insidious forms. There is insufficient space here to chart the multiple ways in which White supremacy has extended its grip on mainstream politics; instead I will comment on a single episode that illustrates the further normalization of anti-minority sentiment in Europe.

In 2017 the Dutch general election appeared to offer hope when the far-right xenophobic *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom), led by Geert Wilders, failed to win a majority. The BBC headlined its coverage, "Dutch election: European relief as mainstream triumphs" (BBC News 2017). Henley (2017a) reported that the result was greeted enthusiastically by numerous European governments:

- "a good day for democracy" (Germany)
- "a clear victory against extremism" (France)
- "a show of responsibility and maturity" (Spain)
- "serious politics" (Denmark)
- "responsible leadership" (Sweden)
- "a rejection of populism" (Norway)

The air of celebration, however, misunderstands (or misrepresents) just how far to the right *mainstream* political discourse has now swung. A few weeks before

the election the incumbent prime minister, Mark Rutte, shifted his policies to the right and adopted anti-immigrant rhetoric. Rutte (2017) published an open letter to “all Dutch people”, stating that the country faced a problem because of people who “abuse our freedom [...] while they have come to our country for that freedom”. People who “harass gays, or whistle at women in short skirts, or brand ordinary Dutch people racists”. He went on to say that “if you so fundamentally reject this country, then I’d prefer it if you leave” (Henley 2017b). And so the Dutch prime minister, whose victory was so warmly welcomed a few weeks later, had effectively declared anyone as unfit to live in the country if they dared “brand ordinary Dutch people racists”. This is how far ‘mainstream’ political discourse has shifted to the right. Racist and anti-immigrant sentiment have become normalized to the degree that, even when we think that racist political parties have been defeated in elections, they have often succeeded in changing the political landscape.

---

## 7 Conclusions

In this chapter I have applied CRT to an examination of racism in education and society. I have shown how CRT understands racism as a wide-ranging, complex, often hidden aspect of social life. CRT’s ability to unmask the everyday ‘business-as-usual’ forms of racism is especially important. I have argued that even well-intentioned teachers can be caught up in processes that remake and extend racist inequity, for example, through decisions about identifying ability and indiscipline – decisions that frequently encode long-standing racist stereotypes. I have also shown how so-called ‘colour-blindness’ acts as an ideological excuse for inaction, resulting in race evasion and racism denial. The evidence demonstrates that policymakers’ claims of a commitment to inclusion, fairness and race equality cannot be taken at face value. Mainstream assumptions about steady incremental progress are contradicted by long-term patterns of persistent and significant race inequity. These patterns reflect the reality of societies that are structured by historical and contemporary deep-rooted racism and yet where the mainstream discourse continues to treat race and racism as marginal issues. CRT offers a fundamental challenge to these assumptions by emphasizing that a critical analysis should adopt a perspective that takes seriously the experiences and understandings of minoritized people: White people do not have an automatic right to define what is ‘normal’ or important; White people are not always the best placed to say what is fair and just.



**Acknowledgements** This chapter draws upon arguments about colour-blind ideology and Whiteness in part from an article published in *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 55(3), 112–117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2019.1622376>

## References

- Amnesty International. (2018, February 22). *Amnesty International Report 2017/18. The State Of The World's Human Rights* (Report No. POL 10/6700/2018). London. Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1067002018ENGLISH.PDF>
- Annamma, S. A., Jackson, D. D., & Morrison, D. (2017). Conceptualizing color-evasiveness: using dis/ability critical race theory to expand a color-blind racial ideology in education and society. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 20(2), 147–162.
- BBC News. (2017, March 16). Dutch election: European relief as mainstream triumphs. *BBC News*. Retrieved July 30, 2019, from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-39297355>
- Bhopal, K. (2016). *The Experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Academics: A comparative study of the unequal academy*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2006). *Racism without Racists* (2nd ed.). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Burke, M. (2019). *Colorblind Racism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Critical White Studies. Looking Behind the Mirror*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (Eds.). (2000). *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Department for Education and Employment [DfEE]. (1997). *Excellence in schools* (CM 3681). The Stationery Office. London.
- Department for Education and Skills [DfES]. (2004). *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners*. London: DfES.
- Figueroa, P. (2004). Multicultural education in the United Kingdom. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (2nd ed., pp. 997–1026). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gillborn, D., Demack, S., Rollock, N. & Warmington, P. (2017). Moving the goalposts: education policy and 25 years of the Black/White achievement gap. *British Educational Research Journal*, 43(5), 848–874. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3297>
- Gillborn, D. (2008). *Racism and Education: Coincidence or Conspiracy?* London: Routledge.
- Gillborn, D. (2010). The White Working Class, Racism and Respectability: Victims, Degenerates and Interest-Convergence. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 58(1), 2–25.
- Gillborn, D. (2013). Interest-divergence and the colour of cutbacks: race, recession and the undeclared war on Black children. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 34(4), 477–491.
- Gillborn, D. (2018). Heads I Win, Tails You Lose: Anti-Black Racism as Fluid, Relentless, Individual and Systemic. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 93(1), 66–77.

- Haney-Lopez, I. F. (2007). "A Nation of Minorities": Race, Ethnicity, and Reactionary Colorblindness. *Stanford Law Review*, 59(4), 985–1063.
- Hemming, M. (2018, October 14). Eric Kaufmann: don't lynch me for spelling out what immigration means. *The Times*. Retrieved April 11, 2019, from <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/eric-kaufmann-dont-lynch-me-for-spelling-out-what-immigration-means-7ljjws60>
- Henley, J. (2017a, March 16). Europe's governments signal relief after Dutch election defeats far right. *The Guardian*. Retrieved March 16, 2017, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/16/europes-governments-signal-relief-as-dutch-election-defeats-far-right>
- Henley, J. (2017b, January 23). Netherlands PM says those who don't respect customs should leave. *The Guardian*. Retrieved January 23, 2017, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/23/netherlands-pm-mark-rutte-dutch-citizens-open-letter-pvv>
- Irvine, J. J. (2018). Teaching in an Increasingly Polarized Society. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 54(3), 103–105.
- Kaufmann, E. (2017). 'Racial Self-Interest' is not Racism: Ethno-demographic interests and the immigration debate. London, United Kingdom: Policy Exchange. Retrieved September 18, 2017, from <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/racial-self-interest-is-not-racism/>
- Kaufmann, E. (2019). *Whiteshift: Populism, Immigration, and the Future of White Majorities*. New York: Abrams.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 7–24.
- Lawrence III, C. R., Matsuda, M. J., Delgado, R. & Crenshaw, K. W. (1993). Introduction. In M. J. Matsuda, C. R. Lawrence III, R. Delgado, & K. W. Crenshaw (Eds.), *Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive speech, and the First Amendment*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Leonardo, Z. (2002). The Souls of White Folk: Critical pedagogy, whiteness studies, and globalization discourse. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 5(1), 29–50.
- Lynn, M., & Dixson, A. D. (Eds.). (2013). *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Macpherson, W. (1999). *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* (CM 4262-I). The Stationery Office London.
- Mullard, C. (1982). Multiracial Education in Britain: From Assimilation to Cultural Pluralism. In J. Tierney (Ed.), *Race, Migration and Schooling* (pp. 120–33). London: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Rankin, J. (2018). People of African descent face 'dire picture' of racism in EU. *The Guardian*, Retrieved July 30, 2019, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/28/people-of-african-descent-face-dire-picture-of-racism-in-eu>
- Rollock, N. (2019). *Staying Power. The career experiences and strategies of UK Black female professors*. Project Report. London: University & College Union.
- Rollock, N., Gillborn, D., Vincent, C., & Ball, S. J. (2015) *The Colour of Class: The educational strategies of the Black middle classes*. London: Routledge.
- Rutte, M (2017). *Aan alle Nederlanders* [To all Dutch people]. Retrieved July 30, 2019, from <https://www.vvd.nl/nieuws/lees-hier-de-brief-van-mark/>

- Sweney, M. (2014). BBC's 'racist approach' to diversity ignores white working class-Tory MP. *The Guardian*. Retrieved July 30, 2019, from <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/jul/15/bbc-racist-diversity-white-working-class-tory-mp>
- Taylor, E., Gillborn, D., & Ladson-Billings, G. (Eds). (2016). *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* (2nd ed). New York: Routledge.
- Thatcher, M. (1993). *The Downing Street Years*. London: HarperCollins.
- Tomlinson, S. (1977). Race and education in Britain 1960-77: an overview of the literature. *Sage Race Relations Abstracts*, 2(4), 3-33.
- Tomlinson, S. (2008). *Race and Education: Policy and Politics in Britain*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.
- Warmington, P. (2014). *Black British Intellectuals and Education. Multiculturalism's hidden history*. London: Routledge.
- Yosso, T. J., Smith, W. A., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. G. (2009). Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate for Latina/o Undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(4), 659-690.



---

# Education and Integration: Some Secular and Religious Considerations

Yotam Hotam

---

## Abstract

This paper takes issue with the relations between modern secular education and religion by taking the main sector of public education in Israel as a case study. By focusing particularly on the educational arena in Israel, the paper presents two reflections. First, that the ‘secular’ is not a universal category but a culturally dependent one that already makes a distinction between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. Second, and in building on the first reflection, that any appeal for integration in education should also include an engagement with the variety of religious identities that may challenge some of the most intimate secular views and concepts, including the concept of integration itself. To present the case, the paper starts with a theoretical framework, followed by a brief examination of the Israeli case study. The paper concludes by exploring some of the questions that these discussions may present for education.

---

## Keywords

Secularization · Religion · Israeli education · Integration · Migration

---

Y. Hotam (✉)

Faculty of Education, University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel

e-mail: [yhotam@gmail.com](mailto:yhotam@gmail.com)

## 1 Introductory Remarks

That the ‘secular’, in the European context, actually means ‘secularized-Christian’, was a generational truism in the German intellectual world of the twentieth century. Scholars such as Theodor Adorno, Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss, or Herbert Marcuse (to name a few), who differed on almost every issue, and contested each other on almost every corner, were united in this supposition. Even Kafka thought that theology (meaning Christian theology) “was the main resource for our conceptual commitments” (North 2015, p. 6). Karl Löwith (1949) summarized the point by noting that the modern way of thinking secularizes the Christian theological (for him mainly eschatological) ideas although it tends to forget, perhaps intentionally ignore, this fact. The point to note is that for this generation of mostly secular scholars a – one could say – theological unconscious runs through secular-modernity. This theological undercurrent applies also to the political world and in particular to the nation-state, which – as Eisenstadt (2002) for example noted well – tends to fall back on sacred processes of meaning making. A secular political world is not considered to be one that exorcises the daemons of religion in any simple sense, but rather one that reworks religious language and symbolism in new and compound ways. For these scholars there is an entanglement of ‘the secular’ and ‘the religious’, rather than a stark separation, which applies to the secular scene itself.

Of course, this generational outlook gave rise to considerable scholarly debates that lie however somewhat beyond the limits of this short paper. Still, the reason for opening with this type of critical awareness to the relations between secular modernity and religion lies in that I find it quite challenging, and in this sense helpful, for any contemporary theoretical discussion of education in ‘transnational’ constellations. Whatever we think of the term ‘transnational’ today – and we may have different understandings of this term – it involves, at least in the last two decades, also the return of religion and religiosity to the forefront of culture, society and politics. Especially in the field of education such a “religious turn” (Turner 2010, p. 652) or, as Milbank and Žižek (2009) would put it, a religious “return with a vengeance” (p. 4) calls for some theoretical reflections on the relations between public secular education and religion.

I would like to present two such reflections that seem to me to be particularly relevant to the field of education. The first reflection has to do with the recognition that the ‘secular’ is not a universal category that applies the same way everywhere. Rather it is a culturally dependent one (that is, dependent on tradition, interpretation of history and social imaginary) that already makes a distinction between insiders and outsiders. The second reflection, which to some extent

builds on the first, relates to the concept of 'integration' in education and what such a concept may indicate given the cultural dependency of any secular context. I wish in such a way to raise some critical awareness of the problems that seem to me to be inherent to a secular educational arena. In so doing, however, I do not wish to suggest that we should necessarily abandon the secular character of public education. Rather that we should be more attentive to the difficulties that are integral to such an educational orientation, especially in interacting with people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

---

## 2 The 'Secular' as a Cultural Dependent Category

In particular, in the field of pedagogy, secular education is never universal but culturally dependent. To make the point let me take the main sector of public education in Israel as an example. What seems to me to justify such a focus on Israel is the fact that this type of education is rooted mainly in a Jewish European experience, and in such a way relates to the tensions that were imported from Europe (Dror 2008; Elboim-Dror 1986, 1993; Hotam 2017; Jobani 2008; Lam 2000; Raichel 2008). One of the main implications of this historical conjunction relates to the construction of the main sector of public education in Israel (in Hebrew: *Chinuch Mamlachti*).<sup>1</sup> There are two main points to note. First, since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the main sector of public education is designed for the Jewish secular majority group. Its curriculum for example has been taken as secular because it is different from a religious curriculum that is based on the study of the Jewish law (the Halacha) or that prepares the student for a life of religious obedience. Here, then, we are dealing with a type of modern education, which defines the 'secular' as an educational practice and a curriculum that is separated from religion. Secular education denotes in this sense independence from religion and religious education so that, at least institutionally, there is a clear separation between religion and education, making religion the excluded term (Dror 2008; Hotam 2017).

---

<sup>1</sup>Public education in Israel is divided into two main sectors, designed to meet the needs of the Jewish majority and Arab minority. The Jewish majority sector is divided into religious (Mamlachti Dati) and non-religious (Mamlachti) orientations, the latter corresponding to the main sector of public education in Israel. This heavily debated institutional division was ratified by the 1953 Law of Education and still characterizes public education in Israel today.

This institutional separation, between secular and religious education, however, is also somewhat misleading. This is, then, the second point to note. What I mean is that the public secular education in Israel is also heavily dominated by the enduring presence of religious language and symbolism. Let me give, however briefly, two notable examples. First, the role of Bible studies in the national secular education. Bible studies are part of the program of studies from elementary to high school learning. They were especially designed for secular education by being informed by a preference for literary and historical reading of the Bible (Shkedi 2003). Such a preference aimed mainly at providing information on religion and not at preaching faith. The method had two main implications. First it supported the distancing of pupils from the religious ideal of a life of obedience to the Jewish law. One reads the bible in order to learn of the past and not to, say, obey the Halacha or to strengthen religious beliefs. Second, however, at the same time, the stories of the Bible were taken to represent a historical reality that relates to an assumed original Jewish presence in the land of Israel. One learns this reality in order to nurture a national sense of belonging and of possession. This means that learning is designed to foster a sense of being part of a Jewish history and holding to a Jewish identity on the land of Israel by way of the direct contact of pupils with the scriptures. The scriptures maintain the role of a sacred source for national rejuvenation. To put it more bluntly, the engagement with the Bible is made to confirm the political legitimacy of the Jewish nation-state. It does so because it points to the manner in which Jewish sovereignty allegedly echoes a certain old godly 'promise', without succumbing, however, to an orthodox religious understanding of the nature of this divine assurance (Hotam 2017; Jobani 2008). Here, myth is transformed into history and theology into political legitimacy.

The second example relates to the role of Jewish holidays in Israeli elementary schools. For example, Chanukah (which is a religious holiday that celebrates a Jewish rebellion against the Hellenistic rule in Judea of the second century BC) and the 15th of the Hebrew month Shevat (which is a Jewish holiday devoted to nature's rejuvenation). These are religious holidays that held a rather minor significance within the traditional Jewish religious culture. Yet, these holidays were selected by the Zionist and later Israeli educational leaders to signify key points in the annual learning cycle (Dror 2008; Sapir 2006). Chanukah serves as an historical indicator for Jewish sovereignty. And 15th of Shevat is taken to accentuate the union of the people of Israel with the Land of Israel. These religious holidays regained importance in the national Jewish education while undergoing a transformation of their original religious meaning. Here, again, religious symbolism is preserved, if not reinvented, while at the same time transformed to the extent that

it now expresses a national-secular outlook which reformulates a religious tradition for its modern needs.

These examples invite no doubt a much deeper examination than what could be offered here. The aim of this brief description lies in showing how within a deeply secular education some religious original content is preserved. Preserving religious symbolism, however, means also dismissing some of its core elements. Religious holidays are thus still held only by reformulating their original religious meaning, and the Bible maintains its role as a sacred source for modern national, and in this sense secular, needs. This is not to say that these examples show that public education in Israel is not secular. Rather they present us with a secular education that reformulates religious imaginaries in the new modern, and in the Israeli case national, context.

A secular approach means in this case a move away from religious obedience, but not away from religious heritage, language and symbolism. Christoph Schmidt (2009) labeled this complexity “dialectic of secularization”, pointing to the admixture of secular and religious notions that are in this case embedded within the Jewish secular approach itself. Under such ‘dialectic’ relations, secular education stands for the transformation of, rather than the separation from religion. One may then distinguish here between secular education and ‘laïcité’ because we are dealing with a type of education that renders irrelevant a ‘strong’ opposition between education and religion (Williams 2007). The transformation of religious language and symbolism means that secular education is characterized by a tacit endurance of religiosity as the core of social cohesion within modern society and culture. A core that on the one hand does not conform to religious laws and institutions – that is a turning away from formal religion – but that on the other hand entails, at the same time, a preservation of religious significance, albeit in a secularized manner. Understanding this type of secular culture in terms of a great divide between the secular and the religious may then be misleading. Instead, we should acknowledge the entanglement of religious and secular notions as constituting the most intimate elements of an Israeli social and political imaginary that this type of education is designed to create and which is – undeniably – also susceptible to all sorts of political manipulations.

One of the outcomes of this short description relates to the manner in which one may define secular education in Israel as secularized Jewish. The term ‘secular’ in this context indicates not a universal category that applies the same way everywhere but one that is heavily informed by a certain tradition, interpretation of history and social imaginary (Jobani 2008). In this sense the secular is culturally dependent. Because of this dependence, secular Jewish education can be seen as a central element in an Israeli regime of belonging. What characterizes



such a regime is that it already makes a distinction between those who belong to a particular tradition, religion and history, and those who do not belong, or between what I would like to, perhaps more bluntly, call “insiders” and “outsiders” (Mendes-Flohr 1991).<sup>2</sup>

This last point seems to me to be important. Especially in the field of education we tend to think of the secular in the most general, universal and arguably inclusive terms. This includes some pedagogic tendencies to see in a secular educational arena a neutral space of sorts to which everyone is equally invited. I would even suggest that contemporary calls for “epistemic neutrality” in schools (Jawoniyi 2015) are informed by an association between such “neutrality” and a secular pedagogic environment. But from the Israeli perspective a secular approach seems to be limited in space, and in cultural reliance. It is, to put it more radically, anything but neutral.

In his “Notes on a post-secular society”, Habermas (2008), I would like to suggest, relies on this exact point, even if perhaps unintentionally. Habermas (2008) does so because he argues that a ‘post-secular’ reality – meaning a social reality which requires public consciousness to “adjust itself to the continued existence of religious communities” (p. 13) – applies only to the ‘affluent’ western societies who according to him experienced secularization. In so doing he limits the discussion to the particular cultural and historical reality of a secularized-Christian (Casanova 1994), Latin (Milbank and Zizek 2009) or North-Atlantic (Taylor 2007) world. The categories of the secular, and by extension post-secular, are presented in such a way as culturally dependent and one could further argue that also for Habermas and Ratzinger (2005) this dependence means mainly a reference to a secularized or post-secularized Christian world.

This is not to argue – at least not yet – against the separation between education and religion that applies in different ways to most European countries (Judge 2002; Rothgangel and Ziebertz, 2013; Williams 2007). It is, however, a suggestion to see the very idea of what the secular means not as universal, but as already

---

<sup>2</sup>I borrow this terminology from Paul Mendes-Flohr. Mendes-Flohr (1991) brilliantly showed how Jewish intellectuals in Europe were “cognitive insiders” in the non-Jewish majority culture in which they lived, but at the same time “axionormative outsiders”, that is alienated and distant from the “religious, moral political or economic ideas” (p. 28) that direct this culture. I then wish here to bring this rather crafty description to bear on a simple social dichotomy (rather than an inner tension) that characterizes a secular educational arena, between those whose world-views are reflected by its framework (insiders), and those who are alienated by it (outsiders).

heavily dependent on a specific cultural, historical and religious (that is secularized religious) heritage, language or symbolic order. There is no single ‘secular’ world, but rather Secular-Christian, Secular-Jewish, or Secular-Muslim, contexts that may share a range of traits while differing on many others. In such a way, as I suggest above, education already differentiates between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ – that is, those whose world-views are reflected by the secular educational framework, and those who are alienated by it. Indeed, one could argue that from the standpoint of someone who comes into such an educational framework from a different cultural or religious background (for example a Jewish person in a secularized-Christian context, or a Muslim in a secularized-Jewish one), secular education may be experienced as alienating not less than any other form of social and educational coercion.

---

### **3 Secularization and ‘Integration’**

I would like now to turn to the relations between secular education and the concept of ‘integration’ which seems to be important in today’s educational reality and in particular in the context of migration (Frederiks and Nagy 2016; Georgi et al. 2011; Warburg 2007). There are, I believe, two main ways to understand what integration may mean in a secular educational context as sketched above. First, integration may mean that there is a pre-existing structure and content of education to which new members of society (children or adults) must adapt. This could be termed a simple notion of integration. In such a simple notion of integration, one assimilates into a prevailing social and cultural context. For such an integration to succeed, changes are required from the individual, but not from the social and educational settings, even if these settings may be accommodating or culturally sensitive. There are clearly noticeable elements that in such a case need to be adopted by the integrating individuals (for example how to behave, how to talk, or engage with others and so on). There are, however, also more deep-rooted and implicit cultural requirements that are usually not very easy to discern or pinpoint. These may relate for example to the understanding of the self, or the relations between such a self and others. Charles Taylor (1989) for example pointed to the ethics of individual self-fulfillment – a cult of individualism, to put it more directly – that is according to him central in a modern and secular (again secularized-Christian) world and that renders ineffective any reliance of the self on common values and social commitments. This type of ethics may seem to be odd to someone who comes from a cultural background in which the construction of identity or of self-fulfillment works differently (for example the presenting

of common commitments as a constitutive precondition of self-fulfillment, rather than the other way around, or perhaps even the arguing for a complicated net of arrangements, between individuals and community, that is constitutive of both concepts and that denies any separation between them).

All this has bearing also on our discussion of secular education. If secular education maintains a pre-existing discursive structure, which is culturally dependent (that is secularized-Jewish, secularized-Christian and so on), it requires people of a different cultural, traditional and religious background to adapt, and that such an adaptation may not be less compulsory to them than any other faith-related educational orientation that could be imposed on them. They may see themselves as being swallowed by the great educational Leviathan, to put it metaphorically, and in this sense, limited by the pre-existing enforced framework. One could perhaps further argue that especially a secular world-view acts in such a coercive way, because of what seems to be a gap between its self-proclaimed inclusive agenda, and its actual mechanism of exclusion. What is excluded is the perspectives of all those with religious affiliations not included in the not openly declared but culturally- and religiously-framed national form of secular education.

Israel, I would argue, tends to think in terms of this model of assimilationist integration. But this may not be true only for Israel. If to refer again to Habermas' notes (2008) on post-secularism, he clearly identifies between what he calls a 'secularist' approach and such a simple notion of integration. "Secularists" according to Habermas (2008) "insist on the uncompromising inclusion of minorities in the *existing* political [and we may add educational] framework" (p. 24). Inclusion for them means then a 'filtered' public space through which only secular contributions may pass as relevant. This is not to say that religious people may not contribute to the public space, but rather that such a contribution has to be negotiated (i.e. has to be 'filtered') through secular venues, which are – to emphasize again – anything but neutral. Given the structure of any secular culture such an approach entails also pre-existing biases. The distinction between those who belong and those who do not – what I termed earlier 'insiders' and 'outsiders' – is already integral to the process of integration into such a society, culture or educational framework.

Integration, however, may mean something else. For this, let me take Talal Asad's (2003) following question as a point of departure: "If adherents of a religion [and I would add of any religion] enter the public sphere, can their entry leave the preexisting discursive structure intact?" (p. 181). For Asad, this is, clearly, a rhetorical question, a point that seems to be reiterated for example also by Seyla Benhabib (2002). One may then argue that it should be also considered

a rhetorical question to anyone who thinks in terms of a shared society. In the educational context such a vision of a shared society means that integration may denote a situation in which the model of education itself reflects the changes in society. Here, for integration to succeed, not only the individuals should change but also the social and educational settings. The point is then that in this model inclusive integration does not mean an adapting of newcomers to a pre-existing culture and heritage, but rather the adjusting of culture, society and education to reflect its new members. Put differently, integration is more akin to a dynamic discussion or a permanent negotiation between all groups and members of society, rather than to the assimilating of new members into a pre-existing social structure. It reflects not only an awareness toward the cultural and religious heritage of new members of society but a more flexible adapting of culture and society to the new heritages and traditions that are now made available to all. Perhaps more poetically: in this model, integration is not about the swallowing of new members of society by the educational Leviathan. Rather it is about the duties of education to change its spheres to meet all members of society, including their culture, religious, or secularized-religious heritages.

In the context of the reflections offered here, such a change relates mainly to a rethinking of the relations between education and religion, to the extent of not making religion the excluded term anymore (Wexler 2013). This means taking into consideration that many social groups and especially newcomers are in possession of a religious tradition or affiliation that constitutes a central part of their lives. This request, at least Habermas (2008) seems to suggest, may be hard on what he termed “secularists”, namely those who “insist on the uncompromising inclusion of minorities in the *existing* political framework” (p. 24) because it seems to work against their most intimate understanding of society, politics and education. But one may argue that bringing people more closely together in contemporary transnational constellations might need a different approach than the one that characterizes a simple notion of integration. This is not to overlook that such a claim invites a new set of questions as to how such a bringing together of people could be institutionalized or what would be needed to provide an appropriate educational space for a cultural or religious exchange. These are important questions that require further deliberations. The point to note here is merely that it might not be enough to be culturally sensitive within a pre-existing, unchanged secularized religious structure. One may need to rethink the secular structure itself. A rethinking may entail also an engagement with the separation between education and religion, because such a separation does not ‘neutralize’ the educational arena, making it more available to all, but rather charts differences between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’.

## 4 Concluding Remarks

Secular education should not be read as a universal category but rather as a culturally dependent one. As such it already makes a distinction between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of a specific, culturally framed secular arena. This may suggest that we might need to reconsider the concept of integration. There is, undeniably, a range of existing definitions of integration, but I believe that this range is located between the two options discussed above: we may either take integration to imply a fixed cultural category, to which all new members of society should be assimilated, regardless of their religious, ethnic or cultural background, or we may think of this concept as representing a constant and in this sense flexible arena of negotiation, one that offers an inclusive rather than exclusive basis for education. A negotiating education rather than an educational Leviathan may indicate not the absorbing of others into a pre-existing culture, but a spreading out of culture to represent everyone. The claim that such a model of integration may require that all former cultural ideals and norms should be abandoned seems to me to be excessive. I tend to believe that such a requirement is not highly practical and perhaps even morally suspicious. It would be hard for example to defend a position that may end with undermining, for example, democratic education, or human rights just because this may reflect ideas and notions that characterize some social actors.

But these concerns may also represent a misconception regarding the meaning of integration in the second, flexible, sense. Religion is not equivalent to fundamentalism – a point that Talal Asad (2003, p. 11) for example articulated rather well. “What is distinctive about secularism”, Talal Asad (2003, p. 2) further argues, is that it presupposes a new concept of ‘religion’ (among other things) and such a presupposition may mean that ‘religion’ represents a closed set of ideals and values only in the eyes of secularists. To make the point more radically: it is the views of “western secularists” that make religious belief “antithetical to democracy” (Arthur et al. 2010, p. 98). In analyzing the educational activism of a specific Muslim religious ‘civil organization’ in Israel (the Eqraa Association<sup>3</sup>) Agbaria and Mustafa (2014) for example showed the extent to which Islamic

---

<sup>3</sup>The Eqraa Association is an Islamic organization that was established in 1996 by the Northern Fraction of the Islamic Movement in Israel for the purpose of providing social and financial services to Arab students in higher education. It later expanded its activities to also include special educational programs, advancing future Arab leadership and promoting culture in Arab society in Israel (Agbaria & Mustafa 2014, p. 48).

participation in society and in education could be seen in terms of social activism open for interpretation and discussion. For Agbaria and Mustafa (2014) it is not only that “religious actors should be understood as part of civil society” but also “the diversity of the Islamic Movements” should be recognized “as an integral part of the pluralistic public sphere” and as contributing to it (p. 45). To follow this idea through, one may suggest that in referring specifically to the relations between secular education and new and old religious groups, finding common grounds in a shared society may not end with undermining important principles of democratic society but rather with strengthening them (Arthur et al. 2010, p. 98). Thinking in such terms may be especially valuable in bringing intercultural recognition (Gogolin et al. 2018; Johannessen and Skeie 2019) as much as in the enhancing of understanding and tolerance across lines of religious difference.

That is to say that we are dealing here with an educational appeal to think in terms of a secular-religious continuum. Such an appeal may invite a revamp of the existing social and political visions along novel lines that may offer new agreements around shared social visions. One such social vision, that can be relevant to religious and secular people alike, may suggest a critical resistance to any form of dogmatism, vicious hostility and violence, including a refusal of any promotion of friend/foe dichotomies and the mobilizing of feelings of superiority to bear on political action (Hotam 2016). This may very well represent our own ‘demand of the day’ in a world in which the tone that makes the political music that surrounds us is alarmingly more and more in tune with intolerance and rancor.

---

## References

- Agbaria, A. K., & Mustafa, M. (2014). The case of Palestinian civil society in Israel: Islam, civil society and educational activism. *Critical Studies in Education*, 55(1), 44–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2014.857360>
- Arthur, J., Gearon, L., & Sears, A. (2010). *Education, Politics and Religion: Reconciling the Civil and the Sacred in Education*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Asad, T. (2003). *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Benhabib, S. (2002). *Another Cosmopolitanism*. Oxford: University Press.
- Casanova, J. (1994). *Public religions in the Modern world*. Chicago: University Press.
- Dror, Y. (2008). ינויצה רופיסה :ימואלה דניחב מבוולש מילכ [National education through mutually supportive devices: The Zionist story]. Jerusalem: Magnes.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. (2002). Multiple Modernities. In S. N. Eisenstadt (Ed.), *Multiple Modernities* (pp. 1–30). New Brunswick & London: Transaction.
- Elboim-Dror, R. (1986). לארשי קראב ירבעה דניחח [Hebrew education in Israel]. Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi.

- Elboim-Dror, R. (1993). *לזמנתא לש דחמה* [The tomorrow of yesterday]. Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi.
- Frederiks, M., & Nagy, D. (2016). *Religion, migration and identity: Methodological and theological explorations*. Leiden: Brill.
- Georgi, V. B., Ackermann, L., & Karakaş, N. (Eds.). (2011). *Vielfalt im Lehrerzimmer: Selbstverständnis und schulische Integration von Lehrenden mit Migrationshintergrund in Deutschland* [Diversity in the Teachers' Room: Self-perception and School Integration of Teachers with Migration Background in Germany]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Gogolin, I., Georgi V. B., Krüger-Potratz, M., Lengyel, D., & Sandfuchs, U. (Eds.). (2018). *Handbuch Interkulturelle Pädagogik* [Handbook Intercultural Pedagogy]. Stuttgart: Julius Klinkhardt.
- Habermas, J. (2008). Notes on post-secular society. *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 25(4), 17-29.
- Habermas, J., & Ratzinger, J. (2005). *Dialektik der Säkularisierung: Über Vernunft und Religion* [Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion]. Freiburg im Breisgau, Basel, & Wien: Herder.
- Hotam, Y. (2016). Reflexive education: Rethinking the relations between secular "consciousness" and religion. *Religion & Education*, 43(3), 285-300.
- Hotam, Y. (2017). Theocracy and pedagogy: Public education in a "postsecular" Israel. *Comparative Education Review*, 61(3), 538-557.
- Jawoniyi, O. (2015). Religious education, critical thinking, rational autonomy, and the child's right to an open future. *Religion & Education*, 42(1), 34-53.
- Jobani, Y. (2008). Three Basic Models of Secular Jewish Culture. *Israel Studies*, 13(3), 160-169.
- Johannessen, L. Ø., & Skeie, G. (2019). The relationship between religious education and intercultural education. *Intercultural Education*, 30(3), 260-274.
- Judge, H. (2002). *Faith-based schools and the state: Catholics in America, France and England*. Oxford: Symposium Books.
- Lam, Z. (2000). *חץ וקשת תודגנתו יחל* [Pressure and resistance in education]. Tel Aviv: Ha'poalim.
- Löwith, K. (1949). *Meaning in history: The theological implications of the philosophy of history*. Chicago: University Press.
- Mendes-Flohr, P. (1991). *Divided passions: Jewish intellectuals and the experience of Modernity*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Milbank, J., & Zizek, S. (2009). *The monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or dialectic?* Cambridge: MIT Press.
- North, P. (2015). *The Yield: Kafka's atheological reformation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Raichel, N. (2008). *יוקח יוב, רתסיגל רהצומ יוב, רוזיבל תויזוכיר יוב: תילארשיה דוניחה תכרעמ לש הרופיס דחמיל* [The story of the Israeli education system: Between centralism and distribution, clarity and ambiguity, replication and ingenuity]. Jerusalem: Magnes.
- Rothgangel, M., & Ziebertz, H.-G. (2013). Religiöse Bildung an Schulen in Deutschland [Religious education at schools in Germany]. In M. Jäggle, M. Rothgangel, & T. Schlag (Eds.), *Religiöse Bildung an Schulen in Europa. Mitteleuropa* (Vol. 1, pp. 41-68). Göttingen: V&R Unipress.

- Sapir, N. A. (2006). היתושב ביבא-לתב תוגגחו מיסקט ירופיס :מייגרייע קוניחו תוברת לש סבוציע. *תנושארה* [The creation of urban culture and education: The story of ceremonies and celebrations in the early years of Tel Aviv]. *Generation to Generation*, 25, 211–219.
- Schmidt, C. (2009). *Die theopolitische Stunde* [The theopolitical hour]. Munich: Fink.
- Shkedi, A. (2003). ך"נת הארוה לש תוירואית. *Studies in Jewish Education*, 9, 263–292.
- Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self: The making of modern identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Taylor, C. (2007). *A secular age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Turner, B. S. (Ed.). (2010). *The new Blackwell Companion to the sociology of religion*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Warburg, M. (2007). Globalization, migration and the two types of religious boundary: A European perspective. In P. Beyer, & L. Beaman (Eds.), *Religion, Globalization and Culture* (pp. 79–99). Leiden: Brill.
- Wexler, P. (2013). *Mystical sociology: Toward cosmic social theory*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Williams, K. (2007). Religious worldviews and the common school: The French dilemma. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 41(4), 675–692.





---

# Schools as the Terrain for Struggles Over Hegemony

Natascha Khakpour

---

## Abstract

This chapter demonstrates how schools can be understood as a location structured by societal power relations as well as a location where these relations are reproduced. A theoretical perspective following Antonio Gramsci's concept of the "integral state" makes it possible to view schools as a terrain on which struggles for hegemony take place. Based on the attempted reform towards a less selective school system in Hamburg, Germany, and an interview sequence in which micro-practices of producing consensus are reconstructed using the example of German as the school language, it is shown that both examples can be analysed as indications of the reproduction of the same hegemonic conditions. The idea of a struggle addresses the contingency and potential changeability of conditions, in this case those in schools. This opens up the possibility of considering how schools could be designed so that they promote fewer inequalities.

---

## Keywords

Hegemony · School · Migration society · Class · Racism · German as a school language

---

N. Khakpour (✉)

Faculty of Education Science, University of Education Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany

e-mail: [natascha.khakpour@ph-freiburg.de](mailto:natascha.khakpour@ph-freiburg.de)

## 1 Introduction

This chapter begins with the assumption that schools are not just places where knowledge is conveyed. They are also sites in which the existing societal order is reproduced to a greater or lesser extent, and I am particularly interested in that ‘greater or lesser extent’. Before I define my interest in the ‘struggle for hegemony’ more closely, I will discuss the perspective and premises that are associated with it. My discussions refer to the school conditions in Germany and Austria, nation-state contexts<sup>1</sup> which are considered to be migration societies (Mecheril 2016). The term ‘migration society’ is associated with a perspective that understands migration as a socially constitutive phenomenon and is interested in how “the mutually constitutive dynamics of border formations and systems of belonging” (Mecheril 2016, p. 15, trans. by author) are used to negotiate identities and regulate opportunities for participation – including participation in formal education. Natio-racial-cultural identity (Mecheril 2018) is not the only factor that determines whether there is potential discrimination at school, however. Especially when focusing more on the social *function* of schools, it becomes clear that one of the functions of schools is to prepare adolescents for various professions and thus social roles. This is to be done in such a way that, for example, children from working-class families are led more towards vocational professions than intellectual ones (Fend 2008; Zinnecker 1975; see also Müller and Ehmke 2016). When thinking about schools and how they are embedded in society, it is absolutely essential to look more closely at the class dimensions of educational inequalities that are conveyed in schools. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, views education in light of its importance for preserving a “class apartheid” (Spivak 2004, p. 533; for further details in the German context, see Castro Varela 2015).

The perspective used in this study can be deemed a contemporary Gramscian one. That is, it follows Antonio Gramsci in that school education and the debates around it can be understood in terms of schools’ entanglement in the struggle

---

<sup>1</sup>These considerations have emerged in the context of my doctorate, which is designed as a transnational study. Austria and Germany were chosen as a relevant framework not because a monolithic nation-state is considered an explanation for complex social processes, but rather because it suggests that the nation-state continues to be relevant, particularly with regard to how school is understood (Wenning 1996). What both formal educational systems have in common is that they have early selection systems, and that social background is as much a deciding factor as migration over success in school (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2018).

for hegemony and state rule. It is contemporary because I am attempting to look at current relations in the education context in a Gramscian way. Approaches informed by discourse theory are used in particular to supplement this. The purpose of my contribution is to discuss how school can be analysed as a site in which struggles for hegemony occur: on the one hand, this applies to how school is designed, that is, *for whom*, forms of school and learning are particularly geared towards,<sup>2</sup> which supposed but powerful category of pupils is addressed by schools, and how this leads to inclusion and exclusion. On the other hand, it can be seen that what happens at the interactional level in the schools is also bound up in power relations and the reproduction of these relations. Interactions refer to micro-practices in which civil-societal consensus is organised but also called into question. What can be regarded as social consensus as well as school normality is not to be understood as self-evident or unchangeable, but is constantly being negotiated and contested. It is true that shifts are achieved, but not all actors and groups can participate equally in this struggle.

The interest in analysing schools as a terrain of the struggle for hegemony is linked to a notion of the state that is not reduced to executive power or legislation but which, according to Gramsci (see Sect. 2), also reproduces itself in civil society practices. The standard of critique is at the same time its goal: reducing institutional violence and injustices that arise from formal education and structural inequalities in education. The aim is therefore not to bid farewell to school as an institution (Illich 1973), but instead to ask what a school that does not promote inequalities could and would need to look like, what roles the various actors (particularly teachers) would play, and what structural conditions would need to exist for such an institution. It is also about examining the opportunities for schools to mitigate social inequalities without having the unrealistic expectation of education as the guarantor of justice (Schäfer 2011).

---

## 2 Gramsci's Concept of the Integral State

To examine how school is involved in reproduction of statehood that goes beyond mere legislation and how this can be investigated, I will first outline Gramsci's expanded understanding of the state. His "integral State" (Gramsci 1972, p. 267)

---

<sup>2</sup>This has been discussed, for example, as part of the "middle-class character" of the school (Rolf 1997, p. 131, trans. by author).

is distinguished both from the orthodox Marxist view, whereby the state is reduced to a tool of the ruling class for ensuring class exploitation, and from a liberal understanding of the state, in which the state is seen as standing above individual interests, as a kind of “neutral arbitrator” (Demirović 2007, pp. 21–22, trans. by author).

The historical context of Gramsci’s reflections on the state was the period between the two world wars, and he addressed the question of why the October Revolution of 1917 was successful as a revolutionary takeover in the East, while it failed in the West (Candeias 2007, pp. 15–18). His theory of the state argued that taking over power in modern societies cannot be limited to assuming control of the centre of power, as was done by the Bolsheviks when they stormed the Winter Palace. He described this type of strategy as a “war of movement” in reference to Machiavelli and others (Gramsci 1992, p. 219), and used it as a metaphor for this kind of political strategy beyond the context of war. While the strategy was successful in the East, it failed in the West – Gramsci attributes this to the more developed sphere of *civil society*, which was scarcely present in the East. In his conception of civil society, Gramsci refers to institutions and fields that also include the “ensemble of organisms commonly called ‘private’” (Gramsci 1972, p. 12), such as educational institutions, associations or the media, and also understands them as part of the state’s terrain, which in the West had developed as “a very complex structure and one which is resistant to the catastrophic ‘incursions’ of the immediate economic element (crises, depressions, etc.)” (Gramsci 1972, p. 235). This expanded definition brings a new understanding of statehood into the picture: the state is not considered separate from society, for instance as the protector of property and civil rights and thus the ‘public’ in contrast to the ‘private’. Instead, it can be described as “a shifting balance of powers” (Demirović 2007, p. 33, trans. by author) that is necessary for a separation between public and private – that is, what is considered to be the public interest and what is a private matter.

In the integral state, Gramsci distinguishes between levels of political society, or ‘the state’ in its narrower sense, and civil society, the ‘*società civile*’:

What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural ‘levels’: the one that can be called ‘civil society’, that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called ‘private’, and that of ‘political society’ or ‘the State’. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of ‘hegemony’ which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of ‘direct domination’ or command exercised through the State and ‘juridical’ government. The functions in question are precisely organisational and connective. (Gramsci 1972, p. 12)

Following Gramsci the civil-societal sphere is a part of the integral state and stands “between the economic structure and the State with its legislation and its coercion” (Gramsci 1972, p. 208). Gramsci distinguishes hegemony from repressive force monopolised by the state as a specific way of exercising power, and power that is predominantly exercised in the sphere of civil society through the establishment of consensus. Although civil society is the ideological sphere in which consensus is negotiated, hegemony cannot be restricted to this level. In addition to elements of coercion, it is above all the mediation and generalisation of interests that takes place in civil society institutions.<sup>3</sup> For when the maintenance of rule focuses on its dynamics and changeability through struggles for hegemony, it becomes crucial that group interests are transcended and generalised.

Hegemony therefore does not mean repression or dominance, but a stabilising of rule by systematically gaining the consent of the governed to their own oppression, not by briefly deceiving them, but by considering their interests and demands. Criticism is partly absorbed as the interests linked to this criticism are served. For example, demands from the opposition are watered down and become an element in the ruling group’s policies. Hegemony’s stability therefore also rests on concessions that are important for the actors but that “cannot touch the essential” (Gramsci 1972, p. 161), that is, the power of control over the economy and state authority.

It is the complex of civil-society institutions in which

those private initiatives can develop into a consensus to which everyone is bound and in which social contradictions can be resolved in a specific way, that is, in the proximity of interactions, daily habits, experiences and convictions, as well as in publicly stated philosophical and academic arguments. (Demirović 1991, pp. 149–150, trans. by author)

Through everyday ways of living and learning, but also thinking and dreaming, a consensus binding for all is worked out by civil society. When it comes to viewing education as work on everyday thinking, Jan Niggemann (2016) has called this “doing consciousness” (p. 64). This means the state also has a pedagogical function, as it not only rules but also educates its citizens to achieve a contemporary subjectivity. For example, Gramsci describes the state as “an ‘educator’, in

---

<sup>3</sup>Institutions, whether a part of civil society or not, are not to be understood as ‘identical actors’, but instead as terrains; within them, there are factions and groups that influence the direction in which the respective institution develops.

as much as it tends precisely to create a new type or level of civilisation” (Gramsci 1972, p. 247) and it thus promotes certain habits and behaviours while shunning others. Gramsci thus views the school, with its “positive educative function”<sup>4</sup> (Gramsci 1972, p. 258), as the most important state activity, although the understanding of education cannot be limited solely to school relationships. Instead, it is meant much more generally, in that a key aspect of ruling in a hegemonically legitimised society is conveying ideas educationally and thereby shaping the relationship between rulers and ruled (Merkens 2006, p. 8).

---

### 3 School as a Terrain for Struggles Over Hegemony

Gramsci himself wrote his longest notes on education in his prison notebooks on school. His reflections arose above all from the criticism of the *riforma Gentile* from 1923, the school reforms initiated by the fascist minister of education and idealist Giovanni Gentile (Mayo 2015, p. 18). At the core of the reforms was a two-tier school system consisting of grammar schools and vocational schools, which Gramsci criticised as a system that legally fixed class differences instead of allowing mobility to overcome them (Borg and Mayo 2002, pp. 93–94). As a counter-proposal, he suggested a Unitarian school, in which all children would be taught together in two phases: first, a phase aimed at “discipline”, in which working techniques and methods, but also the ability to concentrate and exercise discipline, would be developed, followed by a “creative phase” or phase of “autonomous and responsible” work (Gramsci 1972, p. 33), in which the emphasis would be on forms of intellectual self-development. In addition, the curriculum would link intellectual and manual-labour activities as a response to rifts in society created by the division of labour. Gramsci’s works on education and school must be seen in their specific historical and social context, which was characterised primarily by the necessity for social transformation due to the rise of fascism and Fordism (Buttigieg 2002, p. 122).

Although I find Gramsci’s idea of the ‘Unitarian School’ worth discussing by today’s standards (Borg and Mayo 2002), at this point I would like to skip over principles of school organisation and didactic approaches principles to instead analyse the school as a site where hegemonic relations are reproduced. Just as is

---

<sup>4</sup>This is in contrast to the negative, repressive measures such as punishments meted out by the courts.

the case for other educational institutions, aspects of both state spheres take effect in schools as well: the repressive-legislative sphere through school legislation and curriculum development, and the consensus-producing civil-society realm by means of which a unique form of normalisation takes place. Viewing schools through the lens of hegemony theory enables us to combine both aspects and not reduce school and education policy to formal mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, privilege and disadvantage, but instead to look at what Raymond Williams (1981) discussed under the term “cultural reproduction” (p. 182) without losing sight of the material foundations of hegemony.

In this approach, hegemony as a specific mode of rule is not seen as static, but as a changing strategy dependent on historical setting and context. Hegemony must therefore also be organised and maintained; as Stuart Hall (1986/2005) writes:

‘Hegemony’ is a very particular, historically specific, and temporary ‘moment’ in the life of a society. [...] Such periods of ‘settlement’ are unlikely to persist forever. There is nothing automatic about them. They have to be actively constructed and positively maintained. (p. 424)

Schools become sites in which social consensus is actively established and maintained as part of a specific social power relationship,<sup>5</sup> just as they are the result of such a historical process. For Gramsci, the primary function of intellectuals<sup>6</sup> is to organise social consensus, which is then reflected in public opinion. In the struggle for monopoly of the bodies that shape public opinion, which include newspapers and media (Gramsci 1995, p. 145), it is decided which groups can have the greatest impact, which “truths” can be disseminated and integrated into society, making “them the basis of vital action, an element of co-ordination and intellectual and moral order” (Gramsci 1972, p. 325). Using terms from discourse theory, it becomes clear that what is included in the topic of migration and education in public statements by columnists, spokespersons on education or groups representing teachers becomes relevant for schools, but also that in school practices, existing social orders are reproduced.

---

<sup>5</sup>Following Gramsci the school can be viewed as a “Hegemonic Apparatus” (Bollinger and Koivisto 2009), that is, an institution that can be used to achieve societal leadership.

<sup>6</sup>In contrast to our everyday understanding, Gramsci does not describe ‘intellectuals’ as those few individuals from elite circles who pursue a certain type of intellectual activity, but rather all those who exercise the function of co-organising certain social conditions and thus hegemony (Hoare and Nowell-Smith in Gramsci 1972, pp. 3–4).

Since the current form of society can be viewed as a neoliberal capitalist one, schools are also both structured by this form and help to structure it (Czejkowska 2006; Ivanova-Chessex and Steinbach 2018; Kollender 2020). Programmatic self-images of educational systems that are supposedly naturally fairer or provide more equal opportunities then collide with school realities, which exacerbate structural inequalities (with a view on the PISA initiative, see Müller and Ehmke 2016). To explain this discrepancy between claims and reality, the typical method is to point to a merit-based ideology of performance and self-management (Freytag 2008; Solga 2005) or an ideology that relies more on naturalising talent (Gomolla 2012, pp. 32–33). As a result of the history of the struggle for hegemony, both shift the focus away from a school system that measures according to the standards of privileged groups and towards an individualisation of social inequality. This conceals the fact that the prevailing standard, which includes how schools are designed, favours some and discriminates against others. Yet, as Louis Althusser (1970/2010, p. 65) writes about schools as an ideological state apparatus and thus as a central site for the ideological reproduction of the relations of production, it is still true that the practice of and instruction under the ruling ideology, bourgeois or otherwise, functions particularly well in schools because precisely that ideology “describes schools as a neutral milieu in which there is no ideology” (Althusser 1970/2010, p. 69). Ideology does not refer to a false perception but instead, as Hall later argued (2016, p. 122), to an organising and organised way of producing meaning or sense. State and school spaces are linked by the ruling ideology of merit-based assessment according to neutral standards. The programmatic track of equality or at least equality of opportunities conceals the fact that social differences are transformed into social inequalities, not least by school as an institution.

How hegemonic relations<sup>7</sup> are reproduced with and in schools is something I would like to discuss using two examples, one at the structural level and the other at the level of school interaction.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>While questions of racism were certainly relevant to Gramsci (for example, the ‘Southern Question’), his reflections on school focus primarily on the issue of class. The two examples deal with contemporary conditions of the migration society, which are ‘still’ mediated by class relations. However, this more complex interdependence in specific historical cycles cannot be addressed within the scope of this paper. For a draft analysis of racism based on hegemonic theory, see Oprakto (2019).

<sup>8</sup>Paul Mecheril and Saphira Shure (2018, pp. 63–65) differentiate school into an institutionally and interactively generated space. I pick up on this differentiation, though it must be stressed that this is only an analytical differentiation.



## 4 Unequally Distributed Opportunities to Become Involved in the Social Debate: Hamburg's School Reform

Using the example of Hamburg's school reform in 2010,<sup>9</sup> we can see how various social groups have struggled to decide how school can be organised under contemporary conditions. The school reform in Hamburg aimed to introduce a six-year primary schooling period to keep all pupils together longer in order to reduce educational inequalities. This reform was rejected in a referendum.<sup>10</sup> This had been preceded by the initiative of a parents' network that opposed the introduction of this type of primary school. Among other things, an open letter from numerous senior physicians was publicly presented in the context of this initiative, which outlined the scenario of an increased shortage of physicians if this type of primary school was to be introduced: "Since most doctors would like their children to attend grammar schools with a specialisation (classical languages, bilingualism, music, etc.) from grade 5 on, because of the planned school reform, qualified colleagues will usually decide against Hamburg if they are offered positions in several federal states" (Hemker 2010, trans. by author). Groups that occupy privileged positions in accessing formal educational opportunities and financial resources formulated the political interest of preserving the structure of an educational system that perpetuates existing privileged relationships and thus holds out the prospect of a privileged future for their own children, making this outcome probable. At times this is only possible by rejecting directly or indirectly formulated claims by other groups to participate in the respective privileges. The example of the Hamburg referendum shows that especially parents whose children benefited from a selective school system participated in the initiative (Töller et al. 2011, p. 511). Donations of over half a million euros were also made to the initiative between 2008 and 2010 (Töller et al. 2011) to be used for public relations activities.

Examining the negotiations and disputes around school reforms makes it clear that schools are a field of civil-societal and political struggle. It can be assumed that the current debates have always been preceded by struggles about the tasks, organisation and forms of schools, and that the current debates can be understood

---

<sup>9</sup>The example is taken from Khakpour and Mecheril (2018, pp. 144–145).

<sup>10</sup>For the result of the referendum, see <https://www.statistik-nord.de/wahlen/wahlen-in-hamburg/volksentscheide-/referenden/2010> (accessed October 20th 2020).

as a product of this history (for an overview of the disputed history of German school reforms, see Pongratz 2019, pp. 52–62). The protagonists in these struggles have – as the example of the Hamburg school reform makes clear – different resources at their disposal, which are related to their social position. In the context of the debate on the Hamburg school reform, the self-evident nature of a school system that produces and exacerbates discrimination against pupils with limited access to formal education due to their family background was questioned. Following the extension of Gramsci’s ideas of hegemony by the discourse theory approach of Ernesto Laclau (1990, p. 35), it could be said that the social constellation of the school system, understood as a temporary sedimentation of political struggles, could thus once again be the subject of discussion and debate. In a moment of crisis of a given order, forces are mobilised to obtain or share in privileges. In the struggle to preserve educational privileges as a “preservation of vested rights” (Theißel and Yun 2014, para. 2), more extensive resources are available to certain groups, which they can then mobilise in civil society-led conflicts. Founding associations and citizens’ initiatives, securing a referendum and the media campaigns of the Hamburg parents’ network testify not only to the power and expertise to influence public opinion through wide-ranging discourses conducted in the media, but they also evidence the material resources to be able to achieve that. The voices of those who, based on their social position, can be assumed to have been interested in a school reform that would have counteracted social inequality were much quieter in comparison. It is also important in this context that the established civic groups in the field of education pursued the legitimisation of privileges with the argument that any changes would risk a “shortage of doctors” (Hemker 2010), thus simultaneously strengthening an existing social order that values some professions more highly than others.

---

## **5 School Micro-Practices as Practices of Rule: The Common Sense of German as a School Language**

The second example, which illustrates the importance of school as a place where order is produced and where there is a struggle for order, is located more at the level of school interactions. These can be understood as micro-practices whereby power relations are organised in the school context.

Schools in Germany and Austria continue to be “conceptually German-speaking” (Dirim 2015, trans. by author), even though migration-related multilingualism has long been a fact of life. The crisis-ridden relationship between the German language skills expected at school and the pupils’ actual language

proficiency is also addressed in an excerpt from an interview with a pupil<sup>11</sup> in Vienna, Austria. After a few years of schooling in Afghanistan, Mina<sup>12</sup> came to Austria's school system as an adolescent, where she also began to learn German. After starting a *Hauptschule* (lower secondary school) shortly before the summer holidays, she attended a polytechnic, a one-year school form in Austria which is intended to manage students' transition from school to vocational training and which, for many pupils, is their last year of compulsory schooling.<sup>13</sup> The excerpt shown here is preceded by Mina's description of repeatedly having had problems in mathematics, with special mention of the mathematics teacher.

I couldn't use articles, I always spoke foreign (laughs). Then she always found funny and then laughed at me in front of everyone. I hate that. I always cried in Poly [polytechnic school]. <hmm> Really, because German language. Then always she said, "Why are you crying if you don't know German? Then you can't come to the school." I went, "If I don't come here, if I don't go German course, then where should I go? Do you think I'm the only one who can't speak German here in Austria?"<sup>14</sup>

The sequence opens with a reference to a problem – in the past – that has already become a theme: speaking in a way that is characterised by 'not being able' to do something. It is probably plausible that the definition of one's own speaking as 'foreign-speaking' is the adoption of an attribution that acquires its meaning in its negative reference to 'domestic-speaking', or 'speak[ing] German'. The paralinguistic commentary on the self-attribution with laughter can be understood as an expression of shame or as a sarcastic and critical reference to the symbolic

---

<sup>11</sup>The example is taken from my dissertation project, in which I deal with forms and modes of articulation of language and social difference in the school context in Austria and Germany.

<sup>12</sup>All names have been changed for the purpose of anonymisation.

<sup>13</sup>This year decides whether a transition to grammar school, which is possible in theory but relatively rare in practice, could be made, whether it would be possible to enter vocational training, or whether other labour market-related measures could be taken afterwards.

<sup>14</sup>Original German: „Ich konnte nicht Artikel verwenden, ich hab immer Ausländisch geredet (lacht). Dann sie hat immer lustig gefunden und dann vor alle ausgelacht. Ich hasse das. Ich hab immer geweint im Poly [Polytechnische Schule]. <hmm> Wirklich, wegen deutsch Sprache. Dann sie hat immer gesagt ‚Warum weinst du dann, wenn du nicht Deutsch kannst? Dann kommst du nicht in die Schule.‘ Ich so ‚Wenn ich hier nicht komme, wenn ich Deutschkurs nicht gehe, dann wo soll ich hingehn? Glauben Sie ich bin die einzige, das hier in Österreich nicht Deutsch kann?‘“.

violence of the attribution, whether by others or by herself. By using the particle “always” several times, Mina expresses the frequent repetition of her experience and thus its intensified meaning due to its regular occurrence. The ‘foreign-speaking’ is an occasion and repeated opportunity for the teacher to laugh at Mina “in front of everyone”, whereby the class becomes a social arena of shame. The class not only serves as an audience, however, as the spectacle presumably also has an *educational* effect for the other pupils, as it were, which I will come back to later.

With the formulation “I hate that”, which breaks the narrative time by using the present tense, and is therefore still a valid relational statement, and the reference to having “always” cried at the place and in the period of life of the “Poly”, Mina emphasises the affective content of the experience, which is ascribed a relevance that is valid up to the present through its repetition or repeatability. However, this suffering is not attributed to being shamed by the teacher, but is brought into a causal connection with the German language. By quoting an instance of direct speech, Mina depicts how her public humiliation at school continued: the legitimacy of crying is questioned and thus it is presupposed that crying is a kind of individual decision and the pupil who is crying can be held responsible for it. As a consequence, the teacher fundamentally questions the legitimacy of Mina’s presence in the school. With the “I went”, Mina initiates a change of speaker in her presentation and reproduction of her experience. Mina objects to this. In her objection, Mina takes up the request not to attend school and rejects it by asking where else she should or could go. The question suggests that there is no alternative, but at the same time it also lays claim to the right to be present at that school, a presence which is being called into question. Mina does not reject the teacher’s request by pointing out that she is proficient in German, which would also be a possible connection, since after all both the narrative and the narrative situation are German-language, but rather refers to a connection that goes beyond the school context. Mina is not the only one who does not speak German in Austria, which addresses the reality and normality of a multilingual migration society.

With reference to the question of the organisation and reproduction of social orders on the level of school interaction, one could ask which orders are called up in this excerpt, which meanings are connected with each other and what effects they have. Or as Stuart Hall (in Grossberg 1996, p. 142) formulated the idea, which meanings are articulated. In this sense, articulation does not only mean the content and the act of linguistic expression, but also refers to the further meaning of an “articulated lorry” (Hall in Grossberg 1996, p. 142), that is, trailers that can be connected with each other, but do not have to be. This is what Hall (1985) means by the concept of articulation:

a connection or link which is not necessarily given in all cases, as a law or a fact of life, but which requires particular conditions of existence to appear at all, which has to be positively sustained by specific processes, which is not 'eternal' but has to be constantly renewed. (p. 113)

The aim is to understand how, under certain conditions, two or more 'elements' become a single unit, whereby here at least the levels of ideological and discursive construction of meaning and those linking discourse elements and subjects can be distinguished. The extent to which articulations establish or perpetuate themselves as relative fixations is also part of the social struggle for hegemony. With regard to linking elements of meaning, in the teacher's speech the school becomes first of all a place where there are pupils who are legitimately or unquestionably legitimately present and those to whom this does not apply. Legitimate attendance at school is linked to 'being able to speak good German'. When it comes to 'being able to speak good German', a classification system is called up that provides natio-racial-cultural codes (Mecheril 2018) to differentiate between natives and foreigners, those who belong and those who do not belong quite as well, as İnci Dirim demonstrated when discussing the phenomenon of "linguicism" (Dirim 2010). The school becomes a place where only 'those able to speak good German' are legitimately present and a place where 'not being able to speak good German' becomes a characteristic of 'foreigners' – and thus the link is made. The links of meaning established through the teacher's speech are neither necessary nor fixed and receive their discursively mediated significance within the framework of the dominant ideology, which individualises structural inequalities and ascribes responsibility to the subjects. They have either not made sufficient effort to become 'speakers of good German', even though they would have had the opportunity to do so (the myth of meritocratic achievement logic, see Solga 2005). Or they have an inherent property of the body that cannot be sufficiently changed, as is suggested by the ideology of 'native speakerism' (Holliday 2006). The teacher and the pupil are in an institutionally mediated hierarchical relationship to each other, which means that the teacher's word carries more weight than the pupil's, and the teacher thus has the power to define valid assessment standards. The dominant, ideologically mediated articulations in pedagogical contexts unfold meaning for which *subjective* experiences can be had and ultimately also how mediated experiences develop into self-images (Spies 2009). Mina's objection, understood as a demand for the right to participate in formal education as well as to learn the language standards required at school, can also be viewed against this background as an attempt to refuse the situational identification with *existing as* someone who is out of place at school. However, practices

that symbolically regulate legitimate presence, as here with the example of Mina, not only affect the students addressed in this way, but also have a potentially *educational* effect on all students present. Conveyed, among other things, is the fact that there are those subjects who are recognised (and recognisable) at school, as well as those who are disregarded, and that it may be legitimate to disparage these particular others in certain circumstances and that this disparagement may be self-inflicted. Education as a practice of normalisation (Rose 2012) can be placed in the context of consensus production and organisation in civil society, in which there is also a struggle over who are to be legitimately present in general, or at school in particular.

---

## 6 Conclusion

A contemporary Gramscian perspective offers the opportunity to reflect on how statehood, understood with Gramsci's expanded concept of the integral state, is reproduced in and through schools. At the same time, it is also possible to explore where there may be scope for change towards schools that promote less inequality.

The example of the Hamburg school reform illustrates class-related vested interests in the context of formal education, which enables 'long-established' educationally middle-class groups to remain agents for and beneficiaries of a more selective school system. The interpretation of the empirical excerpt is about the radical questioning of the legitimate presence of a female student, and this questioning is justified by linking German language skills and natio-racial-cultural othering, but it does not remain unchallenged.

In summary, inclusion and exclusion in school are regulated by means of both repressive and consensus-based mechanisms. Since Paul Willis' study (1981), we have known that it is not so much the repressive moments but rather the establishment of a school culture in which pupils with a middle-class educational background can better connect to forms of school learning and socialising, while working-class children are encouraged to develop supposedly resistant everyday cultures and self-understandings, which lead to them 'freely' deciding to assume the role intended for them under the conditions of exploitation (see Castro Varela 2016, p. 45). This continues to be an important factor in understanding how power structures are reproduced through school, but not the only one. Especially in the context of migration regimes that are constantly growing stricter (Hess and Kasperek 2012), it is also the increasingly repressive moments that make school

attendance and success impossible; it is worth remembering here which children and young people we cannot interview or observe at school because they simply did not make it there.

Beyond that, and both examples show this, there is nevertheless always scope and possibility for resistant practices, even if these are unequally distributed due to social power relations. School is thus not only a place for reinforcing existing conditions. Mina's example bears witness to this. If school is a terrain on which struggles for hegemony are carried out, this goes hand in hand with an understanding of rule that perceives social relations as determined by contingency. School thus becomes the setting for a social struggle for hegemony, from which social transformations can potentially also emerge. With reference to Gramsci, places and institutions in which formal education and self-education take place are important terrains and spaces in which preparatory work for a transformation of social power relations can and must be carried out (Mayo 2015, p. 38).<sup>15</sup> According to Peter Mayo (1999), if, in Gramsci's terms, we understand civil society as the sphere in which dominant institutions work hard to consolidate existing hegemonic arrangements, we also find "sites or pockets, often within the dominant institutions themselves, wherein these arrangements are constantly renegotiated and contested" (p. 7). Future research would need to ask from which basis or to what extent such renegotiation and potentially resistant practices or micro-practices could succeed, if a special characteristic of hegemony as a form of rule is to integrate critical voices.

If we think back to the example of Mina, this would not only be a symbolic gesture, the mere 'appreciation' of multilingualism, but also a structural enablement of the possibility of participating in school for people who speak German at varying levels.

**Acknowledgements** This is the English version of the text "Die Schule als Ergebnis und Schauplatz des Ringens um Hegemonie", initially published in German, in the edited volume: Castro Varela, M., Khakpour, J., & Niggemann, J. (Eds.). (in press). *Hegemonie bilden. Pädagogische Perspektiven im Anschluss an Antonio Gramsci* [Building Hegemony. Pedagogical Perspectives in the Wake of Antonio Gramsci]. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.

---

<sup>15</sup>As noted at the beginning, the standard and goal of criticism are less violent conditions, which should be mentioned again in view of the appropriation of Gramsci by right-wing actors and groups.

## References

- Althusser, L. (2010). *Ideologie und ideologische Staatsapparate* [Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses]. Hamburg: VSA. (Original work published 1970).
- Borg, C., & Mayo, P. (2002). Gramsci and the Unitarian School. Paradoxes and Possibilities. In C. Borg, J. Buttigieg, & P. Mayo (Eds.), *Gramsci and Education* (pp. 87–108). Lanham: Rowman&Littlefield.
- Buttigieg, J. (2002). Education, the Role of Intellectuals, and Democracy: A Gramscian Reflection. In C. Borg, J. A. Buttigieg, & P. Mayo (Eds.), *Gramsci and Education* (pp. 121–132). Lanham: Rowman&Littlefield.
- Candeias, M. (2007). Gramscianische Konstellationen. Hegemonie und die Durchsetzung neuer Produktions- und Lebensweisen [Gramscian constellations. Hegemony and the enforcement of new ways of production and living]. In A. Merckens & V. Rego Diaz (Eds.), *Mit Gramsci arbeiten. Texte zur politisch-praktischen Aneignung Antonio Gramscis* (pp. 15–32). Hamburg: Argument.
- Castro Varela, M. (2015). „Klassenapartheid“. Klassenherrschaft postkolonial perspektiviert [“Class apartheid”. Class domination post-colonially perspectivated]. *Kurswechsel – Zeitschrift für gesellschafts-, wirtschafts- und umweltpolitische Alternativen*, 4, 18–24.
- Castro Varela, M. (2016). Von der Notwendigkeit eines epistemischen Wandels [The need for epistemic change]. In T. Geier & K. Zaborowski (Eds.), *Migration: Auflösungen und Grenzziehungen. Studien zur Schul- und Bildungsforschung* (pp. 43–59). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Czejkwowska, A. (2006). *Vereinbaren statt anordnen – Neoliberale Gouvernementalität macht Schule* [Making agreements instead of imposing them – neoliberal governmentality in education]. Vienna: Löcker.
- Demirović, A. (1991). Zivilgesellschaft, Öffentlichkeit, Demokratie [Civil society, public, democracy]. *Das Argument – Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Sozialwissenschaften*, 33(185), 41–55.
- Demirović, A. (2007). Politische Gesellschaft – zivile Gesellschaft. Zur Theorie des integralen Staates bei Antonio Gramsci [Political society – civil society. On the theory of the integral state by Antonio Gramsci]. In S. Buckel & A. Fischer-Lescano (Eds.), *Hegemonie gepanzert mit Zwang. Zivilgesellschaft und Politik im Staatsverständnis Antonio Gramscis* (pp. 19–43). Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Dirim, İ. (2010). ‚Wenn man mit Akzent spricht, denken die Leute, dass man auch mit Akzent denkt oder so.‘ Zur Frage des (Neo-)Linguizismus in den Diskursen über die Sprache(n) der Migrationsgesellschaft [‘If you speak with an accent, people assume that you think with an accent too or something.‘ On the question of (neo-)linguicism in the discourses on language(s) in the migration society]. In P. Mecheril, İ. Dirim, M. Gomolla, S. Hornberg, & K. Stojanov (Eds.), *Spannungsverhältnisse. Assimilationsdiskurse und interkulturell-pädagogische Forschung* (pp. 91–114). Münster: Waxmann.
- Dirim, İ. (2015). Umgang mit migrationsbedingter Mehrsprachigkeit in der schulischen Bildung [Coping with migration-related multilingualism in school education]. In R. Leiprecht & A. Steinbach (Eds.), *Schule in der Migrationsgesellschaft. Ein Handbuch. Sprache – Rassismus – Professionalität* (Vol. 2, pp. 25–48). Schwalbach am Taunus: Debus Pädagogik.



- Fend, H. (2008). *Neue Theorie der Schule. Einführung in das Verstehen von Bildungssystemen* [New school theory. Introduction to the comprehension of educational systems] (2nd ed.). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Freytag, T. (2008). *Der unternommene Mensch. Eindimensionalisierungsprozesse in der gegenwärtigen Gesellschaft* [The enterprising person. One-dimensionalisation processes in contemporary society]. Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft.
- Gomolla, M. (2012). Leistungsbeurteilung in der Schule: Zwischen Selektion und Förderung, Gerechtigkeitsanspruch und Diskriminierung [Assessing performance at school: between selection and promotion, equity and discrimination]. In S. Fürstenau & M. Gomolla (Eds.), *Migration und schulischer Wandel: Leistungsbeurteilung* (pp. 25–50). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Gramsci, A. (1972). *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Q. Hoare & G. Nowell-Smith, Eds. and Trans.). New York: International Publishers.
- Gramsci, A. (1992). *Prison Notebooks* (J. A. Buttigieg, Trans. & Ed., Vol. 1). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gramsci, A. (1995). *Further Selections from Prison Notebooks* (D. Boothman, Ed. and Trans.). London: ElecBook.
- Grossberg, L. (1996). On postmodernism and articulation: An interview with Stuart Hall. In K.-H. Chen & D. Morley (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (pp. 131–150). London: Routledge.
- Hall, S. (1985). Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 2(2), 91–114.
- Hall, S. (2005). Gramsci's relevance for the study of race and ethnicity. In D. Morley & K.-H. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall. Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (pp. 411–441). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1986).
- Hall, S. (2016). *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hemker, T. (2010). Primarschule ist ein Standortnachteil für die Gesundheitsmetropole Hamburg! [open letter]. Retrieved October 19, 2020, from [http://www.wir-wollen-lernen.de/resources/Offener\\_Brief\\_Aerzte\\_Mai\\_2010.pdf](http://www.wir-wollen-lernen.de/resources/Offener_Brief_Aerzte_Mai_2010.pdf).
- Hess, S., & Kasparek, B. (Eds.). (2012). *Grenzregime. Diskurse, Praktiken, Institutionen in Europa* [Border regimes. Discourses, practices, institutions in Europe]. Berlin & Hamburg: Assoziation A.
- Holliday, A. (2006). Native-speakerism. *ELT Journal*, 60(4), 385–387. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/cc1030>.
- Illich, I. (1973). *Deschooling Society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Ivanova-Chessex, O., & Steinbach, A. (2018). „Also wir haben hier auch letzten Sommer so 'nen Spendenlauf gehabt“ – Postkoloniale Perspektiven auf Herstellungsprozesse gesellschaftlicher Dominanzverhältnisse in der Schule [“Well, we had a charity run here last summer as well” – Postcolonial perspectives on the production processes of societal conditions of dominance in schools]. *Widersprüche – Zeitschrift für sozialistische Politik im Bildungs-, Gesundheits- und Sozialbereich*, 37(1), 87–99.
- Khakpour, N., & Mecheril, P. (2018). Klasse oder die Moralisierung des Scheiterns [Class or the moralisation of failure]. In İ. Dirim & P. Mecheril (with A. Heinemann et al.), *Heterogenität, Sprache(n), Bildung. Die Schule der Migrationsgesellschaft* (pp. 133–158). Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.

- Kollender, E. (2020). *Eltern – Schule – Migrationsgesellschaft. Neuformation von rassistischen Ein- und Ausschlüssen in Zeiten neoliberaler Staatlichkeit* [Parents – School – Migration Society. New formation of racist inclusion and exclusion in times of neo-liberal statehood]. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Koivisto, J. & Bollinger, S. (2009): Hegemonic Apparatus. *Historical Materialism* 17(2), 301–308. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156920609X436243>.
- Laclau, E. (1990). *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. London: Verso.
- Mayo, P. (1999). *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education. Possibilities for Transformative Action*. London: Zed.
- Mayo, P. (2015). *Hegemony and Education under Neoliberalism. Insights from Gramsci*. New York & London: Routledge
- Mecheril, P. (2016). Migrationspädagogik – ein Projekt [Migration pedagogy – a project]. In P. Mecheril (Ed.), *Handbuch Migrationspädagogik* (pp. 8–10). Weinheim: Beltz.
- Mecheril, P. (2018). Orders of Belonging and Education: Migration Pedagogy as Criticism. In D. Bachmann-Medick & J. Kugele (Eds.), *Migration. Changing Concepts, Critical Approaches* (pp. 121–138). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Mecheril, P. & Shure, S. (2018). Schule als institutionell und interaktiv hervorgebrachter Raum [School as an institutionally and interactively created sphere]. In İ. Dirim & P. Mecheril (with A. Heinemann et al.), *Heterogenität, Sprache(n), Bildung. Die Schule der Migrationsgesellschaft* (pp. 63–89). Bad Heilbronn: Klinkhardt.
- Merkens, A. (2006, December). Hegemonie und Gegen-Hegemonie als pädagogisches Verhältnis. Antonio Gramscis politische Pädagogik [Hegemony and counter-hegemony as a pedagogical condition. Antonio Gramsci's political pedagogy] (Rosa-Luxemburg-Bildungswerk, Eds.). *Hamburger Skripte* (15). Retrieved October 19, 2020, from [https://sh.rosalux.de/fileadmin/ls\\_hamburg/dokumente/Hamburger\\_Skripte/HS15Gramsci.pdf](https://sh.rosalux.de/fileadmin/ls_hamburg/dokumente/Hamburger_Skripte/HS15Gramsci.pdf).
- Müller, K. & Ehmke, T. (2016). Soziale Herkunft und Kompetenzerwerb [Social background and acquisition of skills]. In K. Reiss, C. Sälzer, A. Schiepe-Tiska, E. Klieme, & O. Köller (Eds.), *PISA 2015. Eine Studie zwischen Kontinuität und Innovation* (pp. 285–316). Münster: Waxmann.
- Niggemann, J. (2016). Wozu brauchen die das? Bildung als gelebte Philosophie der Praxis [What do they need it for? Education as a lived philosophy of practice]. In S. Geuenich, D. Krenz-Dewe, J. Niggemann, R. Pfützner, & K. Witek (Eds.), *Wozu brauchen wir das? Bildungsphilosophie und pädagogische Praxis* (pp. 58–71). Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot.
- Oprakto, B. (2019). *Im Namen der Emanzipation* [In the name of emancipation]. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]. (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en>.
- Pongratz, L. (2019). *Pädagogische Theorie für kritische Köpfe. Eine Einführung in die Pädagogik* [Pedagogical theory for critical minds. An introduction to pedagogy]. Retrieved October 16, 2020, from [https://tuprints.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/8369/1/ludwig\\_a\\_pongratz\\_-\\_paedagogische\\_theorie\\_fuer\\_kritische\\_koepfe.pdf](https://tuprints.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/8369/1/ludwig_a_pongratz_-_paedagogische_theorie_fuer_kritische_koepfe.pdf).
- Rolff, H.-G. (1997). *Sozialisation und Auslese durch die Schule* [Socialisation and selection by school]. Weinheim: Juventa.

- Rose, N. (2012). *Migration als Bildungsherausforderung. Subjektivierung und Diskriminierung im Spiegel von Migrationsbiographien* [Migration as an educational challenge. Subjectification and discrimination mirrored in the biographies of migrants]. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Schäfer, A. (2011). *Das Versprechen der Bildung* [The promise of education]. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Solga, H. (2005). Meritokratie – die moderne Legitimation ungleicher Bildungschancen [Meritocracy – the modern legitimation of unequal educational opportunities]. In P. Berger & H. Kahlert (Eds.), *Institutionalisierte Ungleichheiten. Wie das Bildungswesen Chancen blockiert* (pp. 19–38). Weinheim: Juventa.
- Spies, T. (2009). Diskurs, Subjekt und Handlungsmacht. Zur Verknüpfung von Diskurs- und Biografieforschung mithilfe des Konzepts der Artikulation [Discourse, subject and agency. On linking discourse and biography research using the concept of articulation]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-10.2.1150>.
- Spivak, G. C. (2004). Righting Wrongs. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103(2/3), 523–581.
- Theißel, B., & Yun, V. (2014). Bildungsprivilegien für alle! Interview mit María do Mar Castro Varela [Educational privileges for all! Interview with María do Mar Castro Varela]. *Migrazine – Online Magazine von Migrantinnen für alle*. Retrieved April 24, 2020, from <http://www.migrazine.at/artikel/bildungsprivilegien-f-r-alle>.
- Töller, A. E., Pannowitsch, S., Kuscheck, C., & Mennrich, C. (2011). Direkte Demokratie und Schulpolitik. Lehren aus einer politikfeldanalytischen Betrachtung des Scheiterns der Hamburger Schulreform [Direct democracy and school policy. Lessons learned from analysing the failure of the Hamburg school reform from a policy field perspective]. *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen*, 42(3), 503–523.
- Wenning, N. (1996). *Die nationale Schule. Öffentliche Erziehung im Nationalstaat* [The national school. Public education in the nation state]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Williams, R. (1981). *The Sociology of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Willis, P. (1981). *Learning to Labor. How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Farnborough: Saxon House.
- Zinnecker, J. (1975). *Der heimliche Lehrplan. Untersuchungen zum Schulunterricht* [The secret curriculum. Research on school lessons]. Weinheim: Beltz.



# Social Orders and the Political Dimension of Literacy

Daniel Krenz-Dewe and Matthias Rangger

## Abstract

Literacy has become the main signifier in the field of school education for thinking about and discussing education (*Bildung* in German). This substitution of the term education by the term literacy marks an increasing shift towards an individualization and economization of education. In contrast to this trend, the New Literacy Studies conceive literacy in a non-individualized but rather relational way, namely that literacy is related to historical and context-specific social orders and their power relations. This becomes particularly evident in the study of literacy in the context of the migration society. From the perspective of education theory, it then becomes necessary to ask which literacies are recognized, valuable and desirable under which social conditions, and what this means in relation to the “promises of education”. In this paper, we examine these questions as an expression of a fundamental political dimension of literacy.

## Keywords

Literacy · Migration · Hegemony · Education · Racism · New Literacy Studies

---

D. Krenz-Dewe (✉) · M. Rangger  
Faculty of Education, Bielefeld University, Bielefeld, Germany  
e-mail: [daniel.krenz-dewe@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:daniel.krenz-dewe@uni-bielefeld.de)

M. Rangger  
e-mail: [matthias.rangger@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:matthias.rangger@uni-bielefeld.de)

## 1 Introduction

The objective of this paper is to think about the political dimension of literacy within the theoretical horizon of hegemony theory.<sup>1</sup> Literacy, prominently driven by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) PISA studies, has become the main signifier in the field of school education to discuss and think about education or what is called *Bildung* in German. We consider this predominant substitution of the term education by the term literacy not only as a terminological one but also as representing an increasing shift towards the individualization and economization of education (Spring 2015). At the same time, the field of literacy studies offers interesting alternative perspectives on the ‘nature’ of literacy. In particular, the different approaches of the field of New Literacy Studies (Street 1995) help to understand and theorize literacy in a non-individualized but rather relational way. From this perspective literacy is related to historical and context-specific social orders and their power relations. From the standpoint of education theory, it then becomes necessary to ask which literacies are seen as recognized, valuable and desirable under which social conditions, and what this means in relation to the “promises of education” (Schäfer 2011).

Particularly in the context of migration society this has become a current question that at the same time reveals the political dimensions of the social in general and literacy in particular (Mecheril 2004, p. 8). It is possible to say that debates on migration and the future of western nation states are circling around the broader question ‘How do we want to live?’ – in this sense, literacy and education appear as central fields which are structured by existing hegemonic conditions and where struggles for hegemony are going on. In our examination of literacy and migration society, we posit a kind of constitutive relationality between (migration) social orders and literacy. We try to theorize this relationality by reference to approaches engaged with hegemony (Gramsci 2004; Laclau and Mouffe 2001). Within this perspective it should be possible to theorize the context-relational character of literacy and to highlight its fundamental political

---

<sup>1</sup>The considerations we present here, and which are still in development, are the product of a broader research context, which is engaged with the theoretical and empirical study of political literacy in the migration society (<https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/324314813?language=en>) and generally linked to works within the approach of migration pedagogy (Mecheril et al. 2010).

dimension with respect to social orders in migration society and beyond. Finally, we make some short remarks concerning the normative orientations of a political literacy for the migration society.<sup>2</sup>

---

## 2 Literacy and Relationality

The academic field of the study of literacy can be distinguished by one main dividing line: technological conceptions on the side of so-called “autonomous models of literacy” and context-relational conceptions on the side of so-called “ideological models of literacy” (Street 1984). Autonomous models understand literacy as a neutral and universal “set of portable, decontextualized information processing *skills* which individuals *applied*” (Reeder and Davilla 2005, p. 172). They suggest that these kinds of skills are in themselves progressive, emancipating and enabling. As Brian Street (2003) argues, they assume that “[i]ntroducing literacy to poor, ‘illiterate’ people, villages, urban youth etc. will have the effect of enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their ‘illiteracy’ in the first place” (p. 77). The OECD’s PISA study, conducted in 79 countries, can perhaps be regarded not just as one of the most influential empirical surveys into the current state of literacy around the world, but also as an ideal-typical conception of an autonomous model of literacy. The

---

<sup>2</sup>The assumption that the political and historical context in the German-speaking area but also in most other western countries can be described as “migration societies” (Mecheril 2010, p. 11) forms the general background for our considerations. The term highlights the importance of different migration phenomena for the constitution of society and enables views on social contexts that go beyond “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). So, ‘migration society’ is also a description for the global context which is structured by inequality and difference and is constantly changed by migration processes. Within this perspective ‘race’ becomes clear as a dominant social order that generally structures these social contexts. Everybody who is living in migration society contexts is part of the context and its structures – not only those who are seen as ‘migrants’.

In the course of this article we will further explicate the notion ‘migration society’, which has become more and more common in the social sciences and in politics in Germany over the last five to ten years. Although it is not the intention of the article to focus on the political and societal conditions in Germany in particular, our background concerning discourse and experience is the German context, so our perceptions are certainly affected by that. We would be happy to receive feedback which could help us broaden our perspective on the topics we are dealing with here.

*PISA 2018 Assessment and Analytical Framework* (OECD 2019), for example, states the following with regard to the use of the concept ‘literacy’ within the PISA assessment: “The assessment does not just ascertain whether students can reproduce knowledge; it also examines how well students can extrapolate from what they have learned and can apply that knowledge in unfamiliar settings, both in and outside of school. This approach reflects the fact that modern economies reward individuals not for what they know, but for what they can do with what they know” (p. 11).

This (autonomous) concept of literacy is technological because it assumes a causal relationship to social reality (Luhmann and Schorr 1982), which can be enacted in a mechanical way beyond the singular situation and specific context, for example “to apply learned knowledge in unfamiliar settings” (OECD 2019, p. 11). Literacy in this sense is a measurable, trans-contextually applicable competence. But by presenting autonomous models as universal and neutral, what is obscured is that this conception is formulated from a certain perspective on literacy, one that devalues, delegitimizes and excludes other forms of literacy as well as neglecting the importance of the (unequal) social conditions faced by individuals in acquiring and using this form of literacy (Street 2003). Finally, autonomous models follow a functionalist concept of literacy insofar as they are normatively oriented towards the functioning and improvement of the economically and socially ‘given’, for example to conceive literacy according to what modern capitalist “economies reward individuals for” (OECD 2019, p. 11). In this perspective, we can consider autonomous models not just as an individualization of literacy but also as an individualization of social inequality and difference because they ascribe the technological capacity and responsibility to act to the singular individual, independent from contextual conditions of action. Under the image of universality and neutrality, autonomous models are in danger of contributing to maintaining and disseminating given social and economic conditions.

In contrast to autonomous models, the paradigm of New Literacy Studies (NLS) (see for instance Gee 2008; Scribner and Cole 1981; Street 1995) assumes that there are no “broad differences that could uniquely and categorically be linked to literacy” (Reder and Davilla 2005, p. 2). The NLS criticize the autonomous conception of literacy because it “disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it so that it can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal and that literacy as such will have these benign effects” (Street 2003, p. 77). Therefore, NLS emphasize a more ‘ideological’ understanding of literacy, or rather “literacies” (Street 1984), in plural, as specific, context-related social and cultural practices (see for example Barton and Hamilton 1998;

Collins 1995; Gee 2008; Heath 1983; Street 1995). The terminological shift from skills to practices is central to the understanding of literacy in the context of ideological models:

Practices are shaped by social rules which regulate the use and distribution of texts, prescribing who may produce and have access to them. They straddle the distinction between individual and social worlds, and literacy practices are more usefully understood as existing in the relations between people, within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals. (Barton and Hamilton 2000, p. 8)

This conception of literacy is called ideological because literacies, both in their meanings and practices, are always seen as contested, relational, context- and domain-specific phenomena, which incorporate specific ideological views. Hence, literacies are seen as situated social practices in relation to reading and writing, which are overdetermined and patterned by historical and context-specific social orders, institutions and power relations (Barton and Hamilton 1998). From this perspective, there is no obvious division between literates and non-literates, but more an ample sensitivity for the specific contexts: its structures, discourses and practices. Even though a person is not able to read and write in the sense of decoding and encoding any dominant alphabet, that does not mean that she or he is less engaged in literacy activities than someone conceived as 'literate' by hegemonic standards<sup>3</sup> (Barton et al. 2000; Gee 2008; Street and Lefstein 2007). NLS approaches all highlight that there is a plurality of different literacies articulated and performed in the different domains and contexts of plural everyday lives.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, they show that these different literacies are also in a relation of distinction and exclusion to each other as well as that there is a powerful relation or gap between hegemonic forms and understandings of literacy, which are expected and instructed by schools, and the multiple and varying literacies of their students. In doing so, works from the field of NLS highlight the function of

---

<sup>3</sup>By 'hegemonic' we mean in this context the dominant human capital oriented discourse in the neoliberal version of education. 'Hegemonic' also means a relation of that kind of education politics to the general politics of the nation state which is formed by capitalist competition in a globalized world and therefore necessarily exclusive and mostly racist.

<sup>4</sup>In our perspective, the recognition of these different contexts and context-related literacies on an analytical level cannot necessarily involve a recognition on an ethical level (see also below) – there could for example exist discriminatory versions of 'literacy' in the context of right-wing and racist milieus.



dominant institutions such as schools for the reproduction or transformation of a particular social order (Street and Street 1991).

The scientific debates on literacy as well as the current interest of education policy on literacy (like PISA) show that there is no such thing as a single literacy. Rather, what we perceive as literacy and how it is conceptualized is always a decision for a specific form of 'literacy'. There is something at stake in the discussion about literacy. This highlights, firstly, that the debates on literacy are highly political. Secondly, the interest in and struggle for literacy, however, point particularly to the fact that the conception of literacy itself has a political dimension. It is this fundamental political dimension that is expressed in an ideological understanding (NLS) without being explicitly theorized as such. In the following, we therefore focus on the latter, the political dimension of literacy.

In order to pursue this interest, we firstly outline our theoretical approach to migration society and social orders. Building on this, we address the political dimension of literacy in the migration society – including a short detour to education theory. As an outlook, we finally consider some consequences for the normative discussion on literacy that such a perspective implies.

---

### 3 Hegemony in the Migration Society

The perspective of New Literary Studies on literacy is marked by an epistemological shift towards a grounding of literacy within societal and social rules. With NLS we can identify a constitutive relation between literacies and context-specific social orders. This relation and what we will refer to as the political 'nature' of literacy become particularly evident in the study of migration society. Migration phenomena (such as transnationalism, racism, and multilingualism, among others) are *fundamentally* constitutive for current social and pedagogical conditions *in general* (Castles et al. 2014). At no point in history have there been so many people prepared, compelled and able to migrate all over the world (Mecheril 2018a, p. 122). But it is not just the number of movements of people over (national) borders and the presence of 'migrant bodies' in a certain territory that make up the constitutive role of migration. On the one hand migration questions and problematizes prevalent social and educational orders – for instance, the supposed intrinsic unity between nation state, territory and specific languages (Hall 1992, pp. 291–299). On the other hand, it strengthens and (re)produces prevalent social orders, for example by the social construction of 'migration' as an 'exception' and 'problem' for a nation-state world order and by the establishment of practices and institutions to (re)produce the alleged natural order of racial

nation states (Mecheril 2018a, p. 123). In this sense the term ‘migration society’ (Mecheril 2010, p. 11) refers to the perspective that the epistemological nature of migration is to reveal the contingency, fragility and potency of existing social and pedagogical orders (Mecheril 2018b, p. 321).

To take a closer look at this relationship, we refer to theories of hegemony mainly based on the works of Antonio Gramsci (2004, 2011), Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001), since they provide the necessary theoretical tools to understand the social as a field of radical contingency permeated by power relations and dominance. According to Gramsci (2011), the social is structured by dominant social orders. These are powerful but do not dominate everything completely. Nor are they abstract quantities from human practices. They are produced and maintained only through the self-submissive consent of the people. So, to create hegemony it is necessary to create a kind of consensus and congruence concerning political world-views and convictions, cultural beliefs, self-perceptions and ways of living in society. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) take up Gramsci’s idea and transfer it into a discourse-theoretical understanding. They assume that there is no given ground, no essentiality of social orders or subjects within the social. Society appears then as a temporary and partial effect of political – and this means non-necessary but powerful – fixations of the social within (for example, individual, interactional, and institutional) practices. These practices articulate – and this is the discursive aspect for Laclau and Mouffe – different elements into a meaningful, intelligible system of equivalence with and difference from each other; an articulation that can only be stabilized through a constitutive exclusion (antagonism). This moment of antagonism, the moment “where the undecidable nature of the alternatives [of founding the social] and their resolution by power relations becomes fully visible” (Laclau 1990, p. 35), constitutes for them the political. Against the background of this thought social orders are produced, reproduced but also transformed by social practices, which are structured by power relations.

According to Paul Mecheril (2003), the migration society is structured by a natio-ethno-culturally coded order of (non-)belonging and an ongoing distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’. This applies insofar as the migration society can be seen as characterized by a social order of difference, which implies racial and linguistic dominance and discrimination. Even if there is a broad social consensus that rejects racism as a political attitude, racism is still one of the dominant ideologies that organizes and constitutes the prevailing approval of the current nation-state world order (see for example Goldberg 2002; Kooroshy and Mecheril 2019). Furthermore, racism is a social order that organizes social inequality and segregation but also people’s self-perceptions and world-views. In the context of the migration society, the imagination of a particular nation in

terms of some kind of essentialism can form the (ideological) basis for the justification and realization of racist exclusion and discrimination as well as for racist privilege and supremacy.

At the same time, the migration society is a highly contested and controversial area of political, social and cultural struggling for hegemony. Migration processes are challenging and transforming these social orders of difference that imagine an ethnic and linguistic homogeneity of the nation. In particular in current times but also in general, migration challenges social orders of belonging in the modern western nation-state, which is mainly based on a racialized distinction between belonging and non-belonging to the 'family' of the nation (Hall 1992, pp. 291–299).

Within the perspective of hegemony theory and migration society we have to think about social orders, such as racism, as structured and structuring symbolic principles of social reality, which are contingent and changeable but nevertheless powerful, violent and exclusive. They are produced and maintained by social practices as well as structuring them. So they are both the condition for the (unequal) agency of subjects and the effect of their practices. This must be considered if we look at the political dimension of literacies in the migration society.

---

## **4 The Political Dimension of Literacies in the Migration Society**

Summarizing the results of various research studies on multilingual literacies in different areas of Britain, Martin-Jones and Jones (2000) state that:

the acquisition and use of different languages and literacies [in these contexts] are inevitably bound up with asymmetrical relations of power between ethnolinguistic groups. The power relations are rooted in specific historical processes, in the development of a post-colonial order, in international labour migration, in the movement of refugees, in minority rights movements or in global changes of a social and political nature, but in the contemporary world, there are broad resonances in the ways in which these power relations are played out in local sites. (p. 1)

Within this relation between dominant and unequal global social orders and the local, they determine a lot of tensions, which can be identified as micro-contextual struggles for power that are articulated within superordinate relations of power and difference within the migration society. The different types of local and regional literacy practices that are modelled in the different studies do not

simply correspond to a local or global social order, but can be read as complex articulations under the given local and global conditions of the migration society.

Something similar can also be observed in examples for areas with German as (one of) the official language(s) (such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland). In the context of the examination of schools in the migration society, Magdalena Knappik and İnci Dirim (2013), for example, have examined the attributions of language competencies (including literacy skills) of students in teacher education. They highlight that students who are seen as ‘migrants’ and who want to take up studies to become German-language teachers are discriminated against because their German language skills often get disqualified on the basis of racialized attributions. They have found that the ability to become German language teachers is denied only to students who are supposed to speak other languages than German, for example in family contexts, although students whose only ‘mother tongue’ is German (sometimes speaking regional dialects) consistently make a similar number of mistakes. Behind these pejorative attributions made towards students’ German language skills, Knappik and Dirim (2013) locate a kind of “‘native speakerism’”, which is mediated by a racial logic of language competence.

From a migration society perspective, it becomes clear that not just the debates on literacy, but also the mere articulation and conceptualization of literacies within social practices are about more than just determining a neutral functional skill for everyone (autonomous models) or the simple need to recognize a diversity of coexisting cultural practices in relation to ‘text’ (ideological models). We can argue that the struggles about literacy and language skills in the migration society are not only struggles for the hegemonic form of literacy by means of (migration) social orders, but also struggles for the (migration) social order itself. From a hegemony theory perspective, which understands the relationality of the social in terms of difference and antagonism, this means on the one hand that the different literacy practices in the migration society constitute themselves not just in a field of unequal power relations (constituted by racism), but also through their distinction from, and the negation of, other literacy practices (founded on racism). Literacy practices can then become a general component of the struggles for dominance or subversiveness in the current migration society. The literacy practices and policies of PISA, for example, can be read as a powerful engagement of a global educational regime in structuring the current global conditions of the migration society in terms of (western) homogenization and economization (Spring 2015).

With reference to the political in hegemony theory, the political dimension of literacy cannot be located in proximity to what we generally refer to as (education) politics, as the PISA example may suggest. According to Laclau (1990), the

political dimension of any literacy practice or literacy in general lies in the fact that no literacy can be founded in and by itself. Rather, any literacy practice takes place against the background of a range of politically constructed social orders and practices, no matter how obvious, natural, and even unremarkable these may seem to us. Every literacy practice articulates itself in a field of unequal power relations based on the sedimented exclusion and subordination of other practices. However unconscious and heteronomous these articulations may be, they always represent a (powerful) decision in a field of heterogeneous possibilities. This, the (restricted, post-autonomous) decidability, is what makes them political.

In order to clarify this thought, we would like to make a brief reference to theoretical debates surrounding the political dimension of education (*Bildung*) in German-speaking scientific discourse, even though the discourses about literacy and education are somewhat different (for example, education theory is more explicit in its normative orientation towards the subject (as autonomous subject for example), while discourse around literacy often appears more functional, even in its more context-sensitive versions). Nevertheless, as we tried to highlight for literacy practices, Carsten Bünger (2013a, p. 17) points out that education processes (*Bildungsprozesse*) also need to be understood against the background of their embeddedness in the social. At the same time, he argues that efforts undertaken in education theory have always been attempts to describe subjectivity and the processes of its transformation through approaches in which these efforts are not absorbed in the conditions of social immanence. In that sense, the theory of education (*Bildungstheorie*) asks for the possibilities of thinking about freedom as a transgression of determination, as an interruption of independent habits and entanglement in social constraints. This is why Alfred Schäfer (2012, p. 140), with regard to Laclau's understanding of the political, locates the political dimension of education in the moment of the constitution of the subject. This, following Laclau, is the moment when the subject must necessarily decide how to relate to the social conditions that precede and co-constitute it – a necessity that results from the structural lack that social orders cannot themselves create and reproduce. Even if this moment is not the moment of a reasonable, self-transparent decision, the possibility of a context-relational education (*Bildung*), in the sense of a normatively 'desired' mode of subjectivation (in the form, for instance, of transgression of determination), can be conceived of here (Schäfer 2012, p. 140). In this theoretical perspective, education is then conceived, for example, as a critical practice of reflecting on given social conditions which, however, never eludes social immanence, and is therefore only constituted in an open process of critical reflection on the critical reflection, and so on (Bünger 2013b).

In our opinion, we can think of the political dimension of a certain literacy practice in a similar way. When both the social order and the subject of action have a structural lack that allows neither full determination nor unrestricted autonomy, there is a moment of political choice between a heterogeneity of alternatives. In the perspective of hegemony theory, this moment is not 'free', but framed by the prevailing hegemonic conditions. Literacy practices, in that sense, must be thought of as political articulations by socially constituted subjects within the given social power relations within a specific context and its dominant (literacy) orders.

Taking this political dimension of literacy practices into account raises a host of different questions for the study of literacies in education theory, which we could differentiate into empirical and normative ones. Empirically, we have to ask: What different kinds of literacies do exist? What literacies and whose literacies are dominant in educational debates? What literacies and whose literacies are recognized in the given school system? What is the ideological foundation behind the recognition or misrecognition of a certain type of literacy, that means in what ways are certain literacy practices involved in the reproduction of racism or other social orders of difference? Who defines what is understood as 'good' literacy? Who is privileged by the hegemonic forms of literacy? And who, in contrast, is discriminated against and excluded? From a normative perspective: What kind of literacy is desirable? What kind of literacy is needed to advance a more equal and just idea of living together?

The political dimension of literacy highlights that literacy practices and policies are deeply embedded in given hegemonic conditions. Therefore the questions of which literacy or whose literacies are valid or recognized, and of which literacies we want to push forward in our schools, are part of the question of how we want to live and in what kind of (migration) society we want to live now and in the future. So struggles for literacy are struggles for hegemony and the *good social order*. It also becomes clear that debates on literacy are involved in the current political and cultural struggles on migration and hegemonic conceptions of belonging, nation and democracy.

---

## 5 A Political Literacy for the Migration Society

This approach, to examine literacies not as skills of individuals but as context-related social practices, leads to the perspective that literacies are patterned by and 'work' under the conditions of local and broader cultural and political contexts. These contexts can be described as 'social orders', which are powerful but contingent. In particular, migration phenomena question and strengthen these social

orders and reveal their contingency – so struggles for literacy become apparent as struggles for social orders and struggles for hegemony. This contestation of literacies and their interdependence with social orders, as well as their inconclusiveness in principle, is an expression of the political dimension of education.

So, what does this political dimension of literacy mean for a *political* literacy<sup>5</sup> in the migration society – for a literacy that systematically takes its own political constitution into account and reflects it with reference to the historically specific conditions of the migration society? And how would this influence literacy practices, that are based on and which reproduce, for example, instances of anti-semitisms and racisms? And how would a political approach affect literacy policies that try to recognize a broad variety of literacies but only in an instrumental, because functional or disciplinary, sense? Literacy policies can for example become part of current integration policies in the migration society which particularly in Germany often have an assimilative character. Or literacy policies can be used to raise the human capital of the nation state in a framework of capitalist competition.

If we think of the possibility for a normatively preferable political literacy in the moment of the subject, which is also the possibility of education, we must enquire into the contextual conditions. Contextual conditions enable some kind of ‘literacy decisions’ that do not merely know how to ‘read’ and ‘write’ the constitutive contextual social orders that structure a certain literacy event but that are also able to challenge these orders in a normatively reflected way. And if we relate this thought to the racialized and racist conditions of the migration society, we should ask for the contextual conditions that are necessary to enable literacies that do not reduce the possibilities of ‘freedom’ to a kind of critical reflection on the subordination and emancipation of one’s own. Taking the fact of migration society seriously, it is necessary to think about normative concepts that do not assume the same ‘lousy’ conditions for everyone, but systematically presuppose social inequality and try to reduce it. As a first step in this regard, given literacy practices must be acknowledged. So schoolteachers should be able to recognize and contextualize different literacies of the students that appear in their everyday work. In a second step it seems to be appropriate to bring in a normative conception to deal with these literacies. This conception need not disguise its own character as being politically constructed against the background of contingency and

---

<sup>5</sup>We pick up this notion from a broad field of debates and conceptions in the anglophone world. These concern questions of teaching democratic politics and also of ‘living’ democracy in school and everyday life (for an overview, see for example Davies 2008).

power at the same time. Maybe the idea of a post-communitarian solidarity could be such a conception that could provide a normative horizon. Mecheril (2014) frames post-communitarian solidarity as a kind of solidarity that – seizing on the suggestion of Hauke Brunkhorst’s (2005) “solidarity among strangers” – does not already presume an equality or ‘sameness’ of a group of people to build on it. A post-communitarian solidarity develops – particularly under the conditions of a (global) migration society – a kind of empathetic ‘connectedness’ to other people who may live on another continent or next door but potentially under very different conditions than one does oneself. From our perspective the need for a normative reflection and a normative horizon refers to the question that has to be asked again and again – but especially during these times of intensified struggles for a (re)configuration of (migration) society: ‘How do we want to live?’ To acknowledge this while at the same time being able to position oneself in a (self-)reflexive and critical relationship to it – perhaps taking into account the idea of post-communitarian solidarity – would be a task for literacy teachers in the migration society. This is not an individual task but has to be enabled by the different contexts of teacher professionalization.

---

## References

- Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local Literacies. Reading and writing in one community*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (2000). Literacy practices. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanič (Eds.), *Situated Literacies. Reading and writing in context* (pp. 7–15). London & New York: Routledge.
- Barton, D., Hamilton, M., & Ivanič, R. (Eds.). (2000). *Situated Literacies. Reading and writing in context*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Brunkhorst, H. (2005). *Solidarity. From Civic Friendship to a Global Legal Community*. Cambridge & London: MIT Press.
- Bünger, C. (2013a). *Die offene Frage der Mündigkeit. Studien zur Politizität der Bildung* [The open question of autonomy. Studies on the politicalness of education] (Doctoral dissertation). Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Bünger, C. (2013b). Die Politizität der Bildung. Systematischer Fokus kritischen Bildungsdenkens [The politicalness of education – systematic focus of critical reasonings on education]. *Vierteljahresschrift für wissenschaftliche Pädagogik*, 89(3), 430–446.
- Castles, S., de Haas, H., & Miller, M. J. (2014). *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World* (5th ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Collins, J. (1995): Literacy and Literacies. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 75–93.
- Davies, I. (2008): Political Literacy. In J. Arthur, I. Davies, & C. Hahn (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Education for Citizenship and Democracy* (pp. 377–387). London: SAGE.



- Gee, J. P. (2008). *Social Linguistics and Literacies. Ideology in Discourses* (3rd ed.). Oxfordshire & New York: Routledge.
- Goldberg, D. T. (2002). *The Racial State*. Malden & Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gramsci, A. (2004). Hegemonie, Staat und Zivilgesellschaft als pädagogisch-ethisches Verhältnis [Hegemony, state and civil society as a pedagogical-ethical relation]. In A. Merrens (Ed.), *Erziehung und Bildung (Gramsci-Reader)* (pp. 48–59). Hamburg: Argument.
- Gramsci, A. (2011). *Prison Notebooks* (J. A. Buttigieg, Trans. & Ed., Vol. 1–3). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hall, S. (1992). The Question of Cultural Identity. In S. Hall, D. Held, & T. McGrew (Eds.), *Modernity and its Futures* (pp. 273–316). Milton Keynes: Polity Press, The Open University.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with Words. Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Knappik, M., & Dirim, İ. (2013). ‘Native-Speakerism’ in der Lehrerbildung [‘Native-Speakerism’ in teacher education]. *Journal für LehrerInnenbildung*, 13(3), 20–23.
- Kooroshy, S., & Mecheril, P. (2019). Zur Verwobenheit von *race* und *state* [About the entanglement of *race* and *state*]. In B. Hafenecker, K. Unkelbach, & B. Widmaier (Eds.), *Rassismuskritische politische Bildung. Theorien – Konzepte – Orientierungen* (pp. 78–91). Frankfurt am Main: Wochenschau.
- Laclau, E. (1990). *New Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time*. London & New York: Verso.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (2001). *Hegemony and socialist strategy. Towards a radical democratic politics*. London & New York: Verso.
- Luhmann, N., & Schorr, K. E. (1982). Das Technologiedefizit der Erziehung und die Pädagogik [The technological deficit of education and pedagogy]. In N. Luhmann & K. E. Schorr (Eds.), *Zwischen Technologie und Selbstreferenz. Fragen an die Pädagogik* (pp. 11–40). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Martin-Jones, M., & Jones, K. (2000). Multilingual Literacies. In M. Martin-Jones, & K. Jones (Eds.), *Multilingual Literacies. Reading and Writing different Worlds* (pp. 1–16). Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins B.V.
- Mecheril, P. (2003). *Prekäre Verhältnisse. Über natio-ethno-kulturelle (Mehrfach-)Zugehörigkeit* [Precarious Conditions. About natio-ethno-culturally multiple belonging]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Mecheril, P. (2004). *Einführung in die Migrationspädagogik* [Introduction to migration pedagogy]. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz.
- Mecheril, P. (2010). Migrationspädagogik. Hinführung zu einer Perspektive [Migration pedagogy. Leading towards a perspective]. In P. Mecheril, M. Castro Varela, İ Dirim, A. Kalpaka, & C. Melter (Eds.), *Migrationspädagogik* (pp. 7–22). Weinheim & Basel: Beltz.
- Mecheril, P. (2014). Postkommunitäre Solidarität als Motiv kritischer (Migrations-) Forschung [Post-communitarian solidarity as motif of a critical (migration) research]. In A. Broden & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Solidarität in der Migrationsgesellschaft* (pp. 73–92). Bielefeld: transcript.

- Mecheril, P. (2018a). Orders of Belonging and Education. Migration Pedagogy as Criticism. In D. Bachmann-Medick & J. Kugele (Eds.), *Migration. Changing concepts, critical approaches* (pp. 121–138). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Mecheril, P. (2018b). Ordnung, Krise, Schließung. Anmerkungen zum Begriff Migration-Regime aus zugehörigkeitstheoretischer Perspektive [Order, crisis, closure. Remarks on the notion of migration regime from the perspective of theories of belonging]. In A. Pott, C. Rass, & F. Wolff (Eds.), *Was ist ein Migrationsregime?* (pp. 313–330). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Mecheril, P., Castro Varela, M., Dirim, İ, Kalpaka, A., & Melter, C. (Eds.). (2010). *Migrationspädagogik* [Migration pedagogy]. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2019). *PISA 2018 Assessment and Analytical Framework* (Report). Paris: OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b25efab8-en>.
- Reder, S., & Davilla, E. (2005). Context and Literacy Practices. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 25, 170–187.
- Schäfer, A. (2011). *Das Versprechen der Bildung* [The Promise of Education]. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Schäfer, A. (2012). *Das Pädagogische und die Pädagogik. Annäherungen an eine Differenz* [The pedagogical and pedagogy. Approaches to a difference]. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Scribner, S., & Cole, M. (1981). *The Psychology of Literacy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Spring, J. (2015). *Economization of Education. Human Capital, Global Corporations, Skills-Based Schooling*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Street, B. V. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Street, B. V. (1995). *Social Literacies. Critical Approaches to Literacy in Development, Ethnography and Education*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Street, B. V. (2003). What's "new" in New Literacy Studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 5(2), 77–91.
- Street, B. V., & Street, J. (1991). The schooling of literacy. In D. Barton & R. Ivanic (Eds.), *Writing in the community* (pp. 143–166). London: SAGE.
- Street, B. V., & Lefstein, A. (2007). *Literacy. An advanced resource book*. Oxfordshire & New York: Routledge.
- Wimmer, A., & Glick Schiller, N. (2003). Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology. *International Migration Review*, 37(3), 576–610.



---

# Great Transition and World Collective: Global Citizenship Education as Education for Transformation Within School

Gregor Lang-Wojtasik

---

## Abstract

The Great Transition of the world is visible as climate change and other phenomena jeopardizing the survival of humankind. This creates challenges for the world collective, characterizing the tentative link between world society as a communication offer and the world community to deal with the normative agenda of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This leads to learning challenges (approachable through concepts of Global Learning) dealt with in various educational facilities (especially the school as universalized educational facility) to realize Education For All and Lifelong Learning. Global Citizenship Education in its historic-systematic approach and as a decolonized and democratic concept offers feasible paths to deal with the implicit tension of normative hope and cognitive pragmatism for future perspectives.

---

## Keywords

Great Transition · Transformation · World Society/Community/Collective · Global Education/Learning · Education for All · School · Global Citizenship Education

---

G. Lang-Wojtasik (✉)

University of Education Weingarten, Weingarten, Germany

e-mail: [langwojtasik@ph-weingarten.de](mailto:langwojtasik@ph-weingarten.de)

## 1 Preliminary Remarks

In the early 1970s, the Club of Rome brought out the challenging study *The limits to growth* (Meadows et al. 1972). The Brundtland report<sup>1</sup> paved the way to ‘Our Common Future’ (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) and the UN conference at Rio in 1992 was a milestone to start world-encompassing debates about feasible ways to overcome the global crisis by focusing on sustainability and global justice. From today’s perspective, these documents made very clear what we perceive some decades later: climate change is a reality and the “party is over” (Nair 2015, p. 23). This core challenge touches many other fields of the world collective: conservation of world creation, distribution of resources and provision of energy; peace, security and overcoming violence; development; distribution of wealth; elimination of poverty; tackling growing migration; accepting multiculturalism as human normalcy and human dignity/rights as guideline (Lang-Wojtasik 2019a, p. 23). From a German education-science point of view, these challenges have been named as “era-specific key challenges” (Klafki 1985/1996, p. 56).

According to the expert panel of the advisory council to the federal German government on global ecology questions, the world has to tackle constantly growing change (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat der Bundesregierung Globale Umweltveränderungen [WBGU] 2011). Today’s situation is put into historical context in relation to two main and very different transformative eras of social development: the Neolithic Age and the ‘Industrial Revolution’. The difference from today’s visible transition of society is the need for transformative processes to safeguard human survival. This is put in a historical context of the “contrat social” (Rousseau 1762/1977) as a basic French revolutionary text, a significant publication of today’s law philosophy and the foundation of the modern state within the European Enlightenment. With regard to education for transformation, we can focus on Global Citizenship Education today (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2014, 2015) to be fostered especially within school. In doing so, we have to keep in mind what kind of citizenship the

---

<sup>1</sup>The UN-founded World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was an independent body of experts based in Geneva since 1983 following the mandate to compile a report of perspectives to create a sustainable, eco-friendly development for the globe till 2000 and beyond. The submitted report influenced the further international debates on development- and ecology-politics and is recognized as the main trigger for the UN conference at Rio in 1992.

respective states in which schools are located want to achieve and what role formal education can play in this.

The authors of the above-mentioned expert council (WBGU 2011) refer to the term ‘transformation’ and differentiate four areas of transformation. This is summarized as the ‘transformation quartet of knowledge society’: research of transformation (rt) and transformative research (tr) as well as transformative education (te) and education for transformation (et). These areas as approaches to transformation are helpful for systematizing understanding of the underlying theoretical challenges:

Connection of world society and world community as a world collective for transformation:

- In which kind of world do we live? (rt)
- In which kind of world do we want to live? (tr)
- How to deal with the underlying tensions concerning transformation?

Interlinking of education and learning as transformative education for transformation:

- What kind of learning offers chances for transformation? (et)
- What kind of transformative education offers a sustainable future for all? (te)
- How to deal with the hope for societal transformation through learning within which forms of education for transformation and what would be the role of Global Citizenship Education?

These theoretical challenges are dealt with in the following article: The Great Transition and World Collective, Education for Transformation and transformative education as well as perspectives on Global Citizenship Education.

---

## **2 The Great Transition and Options for Transformation Within the World Collective**

In this article, the term ‘transition’ describes the visible changes of society as a challenge to human survival, and ‘transformation’ will mainly be used as encompassing the change of structure-determining societal characteristics (Drees and

Nierobisch 2017, p. 3). Both terms are put into various meaning contexts.<sup>2</sup> According to the WBGU, humankind would have to deal with two areas of debate – the world we live in (which is under transition) and the world we wish to live in (necessities of transformation). I want to approach this by relating to the helpful sociological differentiation between society and community (Tönnies 1887/1922) in its relation to the global world as world society and world community. Both lead to the tentative world collective as both address of and addressing transformation (Lang-Wojtasik 2019c).

## 2.1 In Which Kind of World Do We Live and in What Way is This a Feasible Frame for Transformation?

To deal with this question, the system-theoretical concept of ‘world society’ as a reference of communication (Luhmann 1971) seems to be helpful. This approach is deeply rooted within European Enlightenment values and helps to understand processes of transformation beyond nation-states. These processes beyond nation-states might be described in summary as manifoldness of variations, risks and insecurity (Luhmann 1997; Tremml 2000). The system-theoretical-based ‘world society’ focuses on descriptions of perception around four interlinked and circular dimensions of meaning: spatial, temporal, factual and social. Referring to these dimensions, we can describe four tentative perspectives on the world we live in: delimitation beyond national societies and its semantics, glocalization as parallel and interlinked processes of global and local developments as well as new network structures (*spatial*), de-temporalization and acceleration of social change (*temporal*), rising complexity of information and contingency to legitimate decisions (*factual*) as well as individualization and pluralization (*social*) (Lang-Wojtasik 2014; Scheunpflug 2011; Tremml 2000; see also the first column of Table 1).

To tackle these multiple and interlinked challenges of the world society, people have to be intellectually equipped with appropriate tools. This is a starting point for learning what options are possible in a growing world society. Before elaborating on this, we will have to make clear what we mean when we ask which kind of world we want to live in as a community on the global level.

---

<sup>2</sup> ‘Transformation’ or ‘transition’ have become buzzwords and relate to different research communities (Hölscher et al. 2018).

**Table 1** The World Collective, transformation, education and perspectives

Meaning-dimensions	World Collective for transformation		Transformation through transformative education & learning		Perspectives
	1	2	3	4	5
	Transformation with reference to world society: The world, we live in!	Transformation through world community: The world, we want to live in!	Global Learning as transformative education	School concerning World Society as education frame for transformation	Global Citizenship Education
Spatial	Delimitation, glocalization & networking	Global Village	Limitation & openness	Limitation & structuring	World Literacy
Temporal	Acceleration of social change and de-temporalisation	Sustainable Development	Certainty & uncertainty	Orientation & rhythmisation	Cultural change
Factual	Complexity & contingency	Equality in dignity	Knowledge & lack of knowledge	Decision-making & connections	Interdisciplinary & cross-sectional concepts
Social	Individualization & pluralization	Justice	Familiarity & strangeness	Potentials & options	Glocal Citizenship

Source Table created by the author

## 2.2 In Which Kind of World Do We Want to Live and What Options Do We Follow in Terms of Transformation?

To deal with this question, we have to be clear about the underlying normative potential of this approach. Debates about the Great Transition and necessities of transformation are based on a wide consensus around following the concept of sustainability in a broader context. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are clear in their statements and aims about the steps that are to be taken within the joint world community (United Nations General Assembly 2015). The SDGs are contained in a globally acknowledged and broadly accepted policy paper summarizing the necessary paths of the last five decades. As a 'transforming agenda' they indicate what has to be done by the 193 UN member-state signatories. The importance of the goals has been compared with the founding principles of the United Nations (United Nations General Assembly 2015).

On the basis of the SDG recommendations, politicians and citizens of the global North and South could know where to proceed right now. Definitely, as is also stated in the paper, this is only possible through a balanced procedure of the so-called five Ps – people, planet, prosperity, peace, partnership (United Nations General Assembly 2015). These basic five steps of the preamble underline very clearly that the future of the planet as an environment fit for humanity lies in the conviction of approaches common to all. A future-oriented global understanding of ‘modernity’ beyond common understandings of constant growth (Sommer and Welzer 2017) needs clear steps towards global justice throughout the world, including an end to overconsumption in the Northern parts of the world. Besides very political-based questions of who has to act now according to the 17 target areas and 169 sub-aims, there are some contradictions to be dealt with in the SDG document. At the same time, the SDGs offer a transparent and visionary framework for the kind of transformation the world needs to target for its common survival. To summarize, the four meaning dimensions of the world community are grounded in the SDG targets: global village as network of living and working together (*spatial*), sustainable development (*temporal*), equality in dignity of contents and pattern of explanation (*factual*) and justice as premise of human rights in diversity (*social*) (Lang-Wojtasik 2018b, p. 99; see also the second column of Table 1).

The SDGs are a programme of hope concerning human change within communities. To understand the theoretical blind spots of the SDG approach, an anthropological perspective could be fruitful, which offers a functional connection to sociological perspectives. This will be done in the following paragraphs in reference to aspects of philosophical anthropology (Plessner 1924/2003a, 1928/2019), using these to systematize the differentiation of society and community concerning the world collective (Lang-Wojtasik 2019c).

### **2.3 Tension of Cognitive Expectations and Legitimated Hope Within the World Collective**

The comprehension of the world we live in (world society) and the hoped-for path of the world we want to live in (world community) is tentatively linked between cognitive-based expectations and normative, contextualized legitimations. Society in the above-mentioned conception describes a communication or reference context, including all available information and the need for selection. Beyond nations and nation-states, it aims at offering a selection field of the manifoldness of variations. As a world society it encompasses all options of various



connections and on different levels. Community in contrast is merely related to specific human beings acting in their manifest living environments. What somebody does is supposed to have a direct effect on the contexts in which she or he lives. The individual is part of an actually or potentially known collective. Beyond nations and nation-states, it is hoped that the local and regional feasibility of community might be related to the global context as well (Lang-Wojtasik 2019c). But important targets like international solidarity (whatever this may be), empathy and appreciation (among over seven billion people?) or altruistic action and consensus (with everyone?) are still abstract concepts and face difficulties in their realization (Trembl 2011, p. 199).

Here, it is important to underline with prescriptive concern that the world society does not exist as a political state on the global level, but as a communicative offer beyond growing nation-states. In this understanding, an increasing cultural diversity is perceptible; that is, regional and local differentiations of religions and cultures become more and more visible as inequalities despite the notion of achieving global equality. The functional subsystems are not integrated equally into this concept of a world society. While especially the economic and financial systems have long been in place globally, this stands in contrast to the laws and education systems that still refer mainly to national contexts. Inclusion within the world society is ideally a possible option for everyone, but this contrasts with the exclusion of a majority who remain unable to participate in the chances offered. The 'world society' seems to be quite abstract and exists in contrast to the more tangible world community (Trembl 2011, p. 193) in terms of steps to be taken within a community. Both are loosely interconnected as a unity of difference held in suspense, characterized here as world collective. Debates about addressing transformation should start from here, to tackle possible barriers to awareness concerning the perception and understanding of transformative options and limitations. In consequence, research into transformation (the kind of world we live in) could focus on realistic options of societal and anthropological theory, concerned with cognitive expectations. Transformative research (the kind of world we want to live in) on the other hand could focus on norm-based hopes and their feasibility.

This is important concerning questions about the past, present and future of society and the individual as part of a human community. It also creates a basis for reflections about education and learning in the tensions between pragmatic pessimism and normative optimism (Trembl 2011, p. 196). These considerations illustrate the difficulties in finding tentative links between the reality of a world in transition and the options for transformation on a global level. This is again more difficult when it comes to the interlinkages of society and education or between community and learning.

### **3 Education for Transformation and Transformative Education**

SDG 4 underlines the demand for supporting sustainability through education and learning: to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote Life-long Learning opportunities for all (United Nations General Assembly 2015). This was made clear as a long-term process from Jomtien, via Dakar to Incheon, from 1990 till 2015 and beyond (Datta et al. 2015). At the same time, we talk about learning across the span of life. And that encompasses the time from birth till death, creating chances and challenges in parallel.

To tackle this aim we should be clear about the terms education and learning. Both terms, education and learning, have been discussed intensively in several scholarly debates over time. From a Humboldtian perspective, education is understood as an offering for humans to act and behave in relation to the surrounding world. Education both as a product and as a process provides options for (self-) reflexivity to generate knowledge out of available and constantly growing information. This seems to be more and more urgent in the light of the world society (Trembl 2000, pp. 210–249). In contrast, learning describes the reorganization of neuronal connection through the brain. The change and expansion of our behavioural repertoire (Trembl 1995, p. 97) helps to reduce inner complexity to accommodate increasing external complexity.

According to the aforementioned WBGU expert report, humankind has to deal with two areas of debate – one on learning options, which might offer chances for transformation of the individual brain, and one on transformative educational facilities offering appropriate reflections on options for a sustainable future for all in relation to the global world (Lang-Wojtasik 2019b).

#### **3.1 What Kind of Learning Offers Transformative Chances Appropriate for Dealing with the Challenges of Today?**

To address this question, we have to consider learning options to tackle the paradoxical challenges presented by world society. Through concepts of Global Learning (Lang-Wojtasik and Klemm 2017), an “education [can be offered] that opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all” (O’Loughlin and Wegimont 2003). Global learning as it has been intensively debated worldwide (Bourn 2020), is based on a respectful handling of resources

(sustainability) and equal dignity relating to access and participation (global justice) (Lang-Wojtasik and Erichsen-Morgenstern 2019). Global Learning or Global Education encompasses a variety of contents and approaches, represented in different concepts: “Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education; being the Global Dimensions of Education for Citizenship” (O’Loughlin and Wegimont 2003).

Education in itself is always a transformative process. In consequence, debates about transformative education should make clear what underlying concept of transformation they follow. This is again more visible when we talk about the normative potential of Global Learning. Here, we can see a double transformative assumption – transformation through education for transformation (Scheunpflug 2019), dealing with the challenges of a world in transition. This is important for questions of educational concepts and didactic approaches for education for global citizenship (Lang-Wojtasik 2019a).

Referring to the aforementioned meaning dimensions (*spatial, temporal, factual, and social*) it is possible to name feasible learning options as paradoxes to deal with global transformation. In view of delimitation and glocalization, options for reference need to be offered in linking spatial relations (*limitation*) within local contexts and to connect these to spacelessness (*openness*) within global connections beyond the nation-state but within the context of a world society (*spatial learning paradox*). In view of de-temporalization and the accelerated pace of social change, it is necessary to deal with the uncertainty of planning in light of an ambiguous future. At the same time, while searching for certainty, it is necessary to look critically at feasible strategies learned from the past to be used constructively in the present for a feasible future (*temporal learning paradox*). In view of the complexity of information and the difficulty of the legitimacy of decisions (that is, the experience of contingency), it is necessary to deal with the fact of a growing lack of knowledge and to develop knowledge against this background, considering possible effects and side-effects, to deal with the existing insecurity of decision (*learning paradox related to fact*). In view of growing individualization and the related pluralization of life concepts, including agreed multiple variations of values, there is a need to appreciate equally both familiarity and strangeness and to develop a preparedness to deal with underlying tensions in a multi-perspective fashion (*social learning paradox*) (Lang-Wojtasik 2014, p. 58; Treml 2000; see also the third column in Table 1).

In this view, Global Learning offers options for transformation and provides further possibilities for handling the tensions between ever-increasing variety and the search for uniqueness, civilized risk versus natural danger, and uncertainty as

against anthropologically necessary security (Lang-Wojtasik 2017). This is possible if Global Learning is able to continuously handle a growing inner complexity (Scheunpflug and Schröck 2002, p. 10). It encompasses the support of learners over their lifespan to develop approaches and attitudes that question the sustainability of the world society.

The growing empirical research in this field is encouraging (Lang et al. 2018; Scheunpflug and Uphues 2011). This is especially true concerning Global Learning in schools (Asbrand 2009; Kater-Wettstädt 2015). As a brief summary of findings and recommendations we can state that there are core success factors. To start with, it is evident that adolescents make use of strategies to deal with the challenges of a world society within learning processes; though these might not be compatible with the hoped-for learning output of their teachers (Asbrand 2009, pp. 230–231). Here, we can recognize crucial aspects which might help to create competence-based Global Learning arrangements. Global Learning would consequently need arranged learning environments, chances for perspective change (*spatial*), feasible opportunities for experience, attempts to practise alternative solutions in connection with the past and with an uncertain future (*temporal*), seeking for well selected information and assistance in a search for knowledge being interlinked with lack of knowledge, trial and error in activities taking into account possible side-effects, interlinkage of cognition and affection (*factual*) and the tolerance for alternative strategies of individuals, experiences of sociality (individual as part of a collective of solidarity), and possibilities for (self-)reflection concerning pluralism and hierarchies (*social*).

These four dimensions (*spatial*, *temporal*, *factual*, and *social*) seem to be of core interest when searching for transformative learning options. This leads to possible consequences for education institutions.

### **3.2 What Kind of Transformative Education in Schools Offers Feasible Ways for a Sustainable Future for All?**

Although school as an institution of structured teaching and learning has been under critique since its origin about 6000 years ago, it seems to be the most successful means for offering (mass) education. It offers functionally proven frameworks appropriate for learning challenges of the world society as well (Lang-Wojtasik 2008): limitation and structuring (*spatial*) as a space for enabling learning processes concerning the multiple variety of a world society; orientation and rhythmization (*temporal*) of educational processes for maintenance and

further development of society to deal with security and insecurity; possibilities for decision-making and selected connections (*factual*) as a demarcated place concerning daily life to deal with knowledge and lack of knowledge as well as offering potentials and approving options (*social*) through professionals to work with adolescents to deal with familiarity and strangeness (see the fourth column of Table 1).

These options, as they have been defined for instance by German and neo-institutionalist school theory, suggest that school has been universalized – at least concerning its core idea (Meyer et al. 1992). It is – in its idealistic construction – an institution where norms and values of modernity are (re)produced. This kind of school has a specific organizational structure regarding access and participation of learners and teachers as well as in terms of resources and curricula, which are linked to political decisions. Finally, school is a place of interactions and offers space for experiences and activities. It is a place where people can have a selected and reduced view on options to create a future. They can try these out without the risk of failing. This reliable functionality and structural continuity offers a frame for continuous reform and constant development of the modern school (Lang-Wojtasik 2018b). School is perceived as the guiding facility to reach and teach various and heterogeneous groups of society (Lang-Wojtasik 2018a). These idealistic options stand in contrast to the global realities of school in a worldwide picture concerning access, participation and respect for human-kind within the institution. The real history of schools stands in sharp contrast to this. Especially in the context of debates on Education For All (EFA) and Lifelong Learning (LLL) it makes sense to look beyond formal schooling and to view basic education as a “passport to life” (Delors et al. 1996, Chap. 6). That encompasses – following the approach of Jomtien – all possible learners and not only students addressed by primary basic education: Education For All means Lifelong Learning from birth till death (Datta et al. 2015; UNESCO 2017). These idealistic targets contrast with 2020 data calculating that around 258 million children and youths are out of school (UNESCO 2020, p. 4) and that globally only “86% of adults aged 15 and above and 92% of youth aged 15 to 24 are literate” (UNESCO 2020, p. 267).

Global inequality and injustice of chances are also important themes in Germany, where there are an estimated 6.2 million functional illiterates (Grotlüschen et al. 2019). At the same time, we know from quantitative empirical research about a consistent percentage of at-risk or ‘risqué pupils’ (Burchard 2016; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2013) being possible successors of functional illiterates. On the one hand, we talk about children and youth who fail or just reach the first competence level within large-scale

assessments. On the other hand, the term describes adolescents who grow up in families having high risks of poverty, educational deprivation, and language challenges concerning the lingua franca due to migration (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2018). These face difficulties in gaining capabilities and skills to connect themselves to the requirements of a global information society. Especially in Germany, socioeconomic background of the family, growing up with German as a second or foreign language, and access to qualified help and achievement in education are closely interconnected (Lang-Wojtasik and Jacobs 2016, p. 22). In consequence, it should be made clear that Global Learning is only realizable if all possible learners can gain access to sustainable options for appropriate educational facilities. Only then might it be possible to offer solutions to the worldwide crisis of learning and education. This is heavily connected to questions of formal schooling and its appropriateness for learning needs as well as replacements and supplements through non-formal and informal ways (Harring et al. 2016). To encourage this debate, I would like to suggest a differentiation along education and learning in the aforementioned suggestion of learning options and educational facilities. In this understanding, learning might happen intentionally (formal) or unintentionally (informal) inside and outside the given facilities. These would offer formal, non-formal and informal settings on an organizational level to reach most of the various target-groups by specific organizational frames (Lang-Wojtasik 2017, pp. 16–23).

---

#### **4 Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education (GCED)**

Beyond options for informal learning in daily life, formal learning is mainly possible through educational options and within institutions. This tension could be characterized as a prescriptive path to world literacy, where all people have easy access to educational facilities and receive options for life-long learning. The educational options through learning can be different but should lead to equal and just access and should persist within an educational system. Only then will Global Learning be able to support people in gaining feasible options to survive intellectually in terms of the novelties of the global information society and create options of transformation through education to handle the challenges of the world. As the mentioned world society exists but cannot be intentionally controlled or regulated by individuals, educational facilities have to rethink their functional options (see the fourth column of Table 1) and provide appropriate learning offers in a global perspective (see the third column of Table 1). This

should help raise the inner complexity of an individual's thinking in order to deal with the growing outer complexity of society (Trembl 2000, 2011, p. 197). The tensions alluded to previously are important for reflecting on the promotion of the concept of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) as an approach for transformation through the transformative potential of education.

According to UNESCO, GCED is one of the leading conceptual perspectives within the Global First campaign aiming at decolonized claims and critical thinking on all levels of reflection and action (Abdi et al. 2015; Wintersteiner et al. 2015). The understanding of GCED implies the idea that change in the future might promise innovation. Approved strategies for tackling life challenges are rearranged communicatively in the present from experiences of the past to expectations of the future. In doing so, GCED becomes an educational programme of hope in relation to the descriptive and mainly hopeless reality of a differentiated society. Consequently, the world collective has to tackle well known challenges concerning how to include heterogeneous people of various ages in education institutions, offer feasible ways of learning to connect these people to the manifoldness of variations in today's world society, and to be aware of the gap between knowing and acting (Lang-Wojtasik 2018a; WBGU 2011, pp. 255–256, 375–377).

Concepts of GCED will have to deal with the underlying aporia of education and learning in antinomies between expectations and options. This has to be taken into account when talking about options of transformation on a global level through education. Today we can learn from all the mentioned approaches that GCED aims at achieving an equal society by the ideal of humanity, where (world) literacy is the basis for the necessary transformation to open all people's eyes and minds to the realities of the world. This is the *spatial* frame to think about possibilities to connect with options for change, and to the concepts and understandings of citizenship.

The promotion and realization of a transformative culture (*cultural change*) through learning and education is possible by interlinking three aspects of cultural responsibility – culture of mindfulness as a result of ecological responsibility, culture of participation as democratic responsibility, and culture of commitment as future responsibility (WBGU 2011, p. 8). To do so, one has to remember the mentioned historical lines as systematic request (*temporal*). This also includes a clear commitment to a balanced consideration of liberty, tolerance, equality and sovereignty as a field of activity with many potentials (Lang-Wojtasik 2018a).

Looking at the European debates on Global Learning and education, it seems helpful to concentrate on interdisciplinary and cross-sectional approaches. It therefore makes sense to focus on the concepts of Education for Sustainable

Development, Peace Education, Multicultural Education and Global Learning. Focusing on the main aspects and normative visions of GCED, four ideals become vital: (1) sustainability as preserving and appreciating intra-/intergenerational approaches to humanity and the world; (2) non-violence as a culture of peace constituting the frame and mandate; (3) justice as glocal equal dignity and participation; and (4) partnership as cooperative interaction with other individuals and cultures (Lang-Wojtasik 2019c).

GCED has to be clear about the global in its acronym – starting from questions of citizenship from a *social* perspective. People in education facilities and especially in the school context need clarity at least about three aspects in the tension between global challenges and local options to be dealt with (glocalization). For this ‘glocal citizenship’, the following aspects are important: *status* (from national to transnational), *feelings* (belonging to a community, related to the principles of democracy and human rights) and *practice* (participation in various forms) (Lang-Wojtasik and Erichsen-Morgenstern 2019; Osler and Starkey 2005; Wintersteiner et al. 2015, pp. 22–24). Concerning concepts for cultural change, GCED should focus on cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural aspects (UNESCO 2015, p. 15). All this should support processes of transformation from *international citizens* to *transnational world citizens*.

If the aim is to rethink education in the context of GCED, chances and limitations of the whole endeavour have to be taken into account; that is, to hope for societal and human transformation through education and learning. The previously cited panel of experts has identified the traditional challenge for any educational approach – that of finding appropriate pathways between knowing and acting (WBGU 2011, pp. 255–256). The underlying and well described problem is challenging for didactics. This becomes more evident when the hopes of acting through knowing are connected to debates around Global Citizenship Education. To understand the theoretical challenges, the approaches of philosophical anthropology and system theory are helpful from a European perspective, bearing in mind the possible danger of blind spots concerning continuing colonialization. Following these two metatheoretical concepts, the human is supposed to be a ‘Homo absconditus’, meaning that he or she is unavailable, fathomless and incomprehensible (Plessner 1969/2003b). Such a person acts rationally using his/her own brain for decision-making. This has been described as a technology deficit of teaching and learning: students are able to learn but this learning is not necessarily congruent with the intended learning of the teacher (Luhmann and Schorr 1982). As a consequence, revised concepts of Global Citizenship Education will have to deal with the aporia of education and learning between expectations and options.



This has to be taken into account when talking about options of transformation on a global level through learning and education. Didactic concepts to come will have to reflect on these challenges of education and offer feasible options for overcoming them (Lang-Wojtasik 2019a; Scheunpflug 2019). Besides this, research is needed to understand the requirements and skills for professionalism of experts in this field (Darji and Lang-Wojtasik 2014).

---

## References

- Abdi, A. A., Shultz, L., & Thashika P. (Eds.). (2015). *Decolonizing Global Citizenship Education*. Rotterdam, Boston, & Taipei: Sense Publishers.
- Asbrand, B. (2009). *Wissen und Handeln in der Weltgesellschaft. Eine qualitativ-rekonstruktive Studie zum Globalen Lernen in der Schule und in der außerschulischen Jugendarbeit* [Knowledge and action in the world society. A Qualitative-Reconstructive Study on Global Learning in School and in Out-of-School Youth Work]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung. (2018). *Bildung in Deutschland kompakt 2018. Zentrale Befunde des Bildungsberichts* [Education in Germany compact 2018: Key findings of the education report]. Bielefeld: wbv. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from <https://www.bildungsbericht.de/de/bildungsberichte-seit-2006/bildungsbericht-2018/pdf-bildungsbericht-2018/bbe18-kompakt.pdf>.
- Bourn, D. (Ed.). (2020). *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Global Education and Learning*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Burchard, A. (2016, February 10). OECD fordert mehr Hilfen für schwache Schüler [OECD calls for more help for weak pupils]. *Der Tagesspiegel*. Retrieved July 14, 2020, from <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/risikoschueler-in-der-pisa-studie-oecd-fordert-mehr-hilfen-fuer-schwache-schueler/12941270.html>.
- Darji, B., & Lang-Wojtasik, G. (2014). Preparing globally competent teachers – Indo-German Perspectives. *International Journal of Global Learning and Development Education*, 6(3), 49–62.
- Datta, A., Lang-Wojtasik, G., & Lange, S. (2015). Education For All – bleibende Vision als Auftrag zum Handeln! [Education For All – lasting vision as a mandate to act!]. *Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik*, 38(2), 4–9.
- Delors, J. et al. (1996). *Learning. The treasure within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. Highlights* (Report). Paris: UNESCO.
- Drees, G., & Nierobisch, K. (Eds.). (2017). *Bildung und gesellschaftliche Transformation. Analysen – Perspektive – Aktion* [Education and social transformation. Analysis – Perspective – Action]. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren.
- Grotlischen, A., Buddeberg, K., Dutz, G., Heilmann, L., & Stammer, C. (2019). *Leo 2018 – Leben mit geringer Literalität* [Leo 2018 – Life with low literacy] (Press Brochure). Hamburg: Fakultät für Erziehungswissenschaft, Universität. Retrieved June 24, 2020, from <https://leo.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/LEO2018-Pressheft.pdf>.

- Harring, M., Witte, M. D., & Burger, T. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbuch informelles Lernen. Interdisziplinäre und internationale Perspektiven* [Informal learning manual. Interdisciplinary and international perspectives]. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz Juventa.
- Hölscher, K., Wittmayer, J. M., & Loorbach, S. D. (2018). Transition versus transformation: What's the difference? *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 27, 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2017.10.007>.
- Kater-Wettstädt, L. (2015). *Unterricht im Lernbereich Globale Entwicklung. Der Kompetenzerwerb und seine Bedingungen* [Teaching in the field of global development. The acquisition of competences and its conditions]. Münster & New York: Waxmann.
- Klafki, W. (1996). *Neue Studien zur Bildungstheorie und Didaktik. Zeitgemäße Allgemeinbildung und kritisch-konstruktive Didaktik* [New studies on educational theory and didactics. Contemporary general education and critical-constructive didactics] (5th ed.). Weinheim & Basel: Beltz. (Original work published 1985).
- Lang, S., Scheunpflug, A., & Lang-Wojtasik, G. (Eds.). (2018). Empirische und konzeptionelle Perspektiven auf Globales Lernen [Empirical and conceptual perspectives on Global Learning]. *Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik*, 41(1).
- Lang-Wojtasik, G. (2008). *Schule in der Weltgesellschaft. Herausforderungen und Perspektiven einer Schultheorie jenseits der Moderne* [School in world society. Challenges and perspectives of a school theory beyond modernity]. Weinheim & Munich: Juventa.
- Lang-Wojtasik, G. (2014). World society and the human being: The possibilities and limitations of global learning in dealing with change. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 6(1), 53–74.
- Lang-Wojtasik, G. (2017). *Globalisierung und Globales Lernen als ein Epizentrum politischer Erwachsenenbildung!?* [Globalisation and global learning as an epicentre of political adult education!?!]. Ulm: Klemm + Oelschläger.
- Lang-Wojtasik, G. (2018a). Heterogenität und Inklusion als pädagogisch-didaktische Dauerbrenner. Reflexive Distanz über Differenz als Chance [Heterogeneity and inclusion as pedagogical-didactic perennial themes. Reflective distance over difference as an opportunity]. In G. Lang-Wojtasik & S. König (Eds.), *Inklusion als gesellschaftliche, pädagogische und hochschulische Herausforderung* (pp. 19–44). Ulm & Münster: Klemm + Oelschläger.
- Lang-Wojtasik, G. (2018b). Schulen in der Einen Welt – Perspektiven einer global orientierten Schulentwicklungsforschung [Schools in the One World - Perspectives of globally oriented school development research]. In A. Scheunpflug, H. Simojoki, & M. Schreiner (Eds.), *Evangelische Schulen und religiöse Bildung in der Weltgesellschaft* (pp. 97–117). Münster: Waxmann.
- Lang-Wojtasik, G. (2019a). Globales Lernen als transformative Bildung – Überlegungen zu einer Allgemeinen Didaktik mit weltbürgerlichem Anspruch [Global learning as transformative education – reflections on a general didactics with a cosmopolitan claim]. In S. König & G. Lang-Wojtasik (Eds.), *Die Vielfalt methodischer Zugänge in der Unterrichtsforschung. Beispiele aus Fachdidaktik und Allgemeiner Didaktik* (pp. 23–48). Ulm: Klemm + Oelschläger.
- Lang-Wojtasik, G. (2019b). Große Transformation, Bildung und Lernen – Chancen und Grenzen einer Global Citizenship Education [Great transformation, education and

- learning – opportunities and limits of a Global Citizenship Education]. In G. Lang-Wojtasik (Ed.), *Bildung für eine Welt in Transformation. Global Citizenship Education als Chance für die Weltgesellschaft* (pp. 33–49). Opladen, Berlin, & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Lang-Wojtasik, G. (2019c). Große Transformation von Gesellschaft und Mensch – differenztheoretische Überlegungen zum Weltkollektiv mit pädagogischem Interesse [Great transformation of society and man – difference-theoretical considerations on the world collective with pedagogical interest]. In G. Lang-Wojtasik (Ed.), *Bildung für eine Welt in Transformation. Global Citizenship Education als Chance für die Weltgesellschaft* (pp. 19–31). Opladen, Berlin, & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Lang-Wojtasik, G., & Erichsen-Morgenstern, R. M. (2019). Transformation als Herausforderung. Globales Lernen als lebenslanger Bildungsauftrag für alle [Transformation as a challenge. Global learning as a lifelong educational mission for all]. In W. L. Filho (Eds.), *Aktuelle Ansätze zur Umsetzung der UN Nachhaltigkeitsziele* (pp. 251–270). Berlin & Heidelberg: Springer Spektrum.
- Lang-Wojtasik, G., & Jacobs, T. (2016). Gleiche Bildung für alle ermöglichen. Chancengleichheit zwischen Vision und Illusion [Enabling equal education for all. Equal opportunities between vision and illusion]. In G. Lang-Wojtasik, K. Kansteiner, & J. Stratmann (Eds.), *Gemeinschaftsschule als pädagogische und gesellschaftliche Herausforderung* (pp. 17–32). Münster & New York: Waxmann.
- Lang-Wojtasik, G., & Klemm, U. (Eds.). (2017). *Handlexikon Globales Lernen* [Hand encyclopedia Global Learning] (2nd ed.). Ulm: Klemm + Oelschläger.
- Luhmann, N. (1971). Die Weltgesellschaft [The World Society]. *Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie*, 57, 1–35.
- Luhmann, N. (1997). *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* [The society of society]. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Luhmann, N., & Schorr, K. E. (1982). Das Technologieproblem der Erziehung und die Pädagogik [The technological problem of education and pedagogy]. In N. Luhmann & K. E. Schorr (Eds.), *Zwischen Technologie und Selbstreferenz: Fragen an die Pädagogik* (pp. 11–40). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Meadows, D. H., Meadows, D. L., Randers, J., & Behrens, W. W., III. (1972). *The Limits to growth: A report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*. New York: Universe Books. Retrieved June 24, 2020, from <http://www.donellameadows.org/wp-content/userfiles/Limits-to-Growth-digital-scan-version.pdf>.
- Meyer, J. W., Kamens, D., & Benavot, A. (Eds.). (1992). *School knowledge for the masses: World models and national curricula in the twentieth century*. Washington, D. C. & London: Routledge.
- Nair, C. (2015). Die Party ist zu Ende [The Party is over]. *welt-sichten. Magazin für globale Entwicklung und ökumenische Zusammenarbeit*, 9, 23–25.
- O'Loughlin, E., & Wegimont, L. (2003). Maastricht Global Education Declaration: European strategy framework for improving and increasing global education in Europe to the year 2015. In E. O'Loughlin & L. Wegimont (Eds), *Global Education in Europe to 2015. Strategy, policies, and perspectives. Outcomes and Papers of the Europe-wide Global Education Congress. Maastricht, The Netherlands. 15th–17th November 2002* (Report). Lisbon: North-South-Centre of the Council of Europe. Retrieved June 24, 2020, from <https://rm.coe.int/168070f089>.

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2013, December 3). *PISA-Fortschritt in Deutschland: Auch die Schwachen werden besser* [PISA progress in Germany: Even the weak get better]. Paris & Berlin. Retrieved January 12, 2016, from <http://www.oecd.org/berlin/presse/pisa-2012-deutschland.htm>.
- Osler, A., & Starkey, H. (2005). *Changing Citizenship: Democracy and Inclusion in Education*. Maidenhead & New York: Open University Press & McGraw-Hill-Education.
- Plessner, H. (2003a). Grenzen der Gemeinschaft. Eine Kritik des sozialen Radikalismus [Community borders. A critique of social radicalism]. In H. Plessner, *Macht und menschliche Natur* (Vol. 5, pp. 7–133). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. (Original work published 1924).
- Plessner, H. (2003b). Homo absconditus. In H. Plessner, *Conditio humana* (Vol. 8, pp. 353–366). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. (Original work published 1969).
- Plessner, H. (2019). *Levels of organic life and the human. An introduction to Philosophical Anthropology*. New York: Fordham University Press. (Original work published 1928).
- Rousseau, J.-J. (1977). *Du contrat social ou Principes du droit politique* [The Social Contract or Principles of Political Law]. Stuttgart: Reclam. (Original work published 1762).
- Scheunpflug, A. (2011). Lehren angesichts der Entwicklung zur Weltgesellschaft [Lessons to be learned in the light of the evolution towards a world society]. In W. Sander & A. Scheunpflug (Eds.), *Politische Bildung in der Weltgesellschaft. Herausforderungen, Positionen, Kontroversen* (pp. 204–215). Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung.
- Scheunpflug, A. (2019). Transformatives Globales Lernen – eine Grundlegung in didaktischer Absicht [Transformative Global Learning – a foundation in didactic intention]. In G. Lang-Wojtasik (Ed.), *Bildung für eine Welt in Transformation. Global Citizenship Education als Chance für die Weltgesellschaft* (pp. 63–74). Opladen, Berlin, & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Scheunpflug, A., & Schröck, N. (2002). *Globales Lernen. Einführung in eine pädagogische Konzeption zur entwicklungsbezogenen Bildung* [Global learning. Introduction to a pedagogical concept for development-related education] (2nd ed.). Stuttgart: Aktion Brot für die Welt.
- Scheunpflug, A., & Uphues, R. (2011). Was wissen wir in Bezug auf das Globale Lernen? Eine Zusammenfassung empirisch gesicherter Erkenntnisse [What do we know about Global Learning? A summary of empirically proven findings]. In G. Schrüfer & I. Schwarz (Eds.), *Globales Lernen. Ein geographischer Diskursbeitrag* (pp. 63–100). Münster & New York: Waxmann.
- Sommer, B., & Welzer, H. (2017). *Transformationsdesign. Wege in eine zukunftsfähige Moderne* [Transformation design. Ways into a sustainable modernity]. Munich: oekom.
- Tönnies, F. (1922). *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der Reinen Soziologie* [Community and society. Basic concepts of pure sociology] (5th ed.). Berlin: Carl Curtius. (Original work published 1887).
- Treml, A. K. (1995). Lernen [Learning]. In H.-H. Krüger & W. Helsper (Eds.), *Einführung in Grundbegriffe und Grundfragen der Erziehungswissenschaft* (pp. 93–102). Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- Treml, A. K. (2000). *Allgemeine Pädagogik. Grundlagen, Handlungsfelder und Perspektiven der Erziehung* [General pedagogy. Foundations, fields of action and perspectives of education]. Stuttgart, Berlin, & Cologne: Kohlhammer.

- Treml, A. K. (2011). Globalisierung als pädagogische Herausforderung. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer weltbürgerlichen Erziehung [Globalization as an educational challenge. Possibilities and limits of a cosmopolitan education]. In W. Sander & A. Scheunpflug (Eds.), *Politische Bildung in der Weltgesellschaft* (pp. 190–203). Bonn: BfPB.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2014). *Global Citizenship Education. Preparing learners for the challenges of the twenty-first century*. Paris. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227729>.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2015). *Global Citizenship Education. Topics and learning objectives*. Paris. Retrieved November 23, 2015, from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002329/232993e.pdf>.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2017). *Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/18. Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments* (GEM Report, 2nd ed.). Paris.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2020). *Inclusion and education. All means all* (Global Education Monitoring, Report 2nd ed.). Paris. Retrieved July 13, 2020, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718.locale=en>.
- United Nations General Assembly. (2015, October 21). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (Resolution A/RES/70/1). New York. Retrieved June, 30, 2020 from [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Resolution\\_A\\_RES\\_70\\_1\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Resolution_A_RES_70_1_EN.pdf).
- Wintersteiner, W., Grobbauer, H., Diendorfer, G., & Reitmair-Juárez, S. (2015). *Global Citizenship Education. Politische Bildung für die Weltgesellschaft* [Global Citizenship Education. Political education for the world society] (Brochure, 2nd ed.). Klagenfurt, Salzburg, & Vienna. Retrieved March 1, 2018, from <https://bimm.at/publikationen/global-citizenship-education/>.
- Wissenschaftlicher Beirat der Bundesregierung Globale Umweltveränderungen [WBGU]. (2011). *Hauptgutachten. Welt im Wandel. Gesellschaftsvertrag für eine Große Transformation* [Flagship Report. World in Transition. A Social Contract for Sustainability.] (Report, 2nd rev. ed.). Berlin. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from [https://www.wbgu.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/wbgu/publikationen/hauptgutachten/hg2011/pdf/wbgu\\_jg2011.pdf](https://www.wbgu.de/fileadmin/user_upload/wbgu/publikationen/hauptgutachten/hg2011/pdf/wbgu_jg2011.pdf).
- World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* (Report). Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>.



---

# Education and Multi-Dimensional Belonging: The Significance of Organizational and Professional Practices

Arnd-Michael Nohl

---

## Abstract

This paper puts up for discussion a perspective on the heterogeneity of modern societies that does not reduce it to (assumed) ethnic differences and the regimes of belonging that follow, but sees society constituted in the multi-dimensionality of milieus. From this perspective, the paper examines how teachers can escape the dangers of stereotyping and discriminating against pupils, and then use their multi-dimensional experiences for intercultural learning. Educating teachers in such a heterogeneous society also requires providing specific skills and sensitizing them to the organizational structuring of their practices.

---

## Keywords

Multi-dimensional milieus · Organization · Intercultural learning · Teacher · Discrimination · Professionalization

---

## 1 Introduction

In today's heterogeneous societies, teachers face complex tasks and problems. Although they are actually tasked with teaching children subject-specific knowledge and skills, they also must deal with the fact that there are children from

---

A.-M. Nohl (✉)

Faculty of Social Science, Helmut-Schmidt-University Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

e-mail: [nohl@hsu-hh.de](mailto:nohl@hsu-hh.de)

different backgrounds in their classes: girls and boys, poor and wealthy, citizens and refugees or migrants, children with and without well-educated parents.<sup>1</sup> However, it would be very short-sighted to only regard student heterogeneity as a problem. Instead, it creates opportunities for teachers to prepare their students for what awaits them in society – an environment with a variety of cultural differences.

This paper will theoretically elaborate on the complexity of the conditions under which teachers work and the opportunities for them to act. First, I will develop a clearer picture of what I have vaguely called *a variety of cultural differences*. We live in societies whose heterogeneity is characterized by people having experiences in different dimensions (such as generation, education, class, gender, or nationality). The multi-dimensional affiliations that come with these experiences offer intercultural learning opportunities, but are also in danger of being stereotyped and used for discrimination (Sect. 2). However, teaching should not be reduced to the interaction between teachers and students, as both are a part of the school organization. A brief look at the organizational features of the school will show that established routines can have an exclusionary effect (Sect. 3), even if its formal structure guarantees access for all pupils. From this perspective, it is important that teachers focus on developing a curious, exploratory attitude toward their students (Sect. 4).

---

## 2 Multi-Dimensional Milieus in a Heterogeneous Society

The discussions of how educational organizations should react to the heterogeneity of modern societies are dominated by different concepts of how to deal with culture (particularly immigrant cultures). *Assimilationist education*, the oldest concept, suggests that teachers ensure that immigrant and native minorities adapt

---

<sup>1</sup>According to the 2018 TALIS survey on teachers in OECD countries: “30% [of teachers work] in schools with at least 1% of refugee students”; “21% [of teachers work] in schools with at least 10% of students whose first language is different from the language(s) of instruction or from a dialect of this (these) language(s)”; “20% [of teachers work] in schools with at least 30% of socio-economically disadvantaged students (this means those whose homes lack the basic necessities or advantages of life, such as adequate housing, nutrition or medical care)”; “17% [of teachers work] in schools with at least 10% of students with a migrant background (this means those born outside the country or whose parents were both born outside the country)” (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] 2019).

to majority culture. However, this concept has been replaced (in academic discourse at least) by more critical ones. *Classical multicultural education* aims to enable mutual understanding between cultures and fight racist prejudices (see Hoff 1995; Banks 2007). *Anti-discrimination approaches* perceive the recourse to ethnic-cultural affiliations as a resource of discrimination and observe educational organizations in terms of whether and how they discriminate against students who could be stereotyped as ethnic (Feagin and Booher Feagin 1986; Gomolla 2006; Gomolla and Radtke 2009). *Migration education* sees education as a “site of the reproduction of natio-racial-culturally coded orders of belonging, and as a mechanism to transform such orders” (Mecheril 2018, p. 121). Therefore, it examines the effects of these orders of belonging, which are established throughout society, on “learning processes” and “processes of becoming a subject” (Mecheril 2018, p. 131), and develops strategies to overcome them.

To a varying degree, these four approaches (see Nohl 2014) still exist in educational practice and public discourse. Moreover, these concepts share the assumption that social heterogeneity, especially as far as educational organizations are concerned, is caused by migration and primarily shaped by the plurality of ethnically/racially defined cultures – whether they are to be assimilated, mobilized for intercultural understanding or problematized as a resource of discrimination and hegemonic order of belongings.

In contrast, I think the heterogeneity of modern societies is caused by a multitude of differences beyond just ethnicity and race. Social gender, generational affiliation, class and educational status also play an important role in school and other social affairs. The intersectionality approach primarily understands these categories of difference as mutually reinforcing *discrimination resources* (Crenshaw 1989). Without ignoring the suitability of all these differences for labelling (and subsequent discrimination), it should be noted that these categories of differences are also associated with *experiences* that connect people who look back on commonalities regarding social gender, generation or class (to name only a few). To live as males, white Anglo-Saxons, teenagers in the 2010s, or refugees in a camp, may bring about homologous experiences, including being attributed such affiliations, that connect people, and so are called “*conjunctive experiences*” (Mannheim 1982, p. 194). When such conjunctive experiences solidify, and orientations emerge that structure the practices of those involved, they comprise the core of what Bohnsack (2014) calls a “milieu” (p. 220). However, as nobody’s life is shaped by only one experiential dimension, milieus are always multi-dimensional. In other words, experiences are simultaneously shaped by gender, generational, class, educational and potentially also ethnic or migration-related aspects (Bohnsack and Nohl 1998). Because of this multi-dimensionality, people



share commonalities of their milieu with others, but usually only to a limited extent. “Habitual concordance” (Bohnsack 2018, p. 208) of a female academic may exist in relation to other women, only to the extent that she has homologous experiences as a woman. At the same time, she shares homologous experiences with other academics, regardless of gender. For this reason, she is close to other people, with regard to certain experiences, while they seem strange to her, in another respect. This multi-dimensionality of milieu affiliations pertains to both teachers and their students. It has a wide range of possibilities, but also has problems enriching the experience of all those involved in the educational process.

Therefore, it is the task of teachers to not only take their students’ possible migration- or ethnic- related experiences into account and to not use them as a source of discrimination. Rather, they must identify, on a case-by-case basis, which dimensions of experience (for example gender, generation, migration) become more significant for interacting with their students, such that the respective situations, and how to deal with them, are not detrimental to students (such as discrimination). Ideally, teachers will interact with students in a way that can be mobilized for learning processes.<sup>2</sup>

This task is made more difficult by the fact that teachers and students live in a society permeated by seemingly stereotypical labels, particularly with regard to gender, ethnicity, and class. Moreover, students may also use these socially institutionalized categories of difference to refer to themselves or others. Such cultural representations, however, need not be based on stereotypes. They often also serve as abbreviation strategies which refer to otherwise quite complex spaces of experience. Describing oneself as a *Turk* in Germany, or a *Bangladeshi* in the UK, may tacitly indicate the experiential space that evolves in a migrant community, including experiences with racial discrimination (Bohnsack and Nohl 2001, pp. 20–21). In extreme cases, groups affected by stigmatizing labels re-appropriate them as a source of power (Garlinsky et al. 2003).

However, such cultural representations are a double-edged sword. They may be understood and shared by those who know the complexity of the experiences to which they refer, but they are all too easy to use for stereotyping from the outside. Teachers engaged in intercultural education have an important task. Children must be taught how to bring their respective, milieu-specific experiences into a generally comprehensible language that is not susceptible to stereotyping. They should learn how to convey their multi-dimensional experiences (as migrants,

---

<sup>2</sup>I will not discuss how teachers can deal with and reflect on their own multi-dimensional milieu background, and use it for educational action.

girls, or teenagers, for instance), without using stereotypical labels. Teachers may be of help in this regard, but they must first learn to describe themselves and others without stereotyping.

However, teachers' tasks and opportunities in a heterogeneous society are even more complex. Because they live in multi-dimensional milieus, children's experiences are never related to only one dimension (such as gender, migration, or class), but always have further connotations. Even if a specific experience is seemingly dominated by one dimension (such as being discriminated against, or labelled by the police as a potentially criminal, *Arab* teenager), other dimensions are woven into such experiences (only *young Arab-looking males* are suspected by the police). Labels and classifications (*girl, refugee, or German*) promote one-dimensionality, while other experiential dimensions are neglected. In educational interactions, teachers must not only question if and how such classifications are appropriate to convey the corresponding experience. They should also draw students' attention to the multi-dimensional connotations of their experiences.<sup>3</sup>

To sum up, intercultural learning is not limited to exchanges between different ethnic groups in the classroom, when considering the multi-dimensionality of experiences. Rather, intercultural learning takes place with changing affiliations and groups: in one respect, a student shares experiences with other girls, but acquires knowledge and skills in conversation with boys. In another respect, homologies with regard to a migration or a working-class background form a basis both for common experience and the opportunity to learn across cultural boundaries. Given the fact that adults tend to lead a rather segregated life (such as differentiated career paths, the tendency to marry a spouse of the same education level, the gentrification of housing), primary school provides a unique (and possibly the last) opportunity for *intercultural learning*, or for learning to interact with people from other walks of life.

---

<sup>3</sup> In an analysis on how social workers react to antisemitic remarks made by young people, Radvan (2010) reports on a youth worker who tries to challenge the stereotyped self-descriptions of young people by referring to their multi-dimensional affiliations. When a young person talked about his motives to become a suicide bomber and go to Lebanon on the grounds that he is an "Arab", the youth worker reminded him of a trip organized by the youth centre during which the young man described himself as a "cool Berlin guy". The youth worker recounted his words in the interview with Radvan: "I made reference to it when we were on the trip to Münster [a medium-sized city in the west of Germany]. They didn't say they were cool Arabs, but they said we were cool Berlin guys or something like that, when they flirted with girls for example" (Radvan 2010, p. 228; trans. by author). The youth worker referred to their various affiliations in everyday life and to the opportunities associated with them, while emphasizing the irrelevance of ethnic stereotypes.

### 3 Teachers and Students as Part of the School Organization

The public school as an organization is a social device capable of both creating a space for intercultural socialization and learning by bringing together students from various experiential backgrounds, and of discrimination on the basis of (assumed) gender, class, and race affiliations. Teachers who have been familiarized with the functioning of schools as organizations during their training should be extremely sensitive to such formal and informal processes in schools that structure the possibilities and limits of intercultural socialization and learning.

In modern societies, schools should be organized by formal rules (admission requirements, curricula, and regulations) that do not discriminate against students by referring to their social origin. However, this is not always the case.<sup>4</sup> While discrimination based on formal rules can be fought through political action and protest, there are more subtle forms of discrimination. Fighting these specifically requires sensitizing teachers to the fact that formal rules must always be enforced, but doing so can easily give rise to informal rules that are discriminatory.

For example, formal curriculum rules are put into practice by textbooks. If curricular learning content is conveyed by using narratives and pictures that present women as housewives and men as breadwinners, then non-discriminatory formal rules are put into discriminatory practice (Chisholm 2018). The presentation of ethnic minorities in textbooks is also critical (Niehaus 2018). As much as members of religious minorities can be stereotyped or denied any representation (such as women identified as Muslim by the presence of a headscarf), student body diversity (and society as a whole) can also be expressed as a matter of

---

<sup>4</sup>A striking example of racial discrimination through formal rules is the John F. Kennedy School in Berlin, which is actually dedicated to international understanding, but only allows children to be admitted who are US or German citizens and have at least one parent with the same citizenship: “Children who are German or American citizens with at least one parent or legal guardian who is a German or an American citizen and who are required to attend school in Berlin according to § 41 Paragraph 1 of the Berlin School Law will be admitted in approximately equal numbers to the Entrance Class” (John F. Kennedy Schule Berlin [JFKS] 2019). This formal rule was apparently introduced to keep out children from migrant families who became naturalized citizens.

Another controversial issue is the separation of new immigrant children into preparatory classes to facilitate language acquisition, which can easily lead to discrimination (Glorius and Schondelmayer 2020).

course in the textbooks. For example, textbook publishers can diversify the first names and physiognomy of children mentioned in a mathematical text task. In terms of social studies or history textbooks, the plural *we* should include children of immigrants.

Formal rules are sometimes transferred into practice on the basis of common sense that is specific for the social milieu of the organization's members. For example, if teachers share a middle-class background, they tend to organize their teaching accordingly (and expect, for example, that parents will have time and skills to support their children in learning foreign languages). In this way, teachers' social milieu of origin, if it dominates the school (Nohl and Somel 2019, pp. 164–165), leads to poor treatment of students who, due to the lack of time and competence of their parents, cannot get support. In many countries, mainly members of the majority become teachers, so develop their own, seemingly self-evident, practice of formal rules, which can be a gateway to discrimination. However, this does not imply that a more diverse teaching staff would automatically lead to either less discrimination against, or support for, minority students (Lengyel and Rosen 2015).

In schools that are not dominated by a single social milieu of teachers, the formal rules will be tentatively transferred into practice on a trial basis. However, once informal practices become established, informal rules will emerge within the organization, which will become the foundation of a new, organizational, teachers' milieu (Nohl and Somel 2019, pp. 69–70). Such organizational milieus, comprising teachers from different backgrounds, are not automatically a bulwark against discrimination. Somel (2019) identified an informal discrimination mechanism of an organizational milieu in a school in Istanbul, Turkey. Under the pressure of society and the education ministry to foster student success in national exams, teachers ensured a maximum, performance-based homogenization of classes and allocated additional teaching resources to the most promising students. However, when admitting new children to grade 1, these teachers separated those from poor areas of the district from children who lived in more prosperous areas. The teachers assumed that the former group would show low performance and have negligent parents, while the latter would have caring parents and would excel. Such informal mechanisms, which ostensibly serve to homogenize student performance, but ultimately discriminate against students with certain social backgrounds, are also found in other countries (Agazisti and Falzetti 2017; Kalogrides and Loeb 2013). To the extent that teachers' organizational milieus are responsible for this, it is important not to establish discriminatory informal practices when such organizational milieus come into being.

## 4 A Professional Requirement: Case-Sensitive Interpretation of Students' Practices

It is clear that teachers currently work under complex conditions. This environment requires (further) professional education on the part of teachers. In Germany, there is a vivid theoretical discussion on the professionalization of teachers. One point shared by the various theoretical approaches is the dilemma between individual case reference (reference to a student's individuality) and the teacher's general convictions, knowledge, and routines. Professionalization theories generally call for this dilemma to be sustained in professional practice, rather than resolved on one side or another (Helsper 2018; Schütze 1994).

There are many fields in which teachers encounter this dilemma, including intercultural education. Against the background of the concept outlined in this paper – the assumption that people live in multi-dimensional milieus that make up a heterogeneous society and that teacher action is co-structured by the organization of the school – it is important for teachers to understand the practices and experiences of their students. Since each milieu and its associated dimensions of experience are specific, it would be inappropriate to approach them with prefabricated expectations and hypotheses, and measure them (in terms of subsumption logic) against already existing standards. The peculiarity of gender-, migration- and class-specific experiences is best traced by a reconstructive, interpretative approach similar to what has been proposed in reference to biographies (Schütze 1994).

However, an exploratory, inquiring approach to students' milieus is ridden with prerequisites. Although students often interact through cultural representations, teachers must gain access to their milieu-internal conjunctive experiences. Regarding one's own experiences, "we can know more than we can tell" (Polanyi 1966, p. 4). It is, therefore, not enough to have students explain their experience. Rather, it is important to let them narrate their experiences and speak freely, without the pressure to justify themselves. The teacher then must identify the logic of the narrated practices (Bohnsack 2014). First, it is helpful not to question the validity of these practices (whether they are normatively or factually appropriate) from the outset, but to first engage with the immanent significance of the respective milieu. Second, it is also helpful for teachers to compare the experiences of different students in terms of similarities and differences. This is all the more important since only this comparative attitude allows access to the multi-dimensionality of experiences. Only by comparing students who differ in several respects does it become evident to what extent experiences are gender-, migration-, or class-specific.

Such analytical skills help teachers maintain a balance between individual cases and generalized assumptions. However, the individual, case-reference insights that teachers gain from their encounters with individual students should be used for revising general assumptions and knowledge about such students. Therefore, the balance between individual case reference and general knowledge can also be used to change teachers' opinions. Further education, teacher cooperation, and supervision might be suitable areas for facilitating such revisions.

---

## 5 Outlook

Intercultural education seems to be a secondary task for teachers. However, it is enormously important, since intercultural education is not only a matter of preparing children for life in a heterogeneous society, but also makes non-discriminatory learning possible. As has been made clear in this paper, it is the teacher's task to facilitate students' multi-dimensional intercultural learning and prevent school discrimination, based on gender, ethnicity, class, or any other experiential dimension. To do so, teachers should not confine their attention to just interactions with students but observe and engage with the school organization's practices.

If multi-dimensional intercultural learning succeeds, and schools are free of discrimination, then the seeds are sown for a society in which a regime of ethnic belongings is replaced by a regime of multi-dimensional belongings. However, at this point we should not overestimate individual teachers' or schools' influence on forming this society. Although schools can become the figureheads of a new model of society, it is also absolutely necessary to change institutionalized practices of discrimination. The fight for a society in which people can live together based on multi-dimensional belongings, instead of ethnic belongings and discrimination, is therefore a task for everybody.

**Acknowledgements** This paper is dedicated to Gerd R. Hoff for his 80th birthday.

---

## References

- Agasisti, T., & Falzetti, P. (2017, March). Between-classes sorting within schools and test scores: an empirical analysis of Italian junior secondary schools. *International Review of Economy*, 64(1), 1–45.
- Banks, J. A. (2007). *Race, Culture, and Education*. London & New York: Routledge.

- Bohnsack, R. (2014). Documentary Method. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* (pp. 217–223). Thousand Oaks, London, & New Delhi: SAGE.
- Bohnsack, R. (2018). Praxeological Sociology of Knowledge and Documentary Method: Karl Mannheim's Framing of Empirical Research. In D. Kettler & V. Meja (Eds.), *The Anthem Companion to Karl Mannheim* (pp. 199–220). London, New York, & Delhi: Anthem.
- Bohnsack, R., & Nohl, A.-M. (1998). Adoleszenz und Migration – Empirische Zugänge einer praxeologisch fundierten Wissenssoziologie [Adolescence and Migration – Empirical Approaches of a Praxeological-Based Sociology of Knowledge]. In R. Bohnsack & W. Marotzki (Eds.), *Biographieforschung und Kulturanalyse* (pp. 260–282). Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- Bohnsack, R., & Nohl, A.-M. (2001). Ethnisierung und Differenzenerfahrung: Fremdheiten der Identität und des Habitus. [Ethnisation and the Experience of Difference: Strangeness of Identity and Habitus]. *Zeitschrift für qualitative Bildungs-, Beratungs- und Sozialforschung*, 2(1), 15–36.
- Chisholm, L. (2018). Representations of Class, Race, and Gender in Textbooks. In E. Fuchs & A. Bock (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Textbook Studies* (pp. 225–237). New York: Palgrave.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics. *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139–167.
- Feagin, J. R., & Booher Feagin, C. (1986). *Discrimination American Style – Institutional Racism and Sexism*. Malabar: Robert E. Krieger Publishing.
- Galinsky, A., Hugenberg, K., Groom, C., & Bodenhausen, G. (2003, March). The Reappropriation of Stigmatizing Labels: Implications for Social Identity. *Identity Issues in Groups*, 5, 221–256.
- Glorius, B., & Schondelmayer, A.-C. (2020). Diverging Perspectives on “Integration” in the Vocational Education System: Evidence from an East German Periphery. In B. Glorius & J. Doomernik (Eds.), *Geographies of Asylum in Europe and the Role of European Localities* (pp. 179–200). Wiesbaden: Springer International Publishing.
- Gomolla, M. (2006). Tackling underachievement of learners from ethnic minorities: A comparison of recent policies of school improvement in Germany, England and Switzerland. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 9(1), 46–59.
- Gomolla, M., & Radtke, F.-O. (2009). *Institutionelle Diskriminierung. Die Herstellung ethnischer Differenz in der Schule [Institutional Discrimination. The Creation of Ethnic Difference at School]* (3rd ed.). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Helsper, W. (2018). Lehrerhabitus. Lehrer zwischen Herkunft, Milieu und Profession [Teachers' Habitus. Teachers between Origin, Milieu, and Profession]. In A. Paseka, M. Keller-Schneider, & A. Combe (Eds.), *Ungewissheit als Herausforderung für pädagogisches Handeln* (pp. 105–140). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Hoff, G. R. (1995). Multicultural Education in Germany: Historical Development and Current Status. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (pp. 821–838). New York: Macmillan.
- JFKS [John F. Kennedy Schule Berlin] (2019). *JFKS Admissions Regulations*. Retrieved December 22, 2020, from <https://jfks.de/pdf/JFKS%20Admissions%20Regulations.pdf>.

- Kalogrides, D., & Loeb, S. (2013). Different Teachers, Different Peers: The Magnitude of Student Sorting within Schools. *Educational Researcher*, 42(6), 304–316.
- Lengyel, D., & Rosen, L. (2015). Minority teachers in different educational contexts: Introduction. *Tertium Comparationis*, 21(2), 153–160.
- Mannheim, K. (1982). *Structures of Thinking*. London: Routledge.
- Mecheril, P. (2018). Orders of Belonging and Education: Migration Pedagogy as Criticism. In D. Bachmann-Medick & J. Kugele (Eds.), *Migration. Changing Concepts, Critical Approaches* (pp. 121–138). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Niehaus, I. (2018). How Diverse Are Our Textbooks? Research Findings in International Perspective. In E. Fuchs & A. Bock (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Textbook Studies* (pp. 328–343). New York: Palgrave.
- Nohl, A.-M. (2014). *Konzepte interkultureller Pädagogik [Concepts of Intercultural Education]*. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Nohl, A.-M., & Somel, R. N. (2019). *Education and Social Dynamics: A Multilevel Analysis of Curriculum Change in Turkey*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]. (2019). TALIS 2018 Results. Teachers and school leaders as lifelong Learners (Report Vol. I). Paris: TALIS, OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en>.
- Polanyi, M. (1966). *The Tacit Dimension*. New York: Doubleday & Company.
- Radvan, H. (2010). *Pädagogisches Handeln und Antisemitismus. Eine empirische Studie zu Beobachtungs- und Interventionsformen in der offenen Jugendarbeit [Educational Action and Antisemitism. An Empirical Inquiry into Forms of Observation and Intervention in Open Youth Work]*. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Schütze, F. (1994). Strukturen des professionellen Handelns, biographische Betroffenheit und Supervision [Structures of Professional Action, Biographical Involvement and Supervision]. *Supervision*, 26, 10–39.
- Somel, R. N. (2019). *A Relational Approach to Educational Inequality: Theoretical Reflections and Empirical Analysis of a Primary Education School in Istanbul*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.





---

# The Discussion About Racism and Anti-Racism in Schools and Teacher Education in Germany: Some Short Remarks

Ewald Terhart

---

## Abstract

In my paper, I draw attention to the differences in society and school between the United Kingdom and Germany. The context is different, and especially the scope and intensity of discussion about racism in education, school and teacher training are different. In Germany anti-racist theories and concepts are discussed and spread by a small group of experts, but their efforts have not yet reached the mainstream. This is slowly changing.

---

## Keywords

German school system · Teachers · Teacher education · Critical Race Theory · Institutional racism

---

E. Terhart (✉)

Institute for Education Sciences, University of Münster, Münster, Germany

e-mail: [ewald.terhart@uni-muenster.de](mailto:ewald.terhart@uni-muenster.de)

## 1 Talking About Race in Germany

Making comments on ‘Race’ and ‘Critical Race Theory’ (CRT)<sup>1</sup> from the perspective of the German situation and the German debate on schooling, teaching, discrimination and racism is not easy. First of all, CRT refers in its name to the term ‘race’. Unlike in the English-speaking world this term is not used in German, and certainly not in scientific contexts. Since the Nazi regime and after the Second World War in Germany it is some kind of taboo to talk about race, even to use the word ‘race’ with reference to human beings. This is so in everyday talk in society, and it is so especially in intellectual circles. Most Germans think that only racists talk about race. Not to talk about race is grounded in the fear of creating a basis for racism by accepting human races, and this concern is justified. Obviously and often racist argumentations all over the world refer to race as a presumed ‘objective’ basis for biological and/or cultural argumentation, degrading and humiliating the others on the one side to strengthen one’s own supremacy on the other.

Of course, Critical Race Theory uses the word ‘race’ in a different way. The term race is used as a critical category revealing the practices and power of discrimination and oppression on every level of social life, from micro to macro, from everyday interactions to societal superstructures (see Ledesma and Calderón 2015; for a critical appraisal see Maisuria 2011). As CRT points out, racism is a social structure that is present in Germany, as it is in western societies and beyond in general. But most people in Germany, and also most intellectuals, do not see it or name this phenomenon ‘racism’ (Mecheril and Scherschel 2011; Müller 2011). In a way Germany’s knowledge of its racist past has blinded it to its racist present by the use of certain distancing patterns (Messerschmidt 2010).

In the intellectual zone, in the discourses of social science and social philosophy this is slowly changing. Meanwhile CRT and the international discourses about race, oppression, post-colonialism and critical whiteness have arrived in Germany, and in German educational research and theorising as well. But they

---

<sup>1</sup>The text is based on my commentary on David Gillborn’s lecture during the conference “Failing Identities. Schools and Migrations” in October 2018 at the University of Bremen, Germany. In advance I would like to point out that I am neither an expert in intercultural education nor an expert in CRT, but work on the topics of teacher training and school education.

have not yet reached or influenced the mainstream, especially in school education. They still seem to be topics for specialists, themes for people who work in intercultural education, civic education or social science on racism and migration. Representatives of this work try to develop and spread the perspective of CRT to establish it as a basic topic in educational science in Germany.

So, I think Anke Wischmann (2018) was right when she wrote that there is an “almost complete absence of CRT in German academic discourses” (p. 11). Fortunately, she said “*almost* complete absence” (p. 11, emphasis added). This detail is important, because there are elements of CRT in Germany in critical sociology, political science and also in educational science (see Atali-Timmer and Mecheril 2017; Linnemann et al. 2013; Melter and Mecheril 2009). This means that CRT is presented and discussed, explained and disseminated by a group of experts also in educational research on schools, teachers and teacher education (Fereidooni and Massumi 2015; Karakaşoğlu and Doğmuş 2018; Karakaşoğlu and Mecheril 2019). This volume is an indicator of this development.

However, German intellectuals and educationalists talk about social inequality, segregation, and discrimination of old and new migrant groups – but most of them did and do not talk about race, apart from a few exceptions. Most of them still talk about the strong ties between social background and school success, they talk about the reproduction of discrimination, they talk about the influence and power of prejudices and stereotypes in social life, in school, in the system of professions, in sport, in politics etc. This is a traditional topic of educational research and of school reform. In the 1960s and '70s this debate was concentrated on the several social strata, or social classes. New themes and challenges emerged because of growing migration in German society since the late '60s until now and because of the erosion of the old, well known ‘strata’ or ‘classes’ and their transformation into different milieus, lifestyles and cultures.

---

## 2 Discrimination, Racism, and the School in Germany

The official political *script* says that the school system has to integrate all milieus regardless of the question of national and/or cultural and ethnic belonging, that it has to give all students an equal or at least fair chance, and that it has to establish social common grounds in society. But all studies, all reports, all experts demonstrated again and again that the school does not do a good job in this respect, especially in Germany. This is well known in public and in politics.

In Germany there are obvious disadvantages experienced by migrant children and students compared to non-migrant students. I just want to mention a few things:

- Significantly more frequent deferral of school enrollment for migrant students
- Significantly more frequent transfer from elementary school to the lowest track of the secondary system
- Significantly lower literacy and scientific (and also mathematical) competence, even if they have completed their entire school career in Germany
- Migrant students twice as likely to attend schools for children with special needs with a focus on learning disabilities than non-migrant students
- Since 2000 several international large-scale studies have shown a comparatively lower but slowly improving performance of immigrant students.

In Germany we have a clear and stable pattern of institutional and interactional discrimination in schools and other institutions (Gomolla and Radtke 2009; Humrich 2017). This pattern leads to the fact that educational privileges, grades, permissions etc. are socially inherited, that they are passed over from parents to their children, from generation to generation. The mechanisms are made transparent by social and educational research more and more. The structures, processes and victims of discrimination may change – but the existence of institutional and interactional discrimination is stable.

The situation in Germany is difficult to compare with that of the United Kingdom. This is not only because of the different historical and current developments in the national school systems (for example a stronger deregulation of the school system in the UK), but also because of the different national migration histories and policies. For example, in dealing with the discrimination of migrant students (in higher education), the practices of affirmative action, which are used in the Anglo-American educational systems to reduce discrimination because of ethnic belonging, have not yet been applied in Germany. Traditionally, and still today, British society is much more divided into various economic, social and educational dimensions, so that the oppression and exclusion of ethnic minorities and black people are very evident. Research literature and also David Gillborn (2021) have demonstrated this very impressively. It would be interesting if he were to relate his research approach to the German school system in the sense of a comparison.

I am not saying this to suggest that Germany is somehow ‘better off’ or has somehow abolished discrimination and racism. The opposite is the case. I just want to mark differences between the situation in the two contexts of the UK and Germany.

### 3 What About Teacher Education?

Central elements in the discrimination of migrant students in schools are the teachers and in teacher education. The German Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz) developed “Standards for Teacher Education” (Kultusministerkonferenz 2004/2019) and these standards include competencies for a productive dealing with the diversity and heterogeneity of students in school. But it is true that discrimination based on racism in German schools and classrooms is neglected in these *Standards* (see Fereidooni and Massumi 2015), and it is also neglected in former documents on “Intercultural Education in Schools” (Kultusministerkonferenz 1996/2013).

Most of the 16 German Länder (that are responsible for schools and teacher education) established seminars and courses (sometimes compulsory) in teacher education devoted to the situation, to the needs and potentials of migrant students to enhance their situation. This was part of the movement to qualify teachers for a pedagogical and supportive non-discriminatory way of dealing with heterogeneity. We have to take into account that (in 2018) there were about 37% students with a migrant background in German schools (Mediendienst Integration n. d.; Statistisches Bundesamt 2019, p. 46); in some city quarters above 75% (Spletter 2018). We have about 6% migrant schoolteachers in the staff rooms, and in teacher education about 10 to 12% students with a migration background in 2012 (Berthold and Leichsenring 2012). In the Bundesland North Rhine-Westphalia 22% of the students at universities who want to become teachers have a migration background (Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft Nordrhein-Westfalen 2019, p. 11). All this shows that the situation in Germany is asymmetric and changing only very slowly.

The international scientific discourse and research on racism in schools and about the needs and chances for an anti-racist teacher education (Seriki and Brown 2019; Tao Han et al. 2019) is much more elaborated and comprehensive than the German one. Anti-racist attitudes and behavior of student teachers, beginning teachers and experienced teachers cannot be installed top-down and on command. It is a matter of creating opportunities for personal learning and reflection on racism and a critical perspective on inequality during teacher education and during the professional lifecycle of teachers. This is a challenging aim, because empirical research has indicated that racist attitudes held by a proportion of future teachers do not change even during an explicitly anti-racist teacher education programme. We also have to recognise that anti-discriminatory attitudes developed during teacher education often diminish when the new teachers come

into closer contact with school reality and/or enter a teaching position (Kumar and Hamer 2012; Kumar and Lauermaun 2018). These results align with the old and stable research result that the effects of teacher education on pedagogical attitudes of young teachers are often ‘washed out’ after entering school reality (Zeichner and Tabachnik 1981; Veenman 1984). A look back on previous research shows that in Germany and in many other countries such a process of adaption-to-reality is well documented for the then dominant generation of left-wing, reform-oriented, liberal young teachers entering staff rooms and classrooms in the period 1965 to 1975.

The experience of inequality and discrimination in education and schooling is stable. The hope for reducing these problems by an appropriate educational policy and school reform, via a supportive and individualised form of classroom teaching, by explicit non- or anti-discriminatory regulations and practices for teachers and in teacher education is stable as well. This is the basic optimism in all education, in all educational reform and policy, and especially in critical scientific positions in this field. But we have to acknowledge that so far this has not worked – or, to be exact, it does not work in the way we hope it should. Nevertheless, this hope keeps all pedagogy, all reform, all innovation going. Sometimes I think this practice just keeps us going around in circles. We find new words, new metaphors and new theories always for the same things. And the object of our discourses about segregation, discrimination and oppression is stable over time as well. In our dialogues and discourses they are just re-structured or re-formatted, but not reduced let alone brought to an end. And if old discriminations vanish, new ones arise.

---

## 4 Pedagogy, Societal Change...

I come back to the strong hopes interwoven in educational thinking and widespread among educationalists: inequality of educational opportunities, institutional and interactional discrimination, and open or hidden racism in education must be fought against in the fields of education. But the background, causes and roots of inequality, discrimination and racism have a long history, stem from society and culture and first of all must be fought there – that is, on the political and societal fields. Traditions, situations, structures, processes in society lead to discrimination in education and schooling. Education, even an avowedly anti-racist education, cannot achieve much in this field. But it can and must strive for a slow betterment step by step and on the level of individuals and institutions.

Regarding educational activities as the dominant or even sole solution for societal problems overestimates the impact and possibilities of education. To delegate

societal and ultimately economic problems, inequalities and discriminations to education as a universal problem solver leads to some kind of depoliticisation, trivialisation and defusing of the problem. And by the way: this is an old and cheap trick of traditional and modern conservative elites saying something like: *We have a problem out there? We hand it over to education, to the educationalists, the teachers etc. This gives hope and calms everyone down, and if it does not work, we will blame them – as we always do. And they will hope even stronger and work even harder again – as they always do.*

I do not want to spread cynicism and depression, but my point is that it is misleading for oneself and for others to expect that fundamental societal problems can be 'solved' by educational strategies. Societal problems have to be solved by the political and cultural system and their decisions and dynamics. In open societies there have to be public deliberations and democratic decisions and, in the end, administrative strategies and processes to tackle and solve problems. Pedagogues are part of that process, but they are neither priests, politicians nor technicians (see also Auernheimer 2006; Hamburger and Seus 1981).

---

## 5 ... and the role of educational research

Finally, some words concerning the role of educational research, of scientific expertise in this field. In my view, educational research is distinct from the sphere of educational practice, educational programmes and educational politics. Educational research is not educative in itself. It does not change the world, not even the world of education. Educational research can show and analyse discrimination and make proposals about how to reduce it. But the educational researcher or educational research itself cannot decide what has to be done or should not to be done, because he or she does not have a political mandate. Educational researchers have not been elected in political campaigns, and they do not run the risk of being voted out. He or she has no higher expertise when it comes to normative political decisions just because of being a researcher. His or her duty is to do research and to present sound research results.

In my view there must be a clear division of labour between educational research and educational politics. People in both these realms have a different kind of job to do. The coordination between both realms only works if we accept the demarcation line between educational research and educational politics and the different kinds of responsibility on each side. Respecting this difference even opens up the possibility of successful coordination and cooperation. Research presents information, points out possible strategies, describes the foreseeable and

unforeseeable consequences of certain strategies and programmes – and also has to point out the consequences of non-decision or inaction by politics.

As a researcher and as an expert in teacher education I am a sceptic. I am especially sceptical when big and quick solutions are offered by experts and researchers or such solutions are promised by politicians and administrators. Nevertheless, as a university professor with a responsibility for the status of the educational world and above all as a political being, I am a determined pragmatist striving for the right little steps day by day. Although we are all extremely well informed about the problems of our world and although we have lived through sufficient disappointments in the past, I think we nonetheless have to reflect and decide today what can be done and has to be done tomorrow.

---

## References

- Atali-Timmer, F., & Mecheril, P. (2017). Die subtile Wirksamkeit von Rassekonstruktionen in Bildungsräumen. Empirische Spuren [The subtle effectiveness of race constructions in educational spaces. Empirical traces]. In D. Salomon, J.-M. Springer, & A. Wischmann (Eds.), *Pädagogik in Zeiten von Krieg und Terror. Jahrbuch für Pädagogik 2017* (pp. 195–207). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Auernheimer, G. (2006). Nochmals über die Unmöglichkeit, Politik durch Pädagogik zu ersetzen [Again about the impossibility of replacing politics with pedagogy]. In T. Badawida, H. Luckas, & H. Müller (Eds.), *Das Soziale gestalten. Über Mögliches und Unmögliches der Sozialpädagogik* (pp. 265–280). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Berthold, C., & Leichsenring, H. (Eds.). (2012, January 1). *Diversity Report C2 Lehramt* (Report). Berlin: CHE Consult. Retrieved June 30, 2020 from [https://www.che.de/download/che\\_diversity\\_report\\_c2-pdf/](https://www.che.de/download/che_diversity_report_c2-pdf/).
- Fereidooni, K., & Massumi, M. (2015, September). Rassismuskritik in der Ausbildung von Lehrerinnen und Lehrern [Criticizing racism in teacher education]. *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 65(40), 38–45.
- Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft Nordrhein-Westfalen. (Ed.). (2019, July). *Studiensituation und soziale Lage von Lehramtsstudierenden in NRW. Sonderauswertung der 21. Sozialerhebung des Deutschen Studentenwerks* [Study situation and social situation for student teachers in NRW. Special evaluation of the 21st Social Survey of the German Student Union] (Report). Essen: NDS Verlag. Retrieved July 1, 2020, from [https://www.gew-nrw.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Mein\\_Bildungsbereich\\_PDFs/Studium\\_PDFs/gew-nrw-sonderauswertung-21-Sozialerhebung-Deutsches-Studentenwerks-studium-lehramt-nrw.pdf](https://www.gew-nrw.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Mein_Bildungsbereich_PDFs/Studium_PDFs/gew-nrw-sonderauswertung-21-Sozialerhebung-Deutsches-Studentenwerks-studium-lehramt-nrw.pdf).
- Gillborn, D. (2021). The colour of schooling: Whiteness and the mainstreaming of racism. In L. Heidrich, Y. Karakaşoğlu, P. Mecheril, & S. Shure (Eds.). *Regimes of Belonging – Schools – Migrations. Teaching in (Trans)National Constellations* (see in this volume). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.



- Gomolla, M., & Radtke, F.-O. (Eds.). (2009). *Institutionelle Diskriminierung: Die Herstellung ethnischer Differenz in der Schule* [Institutional discrimination: The production of ethnic differences in school] (3rd ed.). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Hamburger, F., & Seus, L. (1981): Über die Unmöglichkeit, Politik durch Pädagogik zu ersetzen [On the impossibility of replacing politics with pedagogy]. *Unterrichtswissenschaft*, 9(2), 158–167.
- Humrich, M. (2017). Diskriminierung im Erziehungssystem [Discrimination in the education system]. In A. Scherr, A. El-Mafaalani, & G. Yüksel (Eds.), *Handbuch Diskriminierung* (pp. 337–352). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Karakaşoğlu, Y., & Doğmuş, A. (2018). Lehrkräfte [Teachers]. In I. Gogolin, V. B. Georgi, M. Krüger-Potratz, D. Lengyel, & U. Sandfuchs (Eds.), *Handbuch Interkulturelle Pädagogik* (pp. 581–586). Bad Heilbrunn: Julius Klinkhardt.
- Karakaşoğlu, Y., & Mecheril, P. (2019). Bildung für alle. Grundsätzliche Überlegungen zu Lehrerinnenbildung in der Migrationsgesellschaft [Education for all. Teacher Education in a Migration Society]. In D. Cerny & M. Oberlechner (Eds.), *Schule – Gesellschaft – Migration. Beiträge zur diskursiven Aushandlung des schulischen Lern- und Bildungsraums aus theoretischer, empirischer, curricularer und didaktischer Perspektive* (pp. 17–32). Opladen: Barbara Budrich.
- Kultusministerkonferenz (2004/2019). *Standards für die Lehrerbildung: Bildungswissenschaften* [Standards for Teacher Education: Educational Foundations]. Resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of December 16, 2004 as amended on May 16, 2019. Retrieved February 10, 2020, from [http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen\\_beschluesse/2004/2004\\_12\\_16-Standards-Lehrerbildung-Bildungswissenschaften.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2004/2004_12_16-Standards-Lehrerbildung-Bildungswissenschaften.pdf).
- Kultusministerkonferenz (1996/2013). *Interkulturelle Bildung und Erziehung in der Schule* [Intercultural Education in Schools]. Resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of October 25, 1996 as amended on December 5, 2013. Retrieved February 10, 2020, from [http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen\\_beschluesse/1996/1996\\_10\\_25-Interkulturelle-Bildung.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/1996/1996_10_25-Interkulturelle-Bildung.pdf).
- Kumar, R., & Hamer, L. (2012). Preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward student diversity and proposed instructional practices: A sequential design analysis. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 64(2), 162–177.
- Kumar, R., & Lauer, F. (2018). Cultural beliefs and instructional intentions: Do experiences in teacher education institutions matter? *American Educational Research Journal*, 55(3), 419–452.
- Ledesma, M. C., & Calderón, D. (2015). Critical race theory in education: A review of past literature and a look to the future. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(3), 206–222.
- Linnemann, T., Mecheril, P., & Nikolenko, A. (2013). Rassismuskritik. Begriffliche Grundlagen und Handlungsperspektiven der politischen Bildung [Criticizing racism. Conceptual foundations and practical perspectives in civic education]. *Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik*, 36(2), 10–14.
- Maisuria, A. (2011). A critical appraisal of Critical Race Theory (CRT): Limitations and opportunities. In K. Bhopal & J. Preston (Eds.), *Intersectionality and "Race" in Education* (pp. 76–96). New York: Routledge.

- Mecheril, P., & Scherschel, K. (2011). Rassismus und „Rasse“ [Racism and „Race“]. In C. Melter & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Rassismuskritik: Rassismustheorie und -forschung* (Vol. 1, pp. 39–58). Schwalbach am Taunus: Wochenschau.
- Mediendienst Integration (n. d.). *Bildung* [Education]. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from <https://mediendienst-integration.de/integration/bildung.html>.
- Melter, C., & Mecheril, P. (Eds.). (2009). *Rassismuskritik: Rassismustheorie und -forschung* (Vol. 1). Schwalbach am Taunus: Wochenschau.
- Messerschmidt, A. (2010). Distanzierungsmuster. Vier Praktiken im Umgang mit Rassismus [Distancing patterns. Four practices in dealing with racism]. In A. Broden & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Rassismus bildet. Bildungswissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Normalisierung und Subjektivierung in der Migrationsgesellschaft* (pp. 41–58). Bielefeld: transcript.
- Müller, U. A. (2011). Far away so close: Race, whiteness, and German identity. *Identities*, 18(6), 620–645. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2011.672863>.
- Seriki, V. D., & Brown, C. T. (2019). Research on racism in teacher education in the United States. In G. W. Noblit et al. (Eds.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. Retrieved June 9, 2020, from <https://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-372>.
- Statistisches Bundesamt. (2019, August 21). *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018* [Population and employment. Population with migration background. Results of the 2018 micro-census] (Statistical Publication Series 1 Number 2.2). Wiesbaden. Retrieved July 1, 2020, from [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/migrationshintergrund-2010220187004.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile#page=46](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/migrationshintergrund-2010220187004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile#page=46).
- Spletter, M. (2018, February 15). Jede fünfte Grundschule mit über 75 Prozent Migranten. *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*. Retrieved July 1, 2020, from <https://www.waz.de/staedte/essen/jede-fuenfte-essener-grundschule-mit-ueber-75-prozent-migranten-id213443225.html>.
- Tao Han, K., Laughter, J., & Howard, T. C. (2019). *Critical Race Theory in Teacher Education: Informing Classroom Culture and Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Veenman, S. (1984). Perceived problems of beginning teachers. *Review of Educational Research*, 54(2), 143–178.
- Wischmann, A. (2018). The absence of *race* in German discourses on ‘Bildung’. Rethinking *Bildung* with critical race theory. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 21(4), S. 471–485. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248834>.
- Zeichner, K. M., & Tabachnik, B. R. (1981). Are the effects of university teacher education ‘washed out’ by school experience? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(3), 7–11.



# Transnationally Mobile Students and the ‘Grammar’ of Schooling

Dita Vogel and Yasemin Karakaşoğlu

## Abstract

Schools have some features that are virtually present all over the world so that they have been called ‘the grammar of schooling’. Questions raised with regard to transnationally mobile students indicate that the core elements of this currently prevalent ‘grammar’ do not appropriately respond to the demands of a student population that is heterogenous due to past migration and future migration orientations. While adjustment needs due to immigration are subject to long-standing discussions in the education sciences, educational needs in light of the possibility of future migration have been rather marginally discussed. We claim that they should receive more attention and offer the opportunity to reflect about them. After detailing our definition of transnational mobility as potential migration in the future in relation to other conceptualisations on transnationality and mobility in academic literature, we use ‘real-life but hypothetical scenarios’ to show that the change of national school systems due to migration leads to frictions unless schools change or adjust elements of the ‘grammar’ of schooling. Because this is foreseeable, the possibility of future migration would require further adjustments which are exemplified in the outlook.

---

D. Vogel (✉) · Y. Karakaşoğlu  
Faculty of Pedagogy and Educational Sciences, University of Bremen, Bremen,  
Germany  
e-mail: [dvogel@uni-bremen.de](mailto:dvogel@uni-bremen.de)

Y. Karakaşoğlu  
e-mail: [karakasoglu@uni-bremen.de](mailto:karakasoglu@uni-bremen.de)

---

**Keywords**

Transnationality · Migration · Mobility · School development · Multilinguality

---

## 1 Introduction

Maria (15) has grown up in Germany. In her family, she speaks Greek fluently, while she can read and write Greek only to some extent. She is considering studying in Greece after her graduation. Amir (15) attended school in Afghanistan for six years after which he fled the country without his parents. After a long journey without any opportunity to go to school he arrived in Germany. He is now eager to achieve his high school certificate and is also hoping to improve his chances to stay. Lisa (14) would like to gain experience abroad during her time at school. In her family, everybody has always lived in Germany.

These slightly shortened vignettes are “real-life but hypothetical scenarios” (Kandemir and Budd 2018, p. 35) that we have used to incite discussions in the research project “Transnational mobility in schools” (TraMiS).<sup>1</sup> These scenarios are based on real-life cases from the authors’ own exploratory interviews and empirical studies, condensed and transformed into vignettes that contain just enough information to encourage discussion on the side of the practitioners involved in the research and development project. Thus in the empirical part of the above-mentioned project, vignettes served the purpose of operationalising the concept of transnational mobility through a range of situations without explicitly defining it, in order to elicit rich responses relevant to the research question (Kandemir and Budd 2018, p. 45). In this contribution, we discuss our concept of transnational mobility in detail (Sect. 2). In a nutshell, it refers to situations in which migration to another country is a realistic possibility for the future. However, we are aware that situations that trigger transnational mobility can be very different in terms of social, economic and political circumstances, individual motives and biographical preconditions. But what the scenarios presented above have in common is that an uninterrupted future residence in the country of current schooling is not self-evident. We claim that this is rather common in a society with a range of transnational connections due to earlier migration movements, but

---

<sup>1</sup> *Transnationale Mobilität in Schulen* – funded by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research in the programme “Migration und gesellschaftlicher Wandel” [Migration and societal change] (01UM1803Y). For more information, see <https://tramis.de/>.

also to trade, leisure contacts, social media communication and other factors. As a result of different social, economic and political preconditions, moving to another country is a desired option for some students and for others a threat because of enforcement of restrictive migration policies (see Sect. 2.1).

As we are building on a research project conducted in Germany, we based the vignettes on typical situations transnational mobile students may face in the German context as a starting point for our considerations on the theoretical implications of this perspective. However, the basic ideas may be transferred to other contexts as we assume that, throughout the world, national school systems aim at preparing people for successful participation in the corresponding society or even shaping a "national citizen" (Tröhler 2020, p. 626). In this respect all school systems are challenged by the perceived education demands and needs of transnational mobile young people, many of whom have not only migrated in the past but plan, or are forced, to move beyond the borders of their current place of residence in the future. Indeed, we have discussed our vignettes not only in 12 schools in Germany, but also with academics and practitioners during field visits in national contexts with very different conditions with regard to migration and schooling, namely in Bozen (Italy), New York (United States), Winnipeg (Canada), and Stockholm (Sweden). In the frame of the research project these generic insights have helped us to question national restrictions and develop practicable ideas for school development (for example, in terms of school forms, subjects, curricula, and professionalisation) that take into account the needs of students who may move in future.

However, we are aware that this perspective is in danger of being politically abused for the purpose of legitimising the denial of state schools' responsibility for students. The coalition agreement of the governing parties in Germany, for example, indicates that integration obligations are restricted to people who are considered to have 'a perspective to stay permanently' dividing immigrants into those expected to become permanent members of society and those legally required to leave the country in the near future (Christlich Demokratische Union, Christlich-Soziale Union, Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands 2018, p. 106). In fact the state denied equal responsibility for migrant students in Germany in the early years of 'guestworker migration' of the 1950s up to the 1970s, and later only reluctantly promoted equal participation for students with a 'migration background' in German society (Karakışoğlu et al. 2019). In our perspective on transnational mobility we do not differentiate between different ways of crossing national borders but consider transnational mobility as a potential experience for all students – and not only students with a 'migration background' – and we

thus aim at offering an inclusive approach that supports transnational perspectives in any public school system.

Therefore, we address general features of schools when we conduct a thought experiment, asking for responses to past migration and also raise the question of how schools can proactively prevent frictions in the future – in other words how potential future migration (or, as we put it, ‘mobility’) could be addressed in current schooling. As education always has the function of preparing the next generation for an undetermined future, future migration perspectives have to be taken into consideration as relevant for current schooling. For this discussion, we pick up on the metaphor of the ‘grammar’ of schooling defined by Tyack and Tobin (1994, p. 454) as the “regular structures and rules that organize the work of instruction”. Five core elements have been summarised by Fend (2011, p. 44): age cohorts, the principle of one-teacher one-classroom, subjects, grading and certification. While the elements are virtually universal according to the ‘grammar’ of schooling argument, their specifications apply nationally so that there is a national ‘grammar’ of schooling. To use a linguistic analogy, the idea of tenses is universal but the actual tense forms differ from one language to another. We structure our discussion of schooling approaches towards migration and mobility along these five elements. With this approach, we simultaneously question these structuralising elements, showing that changes or at least adjustments are needed to address the needs of transnationally mobile students.

We will start by explaining our use of the term ‘transnational mobility’ and indicate the extent to which the transnational mobility of students is empirically relevant in the specific case of Germany (Sect. 2). After introducing key elements of the ‘grammar’ of schooling (Sect. 3), we explore theoretically – with illustrative reference to the vignettes – how far the differences between national grammars of schooling lead to frictions when students migrate to countries with other school systems or (have to) perceive such migration as realistic future possibility. Finally (Sect. 4), we give an outlook on practical options for including transnational approaches to schooling and indicate further research perspectives.

---

## 2 Defining Transnational Mobility

### 2.1 Transnational Mobility as an Analytical Concept

The term *transnational* is used in scholarly contexts in different ways that are all relevant for analysing specific features of migration societies:

- (a) *Transnational* can refer to any issue or activity that transcends or goes beyond national borders.
- (b) If it is applied to migration, it can refer to migrants with multiple migration movements (Bukus 2015, p. 82), or in a broader way to migrants who “develop and maintain multiple relations [...] that span borders” (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, p. 1).
- (c) The existence of transnational migrants contributes to the emergence of a *transnational social field or space*. This concept is used to describe an established network of connections between at least two places in different nation states – a concept that has become popular from the work of Glick Schiller et al. (1992), transferred to Germany (Faist, 1996, 2006; Pries, 1996) and increasingly applied to educational issues in the last decades (Gogolin and Pries 2004; Küppers et al. 2016; Machold et al. 2020).

We understand *transnational* in the first sense as phenomena and practices that transcend the borders of two or more nation states, and a *transnational migrant* as a person with more than one migration experience across national borders in the past (for the second sense, see also Bukus 2015). As outlined in the transnationalism theory of Pries (1996), transnational *migration* often occurs in and contributes to a transnational (macro-) social space. Our focus lies on individual perspectives to move beyond borders in the future, which we have chosen to address as *transnational mobility*, which means a disposition to migrate beyond national borders as one realistic possibility for the future – whether as a matter of choice or forced on an individual by a temporary or insecure residence status (Karakaşoğlu and Vogel 2019, p. 96). The term “mobility” indicates the “recognition of the dynamic and often more fluid nature of the phenomenon” of migration (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2014, p. 8).<sup>2</sup> Future migration may be planned as temporary or permanent and includes what the United Nations (UN) used to call short-term migration of less than one year (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division [UN DESA] 1998, p. 18).

Meanwhile, the UN’s statistical department uses international mobility as a generic term encompassing all spatial movements of people over state borders (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division

---

<sup>2</sup>For their empirical study, they differentiate between two types of “transnational mobility” – as repeated circular movements of (a) immigrants or (b) return migrants (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2014, p. 17).

[UN DESA] 2017, p. 7).<sup>3</sup> We are aware that we have chosen a term that is used in the sense that we suggest, but also in a wide range of fields and meanings (for example traffic, social status, chemistry, or migration). According to Urry (2007), the term “mobilities” is used to refer to paradigmatic change in social sciences: “Movement, potential movement and blocked movement are all conceptualized as constitutive of economic, social and political relations” (p. 43). Our focus is on potential and blocked migration movements in the future.

## 2.2 Transnational Mobility as an Experience and Option – Empirical Approaches

Whether or not individuals consider future migration across national borders as a realistic possibility cannot be easily measured. Therefore, we cannot prove that transnational mobility is relevant for a considerable proportion of student populations. Nonetheless, we present some indications that this is not unlikely, in terms of migration intentions, residency-related insecurities and statistical indications of multiple, circular and re-migration.

*Migration intentions* indicate how far people consider the possibility of living in a different country in the future. A worldwide survey of the working population in 2018 indicated that more than half of all respondents could imagine working abroad in the future, and about two-thirds in the younger population (Strack et al. 2018, p. 2). In this respect it has been empirically shown that many people who think of migration as a possibility for a number of different reasons never migrate (Kley 2011), but considering the possibility of migration may still influence their perceived educational needs and their educational aspirations.

Past (family) migration seems to have an impact on future migration options and plans. For example, according to a recent survey, people who consider themselves of Turkish origin prove to have considerable interests in temporary and permanent migration between Turkey and Germany. 15% plan to migrate to Turkey, including people of the third generation who have never lived there, and even 37% wish to experience repeated stays in both Turkey and Germany (Sauer 2018, pp. 28–29).

---

<sup>3</sup>Only when a non-resident enters a country with the actual or intended duration of stay of at least one year is the person deemed to have changed residence and is considered as an ‘immigrant’ for statistical purposes.



*Residential insecurities* concern a smaller part of populations. Whereas citizens do not have to fear being forced to leave for another country in times of peace, foreign nationals can be expelled under specific conditions. In democratic states, residency security and legal rights usually increase with the duration of stay, while a residency status with a limited duration is the rule at the beginning of a stay (even if someone is welcomed as an immigrant with the expectation of permanent residence). The foreign nationals register in Germany, for example, indicates that one third of all foreign national residents (3.6 million) have only a temporary or no residence entitlement. Nearly all refugee children and youths had no secure residency status in 2016 (Vogel and Dittmer 2019, p. 27).

*Multiple, circular and re-migration:* The vast majority of the world's population live in their country of birth. However, a proportion have spent part of their lives in another country and returned for different reasons.<sup>4</sup> Estimates indicate that, depending on the country of destination and the time period considered, 20 to 50% of immigrants leave within five years after their arrival, either to return home or to move on to a third country (Dumont and Spielvogel 2008, p. 163). For our context it is of special interest to examine how far this relates to the school-age group. In Germany it can be shown that between 1991 and 2015, German residence registers counted on average five departures of minors from Germany for every ten entries (Vogel and Dittmer 2019, pp. 20–21).

---

### 3 The 'Grammar' of Schooling in the Light of Transnational Mobility

A wide range of schools all over the world have developed a number of core structural and cultural commonalities. These structures and rules have been called the 'grammar' of schooling (Tyack and Tobin 1994) and these define what mainly characterises the organisation of schools. Fend (2011) summarises essential elements of this 'grammar' (p. 44):

- (a) grouping of students of the same age cohorts in stages,
- (b) organisation of teaching in classrooms with a single teacher,

---

<sup>4</sup>For Germany, a microcensus survey indicates that about 3.1% of the currently resident population have interrupted their life in Germany to stay at least one year abroad. Unpublished result, communicated by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt), January 18th, 2019.

- (c) organisation of knowledge in subjects with increasing specialisation along the grades,
- (d) comparative grading of students' performance according to standardised rules and procedures,
- (e) certification of one educational stage as a criterion for accessing higher educational stages.

These features are still largely standard all over the world in formal education at state-run schools.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it makes sense to explore how schools deal with transnational mobility in relation to these elements of the 'grammar' of schooling, even though individual schools can deviate from the norm, for instance by employing multi-professional teams to organise learning in interdisciplinary projects for differing age groups.

The organisational features of schooling can be found all over the world, but their specification differs considerably between nation states. Some examples:

- age cohorts and stages: Children attend their first basic school only for four years in Germany and for nine years in Sweden.
- organisation in classes and courses: Students in secondary schools can attend courses according to their individual learning plans, as for example in Canada, or can be grouped in stable class formations like in many schools in Germany.
- subjects: Schools can offer the subject 'social studies' that includes geographical and historical aspects with a global and methodological focus. Alternatively, history and geography can be taught as separate subjects – with a focus on transmitting national narratives and having pupils memorise key features of the national geography and historical events.
- certification: The school system can end with *one* school leaving certificate that is the precondition for access to all tertiary education schemes, as for example in the US, or with four different school leaving certificates with the lowest being accepted only in a limited range of vocational education schemes and only the highest giving access to all university studies, such as for example in Germany.

---

<sup>5</sup>As institutionalised, intentional and planned through public organisations and recognised private bodies, that constitute the formal education system of a country (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, Institute for Statistics [UIS] 2012, p. 11).

These specifications are part of each country's particular national 'grammar' of schooling. National schooling systems usually address all students as if they have attended the successive stages of the national system from kindergarten to school leaving certificate and tertiary education without interruption (spatial and temporal continuity) (Schroeder and Seukwa 2018, p. 141).

Whenever students experience changes of education systems and/or countries, they are challenged by the need to fit in, to make new connections to school rules and cultures (Helsper 2008), and to follow the respective national curriculum with specific subjects and national narratives (Schroeder and Seukwa 2018, p. 154). If permanent immigrants enter these systems as newcomers, they are supposed to adjust to the new educational environment in order to successfully continue schooling, ideally by establishing connections between the ways of teaching and learning, content of subjects, and soft skills, for instance, of the former and of the current (supposedly permanent) place of residence. If we additionally think of transnational mobility in the sense we have outlined in the former section, options for multiple connections are needed – considering not only connections between past and present systems but also between present and potential future places of residence.

To draw attention to the implications of transnational migration and transnational mobility, we present the results of a thought experiment with reference to Germany as the current place of residence. We consider the situation of the three fictional characters introduced in vignettes at the beginning of this contribution – the 14-year-old Lisa who would like to get some international school experience during her school time, the 15-year-old Maria with a Greek-German speaking family background who would like to be able to study either in Germany or Greece, and the 15-year-old Amir with six years of school experience in Afghanistan, who wishes to stay in Germany but who may be forced to leave due to restrictive asylum regulations. What do the different elements of the 'grammar' of schooling specifically imply for the three hypothetical situations we have outlined in these vignettes? We raise exemplary questions that could arise in the respective situations.

- (a) **Age grouping:** If the 14-year-old Lisa attends school in another country for a couple of months or a full school year to get some international school experience, will she be able to return to her original class, or is she supposed to repeat a year, learning with a lower cohort on return? Will the 15-year-old Maria be able to acquire the necessary academic Greek skills to start studying at a Greek university immediately after gaining her higher secondary school diploma, or will she have to attend preparatory classes to be able to

study in Greece? Does Amir have to attend classes according to his schooling years in grade 7 with 12-year-old children or according to his biological age with his 15-year-old peers?

- (b) **One-teacher one-classroom principle:** When Lisa has returned from her year abroad, is there a second educator in the class who helps her to catch up with her classmates in a subject that did not exist in the school that she attended abroad? If there is no possibility to set up a conventional Greek class with a Greek teacher in Maria's school, are there any alternatives by bringing additional people into the classroom, for example digitally or by cooperating with migrant organisations?<sup>6</sup>

If Amir is supposed to attend a class according to his age group without the necessary German proficiency and subject-related knowledge that his classmates were able to acquire in their German school careers, adequate individual support can hardly be supplied by a single teacher. Does he receive support within the same classroom, for example through bilingual assistants? Or is Amir sorted into a parallel class of German as a second language learners with a German teacher and has to achieve a certain German level before he is put on the road to further subject learning? If he is supposed to attend a German language class for an extended time, German language knowledge would be the only school-induced competence which he can take with him in case he has to leave Germany.

- (c) **Subjects:** If Lisa goes to the US for six months, she will attend different compulsory and elective courses there. In the meantime she will miss what her classmates are learning in Germany. Are her learning experiences considered equivalent, and does she receive help after she returns in case she missed a learning content that is essential for the next step in subjects in her home school? Maria is expected to have basic knowledge in two other languages beyond German if she wants to study in Germany. Is it possible for Maria to learn Greek in school on an academic level as one of these two languages, so that school prepares her to have two options – studying in Greece or Germany?

Can Amir go on to develop his native language Pashto – both as a language subject relevant for the German system and as an essential qualification in case of forced return? Is his initial learning phase restricted to acquiring the

---

<sup>6</sup>On our website, you will find a short handout suggesting a pilot project (in German). See [https://tramis.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/02\\_Mehrsprachenunterricht\\_fin.pdf](https://tramis.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/02_Mehrsprachenunterricht_fin.pdf).

language of instruction (German), or are there opportunities to develop his knowledge in a range of subjects that are relevant beyond the present system, such as mathematics?

- (d) **Grading:** If grades are given in relation to social norms – the class or the age cohort, for example – system changers such as Lisa and Amir face systematic disadvantages. They are likely to have learned knowledge and competences in other systems that are not considered valuable and relevant for their grades in the German system, and instead their performance in tests is measured according to the average of what their classmates show who have continuously attended the German school system. To what extent can their knowledge and skills acquired in another national context be taken into consideration for their grading? Are they exempted from being graded in certain subjects if they have missed the content? Or do they receive additional tuition as long as they need it to catch up?
- (e) **Certification:** How can Lisa plan her stay abroad without risking failure in tests for her school leaving certificates? As Amir arrived in Germany only a couple of years before he is expected to gain his first school leaving certificate, what can be done to enable him to cope? Is his certificate of secondary education accepted in other countries, even though he has studied different subjects? Are there any options for preparing simultaneously for the relevant certificates in two countries in spite of differing age grouping, subjects and grading?

These questions lead us to the next section where we will sketch – again illustrating it with the vignettes – how the 'grammar' of schooling could be adjusted or changed with respect to the needs of transnationally mobile young people and what kind of practical solutions we found in partner schools in Germany and during field visits in four different national school contexts.

---

#### 4 Outlook – Practical Implications of Transforming the 'Grammar' of Schooling

The 'grammar' of schooling is the result of an ongoing historical process of school development in different national contexts. Questions raised with regard to transnationally mobile students indicate that the core elements of this currently prevalent 'grammar' do not appropriately respond to the demands of a student population that is – among other relevant and intersecting diversity dimensions – heterogenous due to past migration and future migration orientations. Thus a

transformation or at least adjustment of the core elements of this ‘grammar’ is needed in order to meet the educational rights and needs of students so that they can receive high-level quality education. As we have asked how the diverse individual needs in a transnational context can be better addressed, it is not surprising that our general conclusions relate very much to principles of reform pedagogy, guiding the agenda of reform schools all over the world. Their commonality is based on the orientation towards the individual student and his or her needs in education to support subjectivation and to unfold their individual potential – which is also the main goal of inclusive education (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2009). In this final section, we formulate some specific considerations regarding how transnational mobility of students can be addressed, being aware that we have created a category encompassing students and parents who see future migration as a valuable option and others who (have to) consider future migration as a realistic possibility because their current residence status may force them to leave.

The final sketch of ideas is inspired by practices in partner schools in Germany and other countries as well as by the experiences and ideas expressed by teachers, parents and students in several workshops and discussion groups that we initiated for our data collection during the last two years. We return again to the illustrative scenarios of transnational mobility to present approaches that have addressed this phenomenon – explicitly without recommending individual schools as examples of best practice, as this would require a more in-depth study and detailed descriptions of specific circumstances and implementation.

Students like those in the vignette ‘Lisa’ who would like to get experience in other countries would be well served if a school offered established exchange relations of varying length and regular consultation practices so that she and her parents could envisage the implications of a stay abroad and make an informed decision. Return to her original class with generous acceptance of courses taken abroad and support in catching up should be an option, and guaranteed access to a class in the year below an alternative. We have found a practicable form of implementation for this idea, for example, in our partner school in Minden, Germany.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Lisa would profit from flexible age grouping and subject definition.

We realised that in schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhoods of cities in which many students already have a range of transnational (family) relations, Lisa’s interest in an international school experience would be

---

<sup>7</sup> See [https://tramis.de/schulen/4\\_rgm/](https://tramis.de/schulen/4_rgm/).

considered as exceptional and probably neither noticed nor addressed in regular school practices. If we consider transnational experience as valuable for all interested parts of the population, students should have access to safe, financially feasible and well-monitored opportunities to collect experiences abroad, even if their parents have no funds to finance a stay and cannot provide advice. Schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods could help by establishing cooperation in regional networks. Schools with a focus on vocational orientation could also explore international traineeship programmes.

For cases similar to the vignette of 'Maria', it would be favourable to enable her to develop her Greek in the regular school time and to make it valuable for her certification. Her school could offer individualised learning options for languages with modularised subject content so that she can build on prior knowledge. There are school types in Germany that offer this option for all their multilingual students, for example one of our partner schools, the European School at Karlsruhe, Germany.<sup>8</sup> This school offers opportunities to all students to learn in two languages and to receive a European-wide recognised university qualification. If their family language is not one of the languages of instruction, they can receive lessons in their family language as well. This model is difficult to scale up due to its high costs. European schools are set up by the European Union (EU), are free for eligible EU employees and accessible for others who are able to pay high school fees. If regular public schools want to provide language development opportunities for all languages that students may wish to develop, this requires new ways of teaching. One teacher in the classroom could be complemented by additional teachers of specific languages who become part of the classroom through online conferences. A proposal to broaden language development opportunities in a way that could be used by state-funded schools has been sketched and presented to scholarly discourse as an outcome of TraMiS (Vogel 2020).

While students in the vignettes 'Lisa' and 'Maria' have grown up in Germany and their transnational mobility is based on voluntary considerations to spend a part of their future abroad, other students – like the one presented in the vignette 'Amir' – have been forced to leave their country of origin so that their school education has been interrupted. Although Amir wishes to stay, this could change in the future, or he could be forced to leave due to restrictive asylum and migration policies. Amir faces considerable constraints and restrictions in terms of

---

<sup>8</sup> See [https://tramis.de/schulen/11\\_esk/](https://tramis.de/schulen/11_esk/).

‘transnational mobility’. To offer him a respectful education experience and a future perspective to exercise agency over his own life – which is the declared function of school in a democratic, inclusive and pluralist society like Germany – schools should design their inclusion paths in a way that also enables double and multiple transnational connections to other contexts. “Amir” would profit, like “Maria”, from an opportunity to develop his family language in the scope of regular schooling. In addition, modularised subject content could help him to catch up on what he has missed without having to repeat what he has already learned – either with students of his age, as is practised in our partner school Gesamtschule Leverkusen Schlebusch<sup>9</sup> for example, or in mixed age groups, a practice we witnessed in the TraMiS partner at the Offene Schule in Cologne.<sup>10</sup>

The schools in the Internationals Network for Public Schools, based in New York City, USA,<sup>11</sup> are specifically designed to address the needs of students who enter secondary education as newly arrived pupils with very diverse school experiences prior to their arrival, like “Amir”. They encourage students to use competences in all languages for learning, offer graduation-relevant subject contents from the beginning, and combine a demanding pedagogical approach with extensive support that leads to high success rates in exams. This approach recognises knowledge and skills that have been developed by students before they entered the new system. An alternative way of taking prior knowledge and skills into account was observed in Lidingö, Sweden. A short and intensive Swedish course for usually two months is accompanied by culture- and language-sensitive diagnosis of competences and interests in core subjects. After the short introductory phase, inclusion in regular classes is supported by bilingual education assistants. Languages spoken in the pupils’ families can also be developed (Linnemann 2020).

We are aware that further analysis would need to go deeper into the specific relation between different nation states, their particular migration patterns and policies as well as their education systems and approaches that have been taken for granted in this contribution. Obligatory learning in public schools is historically closely related to the formation of nation states and the “national citizen” (Wenning 1999, p. 116). Therefore “we will never understand nationalism in all its layers if we exclude education from the study of nationalism and [...] we will

---

<sup>9</sup> See [https://tramis.de/schulen/6\\_gls/](https://tramis.de/schulen/6_gls/).

<sup>10</sup> See [https://tramis.de/schulen/7\\_osk/](https://tramis.de/schulen/7_osk/).

<sup>11</sup> See <http://internationalsnps.org/> and Vogel and Heidrich (2020).



never understand modern education if we exclude nationalism in the emergence of the modern nation-states" (Tröhler 2020).

Historical and contemporary schools have been and still are confronted with the antinomy of liberation and disciplining, between harmonisation and differentiation: state-directed organisation and funding leads to the demand for state-centred structural harmonisation, whereas inclusive education, oriented towards the needs of individuals, leads to the demand for subject-oriented differentiation (Wenning 1999). Current theoretical approaches from the education sciences point at the necessity for a new understanding of teaching and learning in the light of a rising complexity of the present world and an "emerging future" (Schratz 2019, p. 48, trans. by authors). For this to occur, they stress, not only does our understanding of learning need to respond to the world, relating to Rosa's (2019) concept of "resonance pedagogy", but also the functions, structure and content of schools have to be transformed fundamentally. Our contribution aims at connecting to this discourse by means of a focused perspective on transnational mobilities of students. It adds further dimensions of differentiation and orientation to the manifold dimensions of antinomies in contemporary state-run schools already in place, emphasising the increasing importance of transnational connections that schools have to take into consideration in their efforts to empower the development of an individual's personality and to address the societal functions of schooling (Karakaşoğlu and Vogel 2020).

---

## References

- Bukus, B. (2015). The concept of transnationalism in educational science: Educational biographies of school-age children involved in multiple and multidirectional migration. *Transnational Social Review*, 5(1), 79–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21931674.2014.998462>.
- Christlich Demokratische Union, Christlich-Soziale Union, Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands. (2018). *Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa. Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland. Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land* [A new emergence/departure for Europe. A new dynamic for Germany. A new cohesion for our country] (Coalition agreement). Retrieved March 25, 2019, from [https://www.cdu.de/system/tdf/media/dokumente/koalitionsvertrag\\_2018.pdf?file=1](https://www.cdu.de/system/tdf/media/dokumente/koalitionsvertrag_2018.pdf?file=1).
- Dumont, J.-C., & Spielvogel, G. (2008). Return Migration: A new perspective. In OECD (Ed.), *International Migration Outlook SOPEMI: 2008 Edition* (pp. 161–222). Paris: OECD.
- Faist, T. (1996). Internationale Migration und transnationale soziale Räume: Das Beispiel Türkei-Deutschland [International migration and transnational social spaces: the example of Turkey-Germany]. In T. Krämer-Badoni (Ed.), *Das Verschwinden der Städte: Dokumentation des 16. Bremer Wissenschaftsforums der Universität Bremen, 14.–16. November 1996*. Bremen: Universität Bremen, ZWE Arbeit und Region.

- Faist, T. (2006). *Transnationale Migration als relative Immobilität in einer globalisierten Welt* [Transnational migration in terms of relative immobility in a globalised world] (COMCAD-Working Papers No. 11). Bielefeld: University, Center on Migration, Citizenship and Development. Retrieved November 12, 2020, from [https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/soz/ab6/ag\\_faist/downloads/workingpaper\\_11.pdf](https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/soz/ab6/ag_faist/downloads/workingpaper_11.pdf).
- Fend, H. (2011). New Governance of Education. Potentials of reform and risks of failure. In D. Tröhler & R. Barbu (Eds.), *The future of education research. Education systems in historical, cultural, and sociological perspectives* (Vol. 1, pp. 39–53). Rotterdam & Boston: Sense Publishers.
- Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992). Transnationalism: A new analytic framework for understanding migration. In N. Glick Schiller, L. Basch, & C. Blanc-Szanton (Eds.), *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences: Towards a transnational perspective on migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered* (Vol. 645, pp. 1–24). New York: New York Academy of Sciences.
- Gogolin, I., & Pries, L. (2004). Stichwort: Transmigration und Bildung [Keyword: Transmigration and education]. *Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 7(1), 5–19.
- Helsper, W. (2008). Schulkulturen – die Schule als symbolische Sinnordnung [School cultures – the school as a symbolic order of meaning]. *Zeitschrift Für Pädagogik*, 54(1), 63–80.
- Kandemir, A., & Budd, R. (2018). Using Vignettes to Explore Reality and Values with Young People. *Forum Qualitative Social Research/ Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-19.2.2914>.
- Karakaşoğlu, Y., Linnemann, M., & Vogel, D. (2019). *Schulischer Umgang mit transnationaler Migration und Mobilität: Rückschlüsse aus Empfehlungen der Kultusministerkonferenz seit den 1950er-Jahren* [Dealing with transnational migration and mobility at school: Conclusions from recommendations of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs since the 1950s] (TraMiS Working Paper No. 2). Bremen: Universität Bremen, Fachbereich 12, Arbeitsbereich Interkulturelle Bildung. <https://doi.org/10.26092/elib/228>.
- Karakaşoğlu, Y., & Vogel, D. (2019). Transnationale Mobilität als Transformationsanlass für Schulen – ein professionskritischer Beitrag aus der interkulturellen Bildung [Transnational mobility as an occasion of school transformation – a professionally critical contribution from intercultural education]. In G. Lang-Wojtasik (Ed.), *Bildung für eine Welt in Transformation: Global Citizenship Education als Chance für die Weltgesellschaft* (1st ed., pp. 89–105). Opladen: Barbara Budrich.
- Karakaşoğlu, Y., & Vogel, D. (2020). *Transnationale Mobilität als Herausforderung einer Theorie der (deutschen) Schule. Theoretische Überlegungen zu institutionellen Wandlungsnotwendigkeiten* [Transnational mobility as a challenge to a theory of (German) school. Theoretical reflections on institutional needs for change] (TraMiS Working Paper No. 7). Bremen: Universität Bremen, Fachbereich 12, Arbeitsbereich Interkulturelle Bildung. <https://doi.org/10.26092/elib/325>.
- Kley, S. (2011). Explaining the Stages of Migration within a Life-course Framework. *European Sociological Review*, 27(4), 469–486. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcq020>.
- Küppers, A., Pusch, B., & Uyan Semerci, P. (2016). *Bildung in transnationalen Räumen: Education in transnational spaces*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-09642-7>.

- Linnemann, M. (2020). *Fachkompetenzen und Unterrichtssprache parallel entwickeln: Impulse aus Schweden für den Umgang mit neuzugewanderten Schüler\*innen* [Developing professional skills and teaching language simultaneously: Ideas from Sweden on how to approach newly immigrated pupils] (TraMiS Working Paper No. 6). Bremen: Universität Bremen, Fachbereich 12, Arbeitsbereich Interkulturelle Bildung. <https://doi.org/10.26092/elib/109>.
- Machold, C., Messerschmidt, A., & Hornberg, S. (Eds.). (2020). *Jenseits des Nationalen? Erziehungswissenschaftliche Perspektiven* [Beyond the national? Educational perspectives]. Opladen & Berlin: Barbara Budrich.
- Pries, L. (1996). Transnationale Soziale Räume. Theoretisch-empirische Skizze am Beispiel der Arbeitswanderungen Mexiko – USA [Theoretical-empirical outline using the example of labour migration Mexico – USA]. *Zeitschrift Für Soziologie*, 25, 437–453.
- Rosa, H. (2019). *Resonance: A sociology of the relationship to the world*. Cambridge & Medford: Polity Press.
- Sauer, M. (2018, February). *Identifikation und politische Partizipation türkeistämmiger Zugewanderter in Nordrhein-Westfalen und in Deutschland: Ergebnisse der erweiterten Mehrthemenbefragung 2017. Eine Analyse in Kooperation mit dem Ministerium für Kinder, Familie, Flüchtlinge und Integration des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen* [Identification and political participation of immigrants of Turkish origin in North Rhine-Westphalia and Germany: Results of the extended multi-theme survey 2017. An analysis in cooperation with the Ministry for Children, Family, Refugees and Integration of North Rhine-Westphalia] (Research Report). Essen: Stiftung Zentrum für Türkeistudien und Integrationsforschung. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from <https://cdn.website-editor.net/09fe2713f5da44ff99ead273b339f17d/files/uploaded/2017.pdf>.
- Schatz, M. (2019). Schule im 21. Jahrhundert [School in the 21st century]. In M. Haring, C. Rohlf's, & M. Gläser-Zikuda (Eds.), *Handbuch Schulpädagogik* (pp. 45–53). Münster: Waxmann.
- Schroeder, J., & Seukwa, L. H. (2018). (Dis-)Kontinuitäten im Übergang [(Dis-)continuities in transition]. In N. v. Dewitz, H. Terhart, & M. Massumi (Eds.), *Neuzuwanderung und Bildung: Eine interdisziplinäre Perspektive auf Übergänge in das deutsche Bildungssystem* (pp. 141–157). Weinheim & Basel: Beltz Juventa.
- Strack, R., Booker, M., Kovacs-Ondrejckovic, O., Hermann, A., & Löwer, P. (2018). *Germany rises to number two as work destination*. Boston: Boston Consulting Group. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from [http://image-src.bcg.com/Images/BCG-Germany-Rises-to-Number-Two-Work-Destination-Jun-2018\\_tcm108-195220.pdf](http://image-src.bcg.com/Images/BCG-Germany-Rises-to-Number-Two-Work-Destination-Jun-2018_tcm108-195220.pdf).
- Triandafyllidou, A., & Gropas, R. (2014). *Integration, Transnational Mobility and Human, Social and Economic Capital: Concept Paper for the ITHACA Project*. Florence: European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/31200/ITHACAconceptPaper2014.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- Tröhler, D. (2020). National literacies, or modern education and the art of fabricating national minds. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52(5), 620–635. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1786727>.
- Tyack, D., & Tobin, W. (1994). The “Grammar” of Schooling: Why Has it Been so Hard to Change? *American Educational Research Journal*, 31(3), 453–479.

- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO]. (2009): *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*. Paris. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000177849>.
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division [UN DESA]. (1998). *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration: Revision 1* (Statistical Papers Series M No. 58). New York. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesM/SeriesM\\_58rev1E.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesM/SeriesM_58rev1E.pdf).
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division [UN DESA]. (2017, March 1). *Handbook on Measuring International Migration through Population Censuses*. New York. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Handbooks/international-migration/2017-draft-E.pdf>.
- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, Institute for Statistics [UIS]. (2012). *International standard classification of education: ISCED 2011*. Montreal. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>.
- Urry, J. (2007). *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Vogel, D. (2020, June 25). *Drei Sprachen sind genug fürs Abitur! Ein Reformvorschlag für den Abbau der Diskriminierung von mehrsprachig Aufgewachsenen bei Schulabschlüssen* [Three languages are enough for the final exams! A reform proposal for reducing discrimination against multilingual school-leavers] (Discussion Paper). Berlin: Rat für Migration. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from <https://rat-fuer-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/rfm-debatte-2020.-drei-sprachen-sind-genug-fuers-abitur.-initialbeitrag-von-dr.-dita-vogel-2.pdf>.
- Vogel, D., & Dittmer, T. (2019). *Migration von Kindern und Jugendlichen in der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Hinweise auf transnationale Mobilität* [Migration of children and young people in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany: References to transnational mobility] (TraMiS Working Paper No. 1). Bremen: Universität Bremen, Fachbereich 12, Arbeitsbereich Interkulturelle Bildung. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from [https://tramis.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Vogel\\_Dittmer\\_2019\\_Migration-von-Kindern-und-Jugendlichen-in-der-Geschichte-der-BRD.pdf](https://tramis.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Vogel_Dittmer_2019_Migration-von-Kindern-und-Jugendlichen-in-der-Geschichte-der-BRD.pdf).
- Vogel, D., & Heidrich, L. (2020). *Make Connections – ask questions: Sprachensible Schulen im Internationals Network for Public Schools in New York* [Make Connections – ask questions: Language-sensitive schools in the International Network for Public Schools in New York] (TraMiS Working Paper No. 3). Bremen: Universität Bremen, Fachbereich 12, Arbeitsbereich Interkulturelle Bildung. <https://doi.org/10.26092/elib/222>.
- Wenning, N. (1999). *Vereinheitlichung und Differenzierung: Zu den “wirklichen” gesellschaftlichen Funktionen des Bildungswesens im Umgang mit Gleichheit und Verschiedenheit* [Unification and differentiation: On the “real” societal functions of the education system dealing with equality and diversity]. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

---

## **III Migration, Transnationalities and Schools in National Contexts**



---

# Teachers in the Midst of a Global Financial Crisis: Mapping the Impact in the Case of Greece

Polina-Theopoula Chrysochou

---

## Abstract

This paper, based on the findings of a case study conducted in Greece from November to December 2014, discusses the ramifications of the economic crisis on the professional and, by extension social/personal lives of primary education teachers. The analysis of the data shows that all aspects relevant to the education process have been severely affected in terms of infrastructure, relationships, personal development and quality of teaching and learning. More than that, teachers, due to the nature of their profession, have proven to be a rich source of data regarding all aspects of the crisis and its repercussions on themselves, their students and on Greek society as a whole.

---

## Keywords

Economic crisis · Greece · Teachers · Education · Professional lives · Critical pedagogy

---

P.-T. Chrysochou (✉)

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Pagrati/Athens, Greece

e-mail: [tchryso@primedu.uoa.gr](mailto:tchryso@primedu.uoa.gr)

## 1 Introduction

In the *eye of the memorandum hurricane*<sup>1</sup> for the ninth consecutive year, and even though Greece and its crisis have started to become old news in international media, the reality remains harsh and the future definitely looks unpromising. Although, after all these years, it may be difficult to continue to describe the country as being “in the throes of a crisis” (Siani-Davies 2017), evidence produced by research into the situation leaves us little choice.

In fact, restructuring of the country’s education system has taken place in a general environment which can be limited neither geographically nor to a specific level. On the contrary, and despite particularities, the effort to deconstruct public education in Greece is incorporated in a general framework that transcends levels. The latter is the historic attack by capital on all levels: against knowledge degenerating into skills; against education and its social role by intensifying social inequality in education; and against labour and the acquired rights of the working world (Boyiopoulos 2011; Tyack and Cuban 1995). But the relationship between society and education is not mechanistic. It is historical, dialectical and controversial; the product of social, political and ideological conflicts both within and outside education (Giroux and McLaren 1994; Shor and Freire 1987). In that sense, education reforms are not objective processes, but measures marked by class characteristics through which the political authority attempts to overcome the crisis. Whether they will be applied or otherwise is not predetermined, but depends on correlations between social and political powers, the general political and ideological framework and the level of development of social movements (Katsikas and Kavvadias 1998). Consequently, any discussion and analysis of the effects the capitalist crisis has had on education should be approached holistically, providing a clearer picture of its economic, social and political dimensions, along with its causes and the diversity of its aspects; only an approach such as this can demonstrate its real depth and extent.

Therefore, the initial drive for the conducted research, described in this paper, was my firm belief that in current circumstances a twofold understanding is more necessary than ever. Such an understanding should emerge by using empirical evidence from research studies, as a means to determine the significance of changes in education “over and against and in relation” to the financial

---

<sup>1</sup>Literally, a calm or quiet period preceding the onset of a worsening situation.

crisis (Ball 2011, p. x), while at the same time placing schooling in its economic, social, political and cultural contexts. To put it differently, what has been extremely important was to comprehend the reasons for, and ways in which, the economic crisis in Greece has served, among others, as a platform for the much-anticipated technocratic turn in education.<sup>2</sup>

In this regard, I have chosen not to limit myself to merely recording direct consequences or to reviewing changes individually, but to firmly integrate these in a general framework and understand them on the basis of socio-political circumstances that capture their essence. Thus, I treat the endeavour to reform the educational process in Greece as one with global dimensions, correlated with the need to manage capitalist reform and to shape a new type of worker in accordance with capital's need for human resources. More precisely, I maintain that successive Greek governments, having signed the memoranda and in line with the directives of the EU and other international organisations, have been following the typical neoliberal strategy of what Harvey calls "creative destruction" (Harvey 2005). Meaning, allowing for the degradation of public services in order to prove that the market and private sector know best. Additionally, the Greek crisis is not treated as a local phenomenon but as a structural problem of capitalism itself that has been used as an excuse to impose neoliberal practices on society in general, and education in particular. Besides, in the course of the global economic crisis, those domains not as yet privatised, such as public education, become ideal targets for the overaccumulation of capital that remains stagnant and incapable of being reinvested profitably (Gounari 2014).

In this article, therefore, I first strive to outline the socio-political context in Greece around the time the interviews were conducted. The next section provides some insight into my methodology and sampling criteria. Finally, I present the findings of my research in terms of conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data provided by teachers as to how their professional, personal and social lives have been affected by the economic crisis.

---

<sup>2</sup>Even in Greece, the unapologetic and radical turn to neoliberal policies, corresponding with an 'international educational paradigm', has been one of the main concerns of governing political parties since the 1990s (Chrysochou et al. 2014). However, this had only partially been achieved until the emergence of the crisis and the decision to opt for the memoranda.



## 2 A Nation at Risk and Educational Reforms

Concerning public education in Greece, the educational landscape, as it emerges from reforms in all levels of education, is being radically transformed on the basis of changes that remorselessly espouse neoliberal dogmas. In fact, it takes little more than a brief glance at legislation around education and at the official public discourse to see that there is pressure for a different kind of education on all levels: one that promotes selection, fierce competition, performance management, individual accountability and risk management (Apple et al. 2010). In this new framework, education is no longer considered a social right; its democratic and critical characteristics have shrunk and it looks more and more like a market commodity on the basis of supply and demand, cost and profit. At the same time, a new type of school has emerged, characterised by a series of overt or covert privatisations. This school is staffed by teachers largely trapped in flexible forms of work, whose job becomes clearly executive and performative (Gounari and Grollios 2013; Grollios et al. 2015).

During the period of the crisis, policies imposed on Greek education with the help of international organisations<sup>3</sup> have had all the hallmarks of supranational governance: reports and evaluations; advisory programme proposals; operational programmes drawn up by the Ministry of Education; memoranda and commitments; blackmail; and finally, subservience to the OECD (Mavrogiorgos 2017). In fact, the sweeping changes were not even commitments, but prerequisites for all evaluations.<sup>4</sup> Using the economic crisis and various memoranda as pretexts, there was an attempt to achieve a sweeping progress against all delays imposed by the harsh labour struggles in education.

At the time of the study explained below, the consequences of the crisis on education had already started to become painfully obvious. It was a school year that introduced exceptional demands on teachers, right from the start, with reduced personnel in addition.<sup>5</sup> There had already been, among other measures,

---

<sup>3</sup>The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

<sup>4</sup>It should not be forgotten that signing the agreement for a new OECD survey was one of the prerequisite measures for completing the second review under the terms of the third memorandum.

<sup>5</sup>Fewer and fewer substitute teachers had been hired in the previous years while, since 2012/2013, transfers and secondments of permanent staff have been reduced to a minimum.

extensive cuts to teachers' salaries in the academic year 2010–11, in the next academic year when teachers used photocopies due to a lack of textbooks, and finally in 2013–14, when the launch of the beta version of the integrated information system Myschool<sup>6</sup> had excessively burdened headteachers with extra administrative work.

On the other hand, in the country's political scenery, there was a coalition government led by New Democracy, with Antonis Samaras as prime minister.<sup>7</sup> In terms of everyday reality, adverse living conditions were becoming more prevalent, lifestyles were subverted and child poverty was increasing. Alongside the numbers of employed poor, unemployment reached a record high, taxation became crippling and cases of national depression emerged at an alarming rate. Finally, teachers, themselves affected by the crisis professionally, personally and emotionally, had to pedagogically deal with the social and familial crises their students were experiencing, and they had to do so under the most adverse circumstances. It is thus not difficult to comprehend why, in such intense conditions, teachers' roles are not, and cannot, be limited to the classroom. On the contrary, their professional skills are tested to a far greater extent (Gounari 2014). This realisation has made me keenly interested in the collective meaning of teachers' work as they themselves perceive it while being part of an occupational community (Van Maanen and Barley 1984). In that sense, and contrary to mainstream educational research that tends to favour analyses restricted to psychology, traits and individual personalities, I have advocated for conceiving of teachers as a social collectivity, not only engaged in the reproduction of social value but also in social action, and thus having an impact on social change.

---

<sup>6</sup>Myschool.sch.gr is a comprehensive online platform that was designed to integrate all existing digital systems of school, grade and student roster management. While its application was a step in a much-needed direction towards digitisation and better management, it came at a time when teachers and headteachers had suffered many blows. In fact, it was forcibly introduced towards the end of the school year and created a chaotic situation affecting school operations for months afterwards (mainly in terms of registration of students, leaves of absence and recording grades). Ever since its introduction, the administrative work required from headteachers has gradually increased and, on top of that, the extensive training that was necessary to familiarise them with the system never really happened.

<sup>7</sup>New Democracy had won the June 2012 election and formed a coalition government with the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, known generally by its acronym PASOK, and the Democratic Left (DIMAR). Antonis Samaras was prime minister from 2012 to 2015.

### 3 Greece as a Case Study: Results

The purpose of the study at hand was to investigate the ramifications of the economic crisis, ravaging Greece since 2009, on the professional and by extension social/personal lives of primary education teachers, along with the potential impact on teaching practices and the overall quality of the education process. Employing a Critical Pedagogy approach, this case study placed the whole thinking within the philosophical framework of dialectical materialism.<sup>8</sup> This approach not only pinpoints social class as an explanatory variable, it also considers teaching as a form of labour, thus giving an opportunity to depict the deteriorating conditions under which teachers work today (Mac an Ghaill 1996; Weber 2007).

The main research was conducted from November to December 2014 and was carried out in 24 public schools in the prefectures of Attica and Magnesia. The total sample, consisting of 102 primary education teachers, was distributed in 24 focus groups and mini focus groups that were dispersed across areas with different socioeconomic backgrounds. The fact that I was interested in the collective meaning of teachers' work, rather than in individual career trajectories, was a key factor in the choice of the particular method for gathering data (Agostinone-Wilson 2013; Allman 2001; Little 2007). A combination of coding methods,<sup>9</sup> as proposed by J. Saldaña (2012, pp. 188–193), was used to analyse the data, shedding light on the various ways in which primary school teachers in Greece perceived the crisis and its impact on their life and work. More precisely, the following main topics and concerns emerged.

#### 3.1 Funding Problems

The analysis of the data shows that all aspects relevant to the educational process have been severely affected in terms of infrastructure, relationships, personal development and quality of teaching and learning. In fact, the spectre of the crisis seems to have affected teachers to such a degree that they tended to refer to

---

<sup>8</sup>For a thorough analysis of dialectical materialism as a framing research tool, compare the author's *Dialectical materialism: A philosophical framework, a theoretical 'weapon' and a framing research tool* (Chrysochou 2019).

<sup>9</sup>For a thorough analysis on the different coding methods used, see the author's PhD dissertation (Chrysochou 2018).

the beginning of the crisis as a point zero in their working lives, constantly contrasting the clarity of the pre-crisis period with the obscurities of current reality. The findings confirmed that a lack of school funding was obvious in all sectors of school life: from the severe lack of teaching personnel to an underfunding of school units leading to serious shortages of basic materials and to an inability to cover essential needs (like hygiene and heating).<sup>10</sup>

The idea to not ask for much and be grateful for what we have [is always] at the back of our mind. We stopped asking, wanting something more, we forgot what we enjoyed having in the past. This deprivation has become a way of life, living with as little as possible, the bare necessities, fearing a worse future. (VOL6.2)<sup>11</sup>

### 3.2 Uncertainty About Impending Assessment

The second remark is related to teachers' isolation and their suspicion about the motives of the project. I was particularly surprised by the initial reluctance of teachers to meet and participate in interviews. While they were not negatively predisposed to taking part in the research, they wanted to know all details concerning my identity, the reason I was conducting the study and the institution I was representing. Their misgivings though, stemmed from their hesitation to openly express their opinions about the imminent evaluation of teaching work, promoted

---

<sup>10</sup>It is worth noting that from 2009 to 2013, total spending on education has been reduced by 33%, a trend that has only grown in subsequent years. For clarity's sake, an extra point needs to be stressed. Under the terms of the signed memoranda, one of OECD's main priorities regarding Greek public education was to decentralise and make autonomous its school units. To achieve this, the Greek public schools' funding system has changed. More precisely, instead of the Ministry of Education's regular budget that used to cover the operating costs of the schools, the school boards were now under the control of municipalities. The latter have further aggravated underfunding by establishing new time-consuming processes of fund release. A final reference needs to be made to the regional and provincial variations that existed; schools in the more bourgeois regions seemed to face less severe problems, usually due to financial contributions from students' families.

<sup>11</sup>This is part of the *cleaning* of my data for ensuring anonymity and confidentiality for the participants of my research project. So, codes were used to replace the names of interviewees consisting of the site, number of focus group, and number of the participant. For example, Participant ATH7.1 is one of the interviewees from a school in Athens, belonging to focus group 7.

by the government of the time.<sup>12</sup> Not only did they often evade my questions on the issue, but they also used specific vocabulary when referring to government plans. Their discourse repeatedly manifested a vocabulary of fear, with words like “afraid”, “terrified” and “pressure” appearing in all interviews.<sup>13</sup> This expressed sentiment of anxiety was closely linked especially to their fear of dismissal during an extremely difficult period financially. However, teachers did not seem to completely reject the notion of assessment, especially because they had a strong belief in their theoretical background and their competencies. They strongly questioned, however, the framework within which this assessment was designed,<sup>14</sup> and complained about being assessed by governors who had proved themselves unworthy and often corrupt as a result of scandals over the previous decades.

---

<sup>12</sup> It is appropriate here, especially for readers from other national contexts, to make a special reference to the history of evaluation in the Greek public education system. The first form of evaluation in Greece, which was at the same time one of the longest-running institutions in the history of Greek education, was the so-called Inspector (1895). With his judgement, deciding whether a teacher would remain in service or not, the Inspector essentially controlled the degree to which the government’s education policy was applied, punishing or rewarding teachers accordingly. An object of great controversy in the field of educational politics, it was finally abolished in 1982, when it was replaced by the School Advisor. Ever since, even though the issue of evaluation in education frequently resurfaced in discussions or proposed laws, it was not practically applied to the Greek educational reality (twofold evaluation encompassed in Greek law 1986/2002) until 2013. When this research was conducted, in 2014, the evaluation process had partly begun, in terms of quality of the school unit and evaluation of headteachers.

<sup>13</sup> However, a distinction must be noted here between teachers who were unionised and those who were not part of any association. Teachers who were active members of trade unions appeared to be more informed about the requests and guidelines of the OECD and were much more aware of the idea of supranational organisations implementing neoliberal reforms in the Greek education system. These specific teachers appeared to be less afraid of the announced reforms thanks to their knowledge and understanding and also to the feelings of camaraderie this association offered them.

<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting here that teachers as a group, both those who were experiencing change in their work environments and those who were not, expressed similar concerns during interviews. They speculated that if the evaluation proceeded, at least on the basis set down in the Presidential Decree, it would inevitably affect the workers’ relationship as much as schooling culture in general. In fact, they maintained that it would contribute to the formation of a competitive and individualistic context, while at the same time give rise to a culture of obedience towards management. The latter concern, along with the hierarchical character, the vague criteria, the lack of pedagogical value and the lack of transparency in the process and the political and ideological purposes it was supposed to serve, were according to my data the reasons why they unanimously opposed the particular Presidential Decree concerning the forthcoming evaluation.

Indirectly, directly, [the work of teachers] is very much affected. I see colleagues terrified, panicking, [...] stressed, anxious, not because they don't do a good job, but because they don't know what this is, what its purpose is. [...] It's that we don't know exactly what they're asking for. (VOL7.1)

### **3.3 Relationships at Work**

Although the isolation factor is generally considered a feature of teachers' work, the latter appeared to be heavily accentuated by the crisis and its repercussions. While all teachers appeared positive regarding the importance of having a pleasant atmosphere at their workplace, they all noted that since the beginning of the crisis there has been a great shift in their relations with colleagues and parents. As far as other teachers are concerned, many of the interviewees noted that a lot of colleagues had become more distant due to their own personal or financial problems and to the division caused by their opposing opinions on the soon to be implemented assessment.

We are becoming increasingly suspicious of one another. Everyone tries, and often in secret, to do more so that we are in a better position than the others. This creates a suspicious and uncooperative climate, and it's not good [...] because we are dealing with personalities, we try to shape free personalities, unfortunately, in these conditions, they'll be anything but free. (VOL23.1)

### **3.4 Tantalising Bureaucracy**

Special reference needs to be made to the number of administrative reforms in education, during the years of the crisis, and to the ways they affected teachers' work. As teachers overall emphasized, the intensification of their work and the overwhelming pressure have escalated to dangerous levels. Teachers presented themselves as burdened with administrative form filling, and "unnecessary bureaucratic tasks" that distracted them from teaching. Simultaneously, they underlined that time available to socialise with colleagues had been cut to a minimum and the staffroom no longer represented the team spirit of the school community.

At the same time, the majority of teachers referred to bureaucratic control mechanisms that raised the visibility of individual performance and a secretly cultivated climate of suspicion and antagonism among colleagues that promoted an individualised work environment. In that context, there was pressure to make some procedures compulsory, such as school advisors urging teachers to participate in paid seminars. All of the above seemed to cause significant concern for teachers, who described their situation as a targeted approach of "divide and

conquer”. They stressed that it was the first time they had felt so divided into categories and sides; a strategy they interpreted as an attempt to weaken the professional community by undermining common interests.

I’ve seen a huge change; I see everybody running around from morning till the end of the school day and quite often we don’t even have time to talk. This never happened before, we were working, but it was organised, there was a schedule. Now there’s no schedule, suddenly everybody is up and running. (ATH22.1)

### **3.5 Impact on Student Community**

Concerning whether the crisis has had consequences for the student community, always according to teachers, the reply is, unfortunately, yes. The interviewees pointed out that most children, despite their young age, were aware of what was going on around them and were bringing this anxiety into school. Children’s responses may be varied, but teachers constantly referred to aggressiveness and depression. At the same time, teachers remarked that there was a worrying increase in the number of students who faced hunger or the risk of it, as well as widespread malnutrition, and a constantly growing number of students who could not afford to participate in any events organised by the school.

[The children] are hungry, they’re waiting to eat something, if we give them some bread, or there are other children that have realised that some of their classmates – at least in my class, I don’t know about the other classes – are hungry and deprived and they take care to bring two or three sandwiches to give to the next kid and you can see the other one waiting. They’re hungry, there is this problem. (ATH1.2)

### **3.6 Social and Personal Life of Teachers**

Another undeniable result of the crisis is that it has affected the mood, creativity and work of teachers. In fact, almost all teachers stressed that personal stamina, creativity, sense of achievement, relationships with students and efficiency cannot remain unaffected. They seemed to be struggling to maintain balance because children, as they characteristically mentioned, “need them more than ever [and] are not to blame for any of this”. They appeared dominated by a strong sense of responsibility to their students, while at the same time they felt frustrated and angered at being attacked by the media, parents and the government. A majority of interviewees expressed intense dissatisfaction with the hypocrisy hiding, as they pointed out, under the pretence of invoking teaching as a “vocation”.

No, I can't be relaxed and comfortable in my personal, social and family life, I can't fulfil my needs and the needs of the people around me, and as a result, I'm not as dedicated, happy and motivated as when I started work and I had my living ensured. I used to say, I'm not going to be rich, but I'll have dignity. (ATH1.3)

The vast majority of the teachers I interviewed, irrespective of their other social characteristics, admitted bringing this distress into their personal life that was extremely affected by the pressure inflicted on them due to the crisis. However, it is worth mentioning that despite the abandoned infrastructure, the frequently demanding headteachers and the interfering, most teachers claimed that going to school every day was therapeutic. Being with their students, teaching them and often comforting them made them forget about their personal problems and appreciate the social dimension of their role. In many respects, teachers have become students' and families' "frontline crisis caregivers". In that sense, teachers have not remained inactive, at least at the school or neighbourhood level. Among other activities, they have organised bazaars to raise money, collected clothes for students' families facing serious financial problems, organised book and clothing exchanges and have taken the initiative to offer targeted breakfast provision through personal contacts with supermarkets.

Combined with our worries about school and all these educational issues, we try to leave everything that comes up and what every one of us has to deal with out of school. We fight tooth and nail, because children need our support too, they are experiencing the same or worse at home. (ATH22.6)

### **3.7 In-Service Training**

Special reference should be made here to teachers' views about the support they have received in terms of training. Even though most of the interviewed teachers appeared confident in their theoretical background and their teaching practices, the majority expressed the wish and the need to pursue further training and expand their knowledge. One could assume that this much-desired further training could be provided by the state itself. However, this is hardly the case because, as teachers confessed, their Ministry has never been very "generous" with their in-service training. What seemed to be completely different since the beginning of the crisis was the lack of means: whereas some years ago a teacher could afford training fees, nowadays this seems to be a luxury that must be forgone in the face of daily needs. This situation resulted in stressed, anxious teachers who were feeling overwhelmed by directives to implement methods and projects they had never been properly trained for.



[Following an expensive training programme] is my choice, I'll give you that, but with the money I make right now, I'm 32 years old and I can't rent my own flat, because I choose to be educated, to be trained on something else, essentially to develop [professionally] but some other things stay behind. I mean, on the one hand, in education and training I am moving forward, but I feel I'm behind in terms of my personal development. (ATH18.1)

### 3.8 Trade Unions

Finally, an issue of great political importance must be pointed out: teachers' attitudes towards their unions.<sup>15</sup> The vast majority of the interviewed teachers expressed a deep disappointment in trade unions and a growing suspicion about

---

<sup>15</sup> Especially for readers not acquainted with the Greek context, it seems imperative to provide some defining characteristics of the Greek union movement. First of all, we have to bear in mind that we are in the forefront of a conflictual social model. Even though, since the beginning of the 90s, we have been witnessing a spread of consensual practices, we cannot by any means place the case of Greece among those of other countries governed by consensual social standards. Since its appearance as a collective structure, the Greek union movement has adopted, for a number of reasons, an attitude of conflict against employers and against the state. And here lies a Greek particularity of the union movement: it is the only country in Europe that historically experiences a large number of conflicts without having adopted the pluralistic union organisation model, a model which is particularly widespread in Europe. On the contrary, Greece maintains a united organisational structure (a structure where different ideological tendencies coexist, and which is reminiscent of countries with a more consensus-based social model such as in the Scandinavian nations, or in Germany or Austria). However, whereas Greece has adopted a unified organisational structure where different ideological tendencies coexist, all unions fall under two main categories depending on the employment status of their members. Thus, in Greece we have two big trade unions, the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), which represents workers in the private sector and in the broader public sector, such as public utility organisations (DEKO), local government units (OTA) and public banks; and the Confederation of Civil Servants (ADEDY), which represents workers in the core public sector (public administration, education, health). Lastly, it should be noted that the Greek trade union movement is characterised by an irregular development in an irregular political environment, with an intense adherence to political parties. Even though, in the late 1980s, there was a change in the attitude of the state, which gives more autonomy to the trade unions, there is a long tradition of state interference in the operation of the Greek union movement which is present even today. Of course, this intensive state interference has been aided by the enduring presence of autocratic regimes in Greece and historically coincides with the phenomenon of party alliances inside the trade unions. All this contributes to the creation of a clientelist conception of unionism among many union members and of a pervasive partisan culture.

their intentions and practices. Teachers felt abandoned by highly ranked union members, openly accusing them of promoting their own personal interests over the public good. In fact, a large percentage of teachers associated the sector's inability to anticipate problems with the dubious morals of union ideology and the ethics of its representatives. Similarly, when the issue of protest was raised, the majority of participants rejected striking as a means of advocating for rights and benefits. They all felt that the strike was a redundant method of protest,<sup>16</sup> closely linked to old unionism and thus strongly contested as to its effectiveness. It is imperative, however, to clarify that teachers were not against the idea of protesting and demanding their rights, but a lot of them aspired to new forms of unionising, especially at a more local level. Teachers proved eager to try new inspiring structures that would propose something new, away from the sterile, old, union language constantly rejecting everything.

I mean, what did you do to be prepared, especially when you saw that things were coming, Because, they themselves said 'things are coming'; but what do you do? I refuse, passively – I will call this passive – even though they consider it an active stance, it makes you an active citizen when you resist what's coming, but I feel that refusal is a passive stance. I want something beyond the obvious. (ATH20.4)

---

## 4 Final Remarks

The selected data, and the abundance of teacher discourse my interviews provided me with, confirmed my original belief that the Greek education system has suffered a severe blow as a result of the ongoing economic crisis. In fact, it would be no exaggeration to say that the crisis has affected the roles that both education and pedagogy are called to play, since it readjusted the features of state pedagogy

---

<sup>16</sup>To avoid any misconceptions, it should be pointed out that Greece is a country with a long history of resistance. For instance, from May 2010, after the announcement of the first Memorandum, till May 2014, there were a total of 20,120 gatherings, rallies or mobilisations, over 20 national strikes, the rise of civic movements, disruptions of parades, the movement in support of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) after the government's abrupt decision to close it down, occupations of ministries and social solidarity practices. However, I should note that, as is the case for the broader public and private sector, despite recent sporadic outbursts and protests keeping the issue of rupture open, counterattacks by the majority are subdued, hardly suggestive of the mass demonstrations in streets and squares and the rallies of strikers that took place in 2012.

and redefined the roles of school and educators in relation to the institutional framework (Magaliou and Chaniotakis 2014). On this ground, it could be argued that what we are witnessing is not, as maybe thought, a transient phenomenon, but a permanent and multifaceted feature of social life that is definitive for the lives of students, scholars and educators (Grollios 2013, 2015).

In light of the above, it is of vital importance in current circumstances that all those who oppose the dominant pedagogy and seek alternative pedagogies and emancipating prospects for education re-evaluate their positions, practices and propositions in light of this crisis (Grollios et al. 2015). In this direction, the case of Greece could provide valuable insights and largely contribute to the expansion and deepening of a debate over the ongoing assault on, and radical changes to, public education and in the teacher labour market. This would, after all, be a definite step in the right direction of mapping the landscape within which the potential struggles of educational and social movements will take place (Ball 2011).

---

## References

- Agostinone-Wilson, F. (2013). *Dialectical Research Methods in the Classical Marxist Tradition*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Allman, P. (2001). *Revolutionary Social Transformation: Democratic Hopes, Political Possibilities and Critical Education* (2nd ed.). Westport & London: Bergin and Garvey.
- Apple, M. W., Ball, S., & Gandin, L. A. (Eds.). (2010). *The Routledge International Handbook of Sociology of Education*. London: Routledge.
- Ball, S. J. (2011). Crisis and Attentiveness. In D. R. Cole (Ed.), *Surviving Economic Crises Through Education* (pp. ix–x). New York: Peter Lang.
- Boyiopoulos, N. (2011). *It's Capitalism, you Idiot*. Athens: Livani Publishing.
- Chrysochou, P., Katsiampoura, G., & Skordoulis, K. (2014). The Effect of the Economic Crisis on the Professional Lives of Primary School Teachers: The Social Context. In K. Skordoulis & D. Hill (Eds.), *Critical Education at the Crossroads. Selected Papers. 2nd International Conference on Critical Education, 10–14 July 2012, Athens* (pp. 285–295). Athens: Nissos.
- Chrysochou, T. (2018). *The Impact of the Economic Crisis in Greece on the Professional Lives and Teaching Practices of Primary School Teachers: A Critical Pedagogy Approach* (Doctoral Dissertation, Anglia Ruskin University). Retrieved July 7, 2020, from <https://arro.anglia.ac.uk/703814/>.
- Chrysochou, P. T. (2019). Dialectical Materialism: A Philosophical Framework, a Theoretical 'Weapon' and a Framing Research Tool. In D. R. Ford (Ed.), *Keywords in Radical Philosophy & Education. Common Concepts for Contemporary Movements* (pp. 147–160). Leiden & Boston: Brill.
- Giroux, A. H., & McLaren, P. (1994). *Paulo Freire on Higher Education: A Dialogue at the National University of Mexico*. New York: State University of New York Press.

- Gounari, P., & Grollios, G. (2013). Educational Reform in Greece: Central Concepts and a Critique. *Journal of Pedagogy*, 3(2), 303–318.
- Gounari, P. (2014). Neoliberalism as Social Necrophilia: Erich Fromm and The Politics of Hopelessness in Greece. In S. Miri, R. Lake, & T. Kress (Eds.), *Reclaiming the Same Society: Essays on Erich Fromm's Thought* (pp. 187–201). Boston: Sense Publishers.
- Grollios, G. (2013, December 23). Η κρίση και ο ρόλος της παιδαγωγικής [Crisis and the Role of Pedagogy]. *Paremvaseis*. Retrieved December 27, 2016, from <http://www.paremvasis.gr/?p=2632>.
- Grollios, G. (2015). Κρίση και κριτικοί εκπαιδευτικοί [Crisis and Critical Educators]. In G. Grollios, A. Liambas, & P. Pavlidis (Eds.), *Πρακτικά 4ου Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Κριτικής Εκπαίδευσης. "Η Κριτική Εκπαίδευση στην Εποχή της Κρίσης"* (Vol. 1, pp. 312–332). Thessaloniki. Advance online publication. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from [https://www.eled.auth.gr/documents/praktika\\_iv\\_icce\\_volume\\_1\\_gr.pdf](https://www.eled.auth.gr/documents/praktika_iv_icce_volume_1_gr.pdf).
- Grollios, G., Liambas, A., & Pavlidis, P. (2015). Introduction. In G. Grollios, A. Liambas, & P. Pavlidis (Eds.), *Proceedings of the IV International Conference on Critical Education. "Critical Education in the Era of Crisis"* (Vol. 2, pp. i–xvi). Thessaloniki. Retrieved July 13, 2020, from <http://ikee.lib.auth.gr/record/294167?ln=en>.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Katsikas, C., & Kavvadias, G. K. (1998). School Crisis and Educational Policy. A Critique of Educational Changes (1990–1997). Athens: Gutenberg.
- Little, D. (2007). Marxism and Method. In D. Glaser & D. Walker (Eds.), *Twentieth-Century Marxism: A Global Introduction* (pp. 230–245). New York: Routledge.
- Magaliou, S., & Chaniotakis, N. (2014). Αντιλήψεις των παιδιών του δημοτικού σχολείου για την οικονομική κρίση [Primary School Students' Perceptions of the Financial Crisis] (Presentation, pp. 1454–1458). In M. Tzekaki & M. Kanatsouli (Eds.), *Πρακτικά ΤΕΠΑΕ-ΑΠΘ του Πανελλήνιου Συνεδρίου με Διεθνή Συμμετοχή: Αναστοχασμοί για την Παιδική Ηλικία. October 31–November 1, 2014*. Thessaloniki. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from [https://www.nured.auth.gr/dp7nured/sites/default/files/files/Praktika\\_Synedriou.pdf](https://www.nured.auth.gr/dp7nured/sites/default/files/files/Praktika_Synedriou.pdf).
- Mac an Ghaill, M. (1996). Sociology of Education, State Schooling and Social Class: Beyond Critiques of the New Right Hegemony. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 17(2), 163–176.
- Mavrogiorgos, G. (2017). Ο ΟΟΣΑ/PISA και η παγκόσμια διακυβέρνηση στην εκπαίδευση [OECD/PISA and Universal Governing in Education]. *Σελιδοδείκτης*, 2, 57–69.
- Saldana, J. (2012). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Shor, I., & Freire, P. (1987). *A Pedagogy for Liberation. Dialogues on Transforming Education*. Westport: Bergin & Garvey.
- Siani-Davies, P. (2017). *Crisis in Greece*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Tyack, B., & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Van Maanen, J., & Barley, S. (1984). Occupational Communities: Culture and Control in Organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 6, 287–365.
- Weber, E. (2007). Globalisation, "Global" Development and Teachers' Work: A Research Agenda. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(3), 279–309.



# The Ambiguity of 'Us' Between Reality and Educational Policy in Japan

Akiko Ito

## Abstract

Japanese society has been diversifying in terms of linguistically and culturally diverse students gradually and steadily since the 1990s. Along with this, interest in intercultural education is increasing in Japan and many studies into children with foreign roots and education in Japan have been conducted. As one of the outcomes, the existing dichotomy of 'majority Japanese' and 'ethnic minority groups' was found to be inadequate for understanding the reality of Japanese society even though this dichotomy is still an underlying presumption of Japanese educational policy. This paper aims to critically explore the image of national identity ('We Japanese') with reference to how children with foreign roots are addressed in the National Course of Study (Gakushūshidōryō) from an intercultural and comparative educational perspective. It also attempts to analyse the ambivalence between the National Course of Study and discussions about children with foreign roots by some academic advisory boards for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

## Keywords

Diversification in Japan · The National Course of Study · Children with foreign roots · Dichotomy · National identity · Japaneseness · Citizen

A. Ito (✉)

Fukuoka University, Jonan-ku/Fukuoka, Japan

e-mail: [akikoi@cis.fukuoka-u.ac.jp](mailto:akikoi@cis.fukuoka-u.ac.jp)

## 1 Introduction

Superficially observed, it appears that Japanese society is not as diverse as European, US or other societies in terms of the linguistic and cultural composition of its members. But Japanese society has diversified gradually and steadily since the 1990s. In cities where a respectable number of foreign residents are located, it is not unusual for children with different national or cultural backgrounds to attend Japanese public schools. They learn and play together with Japanese children, and also experience joint but conflicting lifestyles, world-views and sociocultural elements. Academically, this diversification of Japanese society has already been recognised for some time. The Intercultural Education Society of Japan was established in 1981 and has been addressing education for Japanese returnee children (Kikokushijyo), Chinese returnee children, and children with foreign roots ever since. Some of its members introduced the concept of multicultural education (Ebuchi 1993; Ehara 2000) and multilingual education (Nakajima 2001, 2010) from Anglo-Saxon countries, intercultural education (Amano 1997; Ito 2017; Sonoyama 2016), and multilingualism from European countries into the Japanese discourse (Yamakawa 2018). Additionally, there have been critiques of assimilation-oriented national education (Ota 2000; Hirasawa 2009; Shimizu and Shimizu 2001). The author of this article shares the analysis of Okano and Tsuneyoshi (2011) who pointed out the diversification of Japanese society and suggested that a dichotomy of ‘majority Japanese’ and ‘ethnic minority groups’ still present in Japanese education policy is inadequate for understanding the reality of Japanese society. One reason for this is rooted in the neglect by the Japanese government to adopt an immigration and integration policy; therefore, even the word ‘immigration’ (in Japanese: ‘imin’) is not used in official documents. In this situation, the national education system does not address children with diverse backgrounds as ‘citizens’ of Japanese society; it only takes into account Japanese nationals, namely those who are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically understood as possessing ‘Japaneseness’. Sato (2010) criticised this method of education in the national education framework by referring to a discussion of ‘Japaneseness’ by Matsuo (2007),<sup>1</sup> and suggested that national education had to be reframed. Although Sato (2010) and Matsuo (2005, 2007, 2013) discussed ‘Japaneseness’ critically and pointed out the need to

---

<sup>1</sup>Matsuo is the first person who discussed ‘Japaneseness’ by referring to the discussion of ‘Whiteness’ in the USA.

reframe national education, previous work has not analysed the National Course of Study (Gakushūshidōryō),<sup>2</sup> wherein national education and educational policy are reflected. The National Course of Study (NCoS) acknowledges the notion of nurturing Japanese: that is, it reflects the image of a linear national identity of Japanese and ignores the diversity and needs of students including students with foreign roots. If children with foreign roots attend Japanese schools, they are taught the NCoS, just as Japanese children are.<sup>3</sup>

This paper aims to show how the image of a national identity as Japanese is described in the NCoS and to open up perspectives on how to turn Japanese national education into an education for all children, including those with foreign roots. It also points out the ambivalence between the NCoS and discussions about children with foreign roots by some academic advisory boards for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Critical reflection on Japanese education policy will be developed from an intercultural and comparative educational perspective which is based on the acceptance of the diversity of students in a multicultural Japanese society. In this paper, the term 'children with foreign roots' refers to children with foreign nationalities and children raised in international families. The children from international families possess both Japanese and another nationality, culture, language and so on. Some Chinese returnee children may possess Japanese nationality, but live in an ostensibly Chinese cultural environment of the family and neighbourhood. Thus, regardless of their nationality, children might come from different national and cultural family backgrounds. For this reason, they will be referred to in this paper as 'children with foreign roots'. If their mention in official documents is referred to, the official phrase 'foreign children' or 'foreign students' will be used.

---

<sup>2</sup>The National Course of Study (NCoS), which is called Gakushūshidōryō in Japanese, functions as a national curriculum. It is legally binding and defines the learning contents in each subject and grade. NCoS for primary and lower secondary education is revised every ten years at the same time and, along with these revisions, the Teaching Guide of the NCoS (Gakushūshidōryō kaisetsu) is also published. In this paper, I refer only to the NCoS of primary and lower secondary education.

<sup>3</sup>Foreign parents have no obligation to make their children attend Japanese compulsory schools. If they wish, their children are allowed to attend public schools. However, the boards of education in prefectures and cities give a notice of entrance to parents of primary school aged foreign children when the children are six years old.

## 2 Diversification of Japanese Society Through Migration

The diversification of Japanese society has already begun. The main ethnic groups in Japan can be listed as follows (Okano and Tsuneyoshi 2011): historically the longest established communities are the Korean and Chinese returnee communities. The Korean community mainly consists of individuals whose ancestors were forcibly brought to Japan to work before and during the Second World War and who have continued to live in Japan. Chinese returnees whose ancestors were Japanese in occupied Manchuria at first could not come back to Japan, but were able to return to Japan after agreements between the Chinese and Japanese governments in 1972. Since the implementation of the revised immigration law in 1990, descendants of Japanese migrants to South America have been allowed to work in Japan. Since the introduction of the ‘technical intern training programmes’ (Ginoujishshu),<sup>4</sup> people have been coming to work from South-East Asia. Besides, the number from East and South-East Asia is increasing due to policies that aim at attracting international students, the rise in mixed marriages, etc.

### 2.1 The Number of Foreign Residents in Japan

The diversification of Japanese society is indicated by government statistics based on nationality and on the legal status of residents. Approximately 2.93 million foreign residents live in Japan and their percentage of the total population is quite low (2.33% as of the end of 2019). Table 1 shows the number of foreign residents in Japan. It becomes clear that the diversification of Japanese society is mainly based on migration from East and South-East Asian countries. The largest foreign resident population is from China. Recently, the number of Vietnamese and Nepalese people has been rising due to the international student policy at Japanese

---

<sup>4</sup>This programme aims to give people from developing countries and areas chances to gain knowledge, skills and techniques in Japan for global cooperation. However, in fact, trainees of this programme also somehow compensate for Japan’s decreasing labour force. In this respect, moreover, it is criticised that some employers (trainers) violate their human rights. The United Nations Human Rights Committee criticised this programme in 2014, alleging that it led to sexual exploitation, forced labour, and fatal accidents. The US Department of State also criticised it in 2017, comparing it to human trafficking.



**Table 1** The number of registered foreign residents in Japan at the end of 2019

China	Korea	Vietnam	Philippines	Brazil	Nepal	Indonesia	Taiwan	USA	Others	Total
813,675	446,364	411,968	282,798	211,677	96,824	66,860	64,773	59,172	479,026	2,933,137
27.7%	15.2%	14.0%	9.6%	7.2%	3.3%	2.3%	2.2%	2.0%	16.4%	100%

Source Hōmushō (2020). Reiwagannenmatsu genzai niokeru Zairyūgaikokujinsū. Table created by the author

language schools and universities and also due to their representation in 'technical intern training programmes'.

Looking at the statistics we are only informed about the variety of national origins of migrants in Japan. It does not show the number of naturalised citizens and residents with dual citizenships,<sup>5</sup> one of these being Japanese. Those residents are only considered and counted statistically as 'Japanese'. Therefore, these figures alone are inadequate for identifying the different natio-ethno-cultural backgrounds of residents.

## 2.2 The Number of Children in Need of Japanese Language Support

To understand the situation of children with foreign roots, a look at the current statistics may be helpful. Tables 2 and 3 show the number of registered foreign students in Japanese public schools, namely primary schools, lower and upper secondary schools, and schools for the disabled, as well as the number of children needing Japanese language support.

It is clear that the number of foreign children in public schools is quite stable; however, that changed in 2016, when the number of registered foreign students in public schools rose to above 80,000 for the first time, reaching 90,000 in 2018.

MEXT has developed a statistical breakdown of students in need of Japanese language support, disregarding nationalities but with reference to two indices:

---

<sup>5</sup>In Japan, lifelong dual citizenship is not allowed. Children born from parents with different citizenships keep dual citizenship only until the age of 22, after which they must then choose one citizenship.

**Table 2** Foreign students at school and students in need of Japanese language support (in total)

	2006	2007	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Foreign students	70,936	72,751	75,043	74,214	71,545	73,289	80,119	93,133
In need of Japanese language support	22,413	25,411	28,575	28,511	27,013	29,198	34,335	40,485

Source Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT 2019). Nihongoshidōga hitsuyōna jidōseitono ukeirejōkyōtōni kansuru chōsa (Heisei 30 nendo) no kekkani tsuite. Table created by the author

**Table 3** Japanese-national students at school in need of Japanese language support (in total)

	2006	2007	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Japanese students in need of Japanese language support	3,868	4,383	4,895	5,496	6,171	7,897	9,612	10,274

Source MEXT (2019). Table created by the author

children with no or very little Japanese BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills), and children with inadequate CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) for grade-equivalent learning. Table 2 shows that around 43% of foreign students needed Japanese language support in 2018. Interestingly the number of *Japanese* students in need of Japanese language support is growing (Table 3), a fact that probably underlines the increase in children from mixed marriages (Japanese and other nationalities, in which Japanese is never or only rarely spoken). The number of both foreign and Japanese students in need of Japanese language support has been rapidly increasing since 2014.

Table 4 shows the variety of native languages spoken by students in need of Japanese language support. The three principal native languages of foreign national students are Portuguese, Chinese, and Filipino. But it is also interesting to see from this table that there are different native languages among Japanese national students and that a significant number of students with Japanese nationality are in need of Japanese language support. It could be presumed that these students are from binational families and growing up bi/multilingually. Filipino is the principal native language, so it can be deduced from Table 4 that mixed

**Table 4** The number of students in need of Japanese language support by native language in 2018 (in total)

	Students in need of Japanese language support	
	Foreign national	Japanese national
Portuguese	10,404	581
Chinese	9,600	2,127
Filipino	7,893	3,367
Spanish	3,786	471
Vietnamese	1,836	193
English	1,087	1,159
Korean	583	230
Japanese	-	1,181
Others	5,296	965
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,485</b>	<b>10,274</b>

Source MEXT (2019). Table created by the author

marriages between Japanese and Filipinos are predominant. Besides, it is significant that many students who need Japanese language support have 'Japanese' listed as their native language. It is possible that, while the number of children born and growing up in Japan without Japanese as their first family language is increasing, the acquisition of Japanese is not appropriately taught in schools because these are not yet equipped with the methods and personnel to fulfil the task of teaching Japanese as a second or foreign language.

Even if it seems – compared with the European situation – as if Japanese schools are quite homogeneous in terms of the linguistic landscape and cultural background of their students, differentiations have to be made throughout different regions of Japan, as children with foreign roots are generally concentrated in bigger cities and live there only in specific areas. Meanwhile, the number of small cities where only a few children with foreign roots attend schools is increasing.

Whether the number of students with foreign roots is large or small, teachers and schools have to accommodate the cultural and linguistic differences of children and promote mutual understanding. School education has to develop methods for shaping actively intercultural situations based on the growing diversification of the natio-ethno-cultural backgrounds of students, whereby children learn from each other respectfully. So the question would be how to include students with foreign roots into the ‘us’ – that is, how to create ‘a new Japanese us’. In this situation, intercultural education (Sato 2003; Shibuya 2011; Ebuchi 1993)<sup>6</sup> becomes a significant tool. In the early 1990s this teaching approach was adapted by Japanese pedagogues. Based on the work of Ebuchi (1993), Sato (2003) defines that intercultural education targets people living in more than two cultures, and is geared towards comprehending people’s character formation and development through their relationships with others. This approach deals with the conditions under which identity building can be supported in a process guided by principles of intercultural education (Sato 2003, p. 14). Intercultural education can create learning environments and curricula for special needs of children with foreign roots, and provide a supportive framework for intercultural understanding between Japanese and children with foreign roots, although it has yet to be included or even properly recognised in the country’s national educational policy. In reality, it depends on individual teachers’ efforts to try to promote intercultural understanding and create an atmosphere of ‘living together’ in their classrooms. Hence, these attempts and efforts at the practical level are far from being able to influence the national educational-political stage where teaching solely by means of Japanese language instruction is emphasised. This means that the goal of national education is seen without question as teaching (in) the Japanese language and making and developing a national Japanese identity; in other words, the national education system still promotes the homogeneity of the Japanese cultural and linguistic landscape, neglecting the existing and steadily rising cultural and linguistic heterogeneity of Japanese society. Against this background, intercultural education in Japanese schools needs to be promoted by academic experts and practitioners.

---

<sup>6</sup>Shibuya (2011) describes the differences between intercultural education in similar terms of education for international understanding (Kokusai Rikai Kyōiku) and multicultural education (Tabunka Kyōiku) in Japan. Education for international understanding is influenced by the work of UNESCO and frequently used for classroom practice and research into this (Shibuya 2011). The term multicultural education is used by researchers whose research fields are Anglo-Saxon countries and those who address the unequal educational situation of minorities in Japan (Hirasawa 2009; Shibuya 2011).

### 2.3 'Japaneseness' as Described in the National Course of Study, and Children with Foreign Roots

Despite the diversity in Japanese schools, which has already been recognised by MEXT in its statistics, the NCoS still focuses on strengthening Japanese national identity and does not address this diversity. On the other hand, as globalisation progresses, the Japanese government has become aware that preparing Japanese people for life in a globalised world must be given serious consideration in the NCoS. Hence, since the late 1980s, it has been stressed that the Japanese should be prepared to contribute to life in the internationalised world of the near future. Alongside this, globalisation has been linked with traditional culture and national identity through education (Nakamura 2008; Sato 2010) as both have been regarded as important for supporting resilience and thus as enabling Japanese people especially to cope with so-called problematic issues of globalisation. In this respect, the 1998 revised NCoS asserted for example that the goal of moral education (*dōtoku kyōiku*) was to nurture Japanese citizens who could contribute to a peaceful internationalised world and be proactive for the future (MEXT 1998a, b). This goal changed in the 2008 revised NCoS. Instead of being part of a globalised world, the 2008 and 2017 revised NCoSs stressed emphatically that the goal of moral education was to nurture Japanese who respected Japanese traditions and culture, loved their country and homeland, and who could create their own unique Japanese culture (MEXT 2008a, b, 2017a, b). Thus, it can be deduced from the NCoS that the awareness of being Japanese has been emphasised strongly since 2008. This tenor could be understood as a backlash to nationalist sentiment, because the Japanese national identity is stressed as being opposed to the progression and challenges of globalisation.

While this strengthened the awareness of being Japanese, which is related to possessing unique Japanese culture and traditions, some considerations for students with foreign roots are presented as well. Over the years, Japanese returnee children's differences with the national education system in Japan, resulting partly from education received in a system abroad that stressed other cultural elements, have been the target of accommodation on their return back to Japanese schools. The NCoS states that they are one of the target groups that need special consideration in education. Specifically, MEXT (1989a, b, 1998a, b, 2008a, b) states that "for returnee children from abroad, *etc.* in parallel with promoting their adaptation into Japanese schools, schools should give them instruction appropriately, for example, in a way in which their life experiences abroad are made use of" (emphasis by author). The description 'returnee children from abroad, *etc.*'

includes children with foreign roots. Both groups are regarded as facing similar problems, because they have attended local or international schools in foreign countries, learned subjects in a local language or in English and have acquired different cultural customs. Thus, the description of a treatment for ‘returnee children from abroad, *etc.*’ could also apply to foreign students, as MEXT clarified in the Teaching Guide of the NCoS.

A more explicit reference to children with foreign roots was introduced in the NCoS of 2017. That year, the NCoS was revised extensively and MEXT referred not only to ‘Japanese returnee children’, but also directly to ‘students with difficulties of Japanese language acquisition’ (MEXT 2017a, b). This was the first time that a group of students identified as those ‘with difficulties in Japanese language’ was referred to openly as a target group of public schools. Moreover, the Teaching Guide of the NCoS stressed that Japanese national students with foreign roots were a target group for measures of inclusion. In addition to the directives for the accommodation of foreign children, it was mentioned in the Teaching Guides of the NCoSs of 2008 and 2017 that the existence of foreign students was an opportunity for Japanese students to learn about different cultures and become oriented towards living together in culturally diverse environments.

As mentioned above, it can be concluded that these children have finally been implicitly considered as a target group in the Japanese national education system. However, expressions that explicitly address ‘foreign children’ or ‘children with foreign roots’ had not been used until then. It can be deduced from this that there is ambiguity between the prevailing stress on nurturing a ‘National Us’ (meaning somehow those who belong to an essential Japanese entity) in the NCoS and the acknowledgement of a ‘Diverse Us’ being encountered by residents of Japan in their everyday reality.

---

### **3 Education Policies for Children with Foreign Roots**

By recognising the increase in children with foreign roots since the 1990s, MEXT has tried to implement specific measures for them. MEXT requested experts to develop a ‘Japanese as a second language’ (JSL) curriculum to enable children with difficulties in Japanese language acquisition to learn Japanese and the contents of subjects in schools. The development of JSL triggered the enhancement of educational support for children with foreign roots. After its development, MEXT published an acceptance guide for foreign students with the help of

academic researchers in 2011 (revised in 2019). After internal discussions about teaching supports for foreign students in the framework of an official committee in 2012, special curricula for Japanese language teaching were stipulated under the educational law, and were implemented in 2014. As a result of the new regulation of 2014, children now learn Japanese according to a special curriculum under teachers' responsibilities.<sup>7</sup>

These measures, as previously mentioned, focus strongly on promoting the Japanese language. Alongside these, in 2015/2016, MEXT organised an expert advisory council to improve educational support for foreign children. This council mainly discussed four points: (1) construction and enhancement of an instruction system for foreign students, (2) training teachers and support staff and maintaining their numbers, (3) improvement and enhancement of teaching contents for foreign children, and (4) promoting schooling, entering further education and obtaining employment (MEXT 2016). The final report stressed these four points clearly and emphasised that education for foreign children should be put at the centre of significant challenges, in parallel with calling for a concept of education based on intercultural understanding and living together (MEXT 2016). This statement is recognised as a significant sign of change from education focused on Japanese language teaching into education for intercultural understanding (Tajiri 2017) and as a shift towards an integration policy (Sato 2019). Sato (2019, p. 82) pointed out that one of the prominent points of the final report by MEXT (2016) was education for foreign children as 'citizens'. In fact, the discussion influenced the Teaching Guide of the NCoS of 2017; however, as stated above, it only focuses on 'students with difficulties in Japanese language acquisition', namely on Japanese language teaching rather than on issues that were recognised by Tajiri and Sato.

Since 2017, in relation to the second point mentioned above, a further focus has lain on teacher education and training of teachers for children with foreign roots. MEXT has requested the Society for Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language to develop a model programme for teacher education/training.

In 2019, the Central Council for Education started to discuss education for foreign students as one of the major educational challenges. A new expert advisory council was organised by MEXT which discussed almost the same points

---

<sup>7</sup>While the instruction of Japanese language was stipulated, the Japanese government has not prepared for all of children in need of Japanese language instruction throughout Japan. Its implementation differs from prefecture to prefecture depending on factors such as staff numbers, training and funding.

as in 2015/2016. However, in contrast to the previous debate, the experts also mentioned the need to discuss education regarding Japanese life and culture for foreign children, mother tongue instruction, and a concept of education based on intercultural understanding and living together.

To summarise, it can be stressed that the measures for children with foreign roots have been enhanced step by step since 2000. It can be indicated that MEXT now is considering its role in education not only for 'Japanese' but in the same way also for children with foreign roots. However, MEXT's measures to enhance education for children with foreign roots seem to be confined to Japanese language ability only. From the perspective of intercultural education, attention should be paid to the discussion in 2019/2020 especially regarding the concept based on intercultural understanding and living together.

---

#### **4 Issues from the Perspective of Intercultural Education**

Despite improvements in education policies for children with foreign roots, there still remain some critical issues with regard to intercultural education. These issues can be identified on the institutional level. First, substantial limitations can be observed when it comes to reflecting on the diversity of students in the NCoS. As Sato (2010) pointed out, these measures were established in the national education framework; however, it seems an essential prerequisite to a global understanding of education as well as for acknowledging pluralism in many senses, including culturally, to transform national education into citizenship education (Sato 2010). In this respect, Sato (2019) identified in the final report by MEXT (2016) indications of a shift, in both integration policy and in education, from foreign children as 'aliens' to foreign children as 'citizens'. This means that national education should be directed towards stressing education in terms of an understanding of being a 'citizen' rather than being 'Japanese'. However, this has not yet been discussed adequately in the development of the curriculum. Furthermore, intercultural education and the didactics of JSL have not yet been introduced into teacher education systematically. Thus, many teachers who have not addressed children with foreign roots or with difficulties in Japanese language acquisition are now insecure and anxious about how to work with these groups appropriately in their classrooms.

Additionally, it can be stated that education policies and the current treatment of children with foreign roots lack an integrated human rights perspective.



As mentioned above, Japanese language acquisition is emphasised in MEXT's discussions and measures but disregards differences between Japanese language acquisition on the level of BICS or CALP. This limited focus on the level of Japanese language acquisition might result in teachers lacking competences to identify foreign children's individual need for support to achieve different language levels. Thus a pupil's fluency in everyday Japanese language use may lead the teacher to expect that student's academic language proficiency to be at a similar level. However, teachers should consider comprehension of the contents of subjects and the influences of cultural differences on the individual student's identity formation. This is linked to the restriction of targeted students such as 'students with difficulties of Japanese language acquisition' in the NCoS. As was mentioned previously in this paper, foreign students and Japanese national students with foreign roots who can understand Japanese well are, from the perspective of a 'compensatory' or 'assimilatory' approach, not considered adequately in the curriculum.

These issues lead to a basic question: What is the perspective from which we should reconsider national education? Should change be understood as a general approach or should only additional measures be implemented for compensatory education? From the perspective of intercultural education, it can be stated that the current educational measures and practices in Japan mainly focus on a deficit perspective on children with foreign roots. In Japanese academic discussion, Japanese language teaching has been criticised as merely compensatory (Ota 2000). Along with progressing the discussion in intercultural education, strengthening the first/family language and different cultural backgrounds of children with foreign roots are understood as important factors for the development of language skills in general and for individual identity formation, although this has not yet become part of basic knowledge among all teachers and policymakers. The deficit perspective that has been critiqued in European countries since the 1980s (Allemann-Ghionda 2001; Diehm and Radtke 1999; Mecheril 2004), still prevailed in Japan in the 2010s (Ito and Sato 2020). From international comparative studies on intercultural education and teacher education (e.g. Public Policy and Management Institute 2017; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2010), we argue that from a global viewpoint a paradigm shift has occurred, from a deficit perspective in which children with foreign roots/migrants were placed, into a perspective that acknowledges heterogeneity and diversity as the 'normal' state of affairs. This paradigm shift should also occur in Japan for a currently needed transformation from a 'Japanese Us' into the notion of a 'Diverse Us'.

## 5 Conclusion

While MEXT is aware of the diversity of students resulting from a growing number of children with foreign roots in the Japanese education system, the framework of national education persists in highlighting ‘Japanese identity and language’ in national education, and the NCoS maintains the dichotomy between Japanese and foreign students. However, MEXT has not clarified what ‘Japanese’ and ‘Japanese national identity’ would have to be in practice. The acknowledgment of a rising number of students with foreign roots opens up an opportunity to reconsider the notion of ‘national identity’ in the national education system. In light of the need for knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the requirements of citizens in a globalised world, the Japanese government has for a long time tried to nurture Japanese people who would function as advocates for the potential of Japanese people and culture in an international setting. Along with this, it still stresses an essentialised understanding of being ‘Japanese’ in a continuously diversifying Japanese society and a related process of growing internationalisation and globalisation. Thus, education policy in Japan seems to be marked by ambiguity and contradiction. From the perspective of intercultural education it would be appropriate for MEXT to actively counter this contradiction by changing or at least widening the notion of ‘Us’ being understood as a culturally and linguistically homogeneous ‘Japan’ into an education that helps people living in Japan and taking part in that country’s education system to be ‘citizens in Japanese society’.

---

## References

- Allemann-Ghionda, C. (2001). Sociocultural and Linguistic Diversity, Educational Theory, and the Consequences for Teacher Education. A Comparative Perspective. In C.-A. Grant & J.-L. Lei (Eds.), *Global Constructions of Multicultural Education. Theories and Realities* (pp. 1–25). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Amano, M. (Ed.). (1997). *Doitsu no Ibunkakan Kyōiku* [Intercultural Education in Germany]. Tokyo: Tamagawa Daigaku Shuppanbu.
- Diehm, I., & Radtke, F.-O. (1999). *Erziehung und Migration. Eine Einführung* [Education and migration. An introduction]. Stuttgart, Berlin, & Cologne: Kohlhammer.
- Ebuchi, K. (1993). Ibunkakan Kyōiku to Tabunka Kyōiku: Kenyū no Igī to Kadai [Multicultural Education from the Perspective of Intercultural Education Research: Scopes and Issues]. *Ibunkakan Kyōiku (Intercultural Education)*, 7, 4–20.
- Ehara, T. (Eds.). (2000). *Tabunka Kyōiku no Kokusai Hikaku: Esunishiti heno Kyōiku no Taiō* [International Comparison of Multicultural Education: Educational Responses to Ethnicity]. Tokyo: Tamagawa Daigaku Shuppanbu.

- Hirasawa, Y. (2009). Multicultural Education in Japan. In J. A. Banks (Ed.), *The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education* (pp. 159–169). New York: Routledge.
- Hōmushō (Ministry of Justice) (2020). Reiwagannenndomatsu genzainiokeru Zairyūgaikokujin sū. Hōmushō Press Release [The Number of registered Foreign Residents at the End of 2019]. Retrieved July 8, 2020, from [http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanri/kouhou/nyuukokukanri04\\_00003.html](http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanri/kouhou/nyuukokukanri04_00003.html).
- Ito, A. (2017). *Imin to Doitsu wo Tsunagu Kyōiku Shien. Ibunkakan Kyōiku no Shiten kara* [Educational Supports for Connecting to Immigration and German Society. From the Perspective of Intercultural Education]. Fukuoka: Kyushu Daigaku Shuppankai.
- Ito, A., & Sato, H. (2020). Tayōsei wo shikō suru Kyōshikyōiku nikansuru Kisetekikenkyū: Amerika to Doitsu no Kenkyūdōkō kara [A Fundamental Study on Teacher Education for Diversity: Review of Research in the US and Germany]. *Kokusai Kyōiku Hyōron (CRIE Review of International Education)*, 16, 33–47.
- Matsuo, T. (2005). Whiteness Kenkū to “Nihonjinsei”: Ibunkakan Kyōiku Kenkyū heno Atarashii Shiza [Whiteness Studies and “Japaneseness”: Implications for Intercultural/Transcultural Education Research in Japan]. *Ibunkakan Kyōiku (Intercultural Education)*, 22, 4–20.
- Matsuo, T. (2007). *Amerika Tabunka Kyōiku no Saikōchiku: Bunka Tagen Shugi kara Tabunka Shugi he* [Reconstruction of Multicultural Education in the USA: From Cultural Pluralism to Multiculturalism]. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten.
- Matsuo, T. (Ed.). (2013). *Tabunka Kyōiku wo Desain Suru. Iminjidai no Moderu Kōchiku* [Designing of Multicultural Education: Making a Model in the Migration Era]. Tokyo: Keisō Shobō.
- Mecheril, P. (2004). *Einführung in die Migrationspädagogik* [Introduction to migration pedagogy]. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT]. (1989a). *Gakushūshidōryō. Shōgakkō Hen* [The National Course of Study for Primary Schools]. Retrieved September 26, 2019, from <http://www.nier.go.jp/guideline/h01e/index.htm>.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT]. (1989b). *Gakushūshidōryō. Chūgakkō Hen* [The National Course of Study for Lower Secondary Schools]. Retrieved September 26, 2019, from <http://www.nier.go.jp/guideline/h01j/index.htm>.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT]. (1998a). *Gakushūshidōryō. Shōgakkō Hen* [The National Course of Study for Primary Schools]. Retrieved September 26, 2019, from [http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/cs/1320008.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/cs/1320008.htm).
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT]. (1998b). *Gakushūshidōryō. Chūgakkō Hen* [The National Course of Study for Lower Secondary Schools]. Retrieved September 26, 2019, from [http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/cs/1320101.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/cs/1320101.htm).
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT]. (2008a). *Gakushūshidōryō. Shōgakkō Hen* [The National Course of Study for Primary Schools]. Retrieved September 26, 2019, from [http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/new-cs/youryou/syo/index.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/youryou/syo/index.htm).

- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT]. (2008b). *Gakushūshidōyoryō. Chūgakkō Hen* [The National Course of Study for Lower Secondary Schools]. Retrieved September 26, 2019, from [http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/new-cs/youryou/chu/index.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/youryou/chu/index.htm).
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT]. (2016). *Gakko niokeru Gaikokujinjidōseitoto nitaisuru Kyōikushien no Jujitsuhosaku nitsuite (Hokoku)* [Measures for Enhancement of educational support for foreign students in Schools]. Retrieved February 27, 2020, from [https://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/151/shiryō/\\_icsFiles/afldfile/2019/07/29/1418919\\_10.pdf](https://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/151/shiryō/_icsFiles/afldfile/2019/07/29/1418919_10.pdf).
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT]. (2017a). *Gakushūshidōyoryō. Shōgakkō Hen* [The National Course of Study for Primary Schools]. Retrieved September 26, 2019, from [http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a\\_menu/education/micro\\_detail/\\_icsFiles/afldfile/2019/09/26/1413522\\_001.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/micro_detail/_icsFiles/afldfile/2019/09/26/1413522_001.pdf).
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT]. (2017b). *Gakushūshidōyoryō. Chūgakkō Hen* [The National Course of Study for Lower Secondary Schools]. Retrieved September 26, 2019, from [http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a\\_menu/education/micro\\_detail/\\_icsFiles/afldfile/2019/09/26/1413522\\_002.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/micro_detail/_icsFiles/afldfile/2019/09/26/1413522_002.pdf).
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT]. (2019). *Nihongoshidōga hitsuyōna jidōseitono ukeirejōkyōtōni kansuru chōsa (Heisei 30 nendo) no kekkani tsuite* [The Result of Inquiry about Acceptance of Students in Need of Japanese Language Instruction in 2018]. Retrieved September 27, 2019, from [https://www.mext.go.jp/content/1421569\\_002.pdf](https://www.mext.go.jp/content/1421569_002.pdf).
- Nakajima, K. (2001). *Bilingual Kyōiku no Hōhō. 12 Sai madeni Oya to Kyōshi ga Dekirukoto (Zōhokaiteiban)* [The Method of Bilingual Education. What Parents and Teachers can do until the Children are 12 years old] (Rev. ed.). Tokyo: ALC.
- Nakajima, K. (Ed.). (2010). *Multilingual Kyōiku heno Shōtai. Gengo Shigen toshiteno Gaikokujin, Nihonjin Nenshosya* [Introduction of Multilingual Education: Foreign People and Japanese Youth as a Linguistic Asset]. Tokyo: Hitsuji Shobō.
- Nakamura, K. (2008). *Kokka wo Koeru Kōkyōiku. Sekaishimin Kyōiku no Kanōsei* [Public Education beyond the Nation: Possibilities of World Citizenship Education]. Tokyo: Tōyōkan Shuppansha.
- Okano, H. K., & Tsuneyoshi, R. (2011). Introduction. An interactive perspective for understanding minorities and education in Japan. In R. Tsuneyoshi, K. H. Okano, & S. Boocock (Eds.), *Minorities and Education in Multicultural Japan. An Interactive Perspective* (pp. 1–26). London & New York: Routledge.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2010). *Educating Teachers for Diversity. Meeting the Challenges* (Report). Paris: OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264079731-en>.
- Ota, H. (2000). *Newcomer no Kodomo to Nihon no Gakkō* [Newcomer Children and Japanese Schools]. Tokyo: Kokusai Shoin.
- Public Policy and Management Institute (2017). *Preparing Teachers for Diversity: the Role of Initial Teacher Education* (Final Report). Luxembourg City: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved May 14, 2020, from <http://www.readyproject.eu/uploads/files/1502579119PreparingTeachersforDiversity.pdf>.

- Sato, G. (2003). *Kokusaika to Kyōiku. Ibunkakan Kyōikugaku no Shiten kara* [Internationalisation and Education: from the Viewpoint of Intercultural Education]. Tokyo: Hōsōdaigakukyōiku Shinkōkai.
- Sato, G. (2010). *Ibunkakan Kyōiku. Bunka kan Ido to Kodomo no Kyōiku* [Intercultural Education: Transculturalism and Education]. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten.
- Sato, G. (2019). *Tabunkasyakai ni Ikiru Kodomo no Kyōiku: Gaikokujin no Kodomo, Kaigai de Manabu Kodomo notameno Genjō to Kadai* [Education for Children in the Multicultural Society: Current Situation and Challenges about Foreign Children and Japanese Children in Foreign Countries]. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten.
- Shibuya, M. (2011). Intercultural Education in Japan: Foreign Children and Their Education. In C. A. Grand & A. Portera (Eds.), *Intercultural and Multicultural Education. Enhancing Global Interconnectedness* (pp. 110–123). London & New York: Routledge.
- Shimizu, M., & Shimizu, K. (Eds.). (2001). *Newcomer to Kyōiku* [Newcomer and Education]. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten.
- Sonoyama, D. (Ed.). (2016). *Kiro ni Tatsu Imin Kyōiku. Shakaiteki Hōsetsu heno Chōsen* [New Challenges for Migrant Education in Europe and Japan]. Kyoto: Nakanishiya Shuppan.
- Tajiri, E. (2017). Gaikokujin Rōdōsha no Ukeire to 2016 nenndo no Nihongo Kyōikushisaku [Accepting Alien Worker and Japan's Policy of the 2016 Academic Year about Japanese Language Education]. *Ryūkoku Daigaku Global Kyōiku Suishin Center Kenkyūnennpou (Ryūkoku University Center for the Promotion of Global Education research Bulletin)*, 26, 3–19.
- Yamakawa, T. (2018). Nihon no Gengo Kyōiku niokeru “Fukugengo/Fukubunka Shugi” no Ichizuke. Yōroppa no Jijō wo Fumae, Nihondeno Kanōsei wo Kangaeru tameni [“Plurilingualism/pluriculturalism” in the Language and Cultural Education in Japan: From European Roots to Japan's Possibilities]. *Bungakubu Kiyō (Departmental Bulletin of Faculty of Language and Literature)*, 31(2), 1–25.



---

# Deconstructing the Dropout Factory: Redesigning Secondary Schools to Better Serve Immigrant Youth – Examples from the US Context

Marguerite Lukes

---

## Abstract

Significant growth in the US of the population of secondary school students who are new immigrants or children of immigrants and have transnational, multilingual and mixed-status families has not prompted shifts in secondary-teacher training, pedagogy or school design. As a result, the traditional factory model of US secondary schools has become a site of the reproduction of exclusion and of educational failure, a true “dropout factory” for immigrant youth. This chapter explores current data on high school achievement among immigrants; presents central dilemmas of traditional high schools for educating immigrant adolescents effectively; and offers a brief analysis of innovations and promising alternatives. Close examination of effective research-based approaches in high schools is used as the basis to interrogate the pervasive positioning of failure as a student characteristic rather than the consequence of a rigid and perpetually unsuccessful educational design and to offer approaches for linguistically heterogeneous and culturally diverse student populations.

---

## Keywords

Dropout · Secondary school · Immigrant · Transnational · Translanguaging · Multilingual

---

M. Lukes (✉)

Internationals Network for Public Schools, New York, USA

e-mail: [marguerite.lukes@internationalsnetwork.org](mailto:marguerite.lukes@internationalsnetwork.org)

## 1 Introduction

Compulsory schooling is a foundational principle of the government-funded public school system in the United States (Tyack 1976), which begins in kindergarten and extends through grade 12 in upper secondary school. For all children and youth residing in the US, schooling in the primary, lower and upper secondary grades is a requirement (until age 16) and a legal right (usually until age 21). These rights and responsibilities exist irrespective of students' immigration history or status, income, racial, linguistic, or religious backgrounds.

While education in the US is compulsory, completion of secondary school is neither a right nor a guarantee. This chapter examines the pervasive factory model of US secondary schools and their reputation as “dropout factories”<sup>1</sup> – schools in which fewer than half of all entering students attain an official completion certificate (*high school diploma*). This chapter reviews extant research on the integration of immigrants in US schools to explore central dilemmas that the traditional secondary school model presents for educating recently arrived immigrant adolescents effectively. This chapter presents a summary of innovations and promising alternatives to the factory model; explores how cultural deficit frameworks continue to justify achievement gaps that fall along racial and ethnic lines; and concludes by suggesting possibilities for a re-imagining of the secondary school to support the academic, linguistic, and social emotional needs of immigrant youth.

---

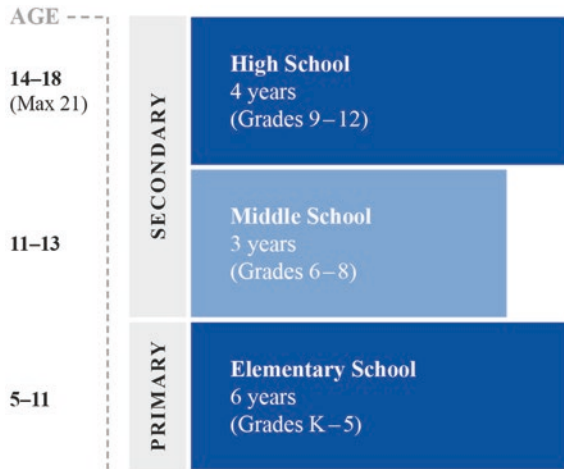
## 2 Factory Model and the Relevance of Dropout Statistics

Structural and legal similarities across US and European institutional contexts mask significant differences that are often misunderstood in transnational comparisons. In contrast to many European school systems, the US system is not multi-stream nor does it offer multiple completion pathways or certificates. The 13-year pathway through primary and secondary schooling in the United States<sup>2</sup> offers fundamentally one door into school and one door out. A plethora of public

---

<sup>1</sup>The term *dropout factory* was coined by US researcher Robert Balfanz, who published statistics on secondary schools in which fewer than half of all entrants completed a diploma prior to exiting (Balfanz 2000; Balfanz and Legters 2001).

<sup>2</sup>The contiguous primary and secondary school system in the US is referred to as the K-12 system, an abbreviation of kindergarten to 12th grade, a total of 13 years.



**Fig. 1** The US School System, Primary and Secondary Levels. *Source* Author’s own illustration

secondary schools offers a broad diversity of philosophical and pedagogical models (including progressive, magnet, charter, bilingual, career-focused, and theme-based, among many others); despite differences and a range in quality, all pathways lead to one outcome: the “high school diploma.”<sup>3</sup> This *high school diploma* is obtained through a combination of three elements: (a) completion of a required set of state-mandated courses; (b) accumulation of a minimum number of credits in predetermined subject areas (including mathematics, English, history, and science); and (c) successful performance on standardized state-mandated exams. The diploma is a prerequisite for entering post-secondary pathways that include training in specific fields (such as nursing, computer design) and university academic training in both undergraduate (Bachelor’s) and graduate (Master’s, Doctoral) academic programs. Figure 1 depicts the US school system from kindergarten through high school.

<sup>3</sup>“High school” is an often misunderstood term that is not synonymous with the German “Hochschule”, despite its common etymology. High schools are US secondary schools akin to German *Gymnasien*. Post-secondary education in the US is termed *college* or *university*. A high school completion certificate (*high school diploma*) is required to enter a US post-secondary (college or university) pathway.



Research on the economic implications of high school completion and post-secondary training demonstrates strong correlations between high school completion, earnings, social mobility, and well-being over individual's lifespan (Tyler 2004; Tyler et al. 1998). Differentials in mobility persist between individuals who complete high school and those with no high school credential, with measurable social and economic disparities among generations of US residents who are the victims of "school failure" in the United States (Dorn 1996; Gándara and Contreras 2009; Orfield et al. 2004; Ruiz-de-Velasco et al. 2000).

The alarm regarding "dropout factories" (Balfanz and Legters 2001) ushered in a new era of US school accountability meant to address the ostensible mass production of failure. At the start of the twenty-first century in US schools, strict achievement benchmarks set by state education agencies were meant to improve school progress and completion for many underserved student subgroups, including racial and linguistic minority students. Yet despite their laudable mission of educating an increasingly diverse populace, current secondary schools in the US remain little changed from the early-twentieth century institutions where students sat in rows listening to a teacher-expert (Dorn 1996; Tyack 1976; Tyack and Cuban 1997; Tyack and Tobin 1994). Teacher-centered classrooms, rigid departmental divisions, credit points (sometimes referred to as Carnegie units), grades and student rankings, sorting from an early age into deterministic student ability tracks, often segregated along socioeconomic and racial lines, are all characteristics of the US high school. The design of the secondary school has changed very little over a century, despite an increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse population of students and the importance of a high school completion certificate for social mobility (Tyack and Cuban 1997; Sugarman 2017; Tyack and Tobin 1994).

---

### **3 School Success and New Immigrant Youth in the US and Europe**

Currently, nearly half of all global migrants and refugees are of school age, an increase of 26% since 2000 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2018). The phenomenon of growing linguistic and cultural diversity in US schools parallels the growth in the number of immigrant children enrolled in schools across Europe, a product of unprecedented global migration patterns that are predicted to persist in the years to come (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA] 2019).

Though not at a historic high,<sup>4</sup> the growing foreign-born population of the US comprises 13.7% of the population, or 44.5 million people (US Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] 2019). In 2019, a significant proportion of school age children were foreign-born or second-generation children of immigrants (that means born to at least one immigrant parent) who speak a language other than English in the home; 9.4% of these school-age children were classified as English language learners (ELs) – students in need of specific linguistic support in school (NCES 2019a). Projections that the proportion of foreign-born US residents will increase to 19% by 2060, or nearly one in five residents (United States Census Bureau [U. S. Census Bureau] 2016), would lead to additional increases of English learners in schools.

Educational achievement statistics reflect alarming trends in both the US and Europe, especially for immigrant youth who arrive as adolescents and seek to continue their schooling. A global migration and school integration report released by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO (2018) reveals patterns in immigrant and minority school achievement and completion that are strikingly similar across continents:

- (a) In the European Union, 22.6% of foreign-born students abandon school with no completion certificate, while ELs (often foreign-born) in the US attain a high school completion certificate at half the rate of US-born peers;
- (b) In the European Union, 10% of natives and 19% of foreign-born aged 18 to 24 dropped out in 2017;
- (c) In the US, 60% of Mexican immigrants who arrived at age seven completed high school, compared with only 30% of those who arrived at age 14, compared to national US high school completion rates of 85%;
- (d) In Germany, 5% of Turkish immigrants had access to tertiary education (post-secondary) as compared to 37% of those in France;
- (e) Immigrant students in OECD countries are nearly twice as likely as native-born students to repeat a grade.

There has been a persistent achievement gap between foreign-born late arrivals and US-born youth for decades; US students who are emergent learners of English

---

<sup>4</sup>The number of foreign-born in the US has increased since 1970 but has not reached the 1890 historical high of nearly 15%, when Germans were among the largest foreign-born immigrant groups.

complete secondary school in the US at rates up to 50% points behind their US-born peers (NCES 2019b), who graduate at rates of 85%. High schools appear to be serving some students quite well, while others appear destined for failure.

In the US context, language proficiency in English and age of arrival are often key determinants for sorting that can result in the under-representation of immigrant students in rigorous academic<sup>5</sup> classes, their over-representation in special education and remedial classes, or their being pushed out of school pathways altogether (Advocates for Children and the Public Advocate of New York 2002; Jennings and Haimson 2009; Lukes 2015; Orfield et al. 2004). New immigrant youth's multilingualism is often framed as a deficit simply because their proficiency in English is emergent (García and Kleifgen 2018) and their academic failure is often considered the result of culture and language rather than the result of inadequate school support (Warikoo and Carter 2009).

---

#### 4 Inherent Dilemma of Secondary School Design

If decades of school reform have failed to produce significant changes in achievement for immigrant students, and the structure of schools has remained unchanged for the past century, it is perhaps timely to consider how not the students, but the very design of secondary schools might contribute to the reproduction of failure (Ruiz-de-Velasco et al. 2000). What follows is a synthesis of research on educational integration of new immigrant youth into five key dilemmas of the US high school model.

**a) *Isolation of language learning from content learning.*** Traditional US secondary schools address the linguistic needs of minoritized multilingual students by focusing on language development in English through specially designed remedial classes often called English as a Second Language (ESL) (García and Kleifgen 2018). While these courses are designed to help students develop academic language skills to succeed in English language courses, they are taught separately by teachers who focus on language development often to the exclusion of academic content or disciplinary language. The courses themselves are mandatory but do not count toward credits required for a high school diploma, thus extending

---

<sup>5</sup>Academic rigor is defined as schoolwork that is intellectually challenging and requires problem-solving and critical thinking, as well as deep analysis, and prepares students to meet the intellectual challenges of tertiary education.

the time required for immigrant youth to complete high school (Callahan et al. 2010). The ‘language first, content later’ approach presupposes that students are unable to engage in learning experiences in key academic disciplines like math, science, and history until they have achieved a benchmark level of English proficiency. The approach renders inadequate any knowledge students have acquired in their home language or country prior to immigrating and is grounded in persistent myths about how language is learned. The approach in the US embeds itself in school- and classroom-level policies that include banning non-English languages in the name of integration (Flores and Rosa 2015; Wiley and Lukes 2015).

Attempts to teach language before content ignore research on instruction for multilingual learners (August and Hakuta 1997; August and Shanahan 2006; García and Kleifgen 2018). Trends reveal that such approaches often place new immigrant students into lower ability groups simply on the basis of emergent English proficiency (Callahan 2005; Olsen 2000) and limit English learners’ opportunities to catch up to their peers by restricting access to the classes and content required for graduation from high school and for post-secondary access (Callahan 2013; Callahan et al. 2010). Achievement data demonstrate that the language-before-content approach has resulted in decades of lagging linguistic and academic achievement of ELs, many of whom struggle to achieve English language proficiency after six years in US schools and who drop out of high school at alarming rates (Clark-Gareca et al. 2019; García and Kleifgen 2018; Lukes 2015; Olsen 2014).

**b) *Insufficient teacher preparation.*** With continued growth in the population of ELs in US schools, the likelihood increases that all teachers will eventually encounter students with emergent English proficiency in their classrooms. To teach academic content in a differentiated, linguistically responsive way tailored to the needs of new immigrants – and all students with emergent academic language skills – teachers require expertise and instructional knowledge that is currently not addressed in the majority of teacher preparation programs. Fewer than a third of all US teachers receive training on second or foreign language acquisition; fewer than half of all US states require teacher training on pedagogy for immigrant language learners (Wixom 2015). For full-time professionals, opportunities for teacher learning in this area are often limited to one or two workshops a year. “Mastery of academic language is arguably the single most important determinant of academic success for individual students” (Francis and Rivera 2006, p. 5), but teachers who have not been trained to teach the language of their discipline have scant opportunity to develop this instructional skill.

c) *Teacher isolation into departmental silos* exacerbates gaps in teacher preparation necessary for linguistically diverse classrooms by undermining opportunities for teachers to collaborate as professionals. In most US high schools, teachers work alone in individual classrooms with little opportunity to work with colleagues outside of their disciplines or to learn from other faculty who teach students at the same grade level (Lee 2019; Ruiz-de-Velasco et al. 2000). There is particular isolation among ESL teachers, who are often tasked with the sole responsibility of addressing the complex needs of new immigrant students.

Research suggests that school structures and norms that promote teacher collaboration, such as scheduling teachers into interdisciplinary teams with allocated time to share strategies, resources, knowledge, and skills can facilitate learning opportunities and trusting relationships among teachers and can also have a positive effect on student achievement (Parise and Spillane 2010; Ronfeldt et al. 2015). Yet, in most US high schools, school leaders have centralized top-down leadership, an approach shown to undermine the innovation shown by research to be necessary to foster critical thinking, collaboration, and intellectual creativity (Zeiser et al. 2014).

d) Conventional approaches to teaching new immigrant students promote rapid integration into mainstream classes that cater to students educated from the early grades in the host country and language (UNESCO 2018). Despite its laudable goal of rapid social integration, *premature placement of students in mainstream classes* has been shown to be effective only in very limited circumstances for students' academic development in the absence of research-based linguistic scaffolds. Research on classes in the US in which ELs and native speakers were grouped together indicated that student talk was reduced and few language learning opportunities were created, with students opting to complete their work quickly rather than communicate with peers (Jacob et al. 1996). Scheduling English learners and native English speakers together provides limited language learning opportunities and may be detrimental to learning for ELs (Cathcart-Strong 1989; Genesee et al. 2006; Platt and Troudi 1997). High school students may sink rather than swim if they are removed from linguistic support too quickly (Robinson-Cimpian et al. 2016; Slama 2014). By contrast, when exit standards increase to an appropriate level of academic difficulty, students' integration into mainstream instruction with little linguistic support has little impact on subsequent achievement levels or graduation rates (Robinson-Cimpian and Thompson 2016). Tantamount to academic success is placement in classrooms where teachers have the expertise to design instruction to meet students' needs, not simply physical proximity to peers who speak the target language.

e) An additional dilemma of the design of many US high schools impacts both academic and social development. *Subtractive linguistic models*, in which students are forbidden from using their home language(s) as resources for learning, undermine academic progress, ignore decades of research in educational linguistics (Cummins 2000; García and Kleifgen 2018; Wiley and Lukes 2015; Wright 2010), and result in the marginalization and stigmatization of youth. English-only approaches (Ramírez et al. 1991; Wiley and Lukes 2015) and similar models in immigrant receiver nations where use of students' home language(s) are banned in schools have roots in widespread misconceptions about language learning. Home language bans also draw on social Darwinist perspectives on language, race, and culture, resulting in ascription of lower status to certain "minoritized" languages (Alim et al. 2016; Flores and Rosa 2015; Wiley and Lukes 2015). The resultant irony: many language-minority youths are prevented from developing academic competence in their home language, while their language-majority peers are encouraged to learn additional languages in 'foreign language' instruction. Such deficit-oriented approaches are discussed in academic scholarship on the importance of nurturing relationships with adults in schools and engagement in stimulating coursework – all factors that lead to student success (García and Kleifgen 2018; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008a).

---

## 5 Addressing the Core Dilemmas: Alternatives to the Factory Model

Some public secondary schools in the US have developed innovative programs to integrate newly arrived immigrant youth. *Newcomer* models are designed for youth who have arrived in middle or early high school in the US (grades 6 to 9) and are emergent learners of English; these programs are designed to address the core dilemmas presented above. Multiple models have been cited as effective innovations to address research findings; they include self-contained newcomer transitional programs, whole-school newcomer models, and school-within-a-school models (Short and Boyson 2012; Sugarman 2017). Students in newcomer programs span a wide academic spectrum and include adolescents who have attended school in their home country and are at grade level with their US peers as well as students with limited formal schooling and emergent literacy. Immigrant youth are required to complete requirements for the US high school diploma identical to those required of peers who have attended US schools since primary school. Current federal legislation in the US requires all school districts to create conditions that promote the learning of both English language and

content, thus enabling ELs to meet the same challenging academic standards as their English-proficient peers (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA] 2015).

Successful newcomer high school models **integrate language instruction into core academic classes**, and as a result English proficiency is not a prerequisite to access academic content. In an integrated language and content approach, newly arrived immigrant youth do not wait to take classes in core disciplines: English language development is embedded in all academic coursework. In this instructional approach, immigrant youth are engaged from day one in rigorous learning experiences that foster problem-solving and critical thinking and harness their background knowledge in the home language(s). What does this look like in practice? In chemistry class, students could be learning English chemistry vocabulary and using it in the process of performing chemistry experiments, writing laboratory reports, generating hypotheses and conclusions, and presenting their findings orally in front of their peers. They might conduct a home or school inventory of chemicals and pesticides and read a text in small groups about the use of chemicals in agriculture. Scaffolds including visuals, demonstrations, sentence stems, graphic organizers, and home-language supporting materials would ensure that, regardless of their language level, students are able to participate fully in a rigorous academic environment that fosters reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension and that draws on their full linguistic repertoire.

In innovative research-based newcomer models, student and teacher schedules are redesigned within the parameters of state requirements and union contracts to meet both student needs and professional development demands. In one network-based whole-school approach,<sup>6</sup> interdisciplinary teacher teams take part in **ongoing professional training as part of their regular weekly assignments** (Kessler et al. 2018; Klein et al. 2016; Lee and Walsh 2017). Professional collaboration among teachers of ELs, particularly those with knowledge of language development and disciplinary knowledge, has been shown to improve ELs' academic performance (August and Hakuta 1997; Gándara et al. 2003; Varghese and Jenkins 2005). Rather than English as a Second Language teachers being solely responsible for academic language development, in a collaborative approach, **teams of teachers** work together to design instruction to maximize academic language development for all students, not only new immigrants or ELs.

---

<sup>6</sup> Internationals Network for Public Schools are 28 district-run public high schools designed to integrate new immigrant youth into innovative academic high school programs, see <http://internationalsnps.org/>.

To compensate for the limited preparation to teach linguistically diverse learners that most teachers receive in their formal certification pathways, part of their weekly schedule includes **formal professional development to integrate language development into their courses**. To ensure that this type of training is not a one-off opportunity, structures at the school level, including revised schedules, teacher teams, and embedded professional development throughout the year provide consistent opportunities for teachers to collaborate, provide peer mentoring, and receive ongoing training and support. These types of collaborative structure cannot be invented by teachers alone; research highlights the importance of school leaders' support to foster structural changes that could improve instructional practices (Bryk et al. 1999; Bryk and Schneider 2002; Fullan 2002; Youngs and King 2002).

To achieve heterogeneous groupings, new immigrant ELs need not be a minority placed with fluent speakers of the host country's language. **Student peer supports** and intentional structures that create opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, structured academic discourse among **heterogeneous mixed-ability classes** leverages the knowledge of peers to maximize second-language learning among immigrant youth (Blum-Kulka and Snow 2004; Francis and Rivera 2006). This means that teachers design projects where students learn from one another in structured group projects that incorporate reading, writing, speaking, individual roles, tasks and responsibilities, research, analysis, and formal written and oral presentations. A social studies project on the French Revolution will involve a small group of students exploring its causes through social, economic, and cultural lenses and working collaboratively to create a presentation for the class. At the structural level, students are part of small learning communities where they have opportunities to build meaningful relationships with peers and teachers, and to take part in services provided by community partners.

A central goal of newcomer approaches is to **address equity in educational outcomes** in the long term (Thompson 2013) by grouping new immigrant students together to receive tailored academic, linguistic, and social emotional supports to steer them toward successful school completion that provides a credential to access university and career pathways. Innovative newcomer models favor supportive services tailored to immigrant youth in the short term to foster long-term academic success. This tailored-services model contrasts with immediate submersion in the mainstream that provides the illusion of integration. Failure to attend to students' academic, linguistic, and psychosocial needs can produce disastrous outcomes for their development, resulting in social isolation and academic failure (Olsen 2000; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008a, b). **Attention paid to social emotional needs of new immigrant youth** is reinforced via structures for ongoing teacher



professional development and shared responsibility for student learning across disciplines and faculty roles (Short and Boyson 2012; Sugarman 2017). Newcomer approaches, such as the one implemented by the public secondary schools in the *Internationals Network*, have demonstrated measurably higher rates of high school completion than traditional approaches that integrate students into mainstream classrooms more quickly (Fine et al. 2005; Zeiser et al. 2014). Such holistic approaches address the inherent dilemmas of traditional factory high schools by drawing on extant research and emphasizing an explicitly additive mission where students' language, culture, and life experiences are the foundation upon which to build to prepare them for long-term success in university and post-secondary pathways.

---

## 6 Conclusion

The US and the European nations, as hosts to growing numbers of school-age immigrant youth, are seeking tested, promising approaches to integrate and educate the next generation. Critical to the success of this project is a re-examination of the traditional secondary school. To re-imagine secondary schools, educators and policymakers in the US and beyond might begin by drawing on existing research as well as on school-based models for teacher professional development, collaboration, and peer learning, and school models that have shown results for immigrant learners.

Traditional high schools adhere to a subtractive model (Menken and Kleyn 2010; Valenzuela 1999), leading to underachievement, loss of potential, and institutionalized barriers to opportunity. Segregation of students into poorly designed remedial language classes devoid of disciplinary content and the subsequent overzealous integration into mainstream classes without linguistic scaffolds has led to decades of failure for many immigrant youth (García and Kleifgen 2018; Ruiz-de-Velasco et al. 2000). Despite the inherent flaws in the subtractive traditional model, it has been applauded for promoting integration and fostering diversity, while cultural deficit theories have been used to explain the persistent failure of the culturally and linguistically diverse students it purports to serve (Arnez 1978; Ogbu and Simons 1998; Ruiz de Velasco et al. 2000; Warikoo and Carter 2009).

Yet immigrant integration and specially designed services for linguistically and culturally diverse youth need not be at odds, as shown in existing newcomer models (Thompson 2013). Incorporating research findings into pedagogical practices, using student achievement data as a tool to inform program improvements, and rethinking subtractive models with the goal of equitable outcomes are vital

systemic shifts. In an era of growing transnational migration, the linguistic and cultural diversity of student populations can be tapped as resources, shifting away from a deficit-oriented, subtractive approach to schooling that has for too long blamed youth and their linguistic and cultural backgrounds for flaws in the system (Valenzuela 1999; García and Kleifgen 2018). Adhering to a nineteenth-century high school model to address the needs of a twenty-first-century transnational school population is unwise and squanders the opportunity to replicate approaches that have shown promise. Research on immigrant youth achievement and innovative US school models that promote academic success provide clear options for reform. Failure to rethink and redesign the factory model of high school very nearly guarantees failure for many young migrants and continues to play into a cultural deficit framing of achievement. The existing research base can inform innovation of the elements of secondary school that currently serve as barriers to adequate education. If integration into educational systems has as its goal equitable outcomes, perhaps it is time to set aside institutional rigidity, rethink the factory model, draw from the research, and take bold strides to innovate.

---

## References

- Advocates for Children and the Public Advocate for the City of New York. (2002, November 21). *Pushing Out At-Risk Students: An Analysis of High School Discharge Figures*. Retrieved March 23, 2020, from [https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/pushing\\_out\\_2002.pdf?pt=1](https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/pushing_out_2002.pdf?pt=1).
- Alim, S., Rickford, J. R., & Ball, A. F. (Eds.). (2016). *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes Our Ideas About Race*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Arnez, N. L. (1978). Implementation of desegregation as a discriminatory process. *Journal of Negro Education*, 47(1), 28–45.
- August, D., & Hakuta, K. (1997). *Improving schooling for language minority students: A research agenda*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.
- August, D., & Shanahan, T. (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth. Executive summary*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Balfanz, R. (2000). Why do so Many Urban Public School Students Demonstrate so Little Academic Achievement? In M. Sanders (Ed.), *Schooling Students Placed at Risk* (pp. 37–49). Mahwah: Erlbaum.
- Balfanz, R., & Legters, N. (2001). *How Many Central City High Schools Have A Severe Dropout Problem, Where Are They Located, and Who Attends Them? Initial Estimates Using the Common Core of Data*. A study prepared for Dropouts in America: How severe is the problem? What do we know about intervention and prevention? A forum convened by The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education and Achieve, Inc. January 13, 2001 Cambridge.

- Blum-Kulka, S., & Snow, C. E. (2004). Introduction: The Potential of Peer Talk. *Discourse Studies*, 6(3), 291–306. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445604044290>.
- Bryk, A., Camburn, E., & Louis, K. S. (1999). Professional Community in Chicago Elementary Schools: Facilitating Factors and Organizational Consequences. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(5), 751–781. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X99355004>.
- Bryk, A., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Callahan, R. (2013). *The English Learner Dropout Dilemma: Multiple Risks and Multiple Resources* (California Dropout Research Project Report No. 19). Santa Barbara: University of Santa Barbara.
- Callahan, R. M. (2005). Tracking and high school English learners: Limiting opportunity to learn. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42(2), 305–328.
- Callahan, R. M., Wilkinson, L., & Muller, C. (2010). Academic achievement and course taking among language minority students in U.S. schools: Effects of ESL placement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 32(1), 84–117.
- Cathcart-Strong, R. L. (1989) Input Generation by Young Second Language Learners. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(3), 515–530.
- Clark-Gareca, B., Short, D., Lukes, M., & Sharp-Ross, M. (2019, May). Long-term English learners: Current research, policy, and practice. *TESOL Journal*, 49(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.452>.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Dorn, S. (1996). *Creating the dropout: An institutional and social history of failure*. Westport: Praeger.
- Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], Pub. L. No. 114-95 (2015).
- Fine, M., Stoudt, B., & Futch, V. (2005). *The Internationals Network for Public Schools: A Quantitative and Qualitative Cohort Analysis of Graduation and Dropout Rates Teaching and Learning in a Transcultural Academic Environment*. New York: The City University of New York Graduate Center.
- Flores, N., & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing Appropriateness: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Language Diversity in Education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 85(2), 149–171.
- Francis, D. J., & Rivera, M. (2006). *Research-based recommendations for serving adolescent newcomers*. Houston: University of Houston, Center on Instruction.
- Fullan, M. (2002). The change. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16–20.
- Gándara, P., Rumberger, R., Maxwell-Jolly, J. and Callahan, R., (2003, October 7). English Learners in California Schools: Unequal resources, unequal outcomes. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 11(36). Retrieved February 20, 2020, from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v11n36/>.
- Gándara, P., & Contreras, F. (2009). *The Latino education crisis: The consequences of failed social policies*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- García, O., & Kleifgen, J. (2018). *Educating Emergent Bilinguals: Policies, Programs, and Practices for English Language Learners* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Saunders, W. & Christian, D. (2006). Conclusion and Future directions. In F. Genesee, K. Lindholm-Leary, W. Saunders, & D. Christian (Eds.), *Educating English Learners: A Research Synthesis* (pp. 223–234). New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Jacob, E., Rottenberg, S., Patrick, S. & Wheeler, E. (1996). Cooperative Learning: Context and Opportunities for Acquiring Academic English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(2), 253–280.
- Jennings, J. L., & Haimson, L. (2009, April 30). *High school discharges revisited: Trends in New York City's discharge rates 2000–2007* (Report). New York: Class Size Matter & Columbia University. Retrieved October 16, 2020, from [https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/High\\_School\\_Discharge\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/High_School_Discharge_Report_FINAL.pdf).
- Kessler, J., Wentworth, L., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2018). *The Internationals Network for Public Schools: Educating our immigrant English language learners well* (report). Stanford: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education. Retrieved October 16, 2020, from <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/International%20Network%20v2.pdf>.
- Klein, E. J., Jaffe-Walter, R., & Riordan, M. (2016). Taking teacher learning to scale: Sharing knowledge and spreading ideas across geographies. *Teachers College Record*, 118(13), 1–26.
- Lee, O. (2019). Aligning English Language Proficiency Standards With Content Standards: Shared Opportunity and Responsibility Across English Learner Education and Content Area. *Review of Research in Education*, 43(8), 534–542.
- Lee, S., & Walsh, D. (2017). Socially Just, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy for Diverse Immigrant Youth. In D. Paris & H. S. Alim (Eds.) *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World* (pp. 191–206). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lukes, M. (2015). *Latino Immigrant Youth and Interrupted Schooling: Dropouts, Dreamers and Alternative Pathways to College*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters/Channel View.
- Menken, K., & Kleyn, T. (2010). The long-term impact of subtractive schooling in the educational experiences of secondary English language learners. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 13(4), 399–417.
- National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. (2019a). *English language learners in public schools. The Condition of Education*. Retrieved March 23, 2020, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe\\_cgf.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_cgf.pdf).
- National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. (2019b). *National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Retrieved March 23, 2020, from <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/assessments/>.
- Ogbu, J., & Simons, H. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 29(2), 155–188.
- Olsen, L. (2014). *Meeting the Unique Needs of Long Term English Language Learners: A Guide for Educators*. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association.
- Olsen, L. (2000). Learning English and Learning America: Immigrants in the Center of a Storm. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(4), 196–202.
- Orfield, G., Losen, D., & Wald, J. (2004). *Losing our future: How minority youth are being left behind*. Cambridge: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. Retrieved July 25, 2020, from <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-dropouts/losing-our-future-how-minority-youth-are-being-left-behind-by-the-graduation-rate-crisis/orfield-losing-our-future-2004.pdf>.

- Parise, L. M., & Spillane, J. P. (2010). Teacher learning and instructional change: How formal and on-the-job learning opportunities predict change in elementary school teachers' practice. *The Elementary School Journal*, *110*(3), 323–346.
- Platt, E., & Troudi, S. (1997). Mary and Her Teachers: A Grebo-Speaking Child's Place in the Mainstream Classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, *81*, 28–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1997.tb01625>.
- Ramírez J., Yuen, S., Ramey, D., & Pasta, D. (1991). Longitudinal study of structured English immersion strategy, early exit and late-exit bilingual education programs for language-minority children. (Final Report No. 300-87-0156). San Mateo: Aguirre International.
- Robinson-Cimpian, J. P., & Thompson, K. D. (2016). The Effects of Changing Test-Based Criteria for Reclassifying English Learners. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *35*(2), 279–305.
- Robinson-Cimpian, J. P., Thompson, K. D., Umansky, I. M. (2016). Research and Policy Considerations for English Learner Equity. *Policy Insights*, *3*(1), 129–137.
- Ronfeldt, M., Farmer, S., McQueen, K., & Grissom, J. (2015). Teacher collaboration in instructional teams and student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, *52*(3), 475–514.
- Ruiz-de-Velasco, J., Fix, M. E., & Clewell, B. C. (2000). *Overlooked and underserved: Immigrant students in U.S. secondary schools*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.
- Short, D., & Boyson, B. A. (2012). *Helping Newcomer Students Succeed in Secondary Schools and Beyond*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Slama, R. (2014). Investigating Whether and When English Learners Are Reclassified Into Mainstream Classrooms in the United States: A Discrete-Time Survival Analysis. *Review of Research in Education*, *51*(2), 220–252.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., Qin, D. B., & Amthor, R. F. (2008a). Adolescents from immigrant families: Relationships and adaptation in school. In M. Sadowski (Ed.), *Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity, and Education* (2nd ed., pp. 51–69). Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., Suárez-Orozco, M., & Todorova, I. (2008b). *Learning a new land*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Sugarman, J. (2017). *Beyond Teaching English: Supporting High School Completion by Immigrant and Refugee Students*. Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute.
- Thompson, K. (2013). Is Separate Always Unequal? A Philosophical Examination of Ideas of Equality in Key Cases Regarding Racial and Linguistic Minorities in Education. *American Educational Research Journal*, *50*(6), 1249–1278.
- Tyack, D. (1976, September). Ways of Seeing: An Essay on the History of Compulsory Schooling. *Harvard Educational Review*, *46*(3), 355–389.
- Tyack, D., & Cuban, L. (1997). *Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Tyack, D., & Tobin, W. (1994). The “Grammar” of Schooling: Why Has It Been So Hard to Change? *American Educational Research Journal*, *31*(3), 453–479.
- Tyler, J. (2004). Basic Skills and the Earnings of Dropouts. *Economics of Education Review*, *23*(3), 221–235.
- Tyler, J., Murnane, R., & Willett, J. (1998). *Estimating the impact of the GED on the earnings of young dropouts using a series of natural experiments*. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research.

- United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO]. (2018). *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, not Walls*. Paris.
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division [UN DESA]. (2019). *World Population Prospects 2019: Ten Key Findings*. Retrieved July 25, 2019, from [https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2019\\_10KeyFindings.pdf](https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2019_10KeyFindings.pdf).
- United States Census Bureau [U.S. Census Bureau]. (2016). *United States Demographic Characteristics: Data from the American Community Survey*. Washington, D.C.
- United States Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. (2019). *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups, Indicator 2: Nativity*. Retrieved February 20, 2020, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator\\_RAB.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator_RAB.asp).
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive Schooling*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Varghese, M. & Jenkins, S. (2005). Challenges for ESL teacher professionalization in the US: a case study, *Intercultural Education*, 16(1), 85–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14636310500061948>.
- Warikoo, N., & Carter, P. (2009). Cultural Explanations for Racial and Ethnic Stratification in Academic Achievement: A Call for a New and Improved Theory. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 366–394.
- Wiley, T. G., & Lukes, M. (2015). English-Only and Standard English Ideologies in the United States. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *Language Policy and Planning: Critical Concepts in Linguistics* (Vol. 3, pp. 106–129). London: Routledge.
- Wixom, M.A. (2015). *State Level English Learner Policies*. Denver: Education Commission of the States.
- Wright, W. E. (2010). *Foundations for Teaching English Language Learners, Research, Theory, Policy and Practice*. Philadelphia: Carlson Publishing.
- Youngs, P., & King, M. B. (2002). Principal leadership for professional development to build school capacity. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(5), 643–670.
- Zeiser, K., Taylor, J., Rickles, J., & Garet, M. (2014). *Evidence of Deeper Learning Outcomes. report 3: Findings from the Study of Deeper Learning: Opportunities and Outcomes*. Washington, D.C.: American Institutes for Research and The Research Alliance for New York City Schools.



---

# Deconstructing Race: Prerequisite to Belonging in US Society and Schools

Jabari Mahiri

---

## Abstract

Individual and group struggles for human development and belonging across the globe are constrained by a confluence of forces. These forces are largely revealed in deep-seated, historical sentiments, practices, and antagonisms perpetuated by societal elites and those they influence toward disempowered and frequently dislocated racial, ethnic, religious, gendered, and ability groups. Although these forces have differing contextual characteristics, they generally reflect a rise in radical right parties and perspectives that propagate nativism, xenophobia, and highly divisive expressions of nationalism. This chapter looks mainly at the US context where the idea of race frames how myriad dimensions of difference are viewed, enacted, and often contentiously engaged. It argues that ongoing work to deconstruct this racial frame is requisite to creating more equitable, inclusive societies and that in this endeavor schooling plays a key role.

---

## Keywords

Race · Micro-cultures · Identity · African Americans · White supremacy · Othering · Belonging

---

J. Mahiri (✉)

Graduate School of Education, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, USA

e-mail: [jmahiri@berkeley.edu](mailto:jmahiri@berkeley.edu)

## 1 Introduction

The crisis of “othering” (powell and Menendian 2016), a term that identifies practices of marginalization and discrimination between and within racial, ethnic, religious, gendered, and national groups continues to spread across the world during the first quarter of the twenty-first century with unfortunate extensions of and parallels to these problematic issues in previous centuries. There are differences in the confluence of forces that fuel this current crisis (like nationalism or climate disruption, for example), but it continues to be revealed in deep-seated, historical sentiments and antagonisms perpetuated by societal elites and those they influence toward targeted and often disempowered groups and individuals who are subjected to being defined as the other. In Europe, the rise of radical right parties and perspectives and the resulting propagation of nativism and xenophobia have caused increasing sociocultural, political-economic, and geographic tensions and fragmentations. Similarly, in the United States, the 2016 election of Donald Trump in conjunction with the rise, calcification, and ‘normalization’ of extremely divisive expressions of nationalism has further polarized American people within and across socially constructed categories of difference.

Public education in state institutions clearly has critical roles to play in negating rather than perpetuating the problematic consequences of dividing US residents along the lines of color-coded racial hierarchies and, instead, being a force for greater understanding and appreciation of diversity and belonging. A special issue of *Educational Researcher* (a premier scholarly journal published by the American Educational Research Association) re-kindled my thinking about these issues. Its focus was on rethinking race to better understand the range of diversity within ethnic groups in order to design more effective educational approaches. In this issue, edited by Carol Lee (2003), she along with Spencer and Harpalani explored a wide range of ways African American youth live and engage in family systems, peer social networks, and within larger institutional, societal, and historical systems. Their article revealed how racial and ethnic minorities are not homogenous and argued for better understanding of how people uniquely live, learn, and develop culturally. In the same issue, Nasir and Saxe (2003) showed how youth identities are not located solely in the individual, but mainly negotiated in social interactions and also shift as individuals participate in the same practices in new ways or as they become participants in new practices. Similarly, Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) illustrated the problems of trying to match educational practices to cultural assumptions about diverse groups without more



comprehensive understanding of specific individuals' and groups' histories of engagement in cultural practices that were not captured in static notions of race. Viewing the cultural characteristics of individuals and groups as dynamic, contextualized, and shaped by historical experiences was central to the approach of each of the studies.

This chapter looks mainly at the US context where the idea of race usually frames how myriad dimensions of difference are viewed, enacted, and contentiously engaged. I deliberately say the "idea" of race because scientists have amply demonstrated that there is no physical existence of races. For example, the official statement on race adopted by the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association [AAA] (1998), in part, stated:

Physical variations in the human species have no meaning except the ones that humans put on them. Today scholars in many fields argue that 'race' as it is understood in the United States of America was a social mechanism invented during the 17th century to refer to those populations brought together in colonial America: the English and other European settlers, the conquered Indian peoples, and those peoples of Africa brought in to provide slave labor.

Banton (1977) in "The idea of race" made the case earlier than the AAA's official statement that there is no scientific justification for race. Scholars like Brodtkin (1998), Palmié (2007), Feagin (2010), Painter (2010), Allen (2012), Fields and Fields (2012), Mukhopadhyay et al. (2014), and Powell and Menéndez (2016) continue to challenge this problematic term. Despite not being a scientific fact, the use of racial categorizations for people has become a social fact with a violent history that has resulted in differential and disturbing experiences of racism extending from inculcated beliefs that human divisions into racial categories are grounds for how they should interact. I argue that continuing the intentional work to deconstruct the reductive, color-coded racial framing of people's identities that permeates the US is essential to creating a more equitable and inclusive society. I offer a more nuanced and complex conceptualization of people's "micro-cultural" identities and affinities as revealed through distinct positionalities, practices, choices, and perspectives. I suggest how this work has ameliorative impacts on individual and group struggles for development and belonging in this country and around the world. Finally, I provide an example of teaching and learning that characterizes how schooling can contribute to an ongoing process of deconstructing race.

## 2 Race in the United States

Racial categories were invented by elites holding political and economic power to privilege selected members of US society and to disenfranchise others (Allen 2012). The foundations of race and racist ideas, i.e. ethnic, religious, and color prejudice, were laid in the ancient world prior to the actual construction of races in the US that were initially expressed in color-coded contrasts of white and black. According to Kendi (2016), “racist ideas were nearly two centuries old when Puritans used them in the 1630s to legalize and codify New England slavery – the Virginians had done the same in the 1620s” (p. x). So, early occupation of the Americas and the enslavement of Africans to work its lands were realized in a white/black binary of race that was used to signify and justify colonial structures of power, privilege, and oppression. These structures are embedded in and perpetuated through each societal institution, including being encoded into the nation’s census that sought to define all people in US society in contrast to those ascribed as white. Though clearly not comprehensive, I will use the evolution of the census, on the one hand, and several aspects of the experience of African Americans, on the other, as a bifocal for viewing key aspects of the dynamics of race in the United States as they have played out historically between European Americans and African Americans.

The US census provides one example of how the idea of race is seen and used within a broad set of institutional structures and practices to rationalize a hierarchy with whites at the top. For example, although there have been numerous changes in the designations of all other groups in US society, the white designation has not changed from the first census in 1790, shortly after the country won its independence, to the one in 2010, just after the country elected its first African American president. In contrast to the intentional uniformity of the white category, people of African descent have been variously defined in the census as slaves, free colored persons, mulattos, quadroons, octoroons, Negroes (or of Negro decent), and African Americans as well as blacks. More recently, people in US society who are racially seen as “brown” were variously identified in the 2010 census as Hispanic, Latino, Spanish Origin, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc. However, people identified as racially white have not been disaggregated from the first census to the one in 2010 and, thereby, appear throughout the history of this country as if they are a single racial identity. When the US census is taken every ten years, people are asked to self-identify and choose from a set of racial categories that the creators of the census have constructed. Formerly, the mostly uniform category of “white” versus the varying

categories for other groups in the US was one of the ways that whiteness was not disaggregated and thus constructed as if it were a uniform designation of a race.

There is a hopeful move in the 2020 US census in which people are not only asked to check the “white” box, but also allowed to write in a country of origin like “German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian”, etc. Similarly, if a person checks the “black” box, they can also write in “African American” or a country of origin like “Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali”, etc. So, subsequent analysis of how people in the US respond to these new options will be important for how we may be able to better understand a truer sense of the diversity of people in this country. Yet, the destructive color-codes remain.

Interestingly, based on decades of US census data, Palmié (2007) estimated that about 25% of Americans listed as white in 1970 probably had ancestors from Africa. Hypodescent, the one-drop-of-black-blood rule, would change the identity of many who see themselves as purely white (Hollinger 2003). These considerations will still not be captured by the additional options allowed on the 2020 US census. A similar consideration is that more than 80% of those listed as black had non-African ancestors (Palmié 2007). This is one of the unfortunate consequences of having been enslaved. Census designations for Asians, American Indians, and Alaskan Natives have also been highly changeable over time in contrast to those designated as white. Additionally, if a person chose the “black or African American” category also chose to identify with one or more additional races including the white race, she, he, or they were still racially identified as a member of the “black in combination” population, or the “multiple race black” population (Rastogi et al. 2011). No option is provided for a “white in combination” population, thus implying a white homogeneity or a white racial essence that has never actually existed. Challenging the notion of a white racial essence or a racial essence for any of the racialized groups is a key goal of deconstructing race.

This brief discussion of the census illustrates how one institution has historically constructed the idea of race in conjunction with the supremacy of whites over others. The normalization of whiteness at the top of US society could be demonstrated using other institutions as well, including education. According to Lipsitz, it is “the possessive investment in whiteness that is responsible for the racialized hierarchies in our society” (2006, p. vii). This also reflects what Feagin (2010) called “the white racial frame” that rationalizes and perpetuates racial inequality through a broad set of institutional structures and practices. The white racial frame that undergirds white power and privilege is a key component of the ideology and oppressive consequences of white supremacy. Leonardo defined white supremacy as a specific form of modern racism that underlies and makes

other forms of racism thrive (Leonardo 2009, p. 118). It is responsible for dramatic inequities and divisions among people in US society as reflected in the inordinate concentrations and disparities of wealth and power, the ruthless exploitation of human and material resources, the unchecked military expansion and interventions, as well as mass incarceration and other forms of disenfranchisement of targeted groups, to name a few.

The census provides one reading of the construction of race in the United States. The experiences and treatment of African Americans from enslavement (1619 to 1865), to the re-construction era (1863 to 1877), to the Jim Crow era (1870s to 1965), to the New Jim Crow of mass incarceration (1970s to the present), to the civil rights and black power movements (1954 to 1990), to the elections of Presidents Barack Obama (2009 to 2017) and Donald Trump (2017 to the present) provide a corroborative reading. This additional reading is informed by Kendi's (2016) indication of how *dual and dueling* forces of racial progress and the simultaneous progression of racism march forward together with continually evolving and sometimes intersecting tactics, policies, and rhetoric. From the arrival in Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 of the first 19 enslaved Africans, the idea of race began to be constructed in ways to serve and justify the interests of the colonists. Although these early captives were initially treated as indentured servants, this positioning was gradually changed to a racial caste and laws were soon enacted to define and ensure that this status would not change. For example, when three men attempted to flee indentured servitude in Virginia in 1640, the one African, John Punch, was sentenced to slavery while the other two men of European descent were only given an additional year of indentured service. This was the first legal sanction of slavery and also the first legal distinction made between Africans and Europeans (Higginbotham 1975). A year later in 1641, Massachusetts became the first colony to enact a law to authorize slavery.

Throughout the colonial period and well after the Revolutionary War, enslaved Africans were subjected to unimaginable cruelties within the binary system of race. In the economy of enslaved labor, colonists preferred young males for the physically grueling work, and in this pursuit, they devastated African families or possibilities for families. There was also a sexual economy described by Davis (2002) that placed a premium on enslaved girls just reaching puberty and forced them along with other enslaved women "to perform not only physical labor, but sexual and reproductive labor as well" (p. 107). So, in addition to being a means for increasing the number of enslaved people, these practices also manifested the pervasive sexual violence of white men. It also further complicated the simple skin-color binary of white and black. Interestingly, although the words "slave" or "slavery" do not appear in the US Constitution approved in 1787, it did not

explicitly prohibit, and therefore tacitly permitted, slavery that continued in the South until the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 at the end of the Civil War. Unfortunately, many enslaved people in the South were not made aware of the Emancipation Proclamation until more than two years later on June 19th.

Disenfranchisement, stigmatization, and inequitable treatment based on race continued for African Americans from enslavement through Reconstruction, the Jim Crow Era, the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, and into the present day. Although the institution of slavery ended with ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, an enslavement mentality along with the enactment of various instruments of involuntary servitude by whites has continued to characterize racial dynamics in the United States. During the Reconstruction era that began in the early 1860s, federal troops had to be stationed in the South to protect the newly granted rights of African Americans and to prevent them from being re-enslaved. As African Americans gained political power, their Reconstruction governments and local leaders were attacked with mob violence that included bombings and lynchings. When federal troops were withdrawn in 1877, African Americans were at the mercy of Southern whites who imposed Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation, prevented them from voting, restricted their movement, and in other ways brought them back into servitude. For example, since the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery except as punishment for a crime, political jurisdictions created a variety of minor crimes that were used to arrest and convict African Americans and, under systems of convict leasing and other forms of peonage, to compel them to work without pay on farms and for businesses as well as to be bought and sold. This lasted well into the twentieth century when peonage was finally abolished by President Johnson in 1966.

In conjunction with legalizing ways to reintroduce *Slavery by Another Name*, a consideration that is comprehensively researched and analyzed in Blackmon's (2008) Pulitzer Prize-winning book by that title, the mass incarceration of African Americans after peonage was officially abolished amounted to what Alexander (2010) termed *The New Jim Crow*. Her argument is, "We have not really ended racial caste in America, we have merely redesigned it" (p. 2). Central to this redesign was the aggressive arrests and convictions of African Americans, particular young men, and other people of color on charges of drug use. In less than 30 years between 1960 and 1990, the number of people incarcerated skyrocketed from around 300,000 to more than 2 million with drug convictions accounting for most of that increase (Mauer 2006). The US has the highest incarceration rate in the world, effectively dwarfing other countries. By design, African Americans who make up 13% of this country's population reflect 40% of those who are incarcerated.

Consistent with Kendi's (2016) notion of *dual and dueling* forces, the continuing, dramatic rise in incarceration rates of African Americans occurred collaterally with the civil rights and black power movements in the US as well as the political movement that led to the election of President Barack Obama in 2008. This election of a 'black' President caused some Americans, mainly liberals, to suggest that the country had finally arrived in an era of color-blindness. As Coates (2017) noted,

the charming and beautiful wife, the lovely daughters, the dogs – seemed pulled from the Brooks Brothers catalogue [...]. Obama, his family, and his administration were a walking advertisement for the ease with which black people could be fully integrated into the unthreatening mainstream of American culture, politics, and myth. (p. xv)

His eight years in office were seen by many as indicative of how far the country had come from the vicious threats and violence enacted to undo the eight years of government by Negroes (the term used for African Americans at that time) that was emerging in a few southern states as a result of leadership changes that occurred during the Reconstruction era that began as slavery came to an end. The subsequent election of President Donald Trump in 2016, however, disabused Americans and the rest of the world that the vitriol of white supremacy had somehow subsided in the US. Instead, Trump's bigoted rhetoric and policies invigorated and activated racist behavior and views that directly contributed to significant increases in hate crimes and violence against not only African Americans, but Muslims, Latinx, Jews, LGBTQI Americans, and other minority and vulnerable groups, and eventually led to the January 6, 2021 insurrection and violent attack on the US Capitol. His election affirmed that race and white-identity politics are as alive as ever in the United States, and the need to free ourselves from these ways of constraining human identities and trajectories is ever more crucial.

This chapter offers a different approach to addressing and attempting to ameliorate societal conflicts along racial lines. It does this, in part, by challenging premises upon which the idea of race in the United States is based – one being that there is a white racial essence or a racial essence for any of the ascribed racial groups. It is a challenge to the easy acceptance and use of the everyday language of race that is resident in terms like 'white' and 'black' and other color-coded referents like 'brown', 'yellow', and 'red' that are capriciously situated between the white/black poles. Within the ideology of white supremacy, these terms have been defined and operationalized so that they have intrinsic rather than constructed meanings. This chapter offers more complex and nuanced ways of

understanding identities as part of the process of deconstructing race as a barrier to higher levels of belonging in US society and schools.

---

### 3 Deconstructing Racial Identities

One aspect of Derrida's (2005) concept of *deconstruction* is the denial of any pure or intrinsic essence in meanings of words in languages as well as in notions of 'being'. Other scholars discussed in this section of the chapter demonstrate that there is no intrinsic essence to the idea of race and have shown, instead, how race operates within society through social constructions. In the United States, deconstruction of racial identities most profitably begins with people who are identified as white and, thereby, have been privileged and empowered within the system of white supremacy. The work of several scholars discussed in this section lifts the veil of white supremacy and reveals its structures for creating and sustaining hierarchies of difference and their resulting disparities.

One of these structures operating throughout US history is the continual expansion of the category of people identified as white. Immigration issues are currently being intensely debated and acted upon regarding people coming into the country across its southern border. But this issue must also be seen in the historical context of European immigration to America. Although the acculturation of successive waves of European immigrants was not without contention from both the newly arrived and those who were on this land longer, the end result has been significant enlargement of those who are identified as white.

Painter (2010) explored the historical processes of constructing and enlarging the racial identity of white Americans and how whiteness became connected to specific conceptions of hierarchy, entitlement, labor, class, and images of self and beauty. Part of her discussion describes four successive waves of white enlargement. Early beliefs were of multiple European races. So, some groups formerly considered to be non-white were designated as white and assimilated into American life over time. One of many examples was the acceptance of the Irish as white (Ignatiev 1995). Initially, they were seen as Celts and inferior to the Anglo-Saxon English. Later in American history, the same process was extended to descendants of southern and eastern European immigrants and eventually to Jews (following the Second World War). Brodtkin (1998) addressed this process as the "whitening" of American Jews and described the role of Jewish intellectuals as a driving force in this whitening process by promoting the "American characteristics" of Jewish immigrant culture. Prior to assimilation into expanding constructions of whiteness, each of these immigrant groups was considered inferior and

experienced harsh discrimination. Painter's work contributes to the discussion of this chapter in how it deconstructs white identity by revealing that it has always been a continually changing social construct with ascribed rather than intrinsic meaning.

Painter's work is important, and there also is a need to go beyond delineating the fluidity and diversity within constructed racial categories to deconstructing the idea of race itself. Fields and Fields (2012) challenged the racial construct, even as they clarified why it remains so prominent. Preceding from the fact that race has nothing to do with biology, they also provided a compelling analysis for why its folk classifications have not dissipated over time. Core to their analysis was an illustration of how the shared irrational and rational features of witchcraft could be compared to a kind of *racecraft*. They noted how *racecraft* has "such intellectual commonalities with witchcraft as circular reasoning, prevalence of confirming rituals, barriers to disconfirming factual evidence, self-fulfilling prophecies, multiple and inconsistent causal ideas, and colorful inventive folk genetics" (p. 198). Therefore, though race is scientifically fictive in terms of categorizing humans, racism as a social practice operates through the sleight of hand of *racecraft* (both as action and its rationale) as if race were not just an idea, but an objective reality. Consequently, they challenge us to see race as the ghostly fiction that it is and to critically question why we continue to accept and use this fictive concept to define ourselves and others in the context of US society.

In place of the social construct of race, I suggest a framework of "micro-cultures" (Mahiri 2017), a concept that captures the numerous components of positioning, practices, choices, and perspectives that make up the unique identities of each individual. Micro-cultural identities and practices are mediated by language and, like language, they are both acquired and learned. But they are also constituted and mediated through digital texts and tools that dramatically increase the range of how they are enacted. These virtually limitless combinations of components not only define the uniqueness of individuals, they also reflect similarities and affinities of individuals to specific others in shared or connected experiences within lineages, histories, and geographies. Importantly, the combinations of micro-cultural components are dynamic and constantly changing in people's lives in ways that are not defined or contained within categories of race, as the compelling stories of 20 informants so clearly demonstrated (Mahiri 2017).

The cover of the April 2018 special issue of *National Geographic* depicted twin sisters, one having white skin and straight blonde hair, and the other having brown skin and curly black hair. Despite their social positioning within the same family, probably, these twins will have different life experiences based upon racialized perceptions of superficial features of skin tone and hair texture. Their



identities, however, range far beyond how they are physically perceived and are reflected by the unique, individual practices in which they engage as well as the personal choices they make throughout their lives. Micro-cultural *practices* reveal activity-based aspects of identity, and micro-cultural *choices* reveal aspects of identity that are affinity-based. Both of these aspects of identity do not depend on or necessarily connect to categories of race. In other words, we are what we do, and we also are what we choose to affiliate with. Our identities are complex, nuanced, and unique and not able to be captured in superficial labels. More and more, these ways of being in the world are mediated by digital texts and tools. Gee (2003) discussed how people take on and play with identities and mediate relationships between new and old identities via digital media. He noted “a tripartite play of identities” (p. 208) that included people’s multiple real-world identities along with their virtual and projective identities. Gee further noted that people’s membership and participation in affinity groups (often located in virtual sites of interaction) are defined primarily by shared endeavors, goals, and practices, rather than shared race, gender, nation, ethnicity, or culture (Gee 2003, p. 208).

Clearly, the continually emerging, rapidly changing micro-cultural identities reflected in the positionalities, practices, choices, and perspectives of individuals in society cannot be contained in static categories of race. Yet negating the effects of racism, power, and privilege wielded historically and contemporarily by oppressive individuals and groups will take time and deliberate, strategic acts of resistance and reformation. Teaching and learning in schools have important roles to play in this process.

---

## 4 Examples of Positive Identity Work in Schools

Although not a panacea for the historically structured, racial inequities in the United States, education can contribute to deconstructing race and the creation of a more socially just society. Unfortunately, American schools have also been major sites for sustaining race as hierarchical markers of difference. This is seen, for example, in how curricular tracking results in racial hierarchies with white students at the top (Oakes 1985), how the administration of discipline reflects severe inequities for African American and Latinx students (Gregory and Weinstein 2008), and how students of color have their cultures and identities denigrated and misunderstood in the context of schooling (Valenzuela 1999). When a school door opens onto a classroom of advanced placement students and they are all white, when it opens to the discipline office and all the students are African

American and Latinx, when it opens to a special education classroom and everyone is a student of color, this reveals how sites and meanings of difference are racialized. Racism is enacted in how meanings are assigned to difference and, tragically, these meanings of difference are learned and internalized.

Across grade levels and subject areas, schools can organize content and pedagogy to reveal how and why racial categories are simply not useful for understanding human genetic diversity. Teachers can also integrate this content into learning activities that allow students to explore and experience the complexity and variations of their own personal-cultural identities as well as the identities of others. In conjunction with identity work, teachers can also embed perspectives for individual responsibilities to others and to the larger society into all curricular content and learning experiences. Importantly, instead of re-inventing race in their structures and practices schools should be the places where, through the content of teaching and pedagogical approaches, students learn to deconstruct and thus identify racial categories as human-made. They should be able to understand the disturbing character of race-shaping power relationships in society and gain insight into the fact that race is not a genetically predetermined driver for human differences.

I provide one of many examples from teachers I've worked with that reflects key aspects of these goals for teaching and learning in schools, though not all. In a curricular design called the "Personal Perspectives Project", the teacher engaged upper elementary school students (4th grade and up) in more authentic explorations of identity by having them research their family histories and also interview family members. They then used a multimedia app called "Tellagami" to present their findings, with one goal being to allow them to take safe risks while developing a sense of personal-cultural understanding and self-efficacy. Another goal in utilizing the Tellagami app was for the students to learn through multiple sign systems including written text, animated video, and digital symbols and attributes in representing their identities and presenting them to others in this multimedia project. The project facilitated students going deep into their own positionality beyond essentialized categories of race like "black" or "white", and the share-out portion also allowed every class member to learn more about others as they learned more about themselves, their families, and their ancestors. This learning experience was directly connected to state standards, but it also had a number of internal points of assessment. The family research component of the project required the students to become producers rather than merely consumers of knowledge about their identities beyond race.

The project began with a focus on the metaphor of the "cultural iceberg" in order for students to visualize how their personal identities constitute much

more than is seen on the surface. Next, students brainstormed about eight different aspects of diversity, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, race, religion and socioeconomic status, but there are also many more. Although race was one of the categories offered, it is only one of eight. Importantly, it was not coded by color. Ultimately, the educator might want to eliminate the racial category, or if left in, use it as a window into discussion of what we know about the science and history of race. After this, the students were guided to find answers to a series of questions on family history, such as: What is the structure of your family? Who are members of your family and what roles do they play? This required them to become beginning ethnographers developing and using techniques of ethnographic interviewing and observation. Next, students reflected on which aspects of their identities others can perceive, and which aspects others cannot perceive. They were then given the opportunity to create an online avatar, or animated character, using a free Tellagami app. The program gives students the freedom to design physical attributes, mood, background environment, and music as well as record a voiceover explaining who they are. The project culminates in class-wide presentations of their avatars.

In addition to stimulating reflection and awareness and creating community, this learning experience embraced digital media as a creative, shareable, exciting space for remixing representations of one's personal micro-cultural identity. Recognizing the potential to activate a component of a student's identity in a safe and exciting way in conjunction with gaining significant insights into the identities of others while developing rigorous academic skills inherently contributes to positive personal-cultural and intellectual development. To really become independent learners, students have to develop the ability and agency to find information, sort and evaluate it, and then integrate and synthesize it as findings that can be clearly communicated to others. This learning activity allowed students to go deep into understanding their personal positionality informed by generations of family history and practices, and also go wide in understanding positionalities of others, thereby putting the humanity of students at the core of learning.

Anthropologists Mukhopadhyay et al. (2014) have written a sourcebook on race, culture, and biology that focuses on ways in which teachers can help students to deconstruct and acquire sophisticated and intricate understandings of race. Hopefully, more research and scholarship will be directed to roles that schooling in state-run schools, open to everybody, can play in challenging and transforming the destructive aspects of promoting and accepting race as a sign of difference. Obviously, education alone is not a panacea for the consequences of a society in which lies dominate truth, in which fictions define reality, and where

profit is valued over people. But it is one of the vital forces through which people developed their positive identities of themselves and in relationship to others.

---

## 5 Heightening the Sense of Belonging

Du Bois (1903/1994) characterized the key issue of the twentieth century as the problem of the color-line. Powell and Menéndez (2016) characterized the problem of the twenty-first century as the problem of “othering”. They note: “In a world beset by seemingly intractable and overwhelming challenges, virtually every global, national, and regional conflict is wrapped within or organized around one or more dimensions of group difference. Othering undergirds territorial disputes, sectarian violence, military conflict, and the spread of disease, hunger and food insecurity, and even climate change” (p. 14). They use the term *othering* to capture the dynamic of prejudice on the basis of group identities, but they also feel that it provides a clarity to the larger set of processes and conditions that propagate group-based inequality and marginality (p. 17). I believe this reframing is critical to the work of deconstructing race; however, I also feel it’s important to drill down to the level of the individual while recognizing how these issues are also in play at the level of different groups in society and even institutionalized in powerful entities like schools or administrative bodies.

In the era of the Trump presidency, the continual stoking of fear and hatred of the “other” is rampant. Yet, like Kendi’s (2016) point that *dual and dueling* forces of racial progress and the simultaneous progression of racism march forward together, there is also considerable hope for transformation within the very political institutions that have been partially usurped by radical right parties and perspectives. For example, although the last election date of the 116th Congress in 2018 seated 31 new Republicans in the House of Representatives who were all white males with the exception of one white woman, thereby, increasing the percentage of white male Republicans in the House to 90%, the Democrats seated 40 new Representatives such that white males decreased in that side of the House from 41 to 38%. This increasingly diverse representation of the American people in political parties and processes is an important development in attempts to move toward a more equitable, inclusive, and democratic society. Again, according to Powell and Menéndez (2016), “the only viable solution to the problem of othering is one involving inclusion and belongingness. The most important good we distribute to each other in society is membership” (p. 32). They call for a vision of society with new identities and narratives that counter demagoguery

and demonization of the other while also enhancing the well-being of everyone (p. 33).

In this chapter, I have argued that the goals of belonging in US society and schools cannot be achieved without the requisite work of deconstructing race. The perpetuation of race depends on people accepting the color-coded racial categories to which we are assigned. However, people *can* act in ways that negate these constructed racial categories and trade/transform the selves defined by them into personal-cultural identities that reflect more authentic ancestral, family, friendship, collegial, and virtual connections, relationships, activities, and social practices. We negate race by understanding and embracing the complex, fluid micro-cultural identities and affinities that go beyond ambiguity and make the idea of race obsolete.

---

## References

- Alexander, M. (2010). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness* (2nd ed.). New York: The New Press.
- Allen, T. W. (2012). *The invention of the white race: The origin of racial oppression in Anglo-America* (Vol. 2). London: Verso Books.
- American Anthropological Association [AAA]. (1998, May 17). *Statement on "race"*. Retrieved January 15, 2020, from <https://www.americananthro.org/ConnectWithAAA/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2583>
- Banton, M. (1977). *The idea of race*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Blackmon, D. (2008). *Slavery by another name*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Brodin, K. (1998). *How Jews became white folks and what that says about race in America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Coates, T. (2017). *We were eight years in power: An American tragedy*. New York: One World Books.
- Davis, Adrienne (2002). "Don't let nobody bother yo' principle." *The sexual economy of American slavery*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Derrida, J. (2005). *Writing and difference* (A. Bass, Trans.). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1967)
- DuBois, W. E. B. (1994). *The souls of black folk*. New York: Dover. (Original work published 1903)
- Feagin, J. R. (2010). *The white racial frame: Centuries of racial framing and counter-framing*. New York: Routledge.
- Fields, K. E., & Fields, B. J. (2012). *Racecraft: The soul of inequality in American life*. London: Verso.
- Gee, J. P. (2003). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Gregory, A., & Weinstein, P. S. (2008). The discipline gap and African Americans: Defiance or cooperation in the high school classroom. *Journal of School Psychology, 46*(2), 455–475.
- Gutierrez, K. D., & Rogoff, B. (2003). Cultural ways of learning: Individual traits or repertoires of practice. *Educational Researcher, 32*(5), 19–25.
- Higginbotham, A. L. (1975). *In the matter of color: Race and the American legal process: The colonial period*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Hollinger, D. A. (2003). Amalgamation and hypodescent: The question of ethnoracial mixture in the history of the United States. *American Historical Review, 32*(5), 1363–1390.
- Ignatiev, N. (1995). *How the Irish became white*. New York: Routledge.
- Kendi, I. X. (2016). *Stamped from the beginning: The definitive history of racist ideas in America*. New York: Nation Books.
- Lee, C. D. (2003). Why we need to re-think race and ethnicity in educational research. *Educational Researcher, 32*(5), 3–5.
- Lee, C. D., Spencer, M. B., & Harpalani, V. (2003). “Every shut eye ain’t sleep”: Studying how people live culturally. *Educational Researcher, 32*(5), 6–13.
- Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. New York: Routledge.
- Lipsitz, G. (2006). *The possessive investment in whiteness: How white people profit from identity politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mahiri, J. (2017). *Deconstructing race: Multicultural education beyond the color-bind*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Mauer, M. (2006). *Race to incarcerate*. New York: The New York Press.
- Mukhopadhyay, C. C., Henze, R., Moses, Y. T. (2014). *How real is race? A sourcebook on race, culture, and biology*. Lanham: AltaMira Press.
- Nasir, N. S., & Saxe, G. B. (2003). Ethnic and academic identities: A cultural practice perspective on emerging tensions and their management in the lives of minority students. *Educational Researcher, 32*(5), 14–18.
- Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping track: How school structure inequality*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Painter, N. I. (2010). *The history of white people*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Palmié S. (May 2007). Genomics, divination, ‘racecraft.’ *American Ethnologist, 34*(2), 206.
- powell, J. A., & Menendian, S. (Summer 2016). The problem of othering: Towards inclusion and belonging. *Othering and belonging: Expanding the circle of human concern, 2*(2), 14–40.
- Rastogi, S., Johnson, T. D., Hoeffel, E. M., & Drewery, M. P., Jr. (2011, September). *The black population: 2010. Census Briefs* (Report No. C2010BR-06). Suitland: United States Census Bureau. Retrieved June 12, 2020, from <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf>
- Valenzuela, G. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany: State University of New York Press.



# Foreign Students in the Nationalist-Homogenizing Schools of a Neoliberal and Unequal Society: The Case of Chile

Andrea Riedemann and Muriel Armijo-Cabrera

## Abstract

This paper introduces the educational conditions of foreign children in the present Chilean school system. Based on the existing literature and on a field participative project carried out in 2017–2018, this paper identifies the Chilean school system, deeply rooted in Chilean history as a nationalist and neoliberal organization, where – based on this – students from foreign countries encounter racism and class segregation. In this respect it has to be mentioned that teacher training in Chile does not touch upon any aspect of preventing discriminations, neither regarding their way of managing their students' mutual relationships, nor regarding a reflexive approach that teachers need to identify their own personal prejudices reflected in their everyday professional practice.

## Keywords

Foreign students · Schools · Nationalism · Neoliberalism · Chile · Inequality

---

A. Riedemann (✉)

Universidad Bernardo O'Higgins, Santiago de Chile, Chile

e-mail: [andrea.riedemann@ubo.cl](mailto:andrea.riedemann@ubo.cl)

M. Armijo-Cabrera

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Campus San Joaquín, Santiago de Chile, Chile

e-mail: [muriel.armijo@uc.cl](mailto:muriel.armijo@uc.cl)

## 1 Introduction

In political, social and economic terms, for the last three decades Chile has been known as one of the most stable countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The end of its last military dictatorship in the early 1990s represented the return to a democratic political system; the government-run social programs managed to reduce poverty significantly, and economic growth showed outstanding numbers during the first years of this so-called transition era. But during Pinochet's regime, neoliberal and market-oriented reforms had been introduced in all aspects of social life, creating or deepening the conditions towards an unequal society. Today, it is clear that none of the post-dictatorial governments addressed inequality in a proper way so as to fight substantially the severe income gaps in the population. Currently, the minimum wage in Chile is 320,500 pesos (around 367 euros) per month. In 2017, 69.7% of workers received a salary below 500,000 pesos (around 600 euros), and only 5.2% of workers received a salary of 1,500,000 pesos (around 1800 euros) or more per month (Durán and Kremerman 2020). In 2017, the Gini Index was 46.6 (World Bank, n.d.). Access to education and health is granted in theory, but of poor quality in practical terms. For many people, having a good education and access to good health services is just impossible, due to high prices. Scholars in the areas of economy and sociology (Castillo et al. 2015; Núñez and Tartakowsky 2010), as well as some research centers (Centro de Estudios de Conflicto y Cohesión Social,<sup>1</sup> Fundación Sol<sup>2</sup>) and international organizations (United Nations Development Programme 2017), have shed light on these issues, raising the question of how people living in Chile manage to get along with this inequality and the very high cost of living.

On October 18th 2019, a fare rise in the public transportation system unexpectedly set off the biggest Chilean social movement since the end of dictatorship. To confront the price rise, secondary students organized and called on people to evade payment when using the subway. The government under president Piñera responded with such repressive police measures that many inhabitants of Santiago were outraged and started to protest, through massive demonstrations on the streets and banging pots outside their houses or apartments. The government continued to respond with brutality. In the last weeks of 2019, four different international

---

<sup>1</sup>For further information, please see <https://coes.cl/>.

<sup>2</sup>For further information, please see [www.fundacionsol.cl](http://www.fundacionsol.cl).



human rights organizations<sup>3</sup> and the Chilean Institute for Human Rights<sup>4</sup> published their reports on what has been happening in Chile since October 18th 2019. They all concluded that the current Chilean government has violated human rights in many ways. Based on the latest information provided by the Chilean Institute for Human Rights, over 3,500 people have been injured by state agents (police officers and, to a lesser extent, military forces), including 260 children. There has also been an unspecified number of illegal detentions, sexual harassment, abuse and rape, perpetrated by police on the streets or inside police stations. Some politicians – above all, the younger left-wing parliamentary representatives – have shown signs of understanding where the intense unease of the population comes from, and have achieved an important political agreement which led to the October 25th 2020 plebiscite. In this historic event, almost 78% of the voters approved a change of constitution, to replace the still current constitution signed by Pinochet in 1980. Although the perspective of creating a new constitution represents hope for a more equal country, many people still worry about the violent events of the near past as the multiple expressions of police brutality are interpreted as the President's inability or unwillingness to understand social unrest. Thus almost no advances towards the sustainable establishment of a real culture of human rights in Chile is expected and state authorities do not seem to have learned from the massive human rights violations during the previous dictatorship. The authors of this article deduce from this observation that there is a demand for changes in the education process of Chilean police, as well as for the whole Chilean education system.

---

## 2 Migration to Chile in the Near Past

Before October 2019, the then prevailing stability contributed to a growing migration of Latin American and Caribbean people to Chile. Some milestones that illustrate this growth are the following: in the 1990s, only 0.8% of the population living in Chile were foreign citizens (Organización de los Estados Americanos 2015). In 2006, following a government-run survey, 154,642 people in Chile had been born in another country (Fuentes & Hernando 2019). The 2017 census

---

<sup>3</sup>The four reporting organizations are Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

<sup>4</sup>For further information, see the website of the Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos, [www.indh.cl](http://www.indh.cl).

showed that over 17 million people lived in Chile that year; more than 700,000 were migrants, representing about 4% of the total population. At the end of 2018, the estimated number of migrants rose to 1,252,225 (Fuentes and Hernando 2019), making up 6% of the total population.

In the first years of this migration phenomenon, migrants in Chile were mainly women from neighboring Peru who hoped, through their work in Chile, to be able to send remittances to their families back in their home countries (Stefoni 2011). A few years later, two events contributed to further migration flows: on the one hand, the 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States led to the closure of borders there, as well as in other countries. Migrants from Latin America sought other destinations than the US. On the other hand, in 2001 a huge economic crisis began in Argentina, a country that until then had been the main target of intra-regional migration from Latin America and the Caribbean (Rojas and Silva 2016). Different kinds of political and economic crisis – like the still current one in Venezuela, as well as natural disasters like the big earthquake in Haiti in 2010 – have led to further immigration flows from diverse Latin American and Caribbean countries. Currently, the five most represented foreign communities in Chile are from Venezuela, Peru, Haiti, Colombia, and Bolivia, in order of size (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas & Departamento de Extranjería y Migración 2019).

As an obvious result of this growing immigration, in recent years the number of foreign students in some Chilean schools has risen steadily, and this growth has been especially strong during the last few years. According to the Chilean Ministry of Education, in 2017 2.2% of all students in Chilean schools were from other countries (Ministerio de Educación 2018). In 2018, this rose to 3.2% (Eyzaguirre et al. 2019). Looking at this nationwide average, evidently this figure is still very low compared to other countries – but for a variety of reasons, including Santiago's large degree of urban segregation, in some particular schools over 70% of students are foreigners (Rojas et al. 2018). How do schools deal with these foreign students, and what do these students encounter in Chilean schools? This paper aims to describe some of the tensions related to this question. First, we will refer to some aspects of Chilean history and the very particular Chilean education system, focusing on the facts suggested by the title of the paper: Chile is a neoliberal and socioeconomically highly unequal society, and in many of its schools nationalist and homogenizing ideas and values are central to its education processes (Rojas Flores 2004; Poblete 2009). Then, we will describe the three main issues related to foreign students in Chilean schools that have been highlighted by qualitative research, conducted by the authors of this paper in recent years.

### 3 Some Notes on the Chilean Education System

The current Chilean school system took shape in the first decades of the nineteenth century. After about 300 years in which most of the now existing Latin American countries were under the rule of the Spanish crown, Chile reached independence between 1810 and 1825, and a few years later, the first Chilean university and the first schools emerged. During the first decades of this new nation, teacher formation only existed for the preparatory level, but towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Chilean state hired a number of German teachers in charge of setting up secondary school teacher training (Alarcón 2010). As in many countries of the world, in Chile, too, right from the start the establishment of the school system was closely linked to the political interests of the nation (Bernstein 1996). In spite of the many common elements left by 300 years of colonial rule, Chile and the other Latin American nations that emerged in the first decades of the nineteenth century (Rinke 2010) took on the difficult task of highlighting and praising the supposedly unique characteristics of each individual country. Herein lay to a certain extent the beginnings of Chilean nationalism, a widespread and hardly questioned element of identity and feeling of belonging for Chilean people until today, which is taught in schools by numerous means.<sup>5</sup> The Chilean elites, who were strongly represented within state institutions, parliament, historiography and the press at that time (Cruz 2000), constructed an idea of a nation that should be understood ethnically as white and European, but culturally also as brave and sovereign like the Mapuche, the indigenous people who had fought for centuries against the Spanish invaders during the colonial era (Pinto Rodríguez 2003). This somewhat unusual and tense combination of European and indigenous models became even more complicated when the Chilean state, in the second half of the nineteenth century, forcibly occupied the land of the Mapuche in southern Chile, declared it to be Chilean territory (Cayuqueo 2017), and spread a deep anti-indigenism that was also evident in

---

<sup>5</sup>For example, in many public schools, every week – usually every Monday morning – begins with a symbolic act in the central courtyard of the school, where the nation's flag is raised and the national anthem is sung. Every year, there are big national celebrations in May – honoring a Chilean marine who has been glorified as a central figure of the Saltpeter War, during which Chile fought against its neighboring countries Peru and Bolivia in the second half of the nineteenth century – and in September, a day is dedicated to commemorate the beginning of the Chilean independence process from Spain, in 1810.

the school system for many decades (Riedemann 2012). This anti-indigeneism was originally directed against the indigenous people of Chile, but over the years also developed into hostility against indigenous migrants from other countries, such as Peru and Bolivia (Tijoux 2013). During the nineteenth century, Chile waged two wars against these two countries, resulting in Chile conquering formerly Peruvian and Bolivian lands. This fact has additionally strengthened Chilean nationalism towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the 20th.

As mentioned before, besides the return to democracy, it was the growth of the economy in the 1990s that made Chile an attractive country in terms of migration within Latin America and the Caribbean. But the macroeconomic data hide the fact that Chile has to be evaluated as a highly unequal country in terms of the distribution of health, wealth and education (United Nations Development Programme 2017) and many migrants only learn about this inequality once they arrive in Chile, confronted, for example, with very low wages paid in some industrial sectors. The origins of inequality in Chile can be located first and foremost in the colonial era, but the current inequality is also largely due to the neoliberal reforms introduced during the military dictatorship, which continued in many aspects after the military regime ended (Espinoza et al. 2013) and which was followed by the so-called democratic governments.

During the dictatorship, the abolition of parliament and the inability of civil society to resist allowed a series of reforms to be implemented, which until today affect people living in Chile in practically all areas. This extreme application of neoliberalism in all walks of life has also affected the education system (Valenzuela et al. 2013). In addition to the public schools, on the one hand – which constituted the vast majority of schools until the 1970s – and some private and paid schools, on the other hand, a new and third type of school emerged during those years. From the 1980s onward, the above-mentioned reforms allowed private individuals or institutions to receive public funds in order to found schools and turn them into highly lucrative businesses. From that time on, there has been a growing consciousness that education in Chile actually is just another product negotiated in the marketplace, that is, a consumer good rather than a social right equally granted to all, regardless of socioeconomic status (Falabella 2015).

Many students have changed to these new private schools since the 1980s, mainly for symbolic reasons: families still deem these schools to be more prestigious (Madero and Madero 2012). This massive change, along with the fact that schools are not run centrally by the state but locally by each district, has led to a great impoverishment of public schools (Carlson 2000). Today, public schools in most cases are poor schools. This means for example, that they are

not heated, even though in many parts of the country winter temperatures drop to zero degrees Celsius or below. It also means that the restrooms are not properly equipped (for instance with toilet paper), the school furniture is old, windows are often permanently broken or the roof of the school leaks when it rains. An important fact to mention here is that more than two thirds of all foreign students attend these kinds of school (Joiko and Vásquez 2016). A recent research study shows that in 2017, 46% of all Chilean schools reported having foreign students among its attendees, while 54% of schools reported no foreign students registered. A closer look at this reality, and leaving the small schools (less than 20 students) out of this observation, shows that 50% of all foreign students in Chile are registered in only 3% of all Chilean schools (Eyzaguirre et al. 2019).

So, what has happened since foreign students entered the Chilean education system, marked by inequality, neoliberalism and nationalist notions? From the year 2000 onwards, much qualitative research has been done, showing that foreign students face specific challenges in Chilean schools.

---

## **4 Main Issues Faced by Foreign Students in Chilean Schools**

As a general context, the arrival of foreign students has been representing a new field of tension in a school system already overstretched by several problems. But in the available research results, three main issues have been identified as especially relevant.

The first one of them revealed by research is that in the initial years of the current migration phenomenon some schools refused to host foreign students at their schools (Stefoni et al. 2008). On the other hand, due to the voucher system of the Chilean school system (Valenzuela et al. 2013), some schools were open to receiving migrant students right from the beginning (Joiko and Vásquez 2016). This situation probably explains, to a certain extent, why some schools have such a high concentration, up to 70%, of foreign students (Rojas et al. 2018). Due to the fact that the current Chilean migration law was created under the regime of Pinochet in 1975, based on the doctrine of national security (Stang 2016), for a long time foreigners in Chile have been represented to public opinion as a threat to internal, national issues. This explains why foreign children, too, have been facing multiple bureaucratic obstacles to register in schools. In reaction to the initial refusal of some schools to host migrant students, the Chilean Ministry of Education released a series of new rules and norms related to this topic, which helped to solve that problem, but – probably involuntarily – created a new one: to

facilitate registration in schools, the Chilean Ministry of Education created a new figure based on a fictitious (not official) personal identification number (Stang 2016), which actually encouraged entrance at school – but with limited rights for students.

Foreign students – many of them of indigenous descent from neighboring countries or of African descent – are, as mentioned above, confronted with a society that has tried to present itself as ethnically homogeneous, ‘white’ and non-indigenous since it constituted itself as a nation-state. The growing heterogeneity apparently created by migration irritates large parts of Chilean society because many Chileans believe that immigrants pollute and render worthless a formerly ‘pure’ land. Deeply rooted racist thinking has been identified in some of the studies on attitudes towards foreigners in Chilean society (Tijoux 2016). Latin American and Caribbean migration has made the existing racism in Chile more visible and obvious.

Discrimination experiences at school – the second central topic highlighted by research on foreign students in Chile – are nowadays well documented (Beniscelli, 2016; Pavez 2012). According to an NGO working with migrant children, “Discrimination in school has become so daily that migrant children have naturalized it, getting to consider it as part of the costs of migration” (Corporación Colectivo sin Fronteras 2007, p. 140–141, as cited in Jiménez et al. 2017). A similar conclusion is present in an article focused on Peruvian migration, which states that “children have to stand racism as a way of being of Chilean people” (Tijoux 2013).

The third relevant issue refers to the lack of appropriate teacher formation for this relatively new social context. Until now, teacher education programs with an intercultural approach are rather scarce in Chile, and focus mainly on teaching for indigenous populations. This absence has had diverse negative effects, including the capacity of teachers to identify and recognize racist attitudes, and to act on, prevent or stop them (Riedemann and Stefoni 2015). Foreign students encounter teachers who themselves attended precarious schools during their childhoods, where they were educated in a strongly nationalist way, and where homogeneity was an absolutely important value that they now pass on (Beniscelli et al. 2019). Paradoxically, nationalism is also present when teachers try to show intercultural openness, but the ‘inclusion’ of other countries or nationalities happens mainly through symbolic representations like the presence of their national flags or their anthems. The following quote shows how convinced the chairman of a district is about the effectiveness of this measure addressing cultural heterogeneity of his students in terms of national symbols:

If you go for a walk in the school, you will see that we have practically not only hoisted the Chilean flag, but that it is accompanied by all the other Latin American flags. When we have a school party, we sing the Chilean national anthem, but also the song of the Latin American Brotherhood, and this is institutionalized. (Interview with the Chairman of the District of Education in a district of Santiago, trans. by authors)<sup>6</sup>

Besides nationalism, the fact that these teachers have been barely confronted with education approaches focused on diversity during their studies and practical training also means that they may never have considered or reflected on their own racism. During the fieldwork of a study, the team in charge noted that teachers insistently talked about a Haitian boy who had to be ‘civilized’ to ‘make him more human’, apparently because he had never been to school before. They said that he walked on the tables, never sat quietly because ‘he was not used to it’, and that ‘he had never seen a booklet’, so this student found the school environment and its tools ‘strange’. The teachers also mentioned that he did not speak Spanish and asserted that this student never kept his shoes on, as a further example of his lack of familiarity with schools and missing ‘civilized’ customs.<sup>7</sup>

A secondary effect of the lack of reflection on the teachers’ own beliefs, as mentioned above, is the inability to recognize discriminatory actions among students. Foreign students meet classmates who, although showing a greater intercultural openness than their teachers, often make their foreign classmates feel that Chile is not their country and, for example, have no right to criticize this country. Roessler quotes a male teenager:

---

<sup>6</sup>Interview extract from the project “Construyendo escuelas interculturales: elaboración participativa de una hoja de ruta para asistentes de la educación, profesores y directivos” (Building intercultural schools: participatory construction of a road map for education assistants, teachers and administrators), Stefoni et al. (2017–2018). This project was carried out by a team of researchers related to the faculty of Sociology and the faculty of Education at Universidad Alberto Hurtado, and received funds from the Chilean Ministry of Education (Fonide FX 11,622 2016). The main goal of the project was to design a program proposal for intercultural schools in Chile, considering both the indigenous and the migration reality. The project was conceived at the same time as a research and an intervention project, aiming to foster reflection processes among the teachers. It used a qualitative approach, based on interviews and focus groups at the research stage, and group discussions at the intervention stage.

<sup>7</sup>Fieldwork notes from the above-mentioned project.

I've met foreigners coming to Chile and criticizing the country, and that's actually wrong, because Chile gives them everything, it's a good country, and when a foreigner comes and criticizes it, even though he lives here, and he gets a job and all that then he cannot criticize, and then sometimes we Chileans are angry because of it. (Roessler 2018, trans. by authors)

These quotes and observations give insight in a finding on shortcomings in teacher formation in Chile with respect to reflecting on the notion of 'cultural homogeneity': a special sensitivity for differences, and a critical posture towards racism – two central conditions that have been found to be relevant in teacher formation in other national contexts like Germany (Doğmuş et al. 2016) but which have still not been sufficiently included in Chilean teacher formation.

---

## **5 Need for Reforms in the Chilean Teacher Training System with Respect to Acknowledgement of Changes in Society Through Migration**

The existence of hierarchies between national citizens and migrants, of discrimination in schools and the lack of proper teacher formation with respect to an anti-discriminatory, diversity-friendly pedagogical approach are structural issues of the Chilean education system, which need to be revised. Achieving quality education in a neoliberal and unequal society seems to be a hard task. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that in the last decades important discussion in professional contexts about developing an intercultural approach that would fit the Latin American reality and not be only an adaptation of European or North American ones, have been started.

The approach of 'critical interculturality' (Tubino 2005; Walsh 2010) focuses on the fact that Latin America was a continent dominated by colonial power, and that this long domination has left a deep impact on all structures of society. The colonial way of thinking could be summarized by the idea that 'white' people deserve to be at the top of all human hierarchies, and that indigenous and 'black' people, on the other hand, deserve to remain at lower levels of this socially constructed hierarchy. Analytical approaches in Latin America also discuss "neoliberal multiculturalism" (Boccaro and Ayala 2011), which has been critically identified as a way of making politics only using multicultural rhetoric but not bringing it into practice or even questioning the essentialist notion of culture underlying the approach. But, as mentioned before, it is not only neoliberal multiculturalism but neoliberalism in all its expressions that is nowadays being



criticized in Chilean society. A new consciousness about social inequality has emerged, and in fact, one of the main phrases associated with this movement is “Chile despertó” [Chile awoke].<sup>8</sup> We are concluding the revision of this paper during the first days of November 2020. Thanks, and in reaction, to the social movement, Chile will start a process of constitutional change after the October 2020 plebiscite.<sup>9</sup> We expect that the new Chilean constitution will consider migration as a human right and that it will put an end to the current segregated school system, advancing towards a real quality education for everyone, regardless of social, national, or ethnic origins. As a hope, the inclusion of indigenous people through reserved places in the constitutional organism is in process of approval by the parliament, considering all recognized ethnicities as well as Chileans of African descent. In the light of what has been happening in Chile in the course of one year (October 2019 till November 2020), an urgent content to be included in that quality education is education in human rights, which unquestionably represents a proper frame to embrace a critical intercultural approach.

---

## References

- Alarcón, C. (2010). Frühe Formen des Süd-Süd Transfers und Kooperation im Bildungsbereich. Chilenische Diffusion von Bildungsexperten und -modellen nach Costa Rica, Venezuela und Bolivien am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts [Early forms of South-South transfer and cooperation in education. Chilean diffusion of educational experts and models to Costa Rica, Venezuela and Bolivia at the beginning of the 20th century]. In U. Engel & M. Middell (Eds.), *World Orders Revisited* (pp. 135–154). Leipzig: Universitätsverlag.
- Beniscelli, L. (2016). *‘Nos estamos llenando de extranjeros’*. *Racismo cotidiano en los discursos de las/os maestras de una escuela con niñas y niños migrantes en la comuna de Santiago* [‘We are getting full of foreigners’. Daily racism in teachers’ discourses in a school with migrant children in Santiago] (Unpublished master’s thesis). Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Buenos Aires.

---

<sup>8</sup>On the “Chile despertó” movement, see <https://www.univision.com/noticias/america-latina/chile-desperto-miles-protestan-en-la-manifestacion-mas-masiva-desde-el-retorno-a-la-democracia-en-ese-pais> and also see <https://www.nytimes.com/es/2019/11/04/espanol/america-latina/protestas-sebastian-pinera.html>.

<sup>9</sup>Recently postponed, as mentioned before, from April 2020.

- Beniscelli, L., Riedemann, A., & Stang, F. (2019). Multicultural, y, sin embargo asimilacionista. Paradojas provocadas por el currículo oculto en una escuela con alto porcentaje de alumnos migrantes [Multicultural, yet assimilationist. Paradoxes caused by the hidden curriculum in a school with a high percentage of migrant students]. *Calidad En La Educación*, (50), 393–423.
- Bernstein, B. (1996). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Boccarra, G., & Ayala, P. (2011). La nacionalización del indígena en tiempos de multiculturalismo neoliberal [The nationalization of the indigenous in the era of neoliberal multiculturalism]. *Fiar*, 4(2). Retrieved May 7, 2020, from <http://interamerica.de/volume-4-2/boccarra/>
- Carlson, B. A. (2000). ¿Qué nos enseñan las escuelas sobre la educación de los niños pobres en Chile? [What can the schools teach us about poor children's education in Chile?] *Revista de La CEPAL*, 72, 165–184.
- Castillo, J. C., Palacios, D., Joignant, A., & Tham, M. (2015). Inequality, Distributive Justice and Political Participation: An Analysis of the Case of Chile. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 34(4), 486–502.
- Cayúqueo, P. (2017). *Historia secreta mapuche* [Secret Mapuche History]. Santiago de Chile: Catalonia.
- Cruz, N. (2000). La educación chilena y las elites políticas de los sectores medios (1900–1970) [Chilean education and the political elites of middle-class areas (1900–1970)]. *Mapocho. Revista de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales*, 47(1), 285–302.
- Doğmuş, A., Karakaşoğlu, Y., & Mecheril, P. (Eds.). (2016). *Pädagogisches Können in der Migrationsgesellschaft* [Pedagogical competences in the migration society]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Durán, G., & Kremerman, M. (2020, November). *Los Verdaderos Sueldos de Chile. Panorama Actual del Valor de la Fuerza del Trabajo Usando la ESI (2019)* [The real salaries of Chile. Current Overview of the Value of the Workforce Using the ESI (2019)]. Santiago de Chile: Fundación Sol. Retrieved January 10, 2021, from [https://www.fundacionsol.cl/cl\\_luzit\\_herramientas/static/adjuntos/6700/VS2020\(esi2019\)-1.pdf](https://www.fundacionsol.cl/cl_luzit_herramientas/static/adjuntos/6700/VS2020(esi2019)-1.pdf)
- Espinoza, V., Barozet, E., & Méndez, M. L. (2013). Estratificación y movilidad social bajo un modelo neoliberal: El caso de Chile [Stratification and social mobility in a neoliberal model: the case of Chile]. *Laboratorio. Revista de Estudios sobre Cambio Estructural y Desigualdad Social*, 14(25), 169–191.
- Eyzaguirre, S., Aguirre, J., & Blanco, N. (2019). Dónde estudian, cómo les va y qué impacto tienen los escolares inmigrantes [Where do immigrants students go to school, how are they doing and what impact they have]. In *Inmigración en Chile. Una mirada multidimensional* (pp. 149–189). Santiago de Chile: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Falabella, A. (2015). El mercado escolar en Chile y el surgimiento de la nueva gestión pública: el tejido de la política entre la dictadura neoliberal y los gobiernos de la centroizquierda (1979 a 2009) [School markets in Chile and the emergence of the new public management: the texture of policies between a neoliberal dictatorship regime and center-left democratic governments (1979–2009)]. *Educação & Sociedade*, 36(132), 699–722.
- Fuentes, A., & Hernando, A. (2019). Caracterización estadística de la inmigración en Chile [Statistical characterization of immigration in Chile]. In I. Aninat & Rodrigo Vergara (Eds.), *Inmigración en Chile. Una mirada multidimensional* (pp. 379–407). Santiago de Chile: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

- Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas & Departamento de Extranjería y Migración. (2019). *Estimación de Personas Extranjeras Residentes en Chile. 31 de Diciembre 2018* [Estimate of Foreign People Living in Chile. December 31st, 2018] (Presentation). Santiago de Chile. Retrieved May 8, 2020, from <https://www.extranjeria.gob.cl/media/2019/04/Presentaci%C3%B3n-Extranjeros-Residentes-en-Chile.-31-Diciembre-2018.pdf>
- Jiménez, F., Aguilera, M., Valdés, R., & Hernández, M. (2017). Migración y escuela: Análisis documental en torno a la incorporación de inmigrantes al sistema educativo chileno [Migration and school: Documentary analysis on the incorporation of immigrants into the Chilean educational system]. *Psicoperspectivas*, 16(1), 105–116.
- Joiko, S., & Vásquez, A. (2016). Acceso y elección escolar de familias migrantes en Chile: “No tuve problemas porque la escuela es abierta, porque acepta muchas nacionalidades” [School access and choice of migrant families in Chile: “I had no problems because the school is open, because it accepts many nationalities”]. *Calidad En La Educación*, (45), 132–173.
- Madero, C., & Madero, I. (2012). Elección escolar y selección estudiantil en el sistema escolar chileno. ¿Quién elige a quién?: el caso de la educación católica [School choice and students’ selection in the Chilean school system. Who chooses whom? The case of catholic education]. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa*, 17(55), 1267–1295.
- Ministerio de Educación. (2018). *Política Nacional de Estudiantes Extranjeros 2018–2022*. Retrieved May 8, 2020, from <https://www.mineduc.cl/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/05/PoliticaNacionalMigrantes.pdf>
- Núñez, J., & Tartakowsky, A. (2011). The relationship between income inequality and inequality of opportunities in a high-inequality country: the case of Chile. *Applied Economics Letters*, 18(4), 359–369.
- Organización de los Estados Americanos. (2015). *Migración Internacional en las Américas* [International migration in the Americas] (SICREMI Report No. 3). Washington, D. C. Retrieved May 8, 2020, from <https://www.oas.org/docs/publications/SICREMI-2015-SPANISH.pdf>
- Pavez, I. (2012). Inmigración y racismo: experiencias de la niñez peruana en Santiago de Chile. Si Somos Americanos [Immigration and racism: Peruvian childhood experiences in Santiago de Chile. Yes we are Americans]. *Revista de Estudios Transfronterizos*, XIII(1), 75–99.
- Pinto Rodríguez, J. (2003). *La formación del Estado y la nación, y el pueblo mapuche. De la inclusión a la exclusión* [The construction of State and nation, and the Mapuche people. From inclusion to exclusion]. Santiago de Chile: Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana.
- Poblete, R. (2009). Educación intercultural en la escuela de hoy: reformas y desafíos para su implementación [Intercultural education in today's schools: reforms and challenges for their implementation]. *Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Inclusiva*, 3(2), 181–200. Retrieved May 7, 2020 from [https://issuu.com/educacionintercultural/docs/educacion\\_intercultural\\_en\\_la\\_escue](https://issuu.com/educacionintercultural/docs/educacion_intercultural_en_la_escue)
- Riedemann, A. (2012). *Representaciones cambiantes e historia fragmentada: los mapuche en los textos escolares de historia de Chile, 1846–2000* [Changing representations and fragmented history: the Mapuche in the Chilean history school textbooks, 1846–2000] (Doctoral dissertation). Berlin: Refubium, University publication server. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/refubium-15286>

- Riedemann, A., & Stefoni, C. (2015). Sobre el racismo, su negación, y las consecuencias para una educación anti-racista en la enseñanza secundaria chilena [On racism, its denial, and the consequences for an anti-racist education in Chilean high school]. *Polis. Revista Latinoamericana*, 14(42), 191–216.
- Rinke, S. (2010). *Revolutionen in Lateinamerika. Wege in die Unabhängigkeit, 1760–1830* [Revolutions in Latin America. Ways towards Independence, 1760–1830]. Munich: C. H. Beck.
- Roessler, P. (2018). Pensamiento nacionalista-territorializado y percepción de “des-ubicamiento” del inmigrante: el camino hostil de las construcciones de identidades chilenas en la convivencia escolar [Nationalist-territorialized thinking and perception of the “de-location” of the immigrant: the hostile road of the construction of Chilean identities in school coexistence]. *Calidad En La Educación*, (49), 50–81.
- Rojas, M. T., Riedemann, A., Joiko, S., Palma, J., Urrutia, S., & Sepúlveda, X. (2018). *¿Trabajan las escuelas con un enfoque intercultural? Diagnóstico inicial de escuelas municipales de la zona norte de la Región Metropolitana* [Do schools work with an intercultural approach? Initial diagnosis of public schools from the Northern area of the Metropolitan Region] (Report). Santiago de Chile: Universidad Alberto Hurtado & Fundación Servicio Jesuita a Migrantes. Retrieved May 8, 2020, from <https://educacion.uahurtado.cl/wpsite/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/INFORME-ENFOQUE-INTERCULTURAL-en-escuelas-de-Santiago-2018.pdf>
- Rojas, N., & Silva, C. (2016). *La migración en Chile: breve reporte y caracterización* [Migration in Chile: brief report and characterization] (Report). Retrieved June 12, 2020, from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305618995\\_La\\_Migracion\\_en\\_Chile\\_Breve\\_reporte\\_y\\_caracterizacion/link/5795e70a08aeb0ffcd051dbc/download](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305618995_La_Migracion_en_Chile_Breve_reporte_y_caracterizacion/link/5795e70a08aeb0ffcd051dbc/download)
- Rojas Flores, J. (2004). *Moral y prácticas cívicas en los niños chilenos, 1880–1950* [Moral and civic practices among Chilean children, 1880–1950]. Santiago de Chile: Ariadna Ediciones. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://www.academica.org/jorge.rojas.flores/10.pdf>
- Stang, M. F. (2016). De la Doctrina de la Seguridad Nacional a la gobernabilidad migratoria: la idea de seguridad en la normativa migratoria chilena, 1975–2014 [From the Doctrine of National Security to the migration governance: the idea of security in the Chilean migration normative, 1975–2014]. *Polis. Revista Latinoamericana*, 15(44), 83–107. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-65682016000200005>
- Stefoni, C. (Ed.). (2011). *Mujeres inmigrantes en Chile: ¿Mano de obra o trabajadoras con derechos?* [Immigrants women in Chile: Workforce or workers with rights?] Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado.
- Stefoni, C., Acosta, E., Gaymer, M., & Casas-Cordero, F. (2008). *Niños y niñas inmigrantes en Santiago de Chile. Entre la integración y la exclusión* [Immigrant children in Santiago de Chile. Between integration and exclusion]. Santiago de Chile: International Organization for Migration & Universidad Alberto Hurtado.
- Tijoux, M. E. (2013). Niños(as) marcados por la inmigración peruana: estigma, sufrimientos, resistencias [Children marked by Peruvian immigration: stigma, suffering, resistance]. *Convergencia. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 20(61), 83–104.
- Tijoux, M. E. (Ed.). (2016). *Racismo en Chile. La piel como marca de la inmigración* [Racism in Chile. Skin as a mark of immigration]. Santiago de Chile: Universitaria.

- Tubino, F. (2005). La praxis de la interculturalidad en los Estados Nacionales Latinoamericanos [Praxis of interculturality in Latin American Nation States]. *Cuadernos Interculturales*, 3(5), 83–96.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2017). *Desiguales. Orígenes, cambios y desafíos de la brecha social en Chile* [Unequals. Origins, changes and challenges of the social gap in Chile]. Santiago de Chile. Retrieved May 5, 2020, from [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/chile/docs/pobreza/undp\\_cl\\_pobreza-Libro-DESIGUALES-final.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/chile/docs/pobreza/undp_cl_pobreza-Libro-DESIGUALES-final.pdf)
- Valenzuela, J. P., Bellei, C., & de los Ríos, D. (2013). Socioeconomic school segregation in a market-oriented educational system. The case of Chile. *Journal of Education Policy*, 29(2), 217–241.
- Walsh, C. (2010). Interculturalidad crítica y educación intercultural [Critical interculturality and intercultural education]. In J. Viaña, L. Tapia, & C. Walsh (Eds.), *Construyendo interculturalidad crítica* (pp. 75–96). La Paz: Convenio Andrés Bello. Retrieved May 7, 2020, from <https://aulaintercultural.org/2010/12/14/interculturalidad-critica-y-educacion-intercultural/>
- World Bank. (n.d.). *GINI index (World Bank estimate) - Chile*. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=CL>



# Teachers' Constructions of Students' Transnational Biographies: Analyses in German and US Schools

Dorothee Schwendowius and Saskia Terstegen

## Abstract

This article explores how teachers in German and US public schools relate to students' educational paths and experiences in the context of transnational migration. The analysis is based on focus groups held in two schools. Selected sequences were analyzed comparatively with the aid of interpretative methods. The focus groups firstly reveal different types of knowledge and notions of normality teachers draw on when relating to their students' lives, as well as heterogeneous professional self-positionings. These differences can be linked to local school cultures, professional knowledge repertoires and institutional hierarchies, as well as distinct traditions of anti-discrimination in Germany and the US. Secondly, the analysis highlights overlapping paradoxes of pedagogical professionalism resulting from the tension between students' transnational biographies and nation-state-oriented school systems.

## Keywords

Teaching professionals · Transnational biographies · Education paths · Migration · Qualitative comparison · School culture

D. Schwendowius (✉)

Faculty of Humanities, Otto Von Guericke University Magdeburg, Magdeburg, Germany

e-mail: [dorothee.schwendowius@ovgu.de](mailto:dorothee.schwendowius@ovgu.de)

S. Terstegen

Faculty of Education, Goethe University Frankfurt, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

e-mail: [terstegen@em.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:terstegen@em.uni-frankfurt.de)

## 1 Introduction

Transnational movements through (forced) migration are in conflict with the logic of national school systems (see Gogolin and Pries 2004). Educational paths cross national boundaries and do not fit without creating friction with school procedures and routines. They challenge the organization of nation-state-oriented educational systems and thus are profoundly precarious for the individuals who pursue them (see Chamakalayil and Riegel 2016; Schroeder and Seukwa 2018).

In our article, we explore how teachers relate to students' transnational education paths and how they construct students' transnational biographies in the context of (forced) migration.<sup>1</sup> We use data material from focus group discussions in two schools to explore how teachers make sense of students' transnational education paths, what knowledge they refer to, and how they position themselves as professionals (with respect to the tension between transnational education paths and nation-state-oriented school systems).<sup>2</sup>

We assume that teachers are ambivalently involved in forming education paths and biographies. By framing and accompanying learning processes, and by diagnosing and predicting success and failure in education, they can be seen as central for *reproducing*, as well as *disturbing*, societal relations of difference and inequality (see Lange-Vester 2015; Kramer 2015; Stanton-Salazar 2011). In this context, teachers' views and knowledge of their students' family backgrounds, their lifeworld and their education paths are important as they shape interpretations of

---

<sup>1</sup>Undoubtedly, types of mobility which (by law) fall into the category of *forced* migration potentially create a *specific* vulnerability due to legal frameworks which are beyond the individual's control. Yet in this article we focus on similarities rather than on differences in relation to other types of transnational migration, by highlighting the confusion students' transnational biographies create in nation-state-oriented public schools.

<sup>2</sup>Our analysis is part of a comparative qualitative research project on school cultures in migration societies, which was conducted in German and US schools. The EDUSPACE project (2015–2019, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and led by Merle Hummrich, Goethe-University Frankfurt) investigates how schools in Germany and the US refer to issues of diversity and inequity, and how difference is constructed and processed, against the backdrop of distinct histories of migration and racism, as well as different educational policies and approaches to diversity and anti-discrimination. The study is designed as a qualitative multi-level analysis (see Hummrich and Terstegen 2018) with a focus on case studies in four schools. These include analyses of school programs, homepages, focus groups with teachers and interviews with principals, as well as ethnographic writings and audio recordings of classroom interaction (see also Hummrich 2019).

students' learning practices and achievements and might even contribute to mold children's future education paths (see Gomolla and Radtke 2009; Dreke 2011).

When examining teachers' statements on students' *transnational biographies*, we regard these as socially contextualized constructions, which refer to specific institutional conditions as well as to professional knowledge repertoires and professional (self-)concepts. Drawing on a social constructivist perspective, we read these constructions both as an expression of existing professional *knowledge repertoires* (about transnational education paths and biographies) and processes of *knowledge production* about this phenomenon.

---

## 2 A Transnational Approach to Qualitative Case Comparison

Although all nation-based educational systems conflict with transnational education paths, in migration research, this relationship has so far been mostly addressed within a single nation-state context only. In this article, we would like to overcome a solely nation-based contextualization and adopt "a 'methodological transnationalism' perspective" (Amelina and Faist 2012). By including data material from schools of two nation-states in the analysis, we do not aim at a systematic comparison of the two school systems. Rather, we would like to present a perspective which reflects upon the tension between transnational education paths and national education systems *as a general problem in migration societies*.<sup>3</sup>

By regarding the schools in both countries as *schools in migration societies*, we firstly argue that migration has been shaping school reality in Germany and the US alike. Secondly, even though we may identify many structural and systemic differences between the school systems of these nation-states, findings from international research reveal that in both systems schools play an active role in processing and reproducing social and ethnic inequalities (see for example Weis and Fine 2005). In both countries, institutionalized power relations come into effect in school structures and practices and create (de-)privileged positions for students along interrelated categories of difference (for example Kemp-Graham 2018). This *tertium comparationis* connects schools in Germany and the US

---

<sup>3</sup>Here, we refer to Paul Mecheril's concept of a migration society ("Migrationsgesellschaft"; see Mecheril 2010, p. 11).



– despite significant differences regarding the manifestations and historical conditions of migration, as well as racism and social inequality.

Following the often-quoted critique of methodological nationalism (see Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002), we intend to take an approach which transcends the nation-state as the sole explanatory and reference framework for the comparison of cases. Methodologically, we refer to qualitative-comparative approaches of case analysis as for example suggested by Bartlett and Vavrus (2013), who consider international comparison as a process of including different contexts in the analysis: “Vertical case studies de-center the nation-state from its privileged position as the fundamental entity in comparative research to one of several important units of analysis” (p. 11). This corresponds with interpretative methodology, which allows the researcher to investigate the case in its individual complexity and its respective contexts.

As Vavrus and Bartlett (2006) argue, qualitative case comparisons across national boundaries which are “grounded in a principal site (for example a school, a community, an institution or a government ministry)” (p. 96) must take into account “the ways in which historical trends, social structures, and national and international forces shape local processes” (p. 96) at the investigated site. At the same time, interpretative methodology implies that the question of *which* contexts *in which way* are of relevance for understanding these processes in the particular case cannot be answered a priori, but needs to be analyzed empirically (Falkenberg 2018, p. 129).

Against this backdrop, we regard the teachers’ constructions of students’ transnational biographies as embedded in particular social and institutional contexts (see Kalpaka 2011). While ‘their’ schools are situated in contexts with distinctive policies, laws and discourses, we prefer to examine the teachers’ constructions *empirically* rather than presupposing the potential relevance of national differences. Moreover, we are interested in commonalities in teachers’ constructions which may result from the tension between transnational education paths and national education systems in both cases.

---

### **3 Transnational Biographies from the Perspective of Teachers – Empirical Insights**

In our analyses, we draw on discussions with focus groups of teachers at a high school in a big city on the US east coast (*Hoover High school*) and a community school (“*Gemeinschaftsschule*”) in a medium-sized city in the west of Germany

(*Heinrich-Böll-Schule*).<sup>4</sup> The focus groups aimed to address the experiences and positionings of teachers in relation to the topic of 'diversity' in their respective schools. In the following, we will focus on those sequences in which transnational migration is discussed. In both schools, this topic was introduced *by the participating teachers themselves*. Thus, our data first of all indicate that transnational education paths of students are made relevant in discussions and interpretations of teachers in both cases alike.

By using the concept of transnationalization and framing the examples mentioned as *transnational* biographies, we attempt to highlight that migration often cannot be conceptualized as a linear and one-off process. The concept points to the many ways in which individuals and families create "transnational social spaces", a term coined by Pries (2001), and also social interdependencies<sup>5</sup> (Pries 1996, p. 467) by virtually and/or physically moving between nation-states.<sup>6</sup> In migration societies, schools are shaped through the everyday practices of individuals who attend schools and maintain transnational social spaces in their everyday lives.<sup>7</sup> While it has to be considered that for example national immigration laws limit the physical mobility of migrants (especially when they are categorized as refugees), transnational biographies become relevant in schools *despite* these limitations.

### 3.1 Hoover High School

In the discussion with five 9th-grade teachers<sup>8</sup> at Hoover High School, the issue of migration is introduced by a social studies teacher, Emma Binetti. In response to the general question about the teachers' experiences with diversity at the school, she criticizes that the school does not adequately address the needs of certain groups of students. "We don't really address the diversity of our students

---

<sup>4</sup>All names have been changed for the purpose of anonymization.

<sup>5</sup>Here, Pries refers to Elias (1986).

<sup>6</sup>For further research on transnational biographies in migration societies see for example Lutz (2004) as well as Apitzsch and Siouti (2014), who use the concept of transnationalization for biographical case studies.

<sup>7</sup>Schools can therefore also be examined as transnational educational spaces themselves (see Hinrichsen and Paz Matute 2018).

<sup>8</sup>The teachers participating in the discussions were the ones whose classes we observed. The observations in all schools took place in grade 9.

and focus on the needs of the individual diverse populations” (p. 3/l. 28–29). As an example, Ms. Binetti mentions the ESL<sup>9</sup> students taught by her colleague, Arthur Harris, and points out that “those children are not a priority in our system” (p. 3/l. 32–33). In this statement, “diversity” is used as an essentializing term which is applied to specific groups of students who represent “diversity” rather than characterizing the student population as a whole. By referring to ESL students as an example, Ms. Binetti constructs these students as a homogenous, disadvantaged group (“population”) whose particular needs are not sufficiently acknowledged. At the same time however, by hinting at their non-prioritized status (not only at Hoover High school, but with regard to the school system in general), she opens up the topic of inclusion and exclusion of groups of students for a critical discussion. This opportunity is then used by the ESL teacher, Arthur Harris. He agrees with Ms. Binetti’s statement and points to the powerful role of wealthy parents who, according to him, act as aggressive advocates for their children and, thereby, actively secure privileges for themselves (for example ensuring that their children are taught by teachers they deem qualified). ‘His’ ESL students, on the other hand, do not have such advocates (“no-one is looking out for them”, p. 4/l. 34). Instead, the teachers are required to fill this role, whose voices, according to Mr. Harris, are less powerful than the voices of those parents who have “social or political capital” (p. 4/l. 14). In Arthur Harris’ position, it is worth emphasizing two things: first, the self-positioning as advocate for the ESL students who he positions as marginalized in school; second, his criticism of social privileges, which mirrors social scientific theories. Accordingly, Mr. Harris attributes this marginalized position of ESL students to their families’ unequal access to the resources mentioned above, which makes it difficult for them to use the education system for their own interests.

Mr. Harris describes the migration stories of his students by referring to an ideal–typical pattern. He explains:

This is like a sort of stereotypical like normal story for a lot of these students. A lot of the newcomers in the English-learner cohort from Central America when they were very little their parents immigrated into the US – they were raised primarily by their grandparents – they maybe went up through first grade third grade sixth grade

---

<sup>9</sup>“English as a second language”: these are students who are attributed support in the English language. Their first language is mostly Spanish, as they have migrated mainly from South and Central America to the USA. The ESL classes at this school are therefore held in both languages.

depending on the student – before they start working to help out with the farmer or whatever their grandparents to help earn money – then when they get closer to middle school age that's when the gangs start really recruiting and so the family wants to move them away from that and so they come across the border by themselves or maybe with a sibling to join up with their parents who are really strangers to them [...] they may be working to try to support the family or to pay for legal fees (p. 7/ll. 9–30).

Here, Arthur Harris takes on the position of an expert, which allows him to construct a typecast of the ESL students' life courses. At the same time, the phrase "stereotypical like normal story" indicates that he is aware of this typecast. Thus, it implies both a powerful interpretation of the students' life courses by the speaker, as well as a self-reflective turn regarding this interpretation.

In his presentation of the 'typical' story of students whose geographical origin is located in Central America, Mr. Harris distinguishes their life courses from certain expectations of the "Normallebenslauf" ['ordinary life course', trans. by authors] (Kohli 1985). Besides others, these imply the norm of being raised by one's own parents. The students' childhoods are thus constructed as "non-normative childhoods" (Phoenix et al. 2017, p. 2.7). A second deviation from the expectations of a 'normal' childhood is the early involvement of children in (part-time) agricultural work, which appears to conflict with their school career. The following description continues to focus on the vulnerability and need for protection of children and young people. Their migration is interpreted as a preventive measure to protect them from being recruited by criminal gangs, a danger that seems fore-ordained when entering adolescence. At the same time, these young people face various burdens: the unfamiliar relationship with the parents, economic strains and – this is indicated later – the problem that young people fail to escape the clutches of 'multinational' gangs in the US as well. Thus, in Harris' interpretation, the goal of the migration project is ultimately missed; the young people seem to be caught in a vicious circle. They may cross national borders, but they remain in a vulnerable position, not least due to their families' subordinate economic position in US society. Thus, Harris' statement represents a predominantly negative prognosis of the transnational educational careers and migration biographies of students, which seem to follow a collective trajectory in social space (Bourdieu 1986/1990, pp. 57–58). Thus, there is already a high probability of failure, which points beyond the absence of success at school only. Harris sees the reasons for this in the social and institutional conditions that make it difficult for young people to successfully participate in the education system. He accuses the school and the school district of meeting the students and their 'baggage' with an

attitude of ignorance, by not making available any funds for educational programs on the prevention of gang crime and thereby failing to recognize the dangerous situations in which young people find themselves.

### 3.2 Heinrich Böll Community School

In the discussion about diversity with 9th-grade teachers at Heinrich Böll Community School, migration is thematized especially with regard to forced migration. The teachers deal with forced migration primarily as a risk constellation for the school careers of the students. In contrast to Hoover High School, they do not construct a “group biography” (Schulze 1997, p. 176);<sup>10</sup> instead, the topic is approached via a single case that is presented as an individual’s fate. One of the discussion participants, Ms. Simon, reports about a 9th-grade student named Pelin. Her mother migrated from Syria to Germany during her pregnancy, and Pelin was then born in Germany. The families in Germany and Syria still maintained a close relationship, though.<sup>11</sup> Years after her migration to Germany, Pelin’s mother died in an attack during a visit in Syria. Due to the ongoing war there, Pelin’s aunt recently fled Syria with her children, attempting to get to Germany. But while en route, they went missing temporarily, before they “fortunately” (p. 10/l. 1) arrived at their destination much later. By re-telling this story, Ms. Simon emphasizes the emotional impact of Pelin’s story by saying that everyone in class was touched by it and felt with Pelin. She also presents the story in a way that evokes sympathetic reactions in the focus group interaction. Yet this empathic approach is contradicted by a rather distanced view when she resumes:

That was a very bad time for Pelin and most of all, she did not learn anything at all in the time, so she was like this, away from the class she just could not concentrate anymore (p. 10/l. 5–8).<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>This term is used to describe a certain mode of generalization, which focuses on similarities with respect to individuals’ positions in social space and life conditions, while disregarding the particularity of individual experience (see Schulze 1997, p. 178).

<sup>11</sup>The enduring interpersonal relationships between family members in Syria and in Germany as described here mark an example of social interdependencies (Pries 1996, p. 457) and illustrate transnational dimensions of forced migration.

<sup>12</sup>The interview statements were translated by the authors.

Here, Ms. Simon takes on a diagnostic perspective by saying that Pelin “did not learn anything at all”. One could say that the attempt at empathy is limited by an exclusively institution-centered perspective (see Kade et al. 2007): learning is solely understood as “curricular learning” (Schulze 1993, p. 201). Biographical learning processes that might have been highly relevant for the student, but cannot be used in school, are not considered. The story of Pelin’s family’s forced migration appears from this point of view exclusively as a learning obstacle; a psychological strain that temporarily prevents Pelin from successfully participating in school. The focus here is less a systematic critique of the circumstances and more an individualized problematization of Pelin as a temporary ‘non-learner’.

In terms of the class, however, Pelin’s burden is constructed as a *learning occasion*. For example, Ms. Simon talks about a newspaper article that was published about Pelin’s story, which she “read out in tears” (p. 9/II. 24–25) in the classroom and which, according to Ms. Simon, “got under your skin” (p. 9/II. 24–25). She thus emphasizes the potential for empathic learning through the confrontation with Pelin’s experiences:

Everyone can suddenly empathize with Pelin, even though it’s completely apart from their own living situation, [because] these are things that don’t happen to someone living in Germany because he does not have any social contacts in these countries (p. 10/II. 8–12).

Including the student’s experiences in the curriculum is here constructed as an opportunity to discover foreign worlds. Pelin’s classmates, who are implicitly ascribed a “rootedness” in Germany, are denied any connections to “these countries”. Complementary to this, Pelin’s biographical ties with ‘Germany’ (see also Mecheril 2003, p. 218) are made invisible, and her biography is reduced to family experiences of forced migration. While Ms. Simon constructs forced migration as a burden on individual educational careers, as well as a potential for social learning processes, her colleague, Mr. Kurz, emphasizes the burden and the demands that the reality of forced migration creates for teaching:

Sometimes one is – really at one’s limit, you do not know how, how you should now treat the refugees in the classroom and how you can communicate with them, that’s also quite difficult, at times they are here and then they are gone, there are a lot, quite a lot of question marks. (p. 9/II. 8–13)

Mr. Kurz positions himself as the victim of an uncertain situation, in which he feels “left alone”. Teaching refugee students primarily means, in his view,

working under difficult conditions. With the phrase “at times they are there and then they are gone”, the problem of discontinuous attendance is completely detached from the students’ precarious residence status. Instead, it appears as a sign of an ‘unreliability’ of the students concerned. The statement therefore expresses a maximum distance from the situation of the adolescents. Moreover, the question of an appropriate pedagogical accompaniment of refugee students is masked by the thematization of the speaker’s own suffering.

---

## 4 Comparative Considerations

The outlined statements represent varying *professional perspectives* on transnational education paths and biographies in the context of (forced) migration. In a first attempt, they can be systematized in the following dimensions, across both group discussions.

- First, the analysis points to the tension between *subject-oriented* and *institution- or school-centered constructions* of students’ learning biographies (for this distinction see Kade et al. 2007). While the first perspective focuses on learning processes by referring to the individual’s viewpoint, the latter take institutional norms (for example of uninterrupted curricular learning) as their primary point of reference. Thus, they produce normative perspectives on transnational biographies in the context of forced migration, which are associated with different attributes and assessments. As the example of Ms. Simon has shown, both perspectives can be present simultaneously in an individual teacher’s positioning.
- A second dimension is the *kind of knowledge* about the students’ living situations and their biographies to which the teachers refer. Their statements range between focusing on *collective problems and social inequalities* and looking at *the figuration of individual experiences*. While the former variant represents a typifying knowledge construction, the latter more closely follows the individual’s particular biographical experience.
- Thirdly, the professional self-positionings of teachers are located in a spectrum between *integrating knowledge about the living conditions and experiences* of students into teaching and supervising educational paths on the one hand, and *excluding/ignoring such knowledge* on the other. This is accompanied by different degrees of proximity and distance to the students’ biographies and experiences and to different concepts of professional responsibility.

The outlined dimensions are not limited to the topic of students' transnational biographies in particular. They rather point to more general tensions, which in the German-speaking debate are referred to as antinomies ("Antinomien", Helsper 2008) or paradoxes ("Paradoxien", Schütze 2000) of pedagogical professionalism. Yet, these antinomies take on a specific shape when transnational education paths and biographies are taken into consideration.

In our view, the teachers' constructions and positionings should neither be interpreted simply as an expression of differences between national education systems (especially as they are not consistent within the focus groups), nor are they purely coincidental. They can rather be contextualized by including other findings of our research project which were already mentioned in the beginning. Here, we can only indicate a few:

Firstly, the teachers' views and positionings are entangled in *individual school cultures* (Helsper 2008).<sup>13</sup> In our project, we examined the schools' profiles on their websites, conducted interviews with the managing staff and observed classroom interaction. Our analyses show that the respective schools relate in different ways to the reality of a migration society.<sup>14</sup> Hoover High School, for example, affirmatively refers to diversity in its school profile and has a committed principal who advocates a racism-critical orientation in the school. While this orientation may not be surprising, given the comparatively long tradition of anti-discrimination in the US context, this commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination is not nearly as prominent in other schools. In Heinrich Böll School, on the other hand, there is hardly any vision with respect to diversity and discrimination whatsoever. This becomes visible not only in the school profile but also in the principal's merely administrative view on socioeconomic and linguistic differences among students which mainly receive attention when they interfere with organizational routines. This administrative approach towards societal relations of difference contributes to a school culture in which teachers tend to experience themselves as 'lone fighters' who are left at the mercy of change through migration (and other forms of diversification).

In addition, the differences we find in teachers' perspectives on students' transnational biographies *within the same school* point to the potential relevance of the teachers' *professional functions in their respective schools*. In our data material,

---

<sup>13</sup> School cultures are neither uniform nor rigid in themselves but should rather be regarded as contested and alterable (see Helsper 2008; Altrichter 2010).

<sup>14</sup> For a comparative perspective on school cultures with regard to transnationalization, see Hummrich (2018).



self-positionings as ‘advocates’ of marginalized students become visible especially among ESL/DaZ<sup>15</sup> teachers. These teachers occupy an inferior position in the school’s institutional (power) structures: they are often regarded as experts to whom the processing of ‘non-normative’ educational biographies is delegated. Therefore, the teachers’ self-positionings point to institutional power relations which create distinct spaces for professional self-concepts.

Further questions relate to how *teachers’ personal experiences in migration society* affect their professional self-positionings. The focus groups show that reflective attitudes towards conditions of white privilege and racist discrimination are not necessarily linked to personal experiences of racism. However, they suggest that some self-positionings require the privilege of *not* being affected by racism. In this context, professional communities that provide a space for biographical learning can be a particularly important resource for reflecting on individual and collective experiences of (dis-)advantage in their different dimensions.

Although the analysis makes clear that teachers’ positionings in Hoover High School on the one hand, and Heinrich Böll School on the other, are far from being homogenous, the data material does indicate that *distinct traditions and policies of anti-discrimination in Germany and the US* are important for teachers’ perspectives on migration: Interpretations that highlight systemic integration deficits of school, structural disadvantages of certain groups of students (instead of the students’ lack of ‘fit’) and systemic solutions are much more strongly reflected in our data material from the US schools. At the same time, it is noticeable that these interpretations are not shared by all teachers in the schools we examined.

---

## 5 Conclusion and Outlook

Analyzing the focus groups, it can be stated that teachers in migration societies refer to different kinds of knowledge in their constructions of transnational biographies in the context of (forced) migration. At the same time, they generate and reproduce certain ideas of individual and collective biographies.

As shown, ideas of ‘successful’ and ‘failing’ (individual) educational paths are made visible and collectivized, which are linked to the expectation of

---

<sup>15</sup> German as a second language (“Deutsch als Zweitsprache”); the provision and organization of DaZ courses varies between schools. During our research, one of the schools we visited provided DaZ in separate classes on different levels for newly arrived migrant students. The other school offered no DaZ classes at all at this time.

biographical norms such as, for example, the idea of a sheltered upbringing. At the same time, they are linked to nation-state-centered interpretations, which become visible, for example, in the expectation of uninterrupted educational paths and distinct national-cultural belongings. Thus, both focus groups point to the institutionalized nation-state order of school from which transnational biographies are seen as a deviation from the 'ordinary life course', as Kohli (1985) calls it. As long as the transnationalization of biographies and educational paths is not taken into account, these will almost inevitably be seen as a deviation from the norm and as deficient (see Chamakalayil and Riegel 2016). Nonetheless, teachers position themselves in different ways in relation to the nation-state order of the school: students' education paths and their experiences of (forced) migration can be met with insecurities and defiance, but also with commitment.<sup>16</sup>

The teachers' self-positionings have to be analyzed in their respective social contexts. Our analyses reveal that local school cultures, different societal traditions of anti-discrimination as well as the professional function of teachers and their status in the institutional power structure form relevant contexts which must be equally taken into account.

For further research on pedagogical professionalism in migration societies, it seems vital to analyze the impact different kinds of knowledge and nescience have on the 'production' of learners' transnational biographies, on the pedagogical action taken towards them, and on experiences of difference and belonging in schools. From a perspective critical towards discrimination, it seems highly problematic to exclude knowledge and disregard experiences of (forced) migration and transnational social spaces. Yet it has to be considered that the reference to and use of biographical knowledge in institutions is also highly ambivalent (see Dausien and Hanses 2017). In the case of schools, this includes the emancipatory potential of irritating institution-centered perspectives on students' biographies (see also Dabach and Fones 2016) and carries the danger of occupying and/or instrumentalizing individuals' experiences pedagogically – which can be hurtful especially regarding explicitly vulnerable students in the context of (forced) migration. To what extent the use of biographical knowledge can consolidate or unsettle power relations in schools and pedagogical interactions thus depends on

---

<sup>16</sup>However, this commitment also reaches its limits when migration- and asylum-related conditions endanger students' school participation. Sara Fürstenau (2015, p. 161) thus emphasizes these limits of schools as opposed to a challenge which always includes the possibility of a solution to the problem.

who refers to ‘biography’, in what way and which situation, and how this knowledge is deployed (see Schwendowius and Thoma 2016).

---

## References

- Altrichter, H. (2010). Mikropolitik der Schulentwicklung [Micro-Politics of School Development]. In T. Bohl, W. Helsper, H.-G. Holtappels & C. Schelle (Eds.), *Handbuch Schulentwicklung. Theorie – Forschungsbefunde – Entwicklungsprozesse – Methoden-repertoire* (pp. 96–99). Bad Heilbrunn: UTB.
- Amelina, A., & Faist, T. (2012): De-naturalizing the National in Research Methodologies: Key Concepts of transnational Studies in Migration. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35(10), 1707–1724. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2012.659273>
- Apitzsch, U., & Siouti, I. (2014). Transnational Biographies. *Zeitschrift für Qualitative Forschung*, 15(1–2), 11–23. Retrieved April 22, 2020, from [https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/46102/ssoar-zqf-2014-1-2-apitzsch\\_et\\_al-Transnational\\_biographies.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-zqf-2014-1-2-apitzsch\\_et\\_al-Transnational\\_biographies.pdf](https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/46102/ssoar-zqf-2014-1-2-apitzsch_et_al-Transnational_biographies.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-zqf-2014-1-2-apitzsch_et_al-Transnational_biographies.pdf)
- Bartlett, L., & Vavrus, F. (2013). Introduction: Knowing, Comparatively. In L. Bartlett & F. Vavrus (Eds.), *Critical Approaches to Comparative Education. Vertical Case Studies from Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas* (pp. 1–18). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). Die biographische Illusion [The Biographical Illusion]. *BIOS. Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung und Oral History*, 3(1), 75–81. (Original work published 1986)
- Chamakalayil, L., & Riegel, C. (2016). Negotiating Potentials and Limitations in Education in Transnational Migration Contexts: A Case Study. *European Education*, 48(2), 120–136.
- Dabach, D. B., & Fones, A. (2016). Beyond the „English learner“ frame: Transnational funds of knowledge in social studies. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 18(1), 7–27.
- Dausien, B., & Hanses, A. (2017). „Biographisches Wissen“ – Erinnerung an ein uneingelöstes Forschungsprogramm. Einleitung in den Themenschwerpunkt [“Biographical knowledge” - Memory of an unfulfilled Research Program. Introduction to the Main Topic]. *Zeitschrift für Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 18(2), 173–189.
- Dreke, C. (2011). Zukunftswege von Schulkindern. Soziale Differenzierungen durch Primarschullehrkräfte in Italien und Deutschland [The Future Ways of School Children. The impact of Primary School Teachers on Social Differentiation in Italy and Germany]. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie der Erziehung und Sozialisation*, 31(4), 363–377.
- Elias, N. (1986): Was ist Soziologie? [What is sociology?] (5th ed.). Weinheim & München: Juventa.
- Falkenberg, K. (2018). Permanenter Vergleich. Methodologische Überlegungen zu einer an der Grounded Theory Methodologie orientierten international vergleichenden Forschung [Permanent comparison. Methodological Reflections on a Grounded

- Theory-oriented International Comparative Research]. *Tertium Comparationis: Journal für International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft*, 24(1), 107–134.
- Fürstenau, S. (2015). Transmigration und transnationale Familien. Neue Perspektiven der Migrationsforschung als Herausforderung für die Schule [Transmigration and Transnational Families. New Perspectives of Migration Research as a Challenge for Schools]. In R. Leiprecht & A. Steinbach (Eds.), *Schule in der Migrationsgesellschaft. Ein Handbuch* (Vol. 1, pp. 143–165). Schwalbach am Taunus, Germany: Wochenschau.
- Gogolin, I., & Pries, L. (2004). Transmigration und Bildung [Transmigration and Education]. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 7(1), 5–19.
- Gomolla, M., & Radtke, F.-O. (2009). *Institutionelle Diskriminierung. Zur Herstellung ethnischer Differenz in der Schule* [Institutional discrimination. On the production of ethnic difference in school] (2nd rev. ed.). Wiesbaden: VS.
- Helsper, W. (2008). Schulkulturen als symbolische Sinnordnungen und ihre Bedeutung für die pädagogische Professionalität [School Cultures as Symbolic Orders of Meaning and their Significance for Pedagogical Professionalism]. In W. Helsper, S. Busse, M. Hummrich, & R.-T. Kramer (Eds.), *Pädagogische Professionalität in Organisationen* (pp. 115–145). Wiesbaden: VS.
- Hinrichsen, M., & Paz Matute, P. (2018). „Den Horizont erweitern?“ – Schulische Internationalisierung und die Konstruktion (trans)nationaler Bildungsräume [“Expanding the Horizon?” – School-based Internationalization and the Construction of (Trans)National Educational Spaces]. *Tertium Comparationis: Journal für International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft*, 24(2), pp. 190–205.
- Hummrich, M. (2018). Transnationalisierung, Transnationalität und der Vergleich von Schulkulturen [Transnationalisation, transnationality and the comparison of school cultures]. *Tertium Comparationis: Journal für International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft*, 24(2), 171–189.
- Hummrich, M. (2019). Die Macht der Inklusion. Zur Relationalität von symbolischen Ordnungen in der Schule [The power of inclusion. On the Relationality of symbolic orders in school]. In S. Holtmann, P. Hascher & R. Stein (Eds.), *Inklusionen und Exklusionen des Humanen* (pp. 13–40). Kempten: Klinkhardt.
- Hummrich, M., & Terstegen, S. (2018). Qualitative Mehrebenenanalyse und Kulturvergleich [Qualitative multi-level analysis and cultural comparison]. In C. Thon, M. Menz, L. Abdessadok & M. Mai (Eds.), *Kindheiten zwischen Familie und Kindertagesstätte. Differenzdiskurse und Positionierungen von Eltern und pädagogischen Fachkräften* (pp. 205–223). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Kade, J., Nittel, D., & Seitter, W. (2007). *Einführung in die Erwachsenenbildung/Weiterbildung* [Introduction to Adult Education/Further Education] (Rev. ed.). Stuttgart: Kohlhammer&Urban.
- Kalpaka, A. (2011). Institutionelle Diskriminierung im Blick. Von der Notwendigkeit, Ausblendungen und Verstrickungen in rassistischer Bildungsarbeit zu thematisieren [Eye on Institutional Discrimination. On the Necessity of Thematising Dismissals and Entanglements in Racism-Critical Education]. In W. Scharathow & R. Leiprecht (Eds.), *Rassismuskritik. Rassismuskritische Bildungsarbeit* (Vol. 2, pp. 25–40). Schwalbach am Taunus: Wochenschau.

- Kemp-Graham, K. (2018). #BlackGirlsMatter: A Case Study Examining the Intersectionality of Race, Gender and School Discipline. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 21(3), 21–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458917741171>
- Kohli, M. (1985). Die Institutionalisierung des Lebenslaufs. Historische Befunde und theoretische Argumente [The Institutionalization of the Life Course. Historical Findings and theoretical Arguments]. *Kölnner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 37(1) 1–29.
- Kramer, R.-T. (2015). „Reproduktionsagenten“ oder „Transformationsakteure“? Lehrkräfte im Blick der Bildungssoziologie von Pierre Bourdieu [“Reproduction Agents” or “Transformation Actors”? Teachers in the view of Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Education]. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie der Erziehung und Sozialisation*, 3(4), 344–359.
- Lange-Vester, A. (2015). Habitusmuster von Lehrpersonen – auf Distanz zur Kultur der unteren sozialen Klassen [Habitus Patterns of Teachers - at a Distance from the Culture of the lower social Classes]. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie der Erziehung und Sozialisation*, 35(4), 360–376.
- Lutz, H. (2004). Transnationale Biographien in globalisierten Gesellschaften [Transnational Biographies in Globalised Societies]. In M. Ottersbach & E. Yildiz (Eds.), *Migration in der metropolitanen Gesellschaft. Zwischen Ethnisierung und globaler Neuorientierung* (pp. 207–217). Hamburg & Münster: LIT.
- Mecheril, P. (2003). *Prekäre Verhältnisse. Über natio-ethno-kulturelle (Mehrfach-)Zugehörigkeit* [Precarious conditions. On natio-racial-culturally coded orders of belonging]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Mecheril, P. (2010). Migrationspädagogik. Hinführung zu einer Perspektive [Migration pedagogy. Introduction to a perspective]. In P. Mecheril, M. Castro Varela, Í. Dirim, A. Kalpaka & C. Melter (Eds.), *Migrationspädagogik* (pp. 7–22). Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Phoenix, A., Howarth, C., & Philogène, G. (2017). The everyday politics of identities and social representations: a critical approach. *Papers on Social Representations*, 26(1), 2.1–2.21. Retrieved April 10, 2020, from [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/87716/1/Howarth\\_Everyday%20Politics%20of%20Identities.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/87716/1/Howarth_Everyday%20Politics%20of%20Identities.pdf)
- Pries, L. (1996). Transnationale Soziale Räume. Theoretisch-empirische Skizze am Beispiel der Arbeitswanderungen Mexico - USA [Transnational social spaces. A theoretical-empirical sketch using the example of the work migration Mexico - USA]. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 25(6) 456–472.
- Pries, L. (2001). The approach of transnational social spaces. Responding to new configurations of the social and the spatial. In L. Pries (Ed.), *New transnational social spaces. International migration and transnational companies in the early twenty-first century* (pp. 3–36). London: Routledge.
- Schroeder, J., & Seukwa, L. H. (2018). Bildungsbiografien: (Dis-)Kontinuitäten im Übergang [Educational Biographies: (Dis-)continuities in Transition]. In N. v. Dewitz, H. Terhart & M. Massumi (Eds.), *Neuwanderung und Bildung. Eine interdisziplinäre Perspektive auf Übergänge in das deutsche Bildungssystem* (pp. 141–157). Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Schulze, T. (1993). Lebenslauf und Lebensgeschichte. Zwei unterschiedliche Sichtweisen und Gestaltungsprinzipien biographischer Prozesse [Life course and life story. Two

- different views on and design principles of biographical processes]. In D. Baacke & T. Schulze (Eds.), *Aus Geschichten lernen. Zur Einübung pädagogischen Verstehens* (pp. 174–226). Weinheim & Munich: Beltz Juventa.
- Schulze, T. (1997). Das Allgemeine im Besonderen und das besondere Allgemeine [The general in the particular and the particular general]. In I. Hansen-Schaberg (Ed.), *„Etwas erzählen“. Die lebensgeschichtliche Dimension in der Pädagogik* (pp. 176–188). Baltmannsweiler: Schneider-Verlag Hohengehren.
- Schütze, F. (2000). Schwierigkeiten bei der Arbeit und Paradoxien des professionellen Handelns. Ein grundlagentheoretischer Aufriß [Difficulties in Work and Paradoxes of Professional Action. A Basic Theoretical Outline.]. *Zeitschrift für Qualitative Bildungs-, Beratungs- und Sozialforschung*, 1(1) 49–96.
- Schwendowius, D., & Thoma, N. (2016). Studienbiographien „mit Migrationshintergrund“? Kritische Anmerkungen zu Praktiken der Besonderung in der universitären Praxis [Study biographies ‘with a migration background’? Critical remarks on practices of othering in university]. *Zeitschrift für Qualitative Forschung*, 16(1–2), 221–235.
- Stanton-Salazar, R. (2011). A social capital framework for the study of institutional agents and their role in the empowerment of low-status students and youth. *Youth and society*, 43(3), 1066–1109.
- Vavrus, F., & Bartlett, L. (2006). Comparatively knowing: Making a Case for the Vertical Case Study. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 8(2), 95–03.
- Weis, L., & Fine, M. (Eds.). (2005). *Beyond Silenced Voices: Class, Race and Gender in United States Schools* (Rev. ed.). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Wimmer, A., & Glick-Schiller, N. (2002). Methodological Nationalism and beyond: Nation-state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global Networks*, 2(4), 301–334.



# Understanding Solidarity in Differently (Trans)National Settings: A Study of Europe-Oriented Schools in Germany

Simona Szakács-Behling

## Abstract

This chapter introduces a study on normative and enacted meanings of solidarity in schools with a distinct European ethos in Germany (*Schola Europaea* and *Europaschulen*). The study takes a transnational turn in three ways: empirically, theoretically, and methodologically. First, the study's threefold *empirical area of interest* (solidarity, mobilities and education) makes a synergic transnational turn. Second, I argue that a new concept of transnationally-embedded young people and cross-fertilization between sociological, anthropological and comparative education insights contribute to novel *theorizations* in the field. Third, I illustrate how the study's design avoids national container-logic and promotes a transnational *methodological* approach that considers different organizational modes of schooling (national and supranational) and different positions in the education opportunity structure (more and less privileged). All three strategies, I conclude, give a richer account of transnational dynamics in education and may contribute to transnationalizing education research.

## Keywords

Solidarity · Mobility · Education · Transnational educational spaces · Transnationally-embedded youth · Schola Europaea · Europaschule

S. Szakács-Behling (✉)

Georg-Eckert-Institute, Leibniz-Institute for International Textbook Research,  
Braunschweig, Germany

e-mail: [szakacs@leibniz-gei.de](mailto:szakacs@leibniz-gei.de)

## 1 Introduction

Many commentators observing our contemporary moment agree that we are living in an age marked by transnational movements and flows. Diversity itself is becoming diversified in what some have called “super-diversity” (Vertovec 2007) or “hyper-diversity” (Krafft et al. 2018). Social heterogeneities are increasingly unbound from nation-state contexts (Basch et al. 1994) and are intricately structured by transnational practices (Faist 2014). The transnational, as conceptualized in recent scholarship, is as plural, manifold, and full of (seeming) contradictions as the web of experiences, relationships, and structures that it produces and reflects (Levitt and de la Dehesa 2017; Soysal 2015). The border-crossings involved are not merely singular or unidirectional (from A to B), nor just about the ethno-cultural, geographical or political spheres. They are simultaneously plural and cyclical, take place across time and space and involve real and imagined, material and immaterial, socioeconomic and technological/digital boundaries (to name only a few). Moreover, they produce disconnections, ruptures, and incoherencies that traditional approaches have trouble coming to terms with.

It is, therefore, not sufficient to examine transnationalism as empirical occurrence – that is, what has been called empirical transnationalism, but also to make different methodological and conceptual choices in the way we conceive, design and conduct research on the transnational(izing) changes observed in the empirical world – namely, theoretical and methodological transnationalism (Levitt and Khagram 2008). In other words, by looking at empirically transnational practices with transnational methodological and conceptual lenses, we not only research the transnational but our research itself becomes transnationalized. The transnational is not only a matter of empirical concern but, at the same time, a matter of perspective (Carnicer and Fürstenau 2019, p. 387). A variety of research strategies are appropriate, among which are: designing multi-sited, vertical case studies that do not merely compare countries or education systems (Bartlett and Vavrus 2016); focusing on “situated practices” (see Knutsson and Lindberg 2017) rather than on policies and their implementation in, or travelling among, national contexts; and a deep engagement with self-reflexivity of our research practice.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed discussion of applying these strategies in a study of global citizenship education in German schools abroad, see Keßler and Szakács-Behling (2020).



In this chapter I introduce a research study<sup>2</sup> that employs such a transnational approach and I discuss three ways in which it contributes to education research ‘going transnational’. Through its focus on the making of solidarities in different(ly) transnational schooling settings the study contributes empirically to three, often separated, debates on solidarity, education and mobility – all set within a transnational constellation. Its research questions are (1) how do different transnationally-oriented schools position themselves vis-à-vis solidarity? (2) how are their normative understandings of solidarity enacted in the everyday experiences and interactions of students and staff at these schools? The study answers these questions by drawing on data collected in schools officially promoting a transnational (beyond-the-national – in this case, *European*) ethos; the *Schola Europaea*, and *Europaschulen* in Germany. The focus is not only on their interculturally enhanced or supranationally anchored curricula, textbooks, or extracurricular programs but also on the everyday protagonists, practices, and interactions among them which, given various histories of trans-border mobilities, can be characterized as transnationally located. The school settings under scrutiny are, therefore, considered to be reflective of empirical transnationalism. Data interpretation is grounded in policy analysis, textbook and curriculum analysis, focused ethnographic fieldwork consisting of classroom observations, and interviews with teachers and pupils.

Theoretically, I draw upon, but also rethink and expand on, previous work on “transnational educational spaces” in pre-university education which has so far considered international IB schools, UNESCO-project schools, or German schools abroad (Hornberg 2010; Keßler 2020; Szakács-Behling et al. 2021). Through the study’s design and approach, I respond to long overdue calls for overcoming methodological nationalism, statism and educationism in education research (Robertson and Dale 2008). For example, through choice of data collection sites (that is, schools with a European ethos in a single country but organized nationally or supranationally and attended by ethno-culturally and socioeconomically diverse school publics) the study does not consider nations or education systems as default categories of analysis but allows these, instead, to become relevant during the research process as categories of practice (see Brubaker and

---

<sup>2</sup>The study runs between 2019 and 2021 and is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation), project number 396205389. The chapter lays out the premises and design of the study. Empirical findings will be published as data become available and are interpreted from 2021 onward.

Cooper 2000). Different dynamics (for example, national, transnational, supra-national, local) can be revealed in this way *during* (and not before) the research process. Furthermore, to allow for an overcoming of the transnationally-mobile (*qua* privileged) vs. migration-background (*qua* disadvantaged) dichotomy and offer a more nuanced account of transnational dynamics in education (see Pfaff 2018), the study includes schools that despite sharing a similar (European) ethos, are variously positioned in the uneven fabric of schooling through accessibility criteria, public/private status, fees, prestige and clientele.

In the following sections, I present the nuts and bolts of this study and show how it takes a transnational turn in three ways, through its: (1) threefold empirical area of interest; (2) transgressive conceptual backbone; and (3) novel methodological approach.

---

## 2 Threefold Empirical Field: Solidarity, Mobilities and Education in Transnational Contexts

Research on solidarity, mobilities and education has been gaining attention in the context of increased cross-border youth mobilization (see *Fridays for Future*) with the concomitant realization that existing approaches to these issues have too often failed to look beyond the national framework. New attempts to account for the various transnational(izing) contexts in which solidarities, mobilities, and education play out are currently underway, illustrating the ways in which efforts to account for empirical transnationalism have touched these areas of study. However, despite increased recognition of transnational aspects in all three areas of study, they remain overwhelmingly approached either alone or in tandems of two and are often anchored in a national container-logic that misses key opportunities to understand their interconnections in multiple transnational constellations. In this section I discuss how each separate area of empirical interest made a move towards a transnational approach and argue for the necessity to do so in a synergic, threefold fashion.

Let us start with 'solidarity': from Durkheim's approach defining it as the glue keeping (national) societies together, to Marxist views prioritizing class, gender and race, solidarity has had a long tradition in sociological thought (Bayertz 1999; Stjernø 2005). Contemporary interest in solidarity increasingly accounts for transnational contexts and enlarges the basis of solidarity; in other words, the imagined community over which the feelings and acts of solidarity are considered to be stretching – comprising not only co-nationals but also fellow humans or those sharing a similar fate, enemy, feeling of belonging, identity and suchlike.

Forms of solidarity beyond or alongside the national community have been discussed in terms of global solidarity (Brunkhorst 2005), transnational solidarity (Gould 2007), European solidarity (Gerhards et al. 2018; Sangiovanni 2013), inclusive solidarity (Kymlicka 2015), feminist solidarity (Dean 1996), as well as transnational social movements, mobilizations and networks (Bieler 2014; Hatzky and Stites Mor 2014).

At the meeting point between these transnational movements and ‘solidarity’, however, there is little attention paid to ‘education’. Although seeing solidarity as a multifaceted and contested notion in today’s globalizing world (Nowicka et al. 2019; Wallaschek 2019), most current work on transnational solidarities – understood here as acts or discourses of solidarity with others beyond national/cultural borders and thus involving, or not, actual mobility – omits crucial questions regarding the normative production, transmission and uses of solidarity particularly in key socializing contexts (in this case, schools).

At the meeting point between ‘solidarity’ and ‘education’ an empirical preoccupation with transnational movements has appeared but is far from having ‘gone trans’ methodologically, as the national framework remains dominant even when trans-migrant populations are in focus. While classical sociology emphasized the functional role of the school in building an (at the time) *nationally*-bound form of social cohesion (Durkheim 1922/1956), contemporary education research has turned to more globally-oriented questions of solidarity with the rise of multicultural/intercultural paradigms and ideas of global citizenship. Education policies, programs, or curricula promoting a sense of cohesion above or below (ethno-cultural or national) borders have been explored in various national contexts in connection with citizenship education (Osler and Starkey 2005; Soysal and Szakács 2010), history teaching (Han 2007; Philippou 2007) or language learning (Kinging 2000; Méndez and García 2012). Research on the schooling of minority or migrant groups is often concerned with how different cultures relate to dominantly monoculturally imagined national societies (Johansson and Berthelsen 2012; Sleeter and Soriano 2012; Szalai 2011). Beyond static understandings of (national) cultures, the education of trans-migrant youth has been receiving attention with the appearance of novel notions of ‘mobile’, ‘migrant’ or ‘transnational’ childhoods (Fresnoza-Flot and Nagasaka 2015; Laoire et al. 2011) coupled with an increasing recognition of transnational(izing) practices of children who may not migrate at all but benefit from locally orchestrated “transnational human capital” (Gerhards et al. 2017). With few exceptions – for instance, Savvides (2008) – these approaches scarcely address constructions of solidarity in and through transnationally-oriented forms of schooling whose very mission could be considered to orient towards transnational forms of solidarity. A bridge

between work focusing on individuals and work focusing on institutions or organizations has yet to be built.

Finally, research bringing ‘education’ and ‘mobility’ together does not engage with ‘solidarity’ and remains inadvertently split into studies focused on either elite or non-elite youth (Pfaff 2018). The education of highly mobile, privileged youth is mostly approached in research on international education which mainly focuses on international-mindedness and cosmopolitan imaginations (Hayden et al. 2014; Kenway and Fahey 2014). More recent work recognizes power relations, the complexity of international schooling forms and clienteles, or elite reproduction patterns in various public/private, local, national/transnational constellations (Gardner-McTaggart 2016; Maxwell et al. 2018; Waters and Brooks 2011). Contrastingly, research on the education of non-privileged young people focuses on identities, multilingualism, inequalities or achievement gaps of first- or second-generation migrants understood most often in a framework of *stasis* rather than *movement*. Aspects discussed here are not ‘mobility’ as source of capital but ‘migration background’ as immutable source of disadvantage in particular national locations. Diversity resulting from transnational connections is explored in relation to challenges of integration rather than asset or resource (Adams and Kirova 2011; Becker 2011; Bravo and Moreno 2009). A vocabulary split reflects this state of affairs: the positively connoted ‘mobility’ terminology is used largely in research on privileged youth whereas the negatively connoted ‘migration’ *topos* in research on underprivileged youth, despite the fact that, *mutatis mutandis*, both are meant to evoke a similar condition – that is, of being on the move, between here and there (or neither here nor there), crossing different types of (for instance geographic or discursive) boundaries.

But if transnational movements, multilingualism and trans-migrant experiences can be conceived of as advantageous beyond social class divides as implied by some studies (de Mejía 2002; Küppers et al. 2016) and if transnationalizing ethos (such as association with ‘Europe’ or ‘the globe’) are increasingly promoted in both socioeconomically privileged and underprivileged schooling contexts (see Szakács 2018), it appears timely to ask how young people across various socioeconomic strata are formally exposed to, and engage with, educational ideals, values and norms that may or may not be transnationally circulating, legitimated, or framed. Solidarity is one such value that has both a cohesive and a polarizing potential across and within borders. Focusing on it enables us to re-imagine cross-border mobilizations in the momentarily shaky European and global political climate, in which solidarity rhetoric seems to serve rather exclusionary and populist goals.

The pedagogical significance of solidarity therefore lies not only in how future society is imagined and constructed but also in how various, more or less cosmopolitan socialities (Glick Schiller 2016) are forged, and how the “commonality grounds” upon which groups are formed are shaped in and through schooling. The school is not only a site where solidarities are imagined, but also where they are exercised, contested, made and remade. Inclusion and exclusion patterns emerge in educational contexts. The broader questions of “solidarity with whom” and “for what reasons” reflect key political and ethical issues such as recognition and redistribution, welfare provision and social justice (Kymlicka 2015) and are thus key for understanding youth political socialization in formative school years.

---

### 3 Conceptual Transgressions: “Transnationally-Embedded Youth” and Re-Imagined “Transnational Educational Spaces”

In order to also make a *theoretical* shift towards a transnational approach, I propose several conceptual transgressions. The first transgression is a shift in vocabulary. As argued above, we are lacking not only research to better understand how ‘the transnational’ is lived, practiced, and understood in *variously* (that is, higher- and lower-) privileged schooling contexts but also the terminology to push such research forward. I propose a term that captures mobility and migration arguments under one roof and enables accounting for more and less privileged milieus concomitantly: instead of referring to “mobile-youth”, “migrant-youth” or the more general “transnational youth” (Tanu 2018, p. 21),<sup>3</sup> I suggest the term *transnationally-embedded youth* to refer to young people *across socioeconomic strata* who live in “transnational social spaces” (Faist 1998) consisting of a variety of connections, networks, and symbolic universes across national borders. This term not only allows us to go beyond unhelpful elite/non-elite dichotomies in current research (see also Pfaff 2018), but also beyond the *aporia* of transnationality itself: although borne out of the sociology of migration involving the physical crossing of borders, *transnationally-embedded* acknowledges that transnationality may not always involve physical movement across countries but also

---

<sup>3</sup>Although sensibly used to replace the problematic “third culture kids”, “transnational youth” in Tanu’s understanding carries with it the idea of privileged “serial migration” (Ossman 2013, as cited in Tanu 2018, p. 31).

cultural embedding in a symbolic universe characterized by various transnational connections.

The second transgression is a cross-fertilization between disciplines utilizing different conceptual tools and approaches to make sense of transnational dynamics in education. A key concept in the field is that of “transnational educational spaces” as first outlined by Adick (2005) and systematically developed by Hornberg (2010, 2014). These authors use it exclusively in relation to educational organizations that function privately, alongside and/or beyond national systems of education, such as the International Baccalaureate Organization. But by explicitly paralleling the notion of “transnational soci(et)al spaces” from Faist (1998) and Pries (2008, p. 2), the concept of “transnational educational spaces” implies, however, not only organizational structures, but also border-transcending practices, symbols and artefacts (Adick 2018, p. 126) – an aspect firmly grounded in the everyday of schooling which has not been empirically explored from this perspective so far.

The concept has been taken up in several studies focusing on various educational organizational structures (most notably used by Hornberg 2010) but also increasingly exploring educational trajectories between different countries and individual transnational biographies (Carnicer 2018; Keßler et al. 2018; Putjata 2019). While the ways in which these studies use this concept differ widely by accounting either for transnationalism ‘from below’ or transnationalism ‘from above’ (Küppers et al. 2016), I maintain that the notion of ‘transnational educational spaces’ is well suited to explore *both* official discourses and everyday practices in schools that programmatically offer alternatives to a monocultural, mono-national, and monolingual ethos, such as – in the case of this study, *Schola Europaea* and *Europaschulen*.

The reasons are multiple and span both organizational- and individual-level aspects. In contrast to mainstream schools which, despite their various diversities, exhibit what has been termed a “monolingual habitus” (Gogolin 1997, trans. by author), Europe-oriented schools explicitly address the cultural and linguistic diversity of their pupils by embedding a European dimension into their organizational and institutional structures (for example, providing a bi- or multilingual set-up via language sections or partner languages), curriculum and ethos (such as celebrating ethno-cultural diversity in special courses of study or extracurricular activities). The European dimension is manifested in the *Schola Europaea* curriculum through special courses such as the ‘European hours’ and the fact that the syllabi for all disciplines have to be supranationally agreed upon by all EU member states, thus going above national prescriptions into what could be called a lowest common denominator of requirements. In the *Europaschulen* this

dimension is manifested through an interculturally enhanced curriculum, Europe-wide school exchanges and travel abroad activities. Such strategies involve the accumulation of what has been called “transnational human capital” (Gerhards et al. 2017). Furthermore, at the level of qualifications, many Europe-oriented schools also offer internationally accepted diplomas which promise (at least in theory) transnationally mobile futures for the graduates. They enroll ethno-culturally diverse students and employ staff who are often trained in national education systems different from those in which they teach.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the financial set-up sometimes transcends state/non-state, public/private domains, an aspect which has been considered as a defining element of transnational organizational structures (Adick 2018; Hornberg 2010): for example, some of the courses of study and/or degrees offered must be paid for privately (like DELF/DALF certificates in *Europaschulen*, the European Baccalaureate examination in the *Schola Europaea*, registration for category 2 and 3 students in the *Schola Europaea*, accreditation procedures for private *Schola Europaea* establishments, among others). These schools – which I refer to as Europe-oriented – can therefore be expected to exhibit long-term, regular and intense circulation of artefacts, practices, and symbols that are transnational – that is, that are located between or alongside different educational systems and national frameworks and fit, at least theoretically, the definition of “transnational educational spaces” offered by Hornberg (2010).

Beyond adding Europe-oriented schools as sites for empirically exploring transnational educational spaces both ‘from below’ (individuals’ life-worlds) and ‘from above’ (organizational structure, explicit ethos), I argue that two further impulses should be brought to this growing literature: (1) neo-institutional theorizing in its sociological variant (Schofer et al. 2012) and (2) anthropological traditions of comparative education (Anderson-Levitt 2003). While neo-institutional ideas such as ‘transnational convergences’ were from the beginning part of theorizations of transnational educational spaces, I find other notions from this literature equally useful in further developing this concept: ‘scripts’, understood as blueprints of legitimate action diffused worldwide (Meyer and Ramirez 2000); ‘norm entrepreneurs’ or ‘*disinterested Others*’ (Meyer 2010) understood as the organizational or individual carriers of these blueprints; and ‘embeddedness’, pointing to the wider cultural environment which both contains and constitutes these actors (Meyer and Jepperson 2000). The latter informs what I referred to

---

<sup>4</sup>Teaching in a language section/partner language may require teachers to be native speakers of that language.

as *transnationally-embedded* young people who can be seen not only as agentic individuals engaged in cross-border activities but also as *constructed* subjectivities. Their ‘transnational’ actions are not always exclusively derived from, or resulting in, transnational connections, but often also culturally ‘scripted’ to fit a blueprint of what ‘transnationality’ stands for in the various educational contexts they inhabit.

Anthropological work is a second necessary cross-fertilization as it reveals the paradoxes of local contextualizations that cannot be grasped with an exclusive focus on officially endorsed educational aims, policies or contents which are the purview of neo-institutional scholarship. But, while better equipped to account for local situations, this work tends to regard the transnational as mere background to the processes observed rather than as co-constitutive of them as in the line of neo-institutional scholarship. The patterned relationship of micro-level dynamics to the wider cultural contexts in which schools are embedded is often left out. By investigating how actors play out legitimate scripts of ‘transnationality’ and ‘Europeanism’ in everyday school practices and interactions, the study addresses this gap in anthropological work and concomitantly responds to common criticisms of neo-institutional scholarship that it neglects in-depth examination of local contexts in favor of macro-structures and policies (Schriewer 2012).

In conclusion, the study introduced here re-imagines current conceptualizations of ‘transnational educational spaces’ in education sciences by drawing on sociological and anthropological approaches from the field of globalization of education, and argues for increased attention to the micro-dynamics of everyday school practices to complement current foci on structural and organizational levels.

---

#### **4 Methodological Approach: Beyond Container-Logic in Education Research**

Returning to the argument laid out in the introduction according to which research itself should be transnationalized with the help of various strategies, I now focus on how education research may continue to ‘go transnational’ in a methodological sense. One way to move this agenda forward is to turn away from conceptualizing location in the geographic nation-state sense and instead to consider organizational and opportunity structures as contrasting lenses for the cases examined. Rather than taking countries as units of comparison in what many have called a container-logic (Bartlett and Vavrus 2016), I suggest that investigating several types of schools illustrating a variety of transnational dynamics in



education is a more fruitful strategy of case selection. In the study presented here, these different types of schools are *Schola Europaea*, *Accredited Schola Europaea*, and *Europaschulen* in Germany.

Originally founded in the early 1950s to provide public schooling in their mother tongues for the children of European bureaucrats who move countries for work, the *Schola Europaea* (SE) schools are established, organized, and financed through a supranational central body (the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools based in Brussels), and are intergovernmentally controlled by EU member states. Currently there are 13 SE schools in six European countries enrolling 27,176 students (Schola Europaea 2018). Their students fall under three categories, depending on entitlement to a place and fee-paying status, with the children of EU institutions' employees (category 1 students) benefitting from automatic admittance and free-of charge multilingual education. Their curriculum is agreed among all EU member states and can be characterized as a supranational curriculum. At the end of the 12-year course of study, students obtain an internationally acknowledged, academically-oriented and prestigious European Baccalaureate (EB) qualification.

With the expansion of the EU, the *Schola Europaea* system opened up in 2005 to include a new form of schooling known as *Accredited Schola Europaea* (ASE). Although subject to a supranational accreditation procedure allowing them to teach the same multi-language European curriculum and offer the same EB qualifications as the original SEs, these schools are nationally organized. Their legal form ranges from public to private (fee-paying) schools. There are currently 18 such schools and 3 schools in the process of accreditation enrolling 9,829 students (Schola Europaea 2020), with numbers having almost doubled with the accreditation of eight more schools in the past five years alone. By appealing to new school clienteles, namely local and international economic elites, alongside the more traditional school publics of the SEs (comprising political European elites), the ASEs bring together different 'logics of operation' within the SE system. Studying these two forms of (older and newer) European schooling together enables compelling insights into how European solidarities are enacted in a privileged setting along axes of political/economic, public/private, and national/supranational differences.

The *Europaschulen*, in contrast, are free-of-charge, nationally organized, public schools sharing a similar European ethos. Following different accreditation procedures in each decentralized German federal state, the state-run *Europaschulen* place a premium on the European dimension in terms of interculturality, bilingualism, cultural diversity and social cohesion across linguistic groups

(Meier 2012). They make it their mission to “prepare students for a life in the common European home”.<sup>5</sup> Their ethos of Europeanism however differs from that of the *Schola Europaea* in that it emphasizes interculturality as a requirement of side-by-side ‘living together’ rather than promoting the emergence of a supranational form of identity. At the beginning of 2020 there were at least 639 such schools in Germany, with numbers rising each year, and unequal distribution across federal states.<sup>6</sup> Unlike the *Schola Europaea*, they are open to all, regardless of parents’ profession or social position; their access policies are, thus, arguably less selective than (A)SEs. Although most *Europaschulen* are *Gymnasien*, in other words academically selective secondary schools which structurally advantage middle-class pupils (Seyler 2013), they also include schools, such as *Hauptschulen*, *Realschulen* or *Gesamtschulen*, more frequently attended by pupils from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Becker 2011).

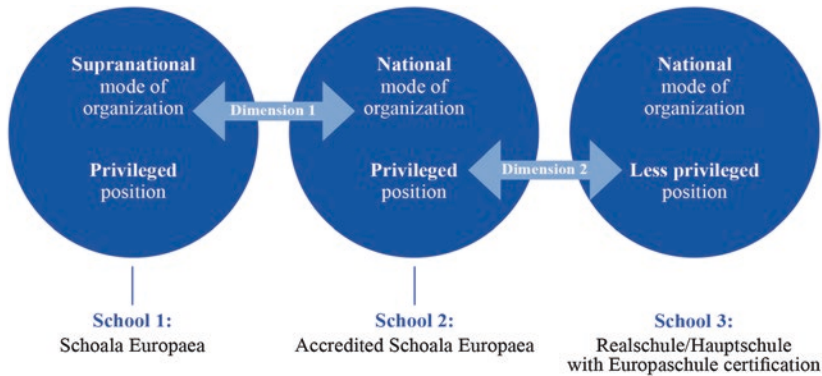
The study covers these three forms of schooling and organizes them along two contrasting dimensions: mode of organization (supranational and national) and position in the opportunity structure (higher and lower).

- The first dimension involves an ‘old’ and a ‘new’ school from the Schola Europaea network: a classic and an Accredited Schola Europaea. They both share a European ethos through their curriculum, multilingual set-up and qualifications and are located in a privileged position in the various opportunity structures in which they are embedded. They differ in terms of mode of organization: the first is supranationally, whereas the second one is nationally, organized, financed and managed.
- The second dimension involves the Accredited Schola Europaea and a Hauptschule or Haupt- and Realschule (or equivalent, such as the Gesamtschule) with Europaschule certification. Both are nationally organized but differ in terms of their position in the opportunity structure of the German (and European) education system, one being more and the other less privileged.

---

<sup>5</sup>According to the website of the Federal Network of Europaschulen <http://www.bundesnetzwerk-europaschule.de> (accessed April 2020).

<sup>6</sup>Information from <http://www.bundesnetzwerk-europaschule.de/europaschulen.html> (retrieved January 2020); it covers *Europaschulen* only from states where the number is known (13 out of 16 federal states).



**Fig. 1** Schools with European ethos in Germany, along dimensions of contrast and similarity. *Source* Author's own illustration

## 5 Conclusion

In this chapter I showed how a research study into a topical theme in today's hyper-diverse world (namely, solidarity in a European context) makes a transnational move in three interrelated ways: empirically, theoretically and methodologically. First, I took stock of recent developments in three areas of interest (solidarity, mobility, and education) and argued that an empirical focus located at the confluence of *all three* areas (rather than on tandems of two) is necessary to better understand the everyday shapes and institutional sources of solidarity among young people particularly in today's transnationalizing moment. Second, I argued for two conceptual transgressions: (1) a new terminology – “transnationally-embedded youth” – to overcome the ‘mobility’ vs. ‘migration’ conundrum casting current debates into an unproductive elite vs. non-elite dichotomy (in line with Pfaff 2018); and (2) a cross-fertilization between disciplines to enrich current conceptualizations of “transnational educational spaces” (Adick 2018; Hornberg 2010) with insights from sociology and anthropology that acknowledge both the social constructedness of ‘transnationality’ and its situatedness in micro-level interactions observable in everyday school practices. Finally, I exemplified how this study furthers a methodologically transnational approach through its non-nationally-bound research design comparing schools with a European ethos in a single country along different modes of organization (supranational and national) and positions in the opportunity structure (privileged and less privileged). This case selection offers

opportunities for understanding transnational(izing) school dynamics beyond an elite/non-elite dichotomy and overcomes the container-logic that privileges national categories as default analytical axes of comparison. Instead, it allows ‘the national’ as a category of practice to emerge as relevant (or not) during the empirical analysis.

It is hard to say what the empirical findings of this study will bring as the data collection is still ongoing. What emerges from an initial appraisal of the official-discourse level data (curricula, textbooks, and school websites) is that the programmatic contents offered to students in Europe-oriented schools hardly match the meanings and scales of solidarity mobilized in the public sphere. Instead of a *European*, intergovernmental sense of solidarity in political or cultural terms, as seen in the dominant portrayal of the refugee crisis in German media (see Wallaschek 2019), the explicit contents of the *Schola Europaea* curriculum echo a universalizing type of solidarity engaging religious and ethical values of humanity, charitable action, and tolerance rather than a specifically ‘European’ sense of solidarity that would privilege ‘European’ values, people, or events. Debates speaking more to everyday European realities than to abstract, universalizing ideals are more likely to occur, if at all, in the non-prescribed or extracurricular activities which will be part of the second step of the analysis of school-level practices in this study.

**Acknowledgements** I would like to thank Sabine Hornberg for inspiring ongoing discussions about transnational educational spaces and her helpful comments on a previous draft of this chapter. I am also grateful to the audience and the organizational team of the FISM conference 2018 in Bremen, Germany.

---

## References

- Adams, L., & Kirova, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Global migration and education: school, children, and families*. New York: Routledge.
- Adick, C. (2005). Transnationalisierung als Herausforderung für die International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft [Transnationalization as a Challenge for International and Intercultural Comparative Educational Science]. *Tertium Comparationis: Journal für International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft*, 11(2), 243–269.
- Adick, C. (2018). Transnational education in schools, universities, and beyond: Definitions and research areas. *Transnational Social Review*, 8(2), 124–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21931674.2018.1463057>

- Anderson-Levitt, K. M. (Ed.). (2003). *Local Meanings, Global Schooling: Anthropology and World Culture Theory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403980359>
- Bartlett, L., & Vavrus, F. (2016). *Rethinking Case Study Research. A comparative approach*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315674889>
- Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N., & Szanton-Blanc, C. (1994). *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers.
- Bayertz, K. (1999). Four Uses of “Solidarity”. In Bayertz, K. (Ed.), *Solidarity. Philosophical Studies in Contemporary Culture* (Vol. 5, pp. 3–28). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-9245-1\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-9245-1_1)
- Becker, R. (Ed.). (2011). *Integration durch Bildung. Bildungserwerb von jungen Migranten in Deutschland [Integration through education. Acquisition of education among young migrants in Germany]*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-93232-3>
- Bieler, A. (2014). Transnational Labour Solidarity in (the) Crisis. *Global Labour Journal*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.15173/glj.v5i2.1154>
- Bravo-Moreno, A. (2009). Transnational mobilities: migrants and education. *Comparative Education*, 45(3), 419–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060903184981>
- Brubaker, R., & Cooper, F. (2000). Beyond “Identity”. *Theory and Society*, 29(1), 1–47.
- Brunkhorst, H. (2005). *Solidarity. From Civic Friendship to a Global Legal Community*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Carnicer, J. A. (2018). Transnational family and educational trajectories. *Transnational Social Review*, 8(2), 170–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21931674.2018.1463056>
- Carnicer, J. A., & Fürstenau, S. (2019). Transnational Education. A Concept for Institutional and Individual Perspectives. *Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung / Discourse. Journal of Childhood and Adolescence Research*, 4, 385–389.
- Dean, J. (1996). *Solidarity of Strangers. Feminism after Identity Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- de Mejía, A.-M. (2002). *Power, Prestige and Bilingualism. International Perspectives on Elite Bilingual Education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Durkheim, É. (1956). *Education and Sociology* (Transl. Sherwood D. Fox). Glencoe: The Free Press. (Original work published 1922)
- Faist, T. (1998). Transnational social spaces out of international migration: evolution, significance and future prospects. *European Journal of Sociology*, 39(02), 213–247. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975600007621>
- Faist, T. (2014). “We are all Transnationals now”: *The Relevance of Transnationality for Understanding Social Inequalities* (SFB 882 Working Paper Series No. 25). Bielefeld: DFG Research Center (SFB) 882 From Heterogeneities to Inequalities.
- Fresnoza-Flot, A., & Nagasaka, I. (2015). Conceptualizing Childhoods in Transnational Families: The “Mobile Childhoods” Lens. In I. Nagasaka & A. Fresnoza-Flot (Eds.), *Mobile Childhoods in Filipino Transnational Families* (pp. 23–41). London: Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137515148\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137515148_2)
- Gardner-McTaggart, A. (2016). International elite, or global citizens? Equity, distinction and power: the International Baccalaureate and the rise of the South. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 14(1), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2014.959475>

- Gerhards, J., Hans, S., & Carlson, S. (2017). *Social Class and Transnational Human Capital. How Middle and Upper Class Parents Prepare Their Children for Globalization*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Gerhards, J., Lengfeld, H., Ignácz, Z. S., Kley, F. K., & Priem, M. (2018). *How Strong is European Solidarity?* (BSSE Working Paper No. 37). Berlin Studies on the Sociology of Europe. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin. Retrieved April 14, 2020, from [https://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/soziologie/arbeitsbereiche/makrosoziologie/arbeitspapiere/pdf/BSSE-Nr\\_37.pdf](https://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/soziologie/arbeitsbereiche/makrosoziologie/arbeitspapiere/pdf/BSSE-Nr_37.pdf)
- Glick Schiller, N. (2016). The Question of Solidarity and Society: Comment on Will Kymlicka's article: "Solidarity in Diverse Societies." *Comparative Migration Studies*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-016-0027-x>
- Gogolin, I. (1997). The "monolingual habitus" as the common feature in teaching in the language of the majority in different countries. *Per Linguam*, 13(2), 38-49. <https://doi.org/10.5785/13-2-187>
- Gould, C. C. (2007). Transnational Solidarities. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 38(1), 148–164. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.2007.00371.x>
- Han, C. (2007). History Education and 'Asian' Values for an 'Asian' Democracy: The Case of Singapore. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education* 37(3), 383–398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920701330271>
- Hatzky, C., & Stites Mor, J. (2014). Latin American Transnational Solidarities: Contexts and Critical Research Paradigms. *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*, 20(2), 127–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13260219.2014.939121>
- Hayden, M., Rancic, B. A., & Thompson, J. J. (2014). Being International: student and teacher perceptions from international schools. *Oxford Review of Education*, 26(1), 107–123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/030549800103890>
- Hornberg, S. (2010). *Schule im Prozess der Internationalisierung von Bildung [School in the process of internationalization of education]*. Münster: Waxmann.
- Hornberg, S. (2014). Transnational Educational Spaces: Border-Transcending Dimensions in Education. In L. Vega (Ed.), *Empires, Post-Coloniality and Interculturality* (pp. 171–180). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6209-731-5\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6209-731-5_11)
- Johansson, E., & Berthelsen, D. (Eds.). (2012). *Spaces for Solidarity and Individualism in Educational Contexts*. Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Kenway, J., & Fahey, J. (2014). Staying ahead of the game: the globalising practices of elite schools. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 12(2), 177–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2014.890885>
- Keßler, C. I. (2020). "Ich will dann meine Zukunft irgendwie so kreieren". (Narrative) Arbeit am eigenen Selbst von Schülerinnen und Schülern in transnationalen Bildungsräumen ["I want to somehow create my future like this". (Narrative) work on the self by pupils in transnational educational spaces]. In U. Deppe (Ed.), *Die Arbeit am Selbst. Theorie und Empirie zu Bildungsaufstiegen und exklusiven Karrieren* (pp. 187–207). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Keßler, C. I., Kotzyba, K., & Schippling, A. (2018). Biografieanalyse und transnationales Kapital – Theoretische und methodologische Reflexionen [Biographical Analysis and Transnational Capital – Theoretical and Methodological Reflections]. *Tertium Comparationis: Journal für International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft*, 24(2), 226–243.

- Keßler, C. I., & Szakács-Behling, S. (2020). Researching the Transnational and Transnationalizing the Research: Towards a Methodological Turn in Education. In C. Machold, A. Messerschmidt, & S. Hornberg (Eds.), *Jenseits des Nationalen? Erziehung und Bildung im Spannungsverhältnis von Entgrenzung und Begrenzung nationaler Ordnungen* (pp. 183–199). Opladen: Barbara Budrich.
- Kinginger, C. (2000). Learning the Pragmatics of Solidarity in the Networked Classroom. In J. K. Hall & L. S. Verplaetse (Eds.), *Second and Foreign Language Learning Through Classroom Interaction* (pp. 23–46). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Knutsson, B., & Lindberg, J. (2017). Studying “the Political” in International Aid to Education: Methodological Considerations. *Comparative Education Review*, 61(4), 701–725. <https://doi.org/10.1086/693924>
- Kraftl, P., Bolt, G., & Van Kempen, R. (2018). Hyper-diversity in/and geographies of childhood and youth. *Social & Cultural Geography*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2018.1491619>
- Küppers, A., Pusch, B., & Uyan-Semerci, P. (Eds.). (2016). *Bildung in transnationalen Räumen [Education in transnational spaces]*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-09642-7>
- Kymlicka, W. (2015). Solidarity in diverse societies: beyond neoliberal multiculturalism and welfare chauvinism. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 3(17). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-015-0017-4>
- Laoire, C. N., Carpena-Méndez, F., Tyrrell, N., & White, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Childhood and Migration in Europe: Portraits of Mobility, Identity and Belonging in Contemporary Ireland*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing.
- Levitt, P., & de la Dehesa, R. (2017). Rethinking “transnational migration and the re-definition of the state” or what to do about (semi-) permanent impermanence. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(9), 1520–1526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1308531>
- Levitt, P., & Khagram, S. (2008). Constructing Transnational Studies. In S. Khagram & P. Levitt (Eds.), *The Transnational Studies Reader: Intersections and Innovations* (pp. 1–19). New York: Routledge.
- Maxwell, C., Deppe, U., Krüger, H.-H., & Helsper, W. (Eds.). (2018). *Elite Education and Internationalisation*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-59966-3>
- Meier, G. (2012). Zweiwegintegration durch zweisprachige Bildung? Ergebnisse aus der Staatlichen Europa-Schule Berlin [Two-way integration through bilingual education? Results from the Staatliche Europa-Schule Berlin]. *International Review of Education*, 58(3), 335–352. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-012-9290-8>
- Méndez, T., & García, A. (2012). Exploring Elementary Students’ Power and Solidarity Relations in an EFL Classroom. *Profile*, 14(1), 173–185.
- Meyer, J. W. (2010). World Society, Institutional Theories, and the Actor. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.012809.102506>
- Meyer, J. W., & Jepperson, R. L. (2000). The “Actors” of Modern Society: The Cultural Construction of Social Agency. *Sociological Theory*, 18(1), 100–120.
- Meyer, J. W., & Ramirez, F. O. (2000). The World Institutionalization of Education. In J. Schriewer (Ed.), *Discourse Formation in Comparative Education* (pp. 111–132). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Publishers.



- Nowicka, M., Krzyżowski, Ł., & Ohm, D. (2019). Transnational solidarity, the refugees and open societies in Europe. *Current Sociology*, 67(3), 383–400. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392117737817>
- Osler, A., & Starkey, H. (2005). *Changing Citizenship: Democracy and Inclusion in Education*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Pfaff, N. (2018). Erziehungswissenschaftliche Transnationalismusforschung im Gegenstandsbereich der Schule - zwischen Struktur und Lebenswelt [Transnationalism research in education science - the school between structure and life-world]. *Tertium Comparationis: Journal für International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft*, 24(2), 151–170.
- Philippou, S. (2007). 'Re-Inventing 'Europe': The Case of the European Dimension in Greek-Cypriot Geography and History Curricula. *Curriculum Journal* 18(1), 57–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585170701292190>
- Pries, L. (2008). Transnational Societal Spaces: Which Units of Analysis, Reference, and Measurement? In L. Pries (Ed.), *Rethinking Transnationalism: The Meso-Link of Organisations* (pp. 1–20). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203893692>
- Putjata, G. (2019). Language in transnational education trajectories between the Soviet Union, Israel and Germany. Participatory research with children. *Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung/Discourse. Journal of Childhood and Adolescence Research*, 4, 390–404.
- Robertson, S. L., & Dale, R. (2008). Researching Education in a Globalising Era: Beyond Methodological Nationalism, Methodological Statism, Methodological Educationism and Spatial Fetishism. In J. Resnik (Ed.), *The Production of Educational Knowledge in the Global Era* (pp. 19–32). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Sangiovanni, A. (2013). Solidarity in the European Union. *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 33(2), 213–241. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ojls/gqs033>
- Savvides, N. (2008). The European dimension in education: Exploring pupils' perceptions at three European Schools. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 7(3), 304–326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240908096485>
- Schofer, E., Hironaka, A., Frank, D. J., & Longhofer, W. (2012). Sociological Institutionalism and World Society. In E. Amenta, K. Nash, & A. Scott (Eds.), *The New Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology* (pp. 57–68). Chichester: Blackwell Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444355093.ch6>
- Schola Europaea. (2018). *Facts and figures on the beginning of the 2018–2019 school year in the European Schools*. Brussels: Schola Europaea/Office of the Secretary-General. Retrieved April 14, 2020, from <https://www.eursc.eu/Documents/2018-10-D-17-en-3.pdf>
- Schola Europaea. (2020). *Accredited European Schools Data*. Brussels: Schola Europaea/Office of the Secretary-General. Retrieved April 14, 2020, from <https://www.eursc.eu/Documents/2020-01-D-16-en-1.pdf>
- Schriever, J. (2012). Editorial: Meaning constellations in the world society. *Comparative Education*, 48(4), 411–422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2012.737233>
- Seyler, S. (2013). *Europaschule in Hessen. Zwanzig Jahre Schulentwicklung und Bildung für Europa [Europaschule in Hessen. Twenty years of school development and education for Europe]*. Schwabach am Taunus: Debus Pädagogik Verlag.



- Sleeter, C. E., & Soriano, E. (2012). Introduction. In C. E. Sleeter & E. Soriano (Eds.), *Creating Solidarity Across Diverse Communities: International Perspectives in Education* (pp. 1–19). New York: Teachers College.
- Soysal, Y. N. (Ed.). (2015). *Transnational Trajectories in East Asia. Nation, citizenship, and region*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Soysal, Y. N., & Szakács, S. (2010). Reconceptualizing the Republic: Diversity and Education in France, 1945–2008. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 41(1), 97–115. <https://doi.org/10.1162/jinh.2010.41.1.97>
- Stjernø, S. (2005). *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Szakács, S. (2018). *Europe in the Classroom. World Culture and Nation-Building in Post-Socialist Romania*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-60258-5>
- Szakács-Behling, S., Bock, A., Keßler, C. I., Macgilchrist, F., & Spielhaus, R. (2021). Global Citizenship in motion: Comparing Cross-Border Practices in German Schools Abroad. In E. Klerides & S. Carney (Eds.), *Identities and education: Comparative perspectives in times of crisis* (pp. 95–116). London: Bloomsbury. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350141322.ch-005>
- Szalai, J. (Ed.). (2011). *Contested Issues of Social Inclusion through Education in Multiethnic Communities across Europe* (EDUMIGROM Final Studies Working Paper). Budapest, Hungary: Central European University, Center for Policy Studies. Retrieved April 14, 2020, from <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/edumigromfinal-study26july2011.pdf>
- Tanu, D. (2018). *Growing Up in Transit: The Politics of Belonging at an International School*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(6), 1024–1054. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870701599465>
- Wallaschek, S. (2019). The Discursive Construction of Solidarity: Analysing Public Claims in Europe’s Migration Crisis. *Political Studies*, 68(1), 74–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719831585>
- Waters, J., & Brooks, R. (2011). International/transnational spaces of education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 9(2), 155–160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2011.576933>

---

## **IV Teacher Training: Knowing How, Knowing That**



# Teachers for Refugee Students in Turkey: Results of an Action Research on an In-Service Training Course

Ş. Erhan Bağcı

## Abstract

There has been turmoil in the Turkish educational system due to the rapidly increasing number of refugee children since the war broke out in Syria in 2011. This study is an action research on the collaborative in-service training course of the Turkish Ministry of National Education and UNICEF for the teachers of refugee students, which has been conducted for nearly three years throughout the country. Within the scope of this research, the in-service training course programme was criticised and depending on the critiques, an alternative programme was prepared, implemented and its results evaluated.

The action research process is based on the idea that teacher agency is of primary importance at schools especially when there are incipient problems, such as enrolment of great numbers of refugee students in public schools. Therefore, the new programme was designed as an educational intervention into the ethnocentric meaning schemes of the teachers. The research process is expected to contribute to the theory–practice relationship under the notion of action research.

## Keywords

Ethnocentrism · Transformative learning · Cognitive therapy · Narrative learning · Schema therapy · Andragogy · Action research

Ş. E. Bağcı (✉)

Faculty of Medicine, Çukurova University, Adana, Turkey

e-mail: [erhanbagci@gmail.com](mailto:erhanbagci@gmail.com)

## 1 Introduction

The Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) introduced an in-service training course in cooperation with UNICEF in 2016 for teachers of refugee students. The purpose of the training course was stated as “facilitating the integration of foreign students into the Turkish educational system within the context of multicultural education, by raising the pedagogical knowledge and skills of the teachers” (Aktekin 2017, p. 7). The overall workload for the course was 40 hours in 10 days. The teachers were assigned to participate in the programme in their off-hours, after or before their shift. The quite ambitious programme included 18 participatory active learning activities, 10 slideshows and an animation on the Declaration of the Rights of Children.

The course programme consisted of five parts, with the first part being an *introduction into the concept of inclusive education*. Besides introducing the programme, its basic concepts and the current situation of refugee students in Turkey, this section of the training also included team building elements like warming up and sharing experiences between the participants. The second part involved making the participants familiar with the concept of the *inclusive school* followed by the third part where the participants gained insight into the principles of *inclusive communication*. Based on this core knowledge, the training continued in its fourth part with theoretical and practical approaches to the notion of *inclusive teaching*. Finally, the fifth part dealt with *inclusive evaluation*.

The author of this article held the position as one of the school counsellors in the first training of the trainers’ session and thus could get insights into how the programme was carried out. From the very beginning, the shortcomings of the programme in terms of both its theoretical and practical application became obvious. In this respect three aspects of critique have to be mentioned. First, the programme assumed that the very first problem in this domain was the teachers’ lack of knowledge and skills. This was why the programme consisted of only methods and techniques of inclusive education. However, according to my experiences and observations as a school counsellor for years, the underlying problem was the ethnocentric meaning schemes of the teachers in relation to the refugees; methods and techniques could work only if the teachers were able to recognise and overcome their prejudices. Second, the composition of the activities was not built appropriately to make a meaningful change in the participants’ minds. And third, the programme was not planned, implemented and evaluated according to the principles of adult learning.

After completing the course with the first group of teachers using the materials and methods of the programme, I intended to change the programme according to the aforementioned critiques. Based on a literature review and discussions with my colleagues, I decided to write a new programme and evaluate its effects as an action researcher. This paper is based on both a practical and a theoretical approach of action research on the jointly implemented in-service training course by MoNE and UNICEF for teachers of refugee students in Turkey. Within the scope of the research, the programme was criticised and as a result of the critiques, an alternative programme was prepared, implemented and evaluated.

---

## 2 Theoretical Framework

As a result of a literature review and discussions with colleagues, a theoretical framework was developed employing cognitive therapy (Beck et al. 2004; Ellis and MacLaren 2003) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow 1991) to build a theoretical foundation in order to shift the focus of the programme to an educational intervention of the ethnocentric meaning schemes of the teachers. I also applied the narrative learning approach (Clark and Rossiter 2008) to help the participant teachers construct an alternative point of view on refugees, and I was inspired by the schema therapy group sessions (Farrell et al. 2014) in ordering the activities within the new programme. Finally, I analysed the programme in terms of andragogy (Knowles et al. 2005) in order to show accordance with the principles of adult learning. These theoretical links will be elaborated shortly in the following section.

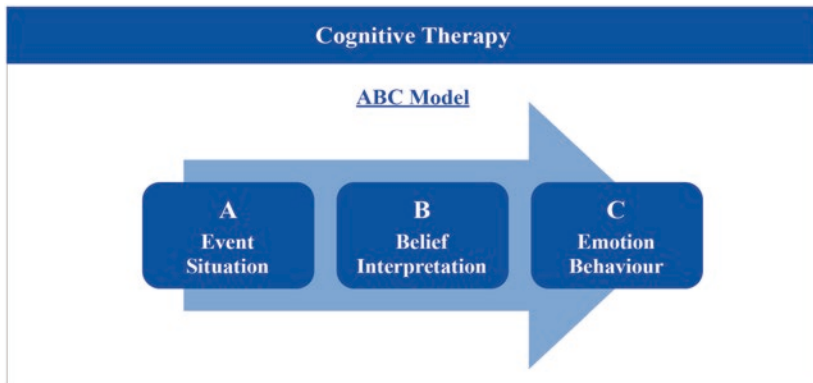
### 2.1 Cognitive Therapy

The psychotherapeutic approach of cognitive therapy was used to give insight into the main factors that shape the educational intervention. Cognitive therapy is based on the assumption that “cognition, emotion and behaviour are not disparate human functions but are, instead, intrinsically integrated and holistic” (Ellis and MacLaren 2003, p. 3). Thoughts, feelings and behaviours are all connected to each other within “interlocking systems of specialized cognitive structures”, called schemas, that operate for the sequence that starts “from the reception of an environmental stimulus to the formation of an adaptive response”. Individuals’

perceptions are shaped by their beliefs and other components of their cognitive schemas (Beck et al. 2004, pp. 25–28). Cognitive therapy attempts to find out and overcome the maladaptive and dysfunctional schemas of the patient so that undesirable thoughts, feelings and behaviours can be changed through a collaborative therapeutic process between the therapist and the patient. Even though the model of cognitive therapy that relates thoughts, feelings and behaviours was developed for psychotherapeutic purposes, it could also help to explain what impacts and shapes teachers' attitudes and behaviours towards refugee students. Teachers' thoughts on refugees determine their emotions, and thus their attitudes and behaviours towards refugee students. Ellis' ABC model (see Fig. 1) provides a simple understanding of the issue.

Based on the model in Fig. 1, I discussed with the participants that when teachers meet refugee students in any educational setting (A), their opinions on refugees (B) affect their conduct or emotion (C) in the situation. For the most part, the teacher is not aware of these opinions (B) because they stem from “automatic thoughts” (Beck et al. 2004, p. 31) which cannot be recognised without intention. Rather than being the results of deliberation, reflection or reasoning, these automatic thoughts spring up rapidly and briefly so that the individual (the teacher) is far more likely to be aware of the emotion that follows (Beck 1995, pp. 14–15), but feels and behaves automatically.

Prejudices stem from the “cognitive distortions” within these automatic thoughts. Cognitive distortions are consistent errors in thinking (Beck 1995,



**Fig. 1** Ellis' ABC Model *Source* Based on Ellis and MacLaren (2003) and Beck et al. (2004). *Source* Author's own illustration.

p. 118). They are irrational and inaccurate patterns of thoughts to produce negative emotions and behaviours, such as all-or-nothing thinking, over-generalisation, mental filter, disqualifying the positive, jumping to conclusion, magnification or minimisation, emotional reasoning, ‘should’ statements, labelling and mislabelling, and personalisation (Burns 2009). Based on these cognitive distortions related to refugees, the teacher might unwittingly behave in a negative manner towards the refugee student.

## 2.2 Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory focuses particularly on how individual meaning perspectives change and new perspectives are integrated into personal biographies. For Mezirow, the founder of the theory, learning is making meaning, and it is shaped and delimited by our frames of reference, or our meaning structures, which are formed through our socialisation, and have been uncritically assimilated since childhood (Mezirow 1994, p. 223). We construe, validate and reformulate our experiences through our meaning structures, which have two dimensions: meaning perspectives (habits of mind) and meaning schemes (points of view). Meaning perspectives are structures of psychocultural assumptions within which new experiences are assimilated to – and transformed by – one’s past experience (Mezirow 1978, p. 101). They constitute the codes that govern our activities of perceiving, comprehending and remembering. Meaning perspectives operate with meaning schemes, as perceptual and interpretative codes in the construal of meaning, which are made up of specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgements and feelings. Meaning perspectives and meaning schemes are our “boundary structures” for perceiving and comprehending new data (Mezirow 1991, pp. 4–6). We may or may not be aware of these habits of mind or points of view but they operate together to shape our interpretations, and thus our attitudes and behaviours.

Mezirow summarises the transformation of meaning perspectives as a process in which we become critically aware of the cultural and psychological assumptions that have influenced the way we see ourselves and our relationships and the way we pattern our lives (Mezirow 1978, p. 101). The transformation process goes through ten stages (Mezirow 2009, p. 94):

1. a disorienting dilemma;
2. self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame;
3. a critical assessment of assumptions;
4. recognition that one’s discontent is shared;

5. exploration of options for new roles, relationships and action;
6. planning a course of action;
7. acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing the plan;
8. provisional trying of new roles;
9. building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;
10. reintegration.

Going through these stages, perspective transformation means becoming critically aware of our psychocultural assumptions about our lifeworld; changing these cognitive, conative and affective structures and finally acting upon the newly emerged orientations. In this study, transformative learning theory is employed to explain how teacher prejudices operate and under which circumstances they can be transformed.

### **2.3 Scaffolding the Programme: Narrative Learning and Schema Therapy Group Sessions**

Learning is a social process and discourse stays central to making meaning (Mezirow 1997, p. 10). Transformative education could be defined as the process of building an alternative meaning perspective or scheme via an alternative discourse. In order to manage this change, the educational relationship should be based on an alternative narrative within which evidences, arguments and alternative points of view are justified and validated.

Narratives serve a function of making meaning out of our dizzying variety of experiences by establishing connections among them. Our minds locate our experiences within a particular narrative, namely storying the experiences in order to avoid senselessness. Narrative is also related to how we craft our self-conception (Clark and Rossiter 2008, pp. 61–63). Teachers' ethnocentric meaning schemes are comprised of prejudiced narratives about refugees, most of which depend on irrational and groundless claims and beliefs. As a result, they construe their new experiences with refugee students via these irrational narratives.

I developed the activities within the programme according to these psychotherapeutic theories and put them in order cohesively so that I could manage to build an alternative narrative for the participants. In terms of scaffolding the educational intervention via this narrative, I was inspired by schema therapy which is also a specific type of cognitive therapy. In my educational intervention the structure of the group schema therapy was employed for scaffolding the flow of the programme.



Group schema therapy has three main stages: bonding and emotional regulation; mode awareness and mode change work; and autonomy (Farrell and Shaw 2012, p. 87). At the first stage, the therapist is expected to develop a warm and confidential relationship with the group while setting the rules rigorously. The second stage, mode awareness and mode change, is the process whereby the participants become aware of their maladaptive cognitive modes that affect their feelings and behaviours, and work on these modes to exchange them with more rational ones. And the final stage is autonomy in which healthy modes develop and become stronger (Farrell et al. 2014, pp. 28–30). I built the modules in the programme parallel to the order of the schema therapy group sessions.

## **2.4 Basing the New programme's Philosophy on Principles of Andragogy**

Andragogy, which has been claimed to be the antithesis of pedagogy, is the art and science of helping adults to learn (Knowles et al. 2005, p. 61). The andragogical model requires specific approaches to needs assessment, planning, implementing and evaluating, assuming that adults have specific learning features different from children. The psychological circumstances within the learning setting should be open, comfortable, respectful, inclusive, non-deceptive, and so on, and the level of voice and lighting, and other physical arrangements, should be appropriate for adult participants. Authoritarian educator behaviours are not welcomed. Depending on the adults' self-directedness, the entire process should be participatory, so that they feel accepted as they are. Due to the rich repertoire of experience of the adults, the educator should be open to experimental techniques to include the participants' experiences in the process by making them feel free to tell stories about themselves and to make contributions to the process. The educator should feel flexible to individualise the programme according to the group dynamic. The timing and duration of the programme are also important for adult education because they learn better if they are ready to learn. And of course, adults learn best when they think that they are going to solve a concrete life-problem as a result of education. Otherwise, they don't participate or simply drop out.

It's obvious that the participatory possibilities of andragogy can only comply with any mandatory in-service training course to a certain extent. Nevertheless, they are still important for any adult education practice since they are implying the distinctive features of adult learning.

Andragogy was thus used as a main feature for framing the programme within its official limitations. While the teachers taking part in the programme couldn't

be given the opportunity to participate in the planning and implementation phase of the training – because this had already been set by the Ministry – I took the chance to change the original evaluation practice of the programme into a self-evaluation activity. All activities were – according to the andragogy approach – built upon participants’ own experiences so that they felt they were contributing and finding solutions to their actual problems. It was crucial to construct a respectful, comfortable and non-authoritarian atmosphere for learning to gain acceptance from the participants that the (mandatory) course was really useful for the improvement of their professional work as teachers of refugee students. In addition, those elements of the training that entailed possibilities for flexibility were made open to negotiation with the participants, such as rules on their flex days or break times.

---

### **3 Action Research as the Methodological Frame of the Study**

Action research is an umbrella term to cover a variety of research that seeks to remove the barriers between research and action. Being an umbrella term makes it difficult to reach commonly shared definitions (see Rowell et al. 2017, pp. 85–101; Rowell et al. 2015; Reason and Bradbury 2008, pp. 695–707). Educational action research, in which teachers become researchers, is one of the most widespread applications of this term (Noffke and Brennan 2014, pp. 285–288). An educational action research is a kind of systematic inquiry in which the educator/researcher aims to solve specific problems of a programme by evaluating the implementation him/herself (Johnson 2014, p. 19; Patton 2002, p. 221). It differs from most social science studies in that the former aim to aggregate data through anonymous third-person knowledge, while action research methods employ first-person knowledge, namely subjective data about oneself in action (Chandler and Torbert 2003, pp. 134–135). At this point it can be suggested that the design and the data collection processes are relatively informal in comparison to other methodologies: the researcher collects data from a situation in which s/he actively participates and even creates; s/he evaluates him/herself and the results are used to solve the problems in that situation again (Patton 2002, p. 221). However, being relatively informal doesn’t make action research arbitrary; the employment of a systematic approach for data collection and analyses is essential (Johnson 2014, p. 20).

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, (alongside the research journal that I kept everyday) I gave a pre-evaluation form on the first day of

the course to the participants and then a self-evaluation form afterwards. In the first version of the pre-evaluation form there were 8 multiple-choice questions to measure the participants' level of knowledge on inclusive education, 10 open-ended questions to grasp the participants' meaning schemes on refugee students, 25 five-point Likert-type questions that I developed based on Neuliep and McCroskey's "Ethnocentrism Scale" (2013) and one open-ended question to gather the participants' feelings and thoughts on the course. The purpose of the pre-evaluation form was both to get insight into the attitudes of the participants towards refugees and to provide an opportunity to make a comparison with the self-evaluation form to see how far the course was effective in terms of its target to change mindsets. As a result of giving the questionnaires to the first group, I cancelled two open-ended questions since the participants had declared some difficulties in answering them. I removed 10 of the Likert-type questions that fell into repetition and that caused negative reactions from the participants and I added one more question instead. The self-evaluation form was made up of similar questions to the pre-evaluation form and I added a part for the participants to evaluate the course. I took note of expert opinions in developing both forms.

---

## 4 Action and Research

The new programme which I built on the theoretical framework above was made up of two main parts: the first directed to the ethnocentric meaning schemes of the teachers, and the second to the theory and implementation, namely the methods and techniques of inclusive education. The first part was comprised of three modules, which are "bonding", "prejudices and teacher attitudes", and "transformation of teacher attitudes", whereas the second part was a single module, titled "inclusive education".

Activities in the bonding module, which took one and a half days, aimed to build confidence between the participants and the educator, to set the group rules collectively, and to reveal how the participant teachers were experiencing problems related to refugee students. The teachers were obviously reluctant to join the course since they had to participate in their off-hours without receiving any additional payments. This was a very important factor for the first contact. Thus, I gave due consideration to the physical comfort of the educational setting, namely the seats, tables, light, temperature, ventilation, music and the like.

The second module, which lasted three days, was about recognising how teacher attitudes and behaviours may be shaped by prejudices against refugees and what the consequences of these prejudices can be. This module included

general knowledge on the relationship between beliefs and behaviours, automatic thoughts and cognitive distortions in our minds; the role of these cognitive distortions in teacher attitudes; and how prejudices are created and happen to affect teachers' attitudes and behaviours.

The third module, which took two and a half days, focused more on the participants' experiences with refugees, which included activities on confronting the participants with their own prejudices, some self-directed techniques to recognise and overcome prejudices, main concepts of prejudices in educational settings, and the comparative consequences of prejudiced and unprejudiced teacher attitudes and behaviours.

The final module, which was conceptualised for a duration of three days, was on the notion "inclusive education". It included knowledge production and activities on children rights and right to education, how to plan, implement and evaluate differentiated learning in the frame of inclusive education. This part offered quite condensed insight into the notion, theories and practices of inclusive education, mainly based on the original programme.

I conducted this modified programme with a total of 198 teachers in six groups. On the very first group with 35 teachers, I applied the original programme. The following five groups consisting of 163 teachers participated in the alternative programme. 57 teachers allowed me to use their self-evaluation forms. Only full data provided by this group was included in the following analyses.

Analyses of the pre-evaluation form demonstrated that none of the participants referred to the teachers' role in the open-ended question, "*The solution to the problems due to foreign students...*" 21% of the participants offered pedagogical solutions preceding the integration of refugee students into public schools, such as *teaching literacy in Turkish at first* or *adaptation at first* (16%+5% respectively). 31.5% of the answers included more general expressions, such as ... *political*, ...*should be rational*, ... *needs time*, and the like, somehow avoiding the suggestion of concrete pedagogical solutions. These findings give a hint of the lack of awareness of the active role that teachers could play with respect to dealing with or solving problems of the integration of refugee children. Thus, dealing with refugee children's educational needs is moreover referred to as an external problem, a problem that other people or institutions should deal with.

It is also significant that almost half of the teachers (47.5%) recommended discriminatory or exclusionary solutions, such as *separate education* (37%) and *repatriation* (10.5%) to this question. The answers to another open-ended question (*Syrians in Turkey...*) in the pre-evaluation form were in accordance with this finding. I picked up the answers to this question in groups due to their content and built three categories of expressions according to their themes. There

were 'discriminative expressions' (31.6%) such as "*should be kept in camps*" or "*should turn back to their country*", implying that the Syrian refugees should live separate from Turkish citizens. There were also 'hierarchical expressions' (31.6%) such as "*have problems of adaptation*" or "*should be adapted to the society*", looking for an integrative solution but placing the Syrian refugees in an inferior social position in which they should be managed by the superior host society. And the rest were 'expressions of sorrow' (36.8%) such as "... *are victims*" or "*I'm sorry for them*", defining the relationship in-between in terms of emotions. None of the teachers uttered egalitarian or rights-based expressions in the pre-evaluation and self-evaluation forms. Moreover, none of the participants mentioned human rights, international law, conventions or duties of teachers as public servants throughout the whole study. Instead, the only somehow positive expressions about refugees were those of sorrow. However, the answers still concentrated on discriminatory and hierarchical expressions, indicating ethnocentric and non-reflexive attitudes underlying the approach of teachers towards refugee students.

A comparison of the data in the ethnocentrism scale in both the pre-evaluation and self-evaluation forms revealed that there was no significant change in the participant teachers' ethnocentric meaning schemes after the programme. It was obvious from the very beginning that transforming psychosocial structures like ethnocentric meaning schemes of the teachers in 40 hours in a mandatory in-service training course was almost impossible, because these structures are assimilated deeply throughout the individuals' whole socialisation process. Nevertheless, the educational intervention in the present study managed to generate some changes to a certain extent. According to the data provided by the self-evaluation form, 31.5% of the participant teachers believed that they understood their refugee students better after having attended this course. 47% stated that they realised that they might have a lack of knowledge/skills on the issue, and 63% realised that they might help their refugee students better by appropriate pedagogical approaches and techniques. 31.5% of the participants acknowledged/remarked that teachers in general might have prejudices against refugee students, while 21% stated that they realised their own prejudices. The participants who thought nothing had changed through the training according to their knowledge and attitudes made up 26%. Hopefully, at the end of the programme, some of the teachers happened to realise and think that they had an important role in shaping the learning conditions and outcomes of refugee students, be it negative or positive.

The self-evaluation form also had a section to reflect the opinions of the participant teachers on the programme itself, including items on their evaluation of the adequacy and appropriateness of the programme with respect to their needs.

For 79%, the programme met their professional needs in terms of content, topics and materials. 16% of the participants didn't find the programme adequate at all. Only 5% didn't like the methods and techniques applied in course activities. A total of 73.5% stated that s/he would (partly) recommend the course to other colleagues. The level of satisfaction seemed to decrease when the question was the appropriateness of time (37% "No") and duration (43% "No") of the course.

The study thus reveals that the participant teachers mostly found the new programme adequate and appropriate generally in terms of content, topics, materials, methods and techniques, time, duration and place. However, it's significant that only 10.5% thought that the programme could help them solve the problems they encounter related to the schooling of refugee students. Although the level of satisfaction of the participants seemed quite high, they were still not sure that the programme would work to solve the identified problems in this field of schooling for refugee children and their teachers in Turkey.

---

## 5 Discussion of Results and Further Recommendations

The intention of this action research was to rewrite the in-service training programme according to a more problem-based need assumption by building it on a sound theoretical ground, and evaluating the process and the results of its implementation. The new programme was essentially based on the idea that beliefs, in other words habits of mind and points of view of the teachers, are of primary importance for adequate pedagogical interventions in schools (see Biesta et al. 2015), especially when it comes to the capacity of dealing with new challenges in the system, such as the enrolment of great numbers of refugee students in public schools in Turkey. No teaching methods and techniques can work unless teachers believe in them.

The analyses of the field notes and the pre-evaluation form demonstrated that the teachers were not considering themselves as 'change agents' or an important part of the solution to the problems they identified and encounter in the everyday practice of dealing with refugee children's need of school education. Ethnocentric mindsets are widespread in this group of professional pedagogues and transforming the psychosocial structures underlying these mindsets requires more effort than an educational intervention limited to 40 hours. However, the results of the study revealed that training courses for teachers might generate the basis of reflection including questioning their own preconceptions and assumptions

on refugees and their pedagogic needs. Some of the teachers did indeed realise through the programme's intervention that their attitudes and behaviours play an important role in facing challenges and solving problems they encounter or identify with respect to the education of refugee children in regular schools in Turkey. A respectable proportion of the participants in the study has – after the training intervention – realised that their own prejudices affect their relationship with their refugee students. This kind of awareness can be considered at least as the starting point of transformative learning (disorienting dilemma and self-examination).

Teachers found the programme adequate and appropriate regarding the identification of individual psychological reasons for the problems related to the schooling of refugee students. On the other hand, they still believed that it wouldn't contribute to solving the identified and experienced problems practically, as the participant teachers didn't consider themselves as change agents or agents of solution in this respect – which also became obvious in the data of this evaluation. For them, trying to solve the problem by transforming the relationship between teachers and refugee students through a reflection on prejudices on the side of teachers with the result of trying to change the attitudes and behaviours of the teachers was at the least ignoring the real problems.

As a consequence, it can be concluded that these kinds of spontaneously invented in-service training courses that aim at solving pedagogical problems due to a migration-driven unexpected change in the population of students are not appropriate when they impose new pedagogical ideas ('inclusive education') to the professionals without acknowledging that pedagogical programmes cannot be based only on knowledge and skills of the professionals but have to enable them to reflect on their attitudes and prejudices towards social groups like refugees. New training courses that aim at implementing pedagogical solutions through educational intervention have to take this (self-)reflective element at least as much into account as fostering the trainees' knowledge and skills.

The present study can indeed be evaluated as a limited but nevertheless exploratory attempt to provide insight into the pre-conditions for teacher training programmes in Turkey that aim at providing teachers of refugee children with the necessary skills and knowledge to face the challenges that come with the new student population. The primary limitation is that evaluation forms such as the ones used in this study may only provide a quite superficial perspective on transformation effects through a temporarily limited and mandatory training. It requires more in-depth qualified methodologies with longitudinal and mixed-method elements to grasp the whole dimension of transformation through the instrument of intervention training of pedagogic professionals.

## References

- Aktekin, S. (2017). *Sınıfta Yabancı Uyruklu Öğrenci Bulunan Öğretmenler İçin El Kitabı* [Handbook for Teachers with Foreign Students]. Ankara: MEB Öğretmen Yetiştirme ve Geliştirme Genel Müdürlüğü.
- Beck, J. S. (1995). *Cognitive Therapy: Basics and Beyond*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Beck, A. T., Freeman, A., Davis, D. D., & Associates. (2004). *Cognitive Therapy of Personality Disorders* (2nd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2015). The Role Of Beliefs In Teacher Agency. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory And Practice*, 21(6), 624–640.
- Burns, D. D. (2009). *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Chandler, D. & Torbert, B. (2003). Transforming Inquiry And Action: Interweaving 27 Flavors of Action Research. *Action Research*, 1(2), 133–152.
- Clark, M. C., & Rossiter, M. (2008). Narrative Learning in Adulthood. In S. B. Merriam (Ed.), *Third Update On Adult Learning Theory* (pp. 61–70). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Ellis, A., & MacLaren, C. (2003). *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: A Therapist's Guide*. Santa Clarita: Impact Publishers.
- Farrell, J. M., & Shaw, I. A. (2012). *Group Schema Therapy for Borderline Personality Disorder: A Step-by-Step Treatment Manual with Patient Workbook*. Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell.
- Farrell, J. M., Reiss, N., & Shaw, I. A. (2014). *The Schema Therapy: Clinician's Guide – A Complete Resource for Building and Delivering Individual, Group and Integrated Schema Mode Treatment Programs*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Johnson, A. P. (2014). *Eylem Araştırması El Kitabı* [Action Research Handbook]. Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.
- Knowles, M., Holton III, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2005). *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective Transformation. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 28(2), 100–110.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mezirow, J. (1994, Summer). Understanding Transformation Theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44(4), 222–232.
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative Learning: Theory To Practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, 5–12.
- Mezirow, J. (2009). An Overview On Transformative Learning. In K. Illeris (Ed.), *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning theorists ... in their own words* (pp. 90–105). New York: Routledge.
- Neuliep, J. W., & McCroskey, J. C. (2013). *Ethnocentrism Scale*. Retrieved December 2, 2017, from [http://www.midss.org/sites/default/files/ethnocentrism\\_scale.pdf](http://www.midss.org/sites/default/files/ethnocentrism_scale.pdf)



- Noffke, S., & Brennan, M. (2014). Educational Action Research. In D. Coghlan & M. Brydon-Miller (Eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research* (pp. 285–288). London: SAGE Reference.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2008). Concluding Reflections: Whither Action Research? In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (pp. 695–707). London: SAGE Publications.
- Rowell, L. L., Polush, E. Y., Riel, M., & Bruewer, A. (2015). Action Researchers' Perspectives About The Distinguishing Characteristics Of Action Research: A Delphi And Learning Circles Mixed-Methods Study. *Educational Action Research*, 23(2), 243–270.
- Rowell, L. L., Riel, M. M., & Polush, E. Y. (2017). Defining Action Research: On Dialogic Spaces for Constructing Shared Meanings. In L. L. Rowell, C. D. Bruce, J. M. Shosh, & M. M. Riel (Eds.), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Action Research* (pp. 85–101). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.



---

# Using Migrant Pupils' Experiences in Teacher Training

Beatrix Bukus

---

## Abstract

At the heart of teachers' professionalism is their competence in reflecting about their own pedagogical practices and the discourses these practices are embedded in. Teachers' understanding of the complexities of their pupils' migration experience and its impact on their educational participation is an important theme for reflective processes. This chapter presents results of my study on pupils involved in multiple and multidirectional migration during their schooling years. Their experiences are discussed with regard to their potential to challenge current pedagogical practices and discourses related to migrant pupils.

---

## Keywords

Child migration · Integration · Education · Teacher professionalism · Transnationalism

---

## 1 Introduction

I exemplify multiple and multidirectional migration by giving a short overview of Leonardo's trajectory, a young man who was born in Caravallo (Peru). He stayed there only four months after his birth due to a war between Peru and Ecuador.

---

B. Bukus (✉)

Faculty of Linguistics and Literary Studies, Bielefeld University, Bielefeld, Germany  
e-mail: [beatrix.bukus@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:beatrix.bukus@uni-bielefeld.de)

He fled with his mother to Columbia, where the family got a visa to Japan. The whole family moved to Osaka, but he entered the first grade of primary school in Shikoku. Leonardo lived in Japan until he was seven years old. His first language was at this time Japanese. His parents were working long hours in a factory and therefore Leonardo did not spend much time with them during these years. This resulted in the fact that when the family moved to Spain when he was seven, he did not speak any Spanish. The reason for the relocation was that they considered Japan to be a transit country only and eventually wanted to return to Peru. In the meantime, however, the family of his mother relocated to Spain. They decided to move on to Spain to reunite the family and find better jobs. He attended a public school where he was enrolled in a regular class in grade level 2. He did not know the Latin alphabet and wanted to enrol in the first grade, but the school insisted on enrolling him according to his age. He was 16 years old when he moved to Leipzig in Germany as a reaction to worsening conditions caused by the world economic crisis. Around this time his parents separated, although both still remained in Spain. His mother then married another man. The family stayed in Spain for another four to five years hoping that things would get better but then they made the decision to move to Germany. They informed themselves about the conditions and opportunities in Leipzig from an uncle (his mother's brother), who had been living there for a longer time. He was enrolled in a public high school's language preparatory class, and then, after a couple of months, in the 9th grade. He completed grades 9 and 10 and passed the high school examination. He started a professional training as a physiotherapist also in Leipzig. During his years in Germany he has kept contact with family members and friends living in Spain. In the second year of his training he decided to move back to the town in Spain where his father lives and he enrolled in a physiotherapy course there, while he also started work (Bukus 2020, pp. 120–123).

This trajectory is a good example of how a young high school pupil has a transnational approach to life and different reasons for relocation, how he manages to attend several different public school systems, to learn and use multiple languages for the purpose of learning and engaging with people in different places, to tackle the process of social and educational integration multiple times and to successfully integrate temporarily at one location with the option to move on. During his narration however, Leonardo refers to the challenge he went through at every location of his life: during his integration process in the new local contexts his previous experiences did not count, a clear focus was on him learning the local language used for school instruction and he was considered as a settled migrant who would never move again.

## 2 Reflexion as a Core Professional Competence of Teachers<sup>1</sup>

Leonardo's story is only one of the diverse experiences pupils attending German public schools have had with migration. Most of my subject teacher colleagues at school and those teachers who attended my in-service teacher training seminars had, however, homogenising and reductive assumptions about migrant pupils. For instance, one widespread assumption (and reduction) is that the only and most relevant characteristic of migrant pupils is that they do not have skills in the language of instruction and thus their integration is about learning German sufficiently well to be able to participate in their regular classes (on the critique of this assumption see Gogolin 2008; Karakaşoğlu and Neumann 2011, p. 58).

As part of my work as a teacher and teacher trainer, I have guided several colleagues through critical reflection on their practices with migrant pupils. In the following quote, for instance, many aspects of the German school discourses on migration and migrant pupils become apparent in the way the teacher uses categories and terms. The quote is part of a conversation between a teacher trainee and a high school teacher of History and German Language and Literature, who both work in a city in Saxony, Germany. It is the teacher's answer to the trainee's question about how long she has been working with pupils who learn German as a Second Language (GSL).<sup>2</sup>

Well, the GSL students are not here with us from the beginning, but we have had them maybe for eight years. It is something on the rise. At the beginning, it was the

---

<sup>1</sup> In this section I rely on the definition of Geier (2016, pp. 190–195), according to whom the focus of reflexion is on teachers' professional role in the formation of a society and their contribution to subjectivation.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'German as a Second Language' refers to a difference from 'German as a Foreign Language', whereby in the former case the language is learned in the environment in which it is used by the local population. The state of Saxony has regulations titled 'Die Sächsische Konzeption zur Integration von Migranten' enacted on August 1st 2000 (Die Sächsische Konzeption 2000) and in the 'Lehrplan Deutsch als Zweitsprache für Vorbereitungsgruppen/Vorbereitungsklassen an allgemeinbildenden Schulen', issued in 2000 and updated in 2018 (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus 2000, 2009, 2018), which regulate the provisions for newcomer pupils, who need to acquire skills in the language of schooling.

Russian Germans<sup>3</sup> who we noticed but they were not considered GSL pupils, but I am not sure. Because they already came with German language skills and maybe five years ago, I now have them in my class 9. In the 5th grade, when I took them over, there were increasingly migrant children. But they have attended elementary school and actually were integrated into the German language. I can't exactly use the term GSL students, but in the last few years it has become quite a lot more who are sent to us because we have the GSL classes. Pupils are sent here, and then one day they are put into the regular classes.<sup>4</sup> (Interview with a subject teacher at a high school/*Oberschule*, May 2nd, 2018, Leipzig, Saxony, Germany)

While describing the migrant pupils, she puts a clear focus on their proficiency at knowing German as 'second language learners' which applies to some but not all of them as some have already attended elementary school in Germany. At the beginning she had to tackle teaching tasks stemming from the needs of migrant pupils who were from ethnic German origin having been brought up speaking German as their first language. Afterwards, she taught pupils who were raised in Leipzig as children of parents who migrated to Leipzig. So these pupils learned academic German first at state-run primary schools. She has only in recent years been confronted with the fact that some of her pupils – due to their own migration experiences – enter regular high schools without any knowledge of the German language. These students are labelled in the Saxonian system as learners of German as a Second Language (on the critique of this term see Dirim and Pokitsch 2017, p. 101). To her credit, she acknowledges that her pupils had differing experiences of migration and shows awareness of the different pedagogical tasks associated with this fact.

One core competence of teachers is reflexion about and (self-)critique of their own pedagogical practices and the discourses these practices are embedded in (Heinemann and Mecheril 2018, p. 269; Mecheril and Shure 2018, p. 89; Messerschmidt 2016, p. 63). I follow here the line of argument of Özayli and Ortner (2015, p. 214), who state that teachers' self-images and pedagogical actions are always entangled in societal (discursive) conditions and that it is not possible to act beyond these conditions. However, as Özayli and Ortner (2015) point out, it is part of teachers' professional habitus to take the responsibility to reflect upon

---

<sup>3</sup>The teacher refers with this expression to *Spätaussiedler* German immigrants from Eastern Europe who were referred to as *Aussiedler* until the end of 1992, and since then as *Spätaussiedler* (Panagiotidis 2017, p. 24, footnote 3).

<sup>4</sup>The interviews quoted in this chapter were conducted in German and translated by the author. All names have been changed for the purpose of anonymisation.

their own entanglements in certain societal conditions and to act responsibly and professionally.

An important theme for such a critical reflexion is the different ways of involvement in migration among pupils and how these impact their educational experiences and needs. According to a study by the Berlin Institute for Integration and Migration Research (BIM) and the Research Department at the Council of Experts of German Foundations for Integration and Migration (SVR), teachers admit to lacking a deep knowledge of migration and diversity and wish to have more concrete training on these issues (BIM and SVR 2017, p. 59). This chapter aims to provide insights into individual migration and educational trajectories of groups of pupils involved in multiple and multidirectional migration in the hope that these insights will trigger reflexion among teachers about some of the prevalent homogenising and reductionist assumptions about migrant pupils.

---

### 3 Study Design

My study focused on experiences of school-aged<sup>5</sup> children involved in multiple and multidirectional migration.<sup>6</sup> The main criteria for eligibility for the sample were that the interviewed pupils attended a state-run school in the city of Leipzig and had already relocated at least twice over international state borders during their school-age years. This form of migration was identified in the Leipzig context among two distinct groups of school-age children: firstly, among those who were part of war-induced family migration and arrived after living at transit locations; and secondly, those whose caregivers settled as part of labour migration in one European Union country but, due to economic hardship following the world economic crisis of 2008, involuntarily relocated.

The study was guided by questions on (1) the reasons for and circumstances of the pupils' involvement in this form of migration, on (2) their participation in formal, informal, and non-formal education at the different locations, and on (3) how they see the effects of multiple and multidirectional migration on their lives and educational participation.

---

<sup>5</sup>The term 'school-age' can be defined by reference to national legislations on education. As the present study involves the state of Saxony in Germany, this term covers the period between six and 18 years of age (Sächsisches Schulgesetz 2018).

<sup>6</sup>Circular migration or continuous movements beyond state borders, for instance, as part of parental professional obligations, were not focused on in this study.

My research had an explorative nature (Drinck 2013, p. 146) and followed the theoretical sampling strategy (Herfter and Rahtjen 2013, p. 118). The data was collected by means of problem-centred interviews and ego-centred network maps and was complemented by field notes taken during home visits and other common free-time activities, as well as during the regular German as a Second Language (GSL) classes that were offered by me. The data collection started in October 2013, and further interviews and network drawings took place in spring 2014 and 2015 as well as in summer 2017. The interviews with pupils were conducted in Leipzig where all participants were residents. Specificities of the data collection resulted from the fact that the participants were multilingual children, and many of them were asylum seekers having previous experience with interviews in the framework of their asylum procedure (Shapiro et al. 2018). In cases where the interviewer and the interviewee did not share a common language, interviews were conducted either with the help of an interpreter or in a language which was a foreign language for the participant. In addition, it had to be taken into account during the interviews that narrative competence was shaped by pupils' different biographical experiences, sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds and proficiencies, psychological conditions and ages (Hoerning 2000, p. 4). The data analysis built on 17 interviews from 13 pupils, their network maps and the associated memos of the researcher. The data analysis followed the steps of the summarising content analysis of Mayring (2010, pp. 69–84).

---

#### **4 Experiences of Pupils Involved in Multiple and Multidirectional Migration**

Multiple migration is induced by various reasons, and the different moves and their rationales within the individual biographies are complex. The reasons which allowed or did not allow families/caregivers freedom of choice in departing from their location of origin can be situated along a continuum between voluntary and forced rather than expressed by this dichotomy. Five of my cases were closer to the voluntary end of the continuum. Whether or not the parents chose to move voluntarily, however, is also not a clear-cut category. In the case of four relocations, the caregiver(s) lost their jobs due to the economic crisis and the move was not spoken of as a free choice, considering that they had an established life in the respective countries. A possibility would be to regard these cases as *involuntary* in order to make a clear distinction from *forced*, in which the safety and consent aspects are decisive. *Involuntary* would instead emphasise that the family decided to relocate because they could not maintain their way of life under the changed

economic circumstances. For four of the interviewed pupils, the reason for their departure was the war in Syria, which meant that they and their families could not meet their basic needs at the location of origin. Three families, on the other hand, decided to move from locations shaped by protracted war situations and political and economic instability. One pupil lived as an immigrant in Iran when the family had to move due to political reasons. Furthermore, in almost all cases in the study, the reasons for the first move were different from those for later migrations. Only in one family was the reason for the first move identical with that for subsequent moves. The lengths of stays at the different locations varied between a couple of months to eight years.

My study participants, apart from three cases, were from many countries of origin because they had attended formal education at several locations prior to arriving in Leipzig. Therefore, gaining information about school attendance at all previous locations is needed. The process of current integration at the school in Saxony is for this reason embedded in a complex educational trajectory where experiences from previous locations have a direct impact on the integration process at the current location.

I found that the perception of and reactions to the educational challenges in Saxony appear to be dependent on two aspects impacting the educational participation of pupils. The first aspect is whether the family made a clear-cut decision about the final country of settlement (here, Germany) prior to leaving the location of origin. The second aspect is whether the family considered the time spent between the location of origin and the current location of settlement to be only a transit phase, which influenced the attitudes and behaviours of school-age children in regard to language learning, formal education, and engagement. This conception of a transit stay is mainly – but not exclusively – to be found among those who left their location of origin due to war. Therefore, it is important to consider separately the transit orientation and the occurrence of war as a motivation to migrate (Bukus 2018).

Thirdly, all study participants have skills in multiple languages and use translinguaging practices in their everyday lives. They are confronted at different locations with a strong discrepancy between the language use at school and their translinguaging practice outside school, which García (2009) refers to as follows:

Multilinguals throughout the world translanguage in order to make sense of their world. It is only when they get to school that their language complexity becomes stigmatized. Schools attempt to control this gift of translinguaging, marking the more fluid languaging practices of society as 'incorrect', or 'corrupt'. (p. 384)



My respondents had no chance to use and practice either their multilingual skills or the newly learned language (German) during their lessons and often felt inhibited by classmates, not daring to talk because of not speaking like a native. These experiences are described by Huxel (2016), Özaylı and Ortner (2015, p. 211) and Frank (2015, p. 23) as the prevalent norm of language learning that focuses on the assumption that all languages are learned and used separately and that learning a language means fulfilling a native-speaker norm. Although research on good practices of how and why to apply the translanguaging approach for linguistically diverse classrooms forms part of a growing literature (Woodley and Brown 2016), my study participants did not refer to any experience which Canagarajah (2013) characterises as follows:

Rather than asking what we can offer to deficient or novice students, we have to ask how we can let students bring into the classroom the dispositions and competencies which they have richly developed outside of classroom. This involves turning the classroom into a site for translanguaging socialization. (p. 184)

My study participants experienced a discrepancy between the norm-oriented monolingual expectations at school and their everyday multilingual practices with their family members, friends and acquaintances living at different locations. Apart from two pupils, who had only local contacts at the location of origin and despite their multiple relocations still have only local connections, all other pupils kept personal and virtual contact with their contact people living in other places. Many pupils already had transnational contacts at their location of origin and maintained these along their multiple migration route. The others did not have any transnational connections at their location of origin, but due to moving many times their social space became transnational (Faist 2000; Gogolin and Pries 2004; Pries 1997).

Fourthly, the study's participants learned during their multiple and multidirectional migration to think in more than one frame of reference and to compare various aspects of their realities. This comparative view was expressed by Stella, for instance, in the form of her critique on the traditional nationally oriented history teaching and her plea for a wider perspective:

These are something completely different because here in Germany is only about Germany, about GDR, and Hitler and such, and in Spain it was about all countries. [...] But, for example, about Russia and such, the countries that count. Here only about Germany. I know Bulgarian, Spanish and German history.

Finally, findings on how the study participants learned to identify with the role of a foreigner, equated with someone being different from a local pupil, will be presented. In many interviews the students referred to themselves as a *foreigner*, as a member of the *group of the others* (Niedrig 2015). Linda Morrice (2012) has applied Mezirow's theory of transformative learning to refugee populations. She draws attention to how asylum seekers learn from interaction with the local society and the media discourse about "who and what they are not" (Morrice 2012, p. 267). She found that migration is an intense process of learning which can lead both positively and negatively to the transformation of the frame of reference and understanding of the world and of oneself. In her interviews with newly arrived asylum seekers in the UK, Morrice (2012, pp. 263–264) found that these people had disbenefits for their identity construction and learned that their symbolic or social capital accumulated so far had no value in the new context. This is an experience that my study participants also had to make within the school system in Saxony.

---

## 5 Conclusion

After studying pupils involved in multiple and multidirectional migration, my findings add to our knowledge around transnational life trajectories among young people of high school age. My respondents developed along their trajectories a rich multi-perspectival knowledge about the world and a range of multilingual skills. While their current phase of life in Leipzig is considered by the pupils as only one waystation among many, their teachers did not necessarily share the same view and therefore have not built on knowledge and experiences previously acquired. Furthermore, with regard to topics of belonging or language use the expectations imposed on these pupils by their experiences of multiple relocation often stood in sharp contrast to the expectations of the particular local school context.

According to Mecheril and Quehl (2015, p. 168), school changes cannot replace social changes. The authors argue that school should be given the task of opening up educational spaces in which changes can be thought about and discussed. In this sense, education may be understood as a process of dealing with experiences, in which the capacity is formed to behave towards general social issues and demands, and to do so in a way that is oriented towards reducing injustice.

By recognising, examining and discussing experiences of their pupils, teachers would be asked to recognise, examine and debate their own roles in shaping

these experiences and also the possibility of adjusting to the needs stemming from these experiences. I argued in this chapter that a change in the perception of and attitudes towards migrant pupils as well as their educational experiences is possible, if teachers are trained in the multiplicity of ways in which their pupils experience migration, and consequently about the plurality of their educational prerequisites, needs and potentials (see the German term “Differenzfreundlichkeit” or ‘affinity towards difference’, coined by Knappik and Mecheril 2018, p. 177).

---

## References

- Berliner Institut für empirische Integrations- und Migrationsforschung [BIM], & Forschungsbereich beim Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration [SVR]. (Eds.). (2017). *Vielfalt im Klassenzimmer. Wie Lehrkräfte gute Leistung fördern können* [Diversity in Classrooms. How teachers can support good achievement]. Berlin. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from [https://www.stiftung-mercator.de/media/downloads/3\\_Publikationen/2017/Juli/Vielfalt\\_im\\_Klassenzimmer\\_final.pdf](https://www.stiftung-mercator.de/media/downloads/3_Publikationen/2017/Juli/Vielfalt_im_Klassenzimmer_final.pdf)
- Bukus, B. (2018). *Conception Versus Reality: The Impact of Migration Experiences on Children’s Educational Participation*. In S. Shapiro, R. Farrelly, & M. J. Curry (Eds.), *Educating Refugee-Background Students: Critical Issues and Dynamic Contexts* (pp. 404–426). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Bukus, B. (2020). *Pupils in the context of multiple and multidirectional migration during their obligatory schooling years* (Doctoral Dissertation). Leipzig: Qucosa, University publication server. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:15-qucosa2-705458>
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2013). *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. London: Routledge.
- Die Sächsische Konzeption zur Integration von Migranten [The Concept for the Integration of Migrants in Saxony, Germany], version number 710-V00.5 (2000, August 1). Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://www.revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/9651-Konzeption-zur-Integration-von-Migranten>
- Dirim, İ., & Pokitsch, D. (2017). *Migrationspädagogische Zugänge zu ‘Deutsch als Zweitsprache’* [Migration Pedagogical Approaches to German as a Foreign Language]. In M. Becker-Mrotzek & H.-J. Roth (Eds.), *Sprachliche Bildung - Grundlagen und Handlungsfelder* (pp. 95–108). Münster: Waxmann.
- Drinck, B. (2013). *Grundlagen zum Forschungsdesign [Basics of research design]*. In B. Drinck (Ed.), *Forschen in der Schule* (pp. 141–150). Opladen & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Faist, T. (2000). *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Frank, M. (2015). *Sprachliche Bildung jenseits von Defizit und Differenz – Perspektiven für die Lehrerbildung auf ein gesamtsprachliches Entwicklungsprojekt in der Mehrsprachigkeit* [Development of academic language skills beyond the deficit- and difference

- perspective – Potentials for teacher training for a holistic multilingual language development project]. In C. Benholz, M. Frank, & E. Gürsoy (Eds.), *Deutsch als Zweitsprache in allen Fächern. Konzepte für die Lehrerbildung und Unterricht* (pp. 15–34). Stuttgart: Fillibach bei Klett.
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Geier, T. (2016). Reflexivität und Fallarbeit. Skizze zur pädagogischen Professionalität von Lehrerinnen und Lehrern in der Migrationsgesellschaft [Reflexivity and Case Studies. Sketch of a pedagogical professionalism in a migration society]. In A. Doğmuş, Y. Karakaşoğlu, & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Pädagogisches Können in der Migrationsgesellschaft* (pp. 179–200). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Gogolin, I. (2008). *Der monolinguale Habitus der multilingualen Schule* [Monolingual habitus of multilingual schools]. Münster, New York, München, & Berlin: Waxmann.
- Gogolin, I., & Pries, L. (2004). Stichwort: Transmigration und Bildung. [Keyword: Transnational migration and education]. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 7(1), 5–19.
- Heinemann, A., & Mecheril, P. (2018). (Schulische) Bildung, normative Referenzen und reflexive Professionalität [(School) Education, normative frames of reference and reflexive professionalism]. In İ. Dirim & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Heterogenität, Sprache(n), Bildung* (pp. 247–270). Bad Heilbrunn: Julius Klinkhardt.
- Herfter, C., & Rahtjen, S. (2013). Forschung muss geplant werden [Research must be designed]. In B. Drinck (Ed.), *Forschen in der Schule* (pp. 95–122). Opladen & Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Hoerning, E. M. (2000). Biographische Sozialisation. Theoretische und forschungspraktische Verankerung [Biographical Socialization. Theory and research]. In E. M. Hoerning (Ed.), *Biographische Sozialisation* (pp. 1–20). Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius.
- Huxel, K. (2016). Professionalisierung von Lehrkräften im Handlungsfeld Sprachliche Bildung [Professionalisation of teachers in the field of language education]. In A. Doğmuş, Y. Karakaşoğlu, & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Pädagogisches Können in der Migrationsgesellschaft* (pp. 143–160). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Karakaşoğlu, Y., & Neumann, U. (2011). Anforderungen an die Bildungsinstitutionen in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft: Integration durch Bildung, Schaffung von Bildungsgerechtigkeit und interkulturelle Öffnung [Requirements for educational institutions in the immigration society: Integration, Equity and Intercultural School Development]. In T. Meyer & U. Vorholt (Eds.), *Bildungsgerechtigkeit als politische*. Bochum & Freiburg: projekt verlag.
- Knappik, M., & Mecheril, P. (2018). Migrationshintergrund oder die Kulturalisierung von Ausschlüssen [Migration background, or the culturalisation of exclusion]. In İ. Dirim & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Heterogenität, Sprache(n), Bildung* (pp. 159–177). Bad Heilbrunn: Julius Klinkhardt.
- Mayring, P. (2010). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken* [Qualitative Content Analysis. Basics and Techniques]. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz.
- Mecheril, P., & Quehl, T. (2015). Die Sprache der Schule. Eine migrationspädagogische Kritik der Bildungssprache [Language of school. A migration pedagogical critique on academic language]. In N. Thoma & M. Knappik (Eds.), *Sprache und Bildung in Migrationsgesellschaften: Machtkritische Perspektiven auf ein prekariisiertes Verhältnis* (pp. 151–177). Bielefeld: transcript.

- Mecheril, P., & Shure, S. (2018). Schule als institutionell und interaktiv hervorgebrachter Raum [School as a constructed space]. In İ. Dirim & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Heterogenität, Sprache(n), Bildung* (pp. 63–89). Bad Heilbrunn: Julius Klinkhardt.
- Messerschmidt, A. (2016). Involviert in Machtverhältnisse. Rassismuskritische Professionalisierungen für die Pädagogik in der Migrationsgesellschaft [Involved in power structures. Critical view on pedagogical professionalism in a migration society]. In A. Doğmuş, Y. Karakaşoğlu, & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Pädagogisches Können in der Migrationsgesellschaft* (pp. 59–70). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Morrice, L. (2012). Learning and refugees: Recognizing the Darker Side of Transformative Learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 63(3), 251–271.
- Niedrig, H. (2015). Ausländer und Flüchtlinge. Eine postkoloniale Diskursanalyse [Foreigners and Asylum Seekers. A postcolonial discourse analysis]. In İ. Dirim, I. Gogolin, D. Knorr, M. Krüger-Potratz, D. Lengyel, H. H. Reich, & W. Weiße (Eds.), *Impulse für die Migrationsgesellschaft. Bildung, Politik und Religion*. (pp. 27–36). Münster: Waxmann.
- Özaylı, G., & Ortner, R. (2015). Wie über sich selbst nachdenken? Machtkritische Reflexionsperspektiven für Pädagog\_innen im Kontext von Mehrsprachigkeit [How to think about oneself? Critical reflexion of teachers in the context of multilingualism]. In N. Thoma & M. Knappik (Eds.), *Sprache und Bildung in Migrationsgesellschaften: Machtkritische Perspektiven auf ein prekariisiertes Verhältnis* (pp. 205–219). Bielefeld: transcript.
- Panagiotidis, J. (2017, March 13). Postsowjetische Migranten in Deutschland. Perspektiven auf eine heterogene “Diaspora” [ Post-Soviet Migrants in Germany. Perspectives on a Heterogeneous “Diaspora”]. *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 67(11–12), 23–30. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from [https://www.bpb.de/system/files/dokument\\_pdf/APuZ\\_2017-11-12\\_online\\_0.pdf](https://www.bpb.de/system/files/dokument_pdf/APuZ_2017-11-12_online_0.pdf)
- Pries, L. (Ed). (1997). *Transnationale Migration* [Transnational migration]. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Sächsisches Schulgesetz [School Act of the State of Saxony, Germany], version number 710–1 (2018, September 27). Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://www.revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/4192-Saechsisches-Schulgesetz>
- Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus. (Ed.). (2000/2009/2018). *Lehrplan für Vorbereitungsgruppen/Vorbereitungsklassen an allgemeinbildenden Schulen. Deutsch als Zweitsprache* [Curriculum of German as a Second Language at State-run Schools]. Coming into force in 2000, as amended in 2009 and in 2018. Dresden. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from [https://www.schule.sachsen.de/lpdb/web/downloads/24\\_lp\\_daz\\_allgemeinbildende\\_schule\\_2018.pdf](https://www.schule.sachsen.de/lpdb/web/downloads/24_lp_daz_allgemeinbildende_schule_2018.pdf)
- Shapiro, S., Farrelli, R., & Curry, J. (Eds.). (2018). *Educating Refugee-Background Students. Critical Issues and Dynamic Contexts*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Woodley, H., & Brown, A. (2016). Balancing windows and mirrors. Translanguaging in a Linguistically diverse Classroom. In O. Garcia & T. Kleyn (Eds.), *Translanguaging with multilingual students: Learning from classroom moments* (pp. 83–99). London: Routledge.



# Symbolic Orders of a Society Shaped by Migration and Their Relevance for the (Re)Production of Racism in Pre-Service Teacher Training in Germany

Aysun Dođmuş

## Abstract

This article discusses how symbolic orders of the migration society shape the negotiation of social practices in school and lead to the (re-)production of racism in the context of pre-service teacher training, called ‘the second phase of teacher training’ in Germany. It presents selected results of interviews with teacher educators from a broader research project on pre-service teacher training in the migration society. The results show that symbolic orders inscribed as migration patterns in the tacit knowledge of these most significant professionals are relevant to racism, particularly because of pre-service teachers’ binary differentiation between the categories ‘German’ and ‘migration background’, the latter being equivalent to ‘not German’. This becomes clear in their reconstructed conceptualization of an imagined ‘ideal teacher’ as well as ‘good teaching’ and leads to the relevant question of which pre-service teachers are identified as suitable for the teaching profession according to teacher educators and why. In this imagination, the binary differentiation takes place in connection with attributes especially linked to the habitual dimensions of language and behaviour.

## Keywords

Pre-service teacher training in Germany · Teacher educators · Professionalization · Migration · Racism

A. Dođmuş (✉)

Faculty of Social Science, Helmut-Schmidt-University Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany  
e-mail: [dogmusa@hsu-hh.de](mailto:dogmusa@hsu-hh.de)

## 1 Introduction

This article discusses the empirical (re-)production of racism during pre-service teacher training, known as ‘the second phase of teacher training’ in Germany, focusing on the negotiation of difference and belonging linked to symbolic orders of the migration society. These symbolic orders are relevant for the analysis of the (re-)production of racism in teacher education, as they solidify in the course of professionalization as forms of tacit knowledge (Bohnsack et al. 2007; Nohl 2009) that underlie the pedagogical practice of prospective teachers. Nonetheless, the potential of symbolic orders should also be recognized as an opening for possibilities of negotiation of meanings. In this chapter, I will outline in more detail the approach of this analysis, which consists of a heuristic model. The theoretical frame is Bourdieu’s (2009) social theory, synthesized through a modified version of the documentary method (Bohnsack et al. 2007; Nohl 2009) and complemented by an intersectional analysis of inequality (Winker and Degele 2010). The analysis is conducted on selected examples of the results of interviews with in-service teacher educators. Teacher educators in the so-called ‘second phase’ of the complex German system of teacher professionalization are situated in the formation space between academic theory and pedagogic practice and play a major role in shaping the professional habitus of novices as teachers. Teacher professionalization in Germany consists of three phases, the first phase with the academic study of two subjects and pedagogy at a university. After students have successfully accomplished their degree courses they enter the second phase with 18 months of intensively guided pre-service training at school and in a teacher training centre. The teacher educators conduct seminars in these training centres and grade the teacher trainees’ performances. The third phase consists of further in-service trainings.

This paper aims to show how the negotiation of the significance of migration in social practices leads to the (re-)production of racism, particularly due to a systematically inscribed binary differentiation between those labelled as ‘German’ and those labelled as having a ‘migration background’, the latter being equivalent to ‘not German’. Hence, this chapter will work with the idea of “racism relevance” coined by Weiß (2013, p. 77, trans. by author). She speaks of racism relevance when an action can be assumed and shown to reproduce racism while not being empirically proven to have been evoked by racist delegitimization. Weiß does not only ask the question of whether an action is racist or not but focuses on the potential of certain actions or practices to reproduce and reinforce racism.

## 2 The Training Area of the Second Phase of Teacher Training

As mentioned above, a special feature of the German teacher training programme is that it consists of two phases plus the continuing education of already trained teachers, which is why education science speaks of the three-phase model of teacher training (Terhart 2004). Here, I am interested in the second phase, where we can find two semi-autonomous training places: the practical teaching experience at a supervising school and the theoretical classes that take place in seminars in specially designated state institutions (Lenhard 2004). According to Bourdieu (2012), these training spaces can be classified as a training area. Their operating mode is represented by differing methods of preparation, including the assessment of teachers within a context of set, explicit and implicit aims of professionalization that are embedded in the symbolic order of the training area and its doxa. Therefore, seeing professionalization as a social practice, I would call this training phase an introductory ritual to become a teacher and evolve into an authorized representative of the teaching profession. The training area and its constitutive conditions where influential gatekeepers preside over assigning the life-long licence to finally enter the teaching profession can be understood as a “battle- and forcefield”, as Paseka (2008, p. 248, trans. by author) terms it, whereby the profession’s symbolic orders and doxa are reproduced habitually and become operative – especially in the form of tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge surrounding the issue of migration is an essential part of this.

The symbolic orders also include knowledge that is represented not only by the habitual sense units within pedagogical practice, but also by the implicit and explicit aims that are set for pre-service teachers during their training. Recognized as authorized representatives of the teaching profession, teacher trainers express these symbolic orders of knowledge when they classify teaching practices as being either excellent or tolerable, marginalized or even made taboo, as Helsper (2008, p. 63) points out. This leads to the reinforcement of a social system of hierarchical disparity. It is important to point out that these orders of knowledge do not refer only to migration, but also to the relationship between gender, class and bodily conditions.

As Alkemeyer and Rieger-Ladich (2008) state, this “battle- and forcefield” (p. 105) is never conquered by one power alone. In other words, there are symbolic battles and discourse formations that take place within the training area. The doxa of discourse formations, which manifest themselves in the symbolic orders and which are then reproduced by pre-service teachers, influences the possibilities of



professionalization in teacher training. In this case, professionalization does not mean deterministic-mechanical appropriation of a habitus that conforms with the aims of the institution. Rather, the symbolic orders, the automatisms of the doxa, as well as the dominating practice are expressed in the forms of reference towards teaching practice, whether as affirmation or rejection, during pre-service teachers' training.

---

### **3 Migration Patterns and Their Relevance to Racism – Selected Examples with a Focus on Interviews with Teacher Educators**

#### **3.1 The Collection of Data and Its Analysis**

Before I turn to the empirical results, I will explain the method of data collection and analysis. During my dissertation project, I interviewed six teacher educators and 18 pre-service teachers. The results presented here refer to the interviews with the teacher educators. They can be termed as experts in the area of the second phase of teacher training given their influence in preparing and implementing decisions and the fact that they have detailed knowledge of internal structures and events (Littig 2011). Not only are they authorized representatives of the teaching profession, they are also authorized personnel that control the transfer of knowledge and knowledge assessment. Thus, they act as links between the teaching occupation and novice teachers. This is put into practice in their work alliance with the trainee teachers, where they have the following tasks and responsibilities: during the 18 months of their training they teach their respective subject in seminars in which about 20 trainees participate. In addition, they observe six times the teaching of each trainee at their training school and conduct a reflection talk afterwards. Furthermore, they are involved in final examinations.

The interviews with the teacher educators consist of an introductory task description and the teacher educators' experience, including their ways of assigning relevance and setting priorities in their work with pre-service teachers. The interviews were evaluated by modifying the documentary method and adapting it to an intersectional multilevel analysis according to Winker and Degele (2010). The analysis firstly entails reconstructing teacher educators' habit formations as they introduce their trainees to the aims of professionalization. Secondly, it includes reconstructing discourse formations around the aims of professionalization for pre-service teachers within the discourse of 'good teaching'. Thirdly, I reconstructed the implicit knowledge about migration that is activated in the

habitus forms of the teacher educators and the discourse formations on the professionalization goals and I compared these results with the implicit knowledge of the trainee teachers. Together they document the migration patterns of implicit knowledge, the established migration patterns – the migration doxa – of symbolic orders in the field of training of the teacher traineeship. As the following shows, the meaning structure of the migration patterns is relevant to racism.

### **3.2 The Ideal, Authorized Teachers and Their Language and Behaviour**

The analysis of the interviews with teacher educators shows that the resulting tacit knowledge related to migration led to the construction and practical conceptualization of an ideal teacher, who may become an authorized spokesperson for the teaching profession. Bourdieu (2012) describes an authorized spokesperson as one who can only influence other agents through words. Their words hold symbolic capital through the authority that is given to them by a group that accepts them as their authorized spokesperson (Bourdieu 2012, p. 103). Within the conceptualization of an ideal, authorized teacher, migration patterns document the dimension of language and behaviour for racism. As far as language is concerned, perfect speaking and writing of the German language is imagined and explicitly required. In terms of behaviour, a controlled distance during social interactions is required and should be kept. This conceptualization determines what Helsper (2008) calls an ‘excellent’ teacher. It also represents the normative positioning of the symbolic order, from which tolerated, marginalized or taboo practices, among others, derive.

One key aspect of analysis is that these dimensions are constructed in an essentialist way, which means that they are not only connected to an ideal image of being or becoming a teacher, but also to an (idealized) conception of being ‘German’. This can be seen in the division and differentiation of pre-service teachers, the status of becoming teachers, as well as the division of pre-service teachers into ‘German’ or ‘of German origin’ versus ‘migrant’. The latter sometimes appears as ‘foreign’ or through natio-ethno-cultural indicators like ‘Turks’, but diametrically opposed, they will never be ‘German’ or ‘originally German’. Considering the quality of the doxa of these categorical classifications, this practice of migrationalized and racialized language and behaviour means that non-Germans in the second phase of teacher training can only be tolerated, marginalised and rendered taboo, but they will never attain to (notionally German) excellence.

### 3.2.1 The Language Dimension

When considering the language dimension, it is important to outline that the identification of difficulties or errors in the German (written) language takes place independently from these categorical classifications. Yet, explanations of difficulties and errors are carried out using these categorical classifications. While German language skills are seen as the first language of pre-service teachers who are characterized as German, German language skills of migrationalized pre-service teachers are seen as second or foreign language skills. Consequently, correcting errors made by ‘German’ trainee teachers is done by identifying and assessing negligence, sloppiness or minor grammatical errors. Since potential excellence is indicated, these mistakes are tolerated and lead to some admonitions and the identification of specific examples. In contrast, correcting errors of migrationalized teachers in training occurs by viewing them as migrants, which, according to the rationale both of the field and of teacher educators in particular, needs no further explanation or specification because it is intersubjectively self-explanatory. Thus, errors are differentiated in terms of being tolerable, marginalized or rendered taboo.

Excellence is seen as inconceivable with regard to the migrationalized teacher trainees, in contrast to trainees marked as German. The tolerable is derived from a possible excellence that migrationalized trainees can never achieve. The tolerable is also generated from the equation of the migrationalized trainees with (migrationalized) pupils. This means that the point of comparison changes depending on classification as a German or migrationalized trainee teacher. The equation of pupils and migrationalized trainee teachers is made by teacher educators such as Ms Schneider<sup>1</sup> who refers to “Turkish pupils from educationally deprived families in certain districts”. She thinks that “typical mistakes aren’t that severe because it is of great value having a young Turkish woman in school, because the Turkish kids see what’s possible – it offers possibilities of identification.” [ll. 545–546].<sup>2</sup>

Apparently, there would still be “a very traditional attitude in the third, sometimes even fourth generation” [ll. 590–591], also because a lot of families “come together” [ll. 592] and hence “are often more traditional than Turkey is nowadays” [ll. 591]. As a consequence, migrationalized pre-service teachers who

---

<sup>1</sup> All names have been changed for the purpose of anonymization.

<sup>2</sup> This and the following quotes are taken from my dissertation project. The interviews were conducted in German and were translated into English by the author.

make tolerable mistakes are attributed the status of role model and identification figure:

And, to have somebody indeed as an identification figure – he [...] is Turkish, too, for example – who, as a woman and mother, works and earns money, that's a great thing and offers the kids who come from educationally disadvantaged families, just like that, yeah it works. It's great. [Il. 592-594]

Marginalizing or even rendering taboo in teacher educators' talks on migrationalized pre-service teachers happens in cases, as Ms Schneider pointed out, where "written language is catastrophic" or "disastrous" [Il. 548], or "if the oral performance or language use is poor as well" [Il. 549–550].

This assessment of German knowledge entails a demand for revision, also because the ability to work is questioned. This means that if teacher trainees are not able to acquire the necessary knowledge, this would automatically lead to "confrontations with parents" [Il. 548–549] as well as pupils who would make fun of the prospective teacher or would not understand work instructions:

And if someone doesn't know how to rephrase something or first of all, to explain something coherently – that's tough; you can bypass that by writing down the instructions at home and learning it by heart for all I care, but that's not practicable for the day-to-day work. [Il. 579–583]

In that case, the level of tolerance for mistakes is exceeded and a request for revision is expressed as the last option in order to be able to enter the teaching profession.

### 3.2.2 The Behaviour Dimension

If we look at the behaviour dimension, one can identify that divergent or deviant behaviour related to the interactional body language of migrationalized pre-service teachers is brought up in the interviews with the teacher educators, while the behaviour of German-labelled teacher trainees is not. For migrationalized pre-service teachers, a certain behaviour that contrasts to the 'German behaviour' is created. This happens by assigning relevance to sympathy towards the pre-service teachers (Mr Kaiser), taking behavioural variation as a justification for discrimination against migrationalized pre-service teachers (Ms Fischer) and stating a need for them to study more (Ms Ziegler). Even though the following example from Mr Kaiser deviates from the previous conclusions, it confirms the logic of attributing deviant behaviour when it comes to physical interaction. This is not discussed in the context of a guiding framework of the ideal teacher, but in the

context of giving relevance to sympathy in his work alliance with teacher trainees. In his reply to the question of what his opinion was on the request, framed by German official education policy in the early 2010s, for ‘more teachers with migration background’ (Bräu et al. 2013), he refers to a migrationalized female pre-service teacher in a gender-focused mode in which he refers to her warmth, ‘cordiality’ and physical ‘closeness’, in contrast to his version of an abstracted and hence randomly replaceable “woman of German origin”:

There is for example – I don’t know why I’m telling this first – no more cordial encounter than with that woman, while you actually ask, is it even allowed to shake hands with a woman of German origin and so on, but in fact, you can do more than that, you can actually come closer, giving pecks on the cheeks – with her, it works without inhibitions. [ll. 758–762]

This may result from the so-called cordiality of this specific pre-service teacher, yet it remains unclear why this should be a trait resulting from a migrant background or why, in the eyes of the teacher educator, this trait cannot be found in other female pre-service teachers.

What Mr Kaiser describes as the possibility of cordiality is treated by Ms Fischer dichotomously in the categories of closeness and introversion in the teacher occupation. She describes the behaviour of a teacher trainee towards the headmaster of the supervising school as having a lack of introversion and thus justifies the teacher trainee’s ‘bad’ mark in the school’s report, which Ms Fischer then describes as discrimination. According to her, there should be a “code” in school, a “social” and/or “cultural code” as well [ll. 530–531]. Even though these pre-service teachers were born and raised in Germany, she believes that they would not have incorporated this “code” or “habitus”, and thus constructs a national-cultural perspective of origin:

And that’s exactly what I’d imagine to cause cultural difficulties; I don’t know this exactly since the question about the teacher role is indeed, when it comes to [...] physical closeness and distance, well these are rather questions that, right – so there are maybe ideas, even if you grew up here, if you have a Turkish origin for example, it’s also a question of which group you originate from, but there may be a different level of closeness, maybe also for the same sex, that isn’t, let’s say, wanted in German schools or that unusual or concerning the touching of students [...]. In a friendly, comradely, you know, when you walk around the room and you put a hand on his shoulder. [ll. 545–556]

Ms Fischer draws attention to the expected behaviour of introversion in school, a form of behaviour that not only refers to the school, but also to 'German' culture. Additionally, she comments on the impossibility of imposing this behaviour and that this behaviour is often marginalized and made taboo in German schools in a way that could lead to discrimination. She assumes that it might lead to discrimination, and she pleads for tolerance for those showing inappropriate closeness. Here, the deviant behaviour is seen as the cause of discrimination due to a lack of tolerance, but the national-cultural underlying logic or the assessment of deviant behaviour are neither questioned nor considered to be knowledge relevant to racism.

Finally, I will present an example to illuminate two aspects: firstly, the impossibility of a distanced controlled behaviour when formulating and determining a need to study. Secondly, it shows how the differentiation of pre-service teachers is reproduced in terms of which relevance is given according to the above-mentioned classifications. Ms Ziegler, for instance, sees pre-service teachers with the so-called migrant background as representing a great potential for learning – in this case for herself as a German teacher educator, and for other German pre-service teachers. Following the logic of model-based learning, she sees them as a model for their (and her) interaction with pupils with a migration background. At the same time, she underlines the necessity for these pre-service teachers to learn as 'Germans', for example when it comes to communicating with colleagues:

Looking from the other way around if, for example, somebody with migration background looked at how I speak to other colleagues, he/she would see very different behavioural patterns or that some things apply or do not apply. I think this can be productive for both sides. I think that this is to an extent a diversity which you can see then. [II. 1038–1041]

The diversity to which she refers manifests itself in determining a certain behaviour within the migrationalisation of pre-service teachers. A 'German' behaviour is activated and made relevant in order to be an accepted member of the teaching profession. At the same time, however, when interacting with migrationalized pupils, the behaviours of migrationalized pre-service teachers are tolerated, and may even be supportive examples to learn from. Yet when interacting with colleagues these behavioural patterns of pre-service teachers are marginalized and rendered taboo.

## 4 Conclusion

The analysis of the teacher educators' evaluation of novices shows the extent to which migration as a significant racialized marker and justification for the assignment of subordinated difference is inscribed in their tacit knowledge about pre-service teachers and pupils alike. The migration patterns show the reconstruction of racism relevance that exists in the training field of teachers' professionalization and finds expressions of racism in the categorical classifications of 'German' versus 'migrant', thus in diametrical attributions. These attributions add to a doxa, as they do not require reflection, but are self-explanatory and can be communicated intersubjectively. Within the order constructed here, they influence the structural possibilities of professionalization: they determine matching possibilities for pre-service teachers and show the chances and limits of learning to become a teacher. Especially within this classification, the production of knowledge about 'migrants' shows on the other hand how the teacher educators as authorized spokespersons for the teaching profession conceptualize this profession in an essentialist way as being 'German'.

Pre-service teachers who are marked as migrants are turned into – without specific criteria – deficiently different and deviant, especially on the level of language and behaviour. Therefore, their migrationalized and racialized use of language and behaviour cannot be anything else but tolerated, marginalized or made taboo. At the same time, this production of knowledge embedded in specific perceptions of 'how migration matters' offers teacher educators a chance to introspectively interpret pre-service teachers' performance, which happens through simplified and homogenized causes. This, in turn, can be attributed to a limited room for professionalization. For a pre-service teacher, being marked as 'German' is a privilege. In teacher training, having the chance to be 'German' is therefore symbolic capital and a way of enjoying possibilities for authorized speech. Migrationalized, racialized teacher trainees, are in contrast always on their way to becoming authorized spokespeople for the teaching profession, but are already considered as unauthorized spokespeople who do not have a say in the 'German' space – they lack the symbolic capital necessary for the process of becoming a teacher and will – this can be concluded here – never be able to acquire this, not even through the stages of professionalization in Germany's three phases of teacher training they have to undergo.

**Acknowledgements** I kindly thank Ana Rovai for proofreading this chapter.

## References

- Alkemeyer, T. & Rieger-Ladich, M. (2008). Symbolische Gewalt im pädagogischen Feld: Überlegungen zu einer Forschungsheuristik [Symbolic violence in the pedagogical field: reflections on a research heuristic]. In: R. Schmidt & V. Woltersdorff (Eds.), *Symbolische Gewalt. Herrschaftsanalyse nach Pierre Bourdieu* (pp. 103–124). Konstanz: UVK.
- Bohnsack, R., Nentwig-Gesemann, I., & Nohl, A.-M. (Eds.). (2007). *Die dokumentarische Methode und ihre Forschungspraxis. Grundlagen qualitativer Sozialforschung* [The documentary method and its research practice. Fundamentals of qualitative social research] (2nd ed.). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Bräu, K., Georgi, V. B., Karakaşoğlu, Y., & Rotter, C. (Eds.). (2013). *Lehrerinnen und Lehrer mit Migrationshintergrund. Zur Relevanz eines Merkmals in Theorie, Empirie und Praxis* [Teachers with a migration background. On the relevance of a characteristic in theory, empiricism and practice]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Bourdieu, P. (2009). *Entwurf einer Theorie der Praxis* [Draft of a theory of practice] (2nd ed.). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Bourdieu, P. (2012). *Was heißt Sprechen? Zur Ökonomie des sprachlichen Tauschs* [What does speaking mean? On the economics of linguistic exchange] (2nd ed.). Vienna: New academic press.
- Paseka, A. (2008). Über Unsicherheiten und schwankende Böden. Erfahrungen von Berufsanfängern mit der Organisation Schule [About uncertainties and fluctuating grounds. Experiences of young professionals with the organisation school]. In W. Helsper, S. Busse, M. Hummrich, & R.-T. Kramer (Eds.), *Pädagogische Professionalität in Organisationen. Neue Verhältnisbestimmungen am Beispiel der Schule* (pp. 245–262). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Winker, G., & Degele, N. (2010). *Intersektionalität. Zur Analyse sozialer Ungleichheit* [Intersectionality. On the analysis of social inequality] (2nd ed.). Bielefeld: transcript.
- Helsper, W. (2008). Schulkulturen - die Schule als symbolische Sinnordnung [School cultures – the school as symbolic order of meaning]. *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, 53(1), 63–80.
- Lenhard, H. (2004). Zweite Phase an Studienseminaren und Schulen [Second phase at study seminars and schools]. In S. Blömeke, P. Reinhold, G. Tulodziecki, & J. Wildt (Eds.), *Handbuch Lehrerbildung* (pp. 275–290). Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Littig, B. (2011). Interviews mit Experten und Expertinnen [Interviews with experts]. In S. Maschke & L. Stecher (Eds.), *Enzyklopädie Erziehungswissenschaft Online*. Retrieved July 21, 2020, from <https://content-select.com/de/portal/media/view/52824828-7f10-4262-96d4-11372efc1343>
- Nohl, A.-M. (2009). *Interview und dokumentarische Methode. Anleitungen für die Forschungspraxis* [Interview and documentary method. Instructions for research practice] (3rd ed.). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Terhart, E. (2004). Struktur und Organisation der Lehrerbildung in Deutschland [Structure and organisation of teacher training in Germany]. In S. Blömeke, P. Reinhold,



- G. Tulodziecki, & J. Wildt (Eds.), *Handbuch Lehrerbildung* (pp. 37–59). Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Weiß, A. (2013). *Rassismus wider Willen. Ein anderer Blick auf eine Struktur sozialer Ungleichheit* [Racism against will. A different view on a structure of social inequality] (2nd ed.). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.



---

# Questioning Cultural and Power Relations as well as Debates on Disability and Migration: Concepts for Contemporary Inclusive Teacher Education

Susanne Gottuck, Nicolle Pfaff and Anja Tervooren

---

## Abstract

This chapter explores discourses in German education sciences that focus on the social categories of migration and disability, and confronts them with critical perspectives from disability and critical race studies. It weighs the historical development of Germany's education system and its attitudes towards disability and differences related to migration society against the development of pedagogy as a discipline. The authors highlight that, in each case, processes of 'othering' dominate educational practice and pedagogy, which also persistently shape debates in teacher education. In contrast to this, the article proposes that focus ought to be redirected and constructions of 'difference' should be critically questioned and incorporated within the context of an analysis of social ordering. This chapter concludes by elaborating concepts for teacher education that aim for an inclusive education system.

---

S. Gottuck (✉) · N. Pfaff · A. Tervooren  
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Duisburg-Essen, Essen, Germany  
e-mail: [susanne.gottuck@uni-due.de](mailto:susanne.gottuck@uni-due.de)

N. Pfaff  
e-mail: [nicolle.pfaff@uni-due.de](mailto:nicolle.pfaff@uni-due.de)

A. Tervooren  
e-mail: [anja.tervooren@uni-due.de](mailto:anja.tervooren@uni-due.de)

---

**Keywords**

Inclusive teacher education · History of education · Pedagogies of difference · Normalism · Ableism · Racism

---

## 1 Introduction

As an item on the agenda of educational reform, ‘inclusion’ challenges teachers and teacher training education methods in Germany to focus more strongly than ever on discriminatory practices and structures of educational institutions and their roles in producing and reproducing social inequality (Budde and Hummrich 2013; Tervooren and Pfaff 2018). Therefore, training teachers is in need of concepts and perspectives to enable students of all teaching professions to reflect on and consider heterogeneity and inclusion.

Many students are required to understand and promote inclusion as a reform agenda in its educational, social, and pedagogical dimensions, though they themselves went through an educational system in which excluding learners with special pedagogical needs from ‘regular school’ was the prevailing norm. This is questioned fundamentally through the framework of the supranational UN Disability Rights Convention, which is binding under international law, and its implementations in national law. Students in German teacher education programmes are therefore challenged to search for new perspectives, as reflected by the words of a teacher education student after taking a course on inclusive education at a German university:

So, it’s not so oppressive that one believes it’s somehow [...] you’re [...] um, forced to speak about topics like disabilities or special needs, but, um, [...] makes it really clear, there are those people, we know them, and we just have to learn how to deal with them and to try [...] somehow to integrate these people too or truly be aware of them and include them in, in our everyday teaching routines.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>The quote (trans. by authors) comes from a group discussion with Bachelor’s students of various teacher education programmes. The data were collected in the project ‘Inclusive teacher education as a cross-sectoral task’ (promoted by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research within the project ProViel at University Essen-Duisburg as part of the quality initiative ‘Teacher Education 2016–2019’).

This student is referring to a seminar he attended, in which the lecturer conveyed basic knowledge of special education in a way that this student perceived as positive. In speaking about it, he refers to disability as a category, the ‘otherness’ being ontologically justified. Children and adolescents who are construed as ‘disabled’ appear as the ‘new others’ of the inclusive school,<sup>2</sup> and the student’s statements suggest that dealing pedagogically with the described group requires specific expertise.

For the German educational system with its exclusionary structures relating to different groups of pupils, it is in no way a new phenomenon that special pedagogical knowledge and skills, which promise certainty in professional action (as called for in the student’s words) are connected to the social construction of specific groups. It is true that the social category of ‘disability’ is currently at the centre of attention in German teacher education programmes. At the same time, numerous conceptual and content-related similarities with the forms of addressing the topic of ‘migration’ have been evident since at least the 1980s, whereby individual groups were associated with specific problems that found their way into the educational system through enrolment in exclusive classes or schools but remained widely excluded from more highly qualified educational pathways. As this topic has been explored within education sciences, however, separate discourses were developed for these processes (of othering) within the discipline.

In the following, we will explore discourses in education sciences in Germany that focus on ‘migration’ and ‘disability’ and confront these with critical perspectives from disability studies and research into Critical Race Theory that interrogate contemporary culture and power structures. As a first step, therefore, we will weigh the historical development of the German education system and its attitudes toward disability and differences relating to migration society<sup>3</sup> against the development of pedagogy as a discipline. We refer to parallels in the two

---

<sup>2</sup>The concept of the regular school highlights the rigid distinction within the German school system between primary and secondary schools on the one hand and special schools on the other, thus reproducing a division of pupils into special and regular pupils. Inclusive schools claim to abolish this division.

<sup>3</sup>We use this term to highlight that debates on the social category ‘migration’ in Germany go far beyond ‘ethnic diversity’ but include constructions of otherness relating to language, religion, nationality, physical appearance or feelings of cultural belonging. The term thus tries to avoid addressing differences that are inherent in people but rather to understand them as socially constructed differences and bound up with national(ist) discourses and power structures in contemporary society. Mecheril (2003, 2018) has termed this “natio-racial-culturally coded orders of belonging” (Mecheril 2018, p. 121) which will be introduced later in this article to describe these practices of differentiation.

discourses that both are based on processes of ‘othering’, and to the persistence of such interpretative approaches in current teacher education (1). In demonstrating those parallels, we propose that focus should be redirected, and constructions of ‘difference’ ought to be questioned and incorporated, within the context of an analysis of social ordering (2). On this basis we discuss conceptual ideas for teacher education aiming at an inclusive education system (3).

---

## 2 Special Pedagogies Legitimizing ‘Othering’ and Discrimination in School: On the History of Pedagogies of Difference

Special education and ‘integration pedagogy’,<sup>4</sup> on the one hand, and education for foreigners and early intercultural pedagogy on the other hand, both begin with single social categories. Both approaches explore how success can be achieved by pedagogically addressing a counterpart construed as ‘other’, or a group explicitly identified as ‘special’. In their analysis of the historical treatment of heterogeneity in German-speaking education sciences, research and teaching, Marcus Emmerich and Ulrike Hormel (2013) use the term ‘pedagogies of difference’ to observe that the conceptual range used to define difference in the discourse of ‘difference pedagogy’ encompasses variety, diversity, heterogeneity, and inequality. Regardless of the number of terms used, it is invariably assumed that the social belonging of individuals makes the decisive difference for pedagogy (Emmerich and Hormel 2013, p. 19). From this viewpoint, pedagogical perspectives on migration and disability are marked as contexts of knowledge production that justify *specialising* forms of pedagogy and, in the twentieth century, legitimise exclusion from general educational institutions through integration in specific ones (Krüger-Potratz 2005; Mecheril 2004).<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>In Germany the term ‘integration’ rather than ‘inclusion’ lay at the core of the debate. UNESCO’s Salamanca declaration (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 1994), in which ‘inclusive education’ was claimed, has been translated as *Integrationspädagogik* (integration pedagogy). This concept starts from the idea of two different groups that are to be brought together again.

<sup>5</sup>The concept of ‘pedagogies of difference’ is not new, and refers to systematic discussions in the discipline that critically examine the concentration of education research and pedagogical concepts and forms of institutionalisation embraced by the education system in its

For example, for children and adolescents for whom a general learning ability was denied, so-called *Hilfsschulen* (schools for children with learning difficulties) that reduced performance expectations and introduced specific pedagogical concepts and practices were established at the end of the nineteenth century, against a background of educational and pedagogical considerations (Weisser 2005; Pfahl and Powell 2011).<sup>6</sup> Newly immigrated adolescents, on the other hand, remained excluded from formal education until the 1920s due to language differences and because they were viewed as foreign, or were schooled separately with the explicit goal of maintaining homogeneity in classrooms (Krüger-Potratz 2005, p. 67).

Beginning in the late 1960s, school rights and obligations for groups that had been excluded until then were systematically enforced. Schools for special education set themselves apart, and up to nine different types of schools were developed along medical classification models of impairments, according to the federal province. The professionalisation of special education followed: first as a further professional qualification for teachers and then, starting in the 1960s, increasingly as a fundamental course of study which distinguished between more and more disciplines within special education (Wittstock 2002).

Beginning in the late 1960s, 'foreign' or 'national' classes in the Federal Republic of Germany made it possible for the children of migrant workers to participate. However, this merely established the separation of newly immigrated children and adolescents in the school system (although this has been oriented to integration into mainstream classes since the mid-1980s), in the form of 'international', 'lateral entry', and 'welcoming classes' (Reich 2016). This was accompanied by the establishment of pedagogical research for 'educating foreigners', which primarily conceived pedagogy as a compensation for deficits in students conceptualised as migrants: the main focus was on language use and socialisation in the families of 'guest workers', who came to work for German companies based on bilateral agreements with countries mainly in southern and eastern Europe (Nohl 2010). Examinations of migration in teacher education prevailed

---

orientation to and responsibility for specific social groups, and that have developed this in a special way using the example of intercultural pedagogy (Krüger-Potratz 2005, p. 176; Mecheril 2004, p. 214).

<sup>6</sup>Though the history of separate schooling for children and adolescents with sensory disabilities or physical impairments in the European region begins much earlier, and is subject to a different dynamic (see for example Söderfeldt 2013, pp. 104–116).

slowly but systematically, beginning with the turn towards intercultural pedagogy in the 1980s (Reich 1994). The development of homogenising and segregating types of schooling is strongly connected to the differentiation between pedagogical approaches to teaching ‘different’ students, to being a subdiscipline of educational science, and as such influences teacher education. Accordingly, categorisation and ‘pedagogical othering’ are not only features of schools that segregate, but at the same time constitutive for ‘pedagogies of differences’ referring to specific categories.

To that end, discussions of ‘pedagogies of difference’, in the schools as in the sciences, establish target-group-oriented pedagogical views, procedures and expertise. Likewise, they suggest target-group-oriented professionalisation in teacher education leading to a body of experts responsible for teaching certain students. The differentiated study of special education disciplines with qualifications specific to the type of school requires selective competence and responsibility for a group described as special. This grouping of students is carried out through the use of diagnostic procedures that legitimise certain pedagogical approaches (for example Wittstock 2002). Similarly, early intercultural pedagogy, with its orientation toward specific groups of migrants and the conveying of culturally relevant knowledge related to those groups (for example regarding types of greetings, lifestyles or social relations), can be understood as target-group-oriented until well into the 1990s (for criticism of this, see Reich 1994; Krüger-Potratz 2005).

Since the late 1990s, interdependencies between various categories have been shown and references made to the impossibility of comprehensively describing any individual person (for example, Hinz 1993; Merz-Atalik 2001; Prengel 1995). Nevertheless, the specification of target groups, with its promise of professional self-assurance that can be only hinted at through the opening quote from a student in a teacher education programme, who refers to the need to “learn how to deal with them and to try [...] to somehow integrate these people”, has persisted all the way to current teacher education. The accumulation of knowledge of specific student groups, so the assumption goes, enables teachers to act adequately, supports them in their decisions, and demonstrates reasonable and promising pedagogical approaches. The fact that this pedagogical knowledge based on ‘difference’ persists as legitimate knowledge in current teacher education, and is compatible for students in their interpretative practice, can be shown using the results of discourse analysis regarding the way scholastic heterogeneity is examined in pedagogical publications (Budde 2012). It is also evidenced by current curriculum analyses of how teacher education programmes examine knowledge about migration society (Doğmus, Karakaşoğlu et al. 2018).

‘Pedagogies of difference’ thus began by establishing an ‘othering’ perspective on young people construed as ‘disabled’ or ‘migrant’. From this viewpoint, difference is always related to the learning individual and ontologically anchored in the person as an essential expression or characteristic. School appears as an institution that must merely deal with difference. The participation of key educational players in generating difference remains widely unconsidered. However, since the end of the 1990s, the significance of schools as institutions for the construction of difference has become a research topic (for example Gomolla and Radtke 2002; Opp et al. 2001): practices of homogenisation in the school system (regarding disability see for example Feuser 1995; regarding language see for example Gogolin 1994) were indicated, conditions and constructions of differentiation when selecting schools examined (for example Gomolla and Radtke 2002; Kottmann 2006) or demonstrated that children and adolescents construed as ‘migrants’ are taught in schools for special education (Kronig et al. 2000). This research (which criticised institutions) supported by perspectives regarding constructions of difference (which criticised power) introduced a change of perspective: the subject matter of the analyses is no longer the recipients of education, but the structures and organisations of the educational system.

---

### **3 Perspectives on Migration and Disability in Pedagogical Research that Criticise Culture and Power Relations**

Perspectives on migration and disability that criticise culture and power have several things in common when it comes to the characteristics that they work out regarding the underlying social category. Based on an analytic research interest in processes for creating difference in social relations, it is asked how people are included or excluded from social orders of normality and which differentiation practices and constructions of difference are used. Moreover, the question is raised of which symbolic and material privileges or exclusions are associated with this.

In the German-speaking regions, migration pedagogy (Mecheril 2004, 2018; Messerschmidt 2009) has established a pedagogical field of research that pursues racism-critical analyses of the emergence of orders of social belonging within educational institutions shaped by migration processes. “Migration pedagogy”, as worded by Mecheril (2018), “focuses on the effects of natio-racial-culturally coded orders on people and their learning processes, on processes of becoming a subject as well as on educational practices that reaffirm, yet also shift and



sometimes transform these orders” (p. 131). In so doing, migration pedagogy refers to the *critical race studies in education* that have emerged in an Anglo-American context (for example Gillborn, Ladson-Billings, & Taylor 2016), and to the British Cultural Studies project (Hall 2000, 1994/2012), that mark racism as circulating knowledge that participates in the constitution of subjects. In light of questions about the inclusive and exclusive effect of notions about citizenship, physical appearance and (the allocation of) cultural orientation, as well as the privileges and exclusions related to these ideas, which Mecheril (2003, 2018) describes as “natio-racial-culturally coded orders of belonging” (Mecheril 2018, p. 121), racism is understood as a cultural construction and powerful tool of interpretation that structures society.

Subjects are positioned in specific social and symbolic orders via repetitive citations of that discursive knowledge, and those positions materialise in legislation or institutional directives (Hall 1994/2012). The central educational institutions during childhood and adolescence – schools – are therefore recognisable as agents for maintaining regimes of belonging or ‘dispositifs of integration’, as Shure (2016) coins it, and as a place to secure the national homogenising order (Karakasoglu and Mecheril 2019). At the same time, by analysing racism, the positioning of teachers and students as those affected by experiences of racism or as privileged individuals becomes the object of reflection.

Disability studies as international and interdisciplinary discourse also base their analyses on perspectives that criticise power relations (Goodley et al. 2019; Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009). Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) show that disability studies that were established in the Anglo-American sphere by or before the 1990s were associated with concepts of criticism from the beginning. These draw upon the work of the Frankfurt School, but they differentiated in various ways, so meanwhile they are framed as ‘critical disability studies’ in an international context. Besides this central feature, both authors name three others: the development of a complex concept of disability; the influence of poststructural ideas of the subject, such as those worked out in American cultural studies; and a distancing from debates that “have co-opted disability studies for simply normalising ends” (Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009, p. 51).

The development of disability studies in the German-speaking countries has displayed a powerful dynamic since 2000, drawing on a delineation from the auxiliary disciplines of medicine, pedagogy and psychology. In the centre of earlier German-language disability studies, theory building resulted from interdisciplinary discourses and from engaging in further debates regarding difference, such as gender, queer, or postcolonial studies. In so doing, interdependencies with

other social categories and the historicity of the separate, presumed category were considered (Tervooren 2000, 2003a; Waldschmidt 2003). As such, they also currently mark reconstructive inclusion research (for example Budde et al. 2017).

Disability studies criticise the long-prevailing rehabilitation paradigm that disability from a medicinal and diagnostic perspective is understood as an individual restriction that must be dealt with in the subject.<sup>7</sup> Strategies of power that constitute the norm as the centre and its opposite as the periphery thus become the actual object of analysis. As Tervooren (2003b) points out, even abled bodies require explanation if disability and its opposite can be understood as historical and time-bound sociocultural concepts and *not* as ‘biological facts’. Dealing with the topic of disability then equally relates to people with and without disabilities (Tervooren 2003b, p. 283). Mechanisms of ableism (Beratan 2006; Campbell 2009) – a concept taken from English-language debates that is based on a ‘phantasm of (in)vulnerability’ as Tervooren (2003b) calls it – refer to the cultural and social production of an assumed normality. This works with the narrative of an autonomous and rational, able-bodied human subject that negates the experience of living with a disability that almost all people will have during their lives. In the German-language debate, Buchner, Pfahl and Traue (2015) assert that disability in the context of ableism can be understood as an intersubjective and social relationship. They criticise an ‘imperative of ability’ within an achievement-oriented society that is connected with a compulsion to be a capable subject. Against this backdrop, it can be understood how school embedded in social orders produces concepts of normality and standards of ability thus producing ‘normal students’ on the one hand, and legitimises a labelling or even exclusion of those who do not meet those standards on the other hand (Buchner 2018; Merl 2019).

Perspectives of critical disability studies and the criticism of racism analyse processes of the social construction of belonging and capability in their respective social conditions of national orders of belonging and social constructions of normality. In doing so, they trace constructions of norms and of difference in their emergence and in their continuance. When regarding the approaches subsequently, interdependencies as well as parallels between the lines of difference

---

<sup>7</sup>With the terms ‘social model of disability’ (Oliver 1996) and ‘cultural model of disability’ (Snyder and Mitchell 2006), reference is made to various research traditions within disability studies that focus on social barriers to participation in society, on the one hand, and symbolic arrangements and the generation of normality and deviation on the other.

of disability and migration come into view (Akbaba & Buchner 2019; Amirpur 2015; Amrhein and Heinemann 2019; Attia 2013; Powell and Wagner 2014; Wansing and Westphal 2014).<sup>8</sup>

Theoretical approaches that have constructions of ability as well as race as their object illustrate how interpretations of difference take up and reproduce an overall social knowledge of differentiation. Interpretations regarding disability and migration have a productive relational character. The distinctions made are visible as a culturally systematic practice of ordering knowledge in a modern, capitalist society (Attia 2013) that stabilises power structures in a social context. It can thus be worked out why categorisation processes in the everyday world, but also scientific and scholastic ones, so persistently prevail, continue and differentiate across the institution's organisational logic. On their basis, claims of categorising and professional self-confidence relating to target groups can be fundamentally questioned.<sup>9</sup> Although, however, systematic reflections and initial proposals for consequences for teacher education have already been presented in German-speaking countries (Dirim and Mecheril 2018; Dođmuş et al. 2016; Karakaşođlu and Mecheril 2019; Shure 2021; Steinbach 2017), a systematic exploration of the category of disability through the lens of a critique of the associated constructions of difference in teacher education has yet to be carried out.

---

#### **4 Perspectives on Disability and Migration that Criticise Contemporary Culture and Power Relations: Spaces for Reflection in Teacher Education?**

These statements have referred to far-reaching parallels in the reference made by education sciences and pedagogy to the categories of migration and disability. Even for the approaches to racism research and critical disability studies that criticise power and have those relationships as their object, structural similarities can be traced. Which perspectives will now be opened by dialogue with those

---

<sup>8</sup>New developments (for example Ferri et al. 2016; Taylor et al. 2015) lead to an interdependency of the perspectives of *critical race studies* and *critical disability studies*. Annamma et al. (2018) have coined the term 'Disability Critical Race Theory' in this context.

<sup>9</sup>A more in-depth criticism of this certainty of action in current pedagogical discourses on inclusion can be found in Shure (2017).

analogies in teacher education, to incite students to critically engage with cultural and social processes for creating difference?

Comparing pedagogical and theoretical approaches to dealing with differences can lead to a paradigm shift in teacher education: when examining disability and migration from the theoretical perspectives of the critique of culture and power, difference is no longer assumed as an objective fact in an ontological sense. Constructions of difference, their emergence, significance, and operating principles (in school practices of differentiation, for example), are instead analysed regarding their embeddedness in social power structures. To understand the generalities of scholastic organisational processes, of pedagogical practice, and of disciplinary as well as everyday knowledge in the world, students are invited to practice analysing various attributions of difference and pedagogical categorisations from theoretical perspectives critically engaging with culture and power. The meaning of this kind of analysis for the emergence of human subjects in an overall social, powerful practice of differentiation and order will be shown against this background.

A comparative observation of relationships of differences should not lose sight of the specific social conditions that bring them about. At the same time, they should not neglect the special discriminations and associated experiences to which they lead. The very cross-category examination of how pedagogy treats relationships of difference can open our eyes to the special features of their social conditions, and to specific experiences and positions of key players. At the same time, they can contribute to an understanding of historical continuity and clarify why pedagogies of difference continue to prevail so persistently in institutions, in pedagogical practices, and as legitimate knowledge as part of teacher education, although they have been criticised since the 1990s.

When demonstrating structural similarities in the examination and institutional handling of various social orders as course content in teacher education programmes, a historical formation and the alterability of those social relations become visible. In doing so, according to the thesis propounded here, basic assumptions and epistemic certainties of students can be fundamentally questioned. When it comes to its target groups, teacher education can not only focus on student teachers as members of majority society, unlabelled, white, or non-disabled teachers, and therefore indirectly exclude students who are positioned differently. Instead, it must provide ways of critically observing one's own practice of signifying (Gottuck 2019, p. 95), in which what is general in society is updated, and ways of questioning promises of professional sovereignty (Messerschmidt 2016), in our case, made by pedagogies of difference.

By examining relationships of difference, students are deprived of a social order that previously seemed obvious – they experience a loss of language if they

abandon the use of categories against the background of the criticism outlined. Hoffarth, Klingler, and Plöber (2013) explain that loss of language as a constitutive moment in teaching about relationships of difference. According to Hoffarth and colleagues, irritation is to be understood as a pedagogical potential. Irritation consists first of all in a moment of not knowing, more precisely of a moment of not being able to verbalise. This loss of certainties can lead to questioning valid norms and the prevailing social order. Irritation can thus also make clear the contingency of one's own view of the world (Hoffarth, Klingler, & Plöber 2013, pp. 61–62). Potentials of comparative research of constructions of difference also lie in analysing the production of otherness in speaking, for example in pedagogical diagnoses and in selection processes.

However, if teacher education is questioning students' knowledge, practices and experience, those examinations can generate opposition and defensive reactions. Calls for critical reflection can be experienced by students as a questioning of a future pedagogical and professional ability to act (Arens et al. 2013; Messerschmidt 2016). Examinations of power-related differentiations and scholastic differentiation processes can lead from knowledge that stabilises action to knowledge that relieves action if they lead not to moralising criticism and work on individual prejudices on the part of teachers, but open up perspectives of social and institutional criticism. Furthermore, as is the case for exercising new practices of designation that explicate the constructive character and make transparent the conditions for its production, the comparative examination of relationships of difference and social orders makes space for achieving that end.

So that students can concern themselves with their own interpretative practice regarding natio-racial-culturally coded orders of belonging and ability constructions and reflect on the meaning of their own positioning within those orders, room for reflection that relieves one of the burden to act must be set up. At the same time, offers must be formulated in which they may distance themselves from the numerous conflicting demands placed on them, or appeals made to them as future 'good teachers', and 'alienate' them, so to speak. This will open up leeway to expand the view of their future field of action with regard to the theoretical foundations of society.

According to Karakaşoğlu and Mecheril (2019, p. 19), a professionalisation that takes inclusion into account therefore is oriented towards a 'sensitivity for difference' and 'criticism of discrimination' that connects with perspectives of social and institutional criticism. At the same time, it opens up room for reflection in which, with a view to the future field of action, a reflective practice on the contradictions of a future action can be exercised without addressing the students as solely responsible 'change agents'. For a long time, concepts have been

discussed in teacher education that give student teachers opportunities to reflect. To that end, research-oriented or case-related and casuistic settings (Geier 2016; see various chapters in Gottuck et al. 2019; Mecheril and Rose 2012; Steinbach 2017) have so far been discussed as possible teaching formats. In those settings, the theoretical and methodological and methodical potential that qualitative, interpretative research can have for pedagogical professionalisation processes that are sensitive to differences becomes clear. A systematic design that combines perspectives of category and power criticism with concepts of research-based learning has yet to be developed.

---

## References

- Akbaba, Y., & Buchner, T. (2019). Dis\_ability und Migrationshintergrund – Differenzordnungen der Schule und ihre Analogie [Dis\_ability and migration background – difference orders of the school and their analogy]. *Sonderpädagogische Förderung heute*, 64(3), 240-252.
- Amirpur, D. (2015). Othering-Prozesse an der Schnittstelle von Migration und Behinderung – „Die muslimische Familie“ im Fokus [Othering processes where migration meets disability – ‘The Muslim Family’ in focus]. *Zeitschrift Für Inklusion*, (3). Retrieved September 20, 2019, from <https://www.inklusion-online.net/index.php/inklusion-online/article/view/299>
- Amrhein, B., & Heinemann, A. M. B. (2019). Borderlands – Zwischen Inklusions- und Migrationspädagogik oder warum Rassismus nicht ent-nannt werden darf [Borderlands – Between inclusion and migration pedagogy or ‘Why racism should not be un-named’]. In A. M. B. Heinemann & N. Khakpour (Eds.), *Pädagogik sprechen* (pp. 169-188). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Annamma, S. A., Ferri, B. A., & Connor, D. J. (2018). Disability Critical Race Theory: Exploring the Intersectional Lineage, Emergence, and Potential Futures of DisCrit in Education. *Review of Research in Education*, 42(1), 46–71. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X18759041>
- Arens, S., Fegter, S., Hoffarth, B., Klingler, B., Machold, M., Mecheril, P., ... Rose, N. (2013). Wenn Differenz in der Hochschullehre thematisch wird. Einführung in die Reflexion eines Handlungszusammenhangs. [When difference is made a topic in university teaching. Introduction into reflecting on patterns of action.] In P. Mecheril, S. Arens, S. Fegter, B. Hoffarth, B. Klingler, M. Machold, M. Menz, M. Plößer, & N. Rose (Eds.), *Differenz unter Bedingungen von Differenz* (pp. 7–27). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Attia, I. (2013, November 11). *Rassismusforschung trifft auf Disability Studies. Zur Konstruktion Marginalisierung von »Fremdheit« und »Behinderung« als Andere* [Racism research meets disability studies. On constructing and marginalising ‘foreignness’ and ‘disability’ as ‘other’] (Lecture). Hamburg: Universität Hamburg. Retrieved September 20, 2019, from [http://www.zedis-ev-hochschule-hh.de/files/attia\\_rassismusforschung\\_ds.pdf](http://www.zedis-ev-hochschule-hh.de/files/attia_rassismusforschung_ds.pdf)

- Beratan, G. D. (2006). Institutionalizing Inequity. Ableism, Racism and IDEA 2004. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 26(2). Retrieved June 16, 2020, from <https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/682/859>
- Buchner, T. (2018). *Die Subjekte der Integration. Schule, Biographie und Behinderung* [The subjects of integration. School, biography, and disability]. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Buchner, T., Pfahl, L., & Traue, B. (2015). Zur Kritik der Fähigkeiten: Ableism als neue Forschungsperspektive der Disability Studies und ihrer Partner\_innen [On the criticism of abilities: Ableism as a new research perspective of disability studies and its partners]. *Zeitschrift Für Inklusion*, (2). Retrieved September 20, 2019, from <https://www.inklusion-online.net/index.php/inklusion-online/article/view/273>
- Budde, J. (2012). Die Rede von der Heterogenität in der Schulpädagogik. Diskursanalytische Perspektiven [Discussion about heterogeneity in school pedagogy. Perspectives of discourse analysis]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 13(2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-13.2.1761>
- Budde, J., Dlugosch, A., & Sturm, T. (Eds.). (2017). *(Re-)Konstruktive Inklusionsforschung: Differenzlinien – Handlungsfelder – Empirische Zugänge* [(Re-)constructive inclusion research: Lines of difference – fields of action – empirical approaches]. Opladen: Budrich.
- Budde, J., & Hummrich, M. (2013). Reflexive Inklusion [Reflective inclusion]. *Zeitschrift Für Inklusion*, (4). Retrieved September 20, 2019, from <https://www.inklusion-online.net/index.php/inklusion-online/article/view/193>
- Campbell, F. K. (2009). *Contours of ableism. The production of disability and abledness*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dirim, İ., & Mecheril, P. (with A. Heinemann et al.). (2018). *Heterogenität, Sprache(n), Bildung. Die Schule der Migrationsgesellschaft* [Heterogeneity, Language(s), Education: School in migration society]. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Doğmuş, A., Karakaşoğlu, Y., & Mecheril, P. (Eds.). (2016). *Pädagogisches Können in der Migrationsgesellschaft* [Pedagogical proficiency in the migration society]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Doğmuş, A., Karakaşoğlu, Y., Mecheril, P., & Shure, S. (2018). Die Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung der Migrationsgesellschaft im Spiegel von Modulbeschreibungen. Eine qualitativ-interpretative Analyse [Teacher training of the migration society reflected in module descriptions. A qualitative-interpretative analysis]. In T. Leonhard, J. Kosinár, & C. Reintjes (Eds.), *Institutionelle Praktiken und Orientierungen in der Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung. Potentiale und Grenzen der Professionalisierung* (pp. 120–138). Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Emmerich, M., & Hormel, U. (2013). *Heterogenität – Diversity – Intersektionalität: Zur Logik sozialer Unterscheidungen in pädagogischen Semantiken der Differenz* [Heterogeneity – diversity – intersectionality: On the logic of social distinctions in pedagogical semantics regarding difference]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Ferri, B. A., Connor, D. J., & Annamma, S. A. (Eds.). (2016). *DisCrit. Disability studies and critical race theory in education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Feuser, G. (1995). *Behinderte Kinder und Jugendliche. Zwischen Integration und Aussonderung* [Disabled children and adolescents. Between integration and singling out]. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

- Geier, T. (2016). Reflexivität und Fallarbeit. Skizze zur pädagogischen Professionalität von Lehrerinnen und Lehrern in der Migrationsgesellschaft [Reflectivity and casework. Outlines on the pedagogical professionalism of teachers in the migration society]. In A. Doğmuş, Y. Karakaşoğlu, & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Pädagogisches Können in der Migrationsgesellschaft* (pp. 179–200). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Gillborn, D., Ladson-Billings, G., & Taylor, E. (2016). *Foundations of critical race theory in education* (2nd ed.). New York City & Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.
- Gogolin, I. (1994). *Der monolinguale Habitus der multilingualen Schule* [The monolingual habitus of multilingual schools]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Gomolla, M., & Radtke, F.-O. (2002). *Institutionelle Diskriminierung. Die Herstellung ethnischer Differenz in der Schule* [Institutional discrimination. The manufacture of ethnic difference in schools]. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- Goodley, D., Lawthom, R., Liddiard, K., & Runswick-Cole, K. (2019). Provocations for Critical Disability Studies. *Disability & Society*, 34(6), 972-997. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1566889>
- Gottuck, S. (2019). Macht – Sehen – Differenzen (be-)deuten. Cultural Studies als Analyseperspektive im Kontext pädagogischer Professionalisierung [Power – vision – signify (or construe) differences. Cultural studies as an analysis perspective in the context of pedagogical professionalisation]. In S. Gottuck, I. Grünheid, P. Mecheril, & J. Wolter (Eds.), *Sehen lernen und verlernen. Perspektiven pädagogischer Professionalisierung* (pp. 95–125). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Gottuck, S., Grünheid, I., Mecheril, P., & Wolter, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Sehen lernen und verlernen. Perspektiven pädagogischer Professionalisierung* [Learning and unlearning to see. Perspectives of pedagogical perspectives]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Hall, S. (2000). Rassismus als ideologischer Diskurs [Racism as an ideological discourse]. In N. Rätzsch (Ed.), *Theorien über Rassismus* (pp. 7-16). Hamburg: Argument Verlag.
- Hall, S. (2012). Der Westen und der Rest: Diskurs und Macht [The west and the rest: Discourse and power]. In S. Hall, *Rassismus und kulturelle Identität, Ausgewählte Schriften* (Vol. 2, pp. 137–179). Hamburg: Argument Verlag. (Original work published 1994)
- Hinz, A. (1993). *Heterogenität in der Schule. Integration – Interkulturelle Erziehung – Koedukation* [Heterogeneity in schools. Integration – intercultural upbringing – coeducation]. Hamburg: Curio.
- Hoffarth, B., Klingler, B., & Plößer, M. (2013). Reizende Ereignisse. Irritation als Beunruhigung und als Verschiebung von Ordnungen [Irritating events. Irritation as a disturbance and a postponement of order]. In P. Mecheril, S. Arens, S. Fegter, B. Hoffarth, B. Klingler, M. Machold, M. Menz, M. Plößer, & R. Rose (Eds.), *Differenz unter Bedingungen von Differenz* (pp. 51–70). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Karakaşoğlu, Y., & Mecheril, P. (2019). Pädagogisches Können. Grundsätzliche Überlegungen zu LehrerInnenbildung in der Migrationsgesellschaft [Pedagogical proficiency. General considerations about teacher training in the immigrant society]. In D. Cerny & M. Oberlechner (Eds.), *Schule – Gesellschaft – Migration. Beiträge zur diskursiven Aushandlung des schulischen Lern- und Bildungsraums aus theoretischer, empirischer, curricularer und didaktischer Perspektive* (pp. 17–32). Opladen: Budrich
- Kottmann, B. (2006). *Selektion in die Sonderschule: das Verfahren zur Feststellung von sonderpädagogischem Förderbedarf als Gegenstand empirischer Forschung* [Selection



- in the special education school: The procedure for determining the need for special education as an object of empirical research]. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Kronig, W., Haeblerlin, U., & Eckhart, M. (2000). *Immigrantenkinder und schulische Selektion: Pädagogische Visionen, theoretische Erklärungen und empirische Untersuchungen zur Wirkung integrierender und separierender Schulformen in den Grundschuljahren* [Immigrant children and school selection: Pedagogical visions, theoretical explanations and empirical studies on the effect of integrating and separating types of schools in the primary years]. Bern, Stuttgart, & Vienna: Haupt Verlag.
- Krüger-Potratz, M. (2005). *Interkulturelle Bildung. Eine Einführung* [Intercultural education. An introduction]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Mecheril, P. (2003). *Prekäre Verhältnisse: Über natio-ethno-kulturelle (Mehrfach-) Zugehörigkeit* [Precarious relationships: On (multiple) natio-racial-culturally affiliations]. Münster: Waxmann.
- Mecheril, P. (2004). *Einführung in die Migrationspädagogik* [Introduction to migration pedagogy]. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz Studium.
- Mecheril, P. (2018). Orders of Belonging and Education: Migration Pedagogy as Criticism. In D. Bachmann-Medick & J. Kugele (Eds.), *Migration. Changing Concepts, Critical Approaches* (pp. 121–138). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Mecheril, P., & Rose, N. (2012). Qualitative Migrationsforschung – Standortbestimmungen zwischen Politik, Reflexion und (Selbst-)Kritik [Qualitative migration research – location determination between politics, reflection, and (self) criticism]. In F. Ackermann, T. Ley, C. Machold, & M. Schrödter (Eds.), *Qualitatives Forschen in der Erziehungswissenschaft* (pp. 115–134). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Meekosha, H., Shuttleworth, R. (2009). What's so 'critical' about critical disability studies? *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 15(1), 47–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1323238X.2009.11910861>
- Merl, T. (2019): *un/genügend fähig: Zur Herstellung von Differenz im Unterricht inklusiver Schulklassen* [Capable vs. incapable: On the creation of difference when teaching in inclusive classrooms]. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Merz-Atalik, K. (2001). *Interkulturelle Pädagogik in Integrationsklassen. Subjektive Theorien von Lehrern im gemeinsamen Unterricht von Kindern mit und ohne Behinderungen* [Intercultural pedagogy in integration classes. Subjective theories of teaching in the joint instruction of children with and without disabilities]. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- Messerschmidt, A. (2009). *Weltbilder und Selbstbilder. Bildungsprozesse im Umgang mit Globalisierung, Migration und Zeitgeschichte* [World image and self-image. Educational processes when dealing with globalisation, migration, and contemporary history]. Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel.
- Messerschmidt, A. (2016). Involviert in Machtverhältnisse [Involved in power structures]. In A. Doğmuş, Y. Karakaşoğlu, & P. Mecheril (Eds.), *Pädagogisches Können in der Migrationsgesellschaft* (pp. 59–70). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Nohl, A. M. (2010). *Konzepte interkultureller Pädagogik: eine systematische Einführung* [Concepts of intercultural pedagogy: a systematic introduction]. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Oliver, M. (1996). *Understanding Disability. From Theory to practice*. London: Basingstoke.

- Opp, G., Fingerle, M., & Puh, K. (2001). Differenz als Konstitutionsproblem der Sonderpädagogik [Difference as a constitution problem of special education pedagogy]. In H. Lutz & N. Wenning (Eds.), *Unterschiedlich verschieden. Differenz in der Erziehungswissenschaft* (pp. 161–176). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Pfahl, L., & Powell, J. J. (2011). Legitimizing school segregation. The special education profession and the discourse of learning disability in Germany. *Disability & Society*, 26(4), 449–462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2011.567796>
- Powell, J. J., & Wagner, S. J. (2014). An der Schnittstelle Ethnie und Behinderung benachteiligt [Disadvantaged where ethnicity meets disability]. In G. Wansing & M. Westphal (Eds.), *Behinderung und Migration. Inklusion, Diversität, Intersektionalität* (pp. 177–199). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Prenzel, A. (1995). *Pädagogik der Vielfalt* [Pedagogy of diversity]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Reich, H. H. (1994). Interkulturelle Pädagogik. Eine Zwischenbilanz [Intercultural pedagogy. An interim result]. *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, 40(1), 9–27.
- Reich, H.H. (2016). Geschichte der Beschulung von Seiteneinsteigern im deutschen Bildungssystem [The history of teaching lateral entrants in the German educational system]. In M. Becker-Mrotzek & H. J. Roth (Eds.), *Sprachliche Bildung – Grundlagen und Handlungsfelder* (pp. 77–94). Münster & New York: Waxmann.
- Shure, S. (2016). Die Schule als Agens eines Integrationsdispositivs? Anmerkungen aus der Perspektive einer kritischen (erziehungswissenschaftlichen) Migrationsforschung [School as an agent of an integration dispositif? Comments from the perspective of critical (pedagogical) migration research]. *SEMINAR*, 4(22).
- Shure, S. (2017). Was fokussieren (schul-)pädagogische „Inklusionsperspektiven“ (eher nicht)? Ein rassismuskritischer Kommentar [What do pedagogical ‘inclusion perspectives’ focus on (and what do they not)? A commentary criticising racism]. In K. Fereidooni & M. El (Eds.): *Rassismuskritik und Widerstandsformen* (pp. 643–656). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Shure, S. (2021). *De\_Thematisierung migrationsgesellschaftlicher Ordnungen. Lehramtsstudium als Ort der Bedeutungsproduktion* [The examination of the systems of a migrant society. The teacher training programme as a place for producing meaning]. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Snyder, S. L., & Mitchell, D. T. (2006). *Cultural Locations of Disability*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Söderfeldt, Y. (2013). *From Pathology to Public Sphere. The German Deaf Movement 1848–1914*. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Steinbach, A. (2017). „Je unterschiedlicher die Schüler sind, desto unterschiedlicher sind natürlich auch die Probleme, die sie mit sich bringen“ – Pädagogische Professionalisierung in migrationsgesellschaftlichen Differenzverhältnissen: diskursanalytisch, selbstreflexiv und anrufungssensibel [‘The more different the students are, the more varied the problems will naturally be that they bring with them.’ – Pedagogical professionalisation in the relationships of differences in migration society: discourse-analytical, self-reflexive, and sensitive to invocation]. In T. Albers, D. Amirpur, & A. Platte (Eds.), *Handbuch inklusive Kindheit* (pp. 400–420). Opladen: Budrich.

- Taylor, E., Gillborn, D., & Ladson-Billings, G. (Eds.). (2015): *Foundation of critical race theory in education*. New York: Routledge.
- Tervooren, A. (2000). Differenz anders gesehen: Studien zu Behinderung [Seeing differences differently: Disability studies]. *Vierteljahresschrift für Heilpädagogik und ihre Nachbargebiete*, 69(3), 316-319.
- Tervooren, A. (2003a). Disability Studies. Einleitung [Disability Studies. Introduction]. In P. Lutz, T. Macho, G. Staupe, & H. Zirten (Eds.), *Der [Im-]perfekte Mensch. Metamorphosen von Normalität und Abweichung* (pp. 416–417). Köln & Weimar: Böhlau.
- Tervooren, A. (2003b). Phantasmen der (Un-)Verletzlichkeit. Körper und Behinderung [Phantasms of (in)vulnerability. Disability and the body]. In P. Lutz, T. Macho, G. Staupe, & Zirten (Eds.), *Der [Im-]perfekte Mensch. Metamorphosen von Normalität und Abweichung* (pp. 280–293). Köln & Weimar: Böhlau.
- Tervooren, A., & Pfaff, N. (2018). Inklusion und Differenz [Inclusion and difference]. In T. Sturm, M. Wagner-Willi (Eds.), *Handbuch schulische Inklusion* (pp. 31–44). Opladen & Toronto: UTB.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality from 07–10 June, 1994*. Paris. Retrieved May 7, 2020, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427>
- Waldschmidt, A. (Ed.). (2003). *Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven der Disability Studies. Tagungsdokumentation* [Cultural and scientific perspectives of disability studies. Conference Documentation]. Kassel: Bifos.
- Wansing, G., & Westphal, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Behinderung und Migration. Inklusion, Diversität, Intersektionalität* [Disability and migration. Inclusion, diversity, intersectionality]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Weisser, J. (2005). Der Strukturwandel der Hilfsschule und das Problem einer Geschichte der Behinderung [The structural change of the ‘school for backward children’ and the problem of a history of disability]. *Heilpädagogische Forschung*, 4, 204-213.
- Wittstock, M. (2002). Das Lehramt für Sonderpädagogik [The teaching profession for special education pedagogy]. In H. U. Otto, T. Rauschenbach, & P. Vogel (Eds.), *Erziehungswissenschaft: Lehre und Studium* (pp. 57–70). Opladen: Leske + Budrich.



# Critical Reflexivity: Theoretical Considerations on Subjection and Postcoloniality for Teacher Education

Oxana Ivanova-Chessex, Anja Steinbach and Jan Wolter

## Abstract

Power relations and societal inequalities are rare subjects in teacher education when focused on differences. This contribution explores a specific idea of critical reflexivity drawing on two theoretical approaches: subjection theory and postcolonial theory. The paper examines the extent to which these approaches and the associated perspectives on teacher education can contribute to a professionalization of teachers in and for migration society without reducing professionalism to the competent handling of ‘the others’.

## Keywords

Subjection · Postcolonial theory · Teacher education · Pedagogical professionalization · Critical reflexivity

---

O. Ivanova-Chessex (✉)

University of Teacher Education Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland

e-mail: [oxana.ivanova@phzh.ch](mailto:oxana.ivanova@phzh.ch)

A. Steinbach · J. Wolter

Institute for Pedagogy, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany

e-mail: [a.steinbach@uni-oldenburg.de](mailto:a.steinbach@uni-oldenburg.de)

J. Wolter

e-mail: [jan.wolter@uni-oldenburg.de](mailto:jan.wolter@uni-oldenburg.de)

## 1 Introduction

The starting points for our considerations are three observations that raise questions about teacher education within the entanglements of the migration society and address the significance of theories of power for the professionalization of teachers in Germany: *Firstly*, the focus on (pre-service) teachers'<sup>1</sup> ability to deal with 'the others' is becoming increasingly relevant. This is mostly a matter of teaching so-called competences to compensate for the deficits of the 'others' while leaving unthematized what the 'actual problem' is (Castro Varela 2002, p. 46). The 'actual problem' can be described as hegemonic conditions of the migration society, also constituted and 'legitimized' by *race* constructions. Within these societal conditions, a rather *technological understanding* of pedagogical professionalism as a set of skills for handling pedagogical situations prevails (Karakaşoğlu, Mecheril, Shure, and Wojciechowicz 2017). According to Astrid Messerschmidt (2013, p. 9), teacher training in Germany is dominated by questions of teaching respectively methods and techniques aiming at the transfer of knowledge to students. As claimed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2008), this can be considered a manifestation of a "progressive rationalization of education" (p. 2). The entanglement of knowledge and power, the actors' involvement in social power and inequality relations as well as in violent processes of the production of 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' subjects are left thereby out of sight.

*Secondly*, we assume that the focus on this technologically understood capacity as an ability of pre-service teachers to act appears problematic not only in the context of migration, but also from a perspective of professionalization theories (Combe 2015; Helsper 2008, 2016). The structural theory approach to teacher professionalism assumes that pedagogical action is not a standardizable action that can be developed by practicing certain processes and routines (Helsper 2008, p. 164). This approach explicitly distances itself from the idea of teacher education that aims at conveying theory-based tricks as a kind of toolkit for correct teacher action (Helsper 2016, p. 103). Rather, pedagogical action is understood as acting in uncertainties and antinomies. The complexity of pedagogical situations requires therefore the development of a (self-)reflexive, scientific and epistemological-critical habitus (Helsper 2016, pp. 103–107). This form of (self-)reflexivity is, however, rather proposed as an (alternative) normative orientation, which

---

<sup>1</sup>We understand 'pre-service teachers' to be students who are enrolled in a teacher education program and working toward teacher certification.

does not necessarily question the scientific basis or the powerful and violent conditions of inequalities.

*Thirdly*, an increasing use of the concept of reflexivity can be observed in the context of teacher education (Messerschmidt 2014, p. 63). It is largely undisputed that pre-service teachers should dispose of something like ‘the ability to reflect’. At the same time, it often remains vague or even completely undefined what exactly characterizes reflexivity, what constitutes a (self-)reflexive habitus and what actually becomes the object of reflection (Berndt et al. 2017). In addition, reflection as a concept increasingly becomes a cipher of the right thing, in which any possibilities of negativity and opposition seem to be impossible and excluded (Messerschmidt 2014, p. 64). Due to a high degree of establishment of the concept, a (frequently exclusively) positive connotation, and at the same time a rather diffuse conceptualization, reflexivity becomes a normative reference that can apparently be ‘used’ for all sorts of purposes.

Drawing on these three starting points, we would like to explore a specific idea of critical reflexivity through two theoretical approaches: subjection theory and postcolonial theory. In doing so, we examine the extent to which these approaches and the associated perspectives on teacher education can contribute to a professionalization in and for migration society without reducing professionalism to the competent handling of ‘the others’. In the following, we will first outline the theoretical orientations that are important for our ideas and linked to the terms subjection (Sect. 1) and postcoloniality (Sect. 2), before asking in what way these theoretical perspectives lead us to an understanding of a critical-reflexive professionalization for teachers in a migration society (Sect. 3).

---

## 2 Perspectivations of Theories in Subjection

For our considerations on *reflexivity* in the context of pedagogical professionalization, the conceptualization of the subject is important. In subjection theories, such as in Judith Butler’s work, the subject is theorized as subjected to dominant discourses and societal conditions but not as determined by them. It is conceived “as a linguistic category, a placeholder” (Butler 1997b, p. 10) and understood as what Judith Butler (1997b) calls “a linguistic occasion” (p. 11) through which the individual can obtain a social existence as a concrete someone. The assumption of the sovereignty of the subject, its independence and self-determination in its being and actions, is replaced by a focus on the unfinished and unfinishable processes of becoming, of subjection. As a result, the subject is “never fully constituted, but is subjected and produced time and again” (Butler 1995a, p. 47).

From this point of view this becoming (subjection) takes place through processes of interpellation and iterative acts of meaning performance and meaning production, in which an individual is repeatedly addressed as a specific someone. Discursive formations of social orders include and provide categories and designations for this act of interpellation that are socially established and enable individuals to be recognized in a certain subject positioning (intelligibility). In this sense, the subject is conceived as an effect of discourses and power relations that precede the subject as normative requirements of the social.

At the same time, we connect to Judith Butler's ideas on agency of the subject theorized as depending on its social existence in discursive orders. By agency, Butler means that subjects can relate to and produce the discourses that constitute them. This is relevant for an understanding of critical reflexivity, which we understand as a requirement and a facet of agency. Nicole Balzer and Katharina Ludewig (2012) elaborate two central ideas on forms of agency according to Judith Butler: a) the reiterating subject, and b) the subversively acting subject.

- a) The condition for becoming a subject is that subjects *repeatedly* relate to norms and discourses, cite and re-articulate them. Since discourses are continually invoked and inevitably varied, fundamental moments of the subjects' agency arise "precisely at such junctures where discourse is renewed" (Butler 1995b, p. 135). Consequently, the agency of subjects is interwoven with the conditions of the discursive or linguistic field. It is not a characteristic of the subject, but rather "the effect of discursive conditions" (Butler 1995b, p. 137). Butler (1997a) summarizes: "The one who acts [...] acts precisely to the extent that he or she is constituted as an actor and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constraints from the outset" (p. 16). According to these considerations, agency does not unfold beyond the linguistic field, but is an immanent moment of this field.
- b) The (re-)iteration as a crucial moment of interpellation is further relevant for an understanding of critical reflexivity insofar as subversive forms of agency are also made possible in the repetitive performance – namely to strengthen those articulations of norms, in which norms are invoked in such a way that they are shifted or changed (Balzer and Ludewig 2012, pp. 108–112). For Butler (1997a), this subversive agency "promises to expose the vacillating boundaries of legitimacy in speech" (p. 41) and reworks "that very matrix of power by which we are constituted" (Butler 1995a, p. 47). The act of relating to the norm becomes "a potential site for politicization" (Butler 2004a, p. 217),

while a subversion becomes possible “only within the practices of repetitive signifying” (Butler 1990/1999, p. 185). Butler theorizes subversive agency as related to a critical-reflexive insight into the own subjection and dependencies of one’s own agency for constituting conditions.

The subject’s capacity to reflect on the conditions of its becoming and to re-articulate them is discussed as post-sovereignty. As Paula-Irene Villa (2012, p. 56) notes in her analysis of Butler’s work: the subject acquires this post-sovereign ability to critically vary the conditions that produce it, when the subject no longer thinks of itself as necessarily sovereign or autonomous. Insight into the illusion of sovereignty is thus a prerequisite for critical and subversive action. In this sense, critical reflexivity can be understood as the capacity of a subject to make oneself – the way of its own becoming and ‘Bildung’ – the subject of reflection (Butler 2002, p. 129). Even if Butler theorizes reflexivity and agency in this way, this does not mean a return to an autonomous sovereign understanding of the subject. The subject is not only bound to reflexivity, but its becoming goes hand in hand with a socially created reflexivity that is subjected to the discourses and conditions of a specific subject position: “the formation of the subject is the institution of the very reflexivity that indistinguishably assumes the burden of formation” (Butler 2001, para. 51). Seen in this way, reflexivity is a structural moment of the subject and not a cultivated skill that can be acquired, for example, within the framework of professionalization processes. Reflexivity is the fluid and situated disposing condition under which the discursively disposed view of the self is turned on itself. This makes a specific form or modus of reflexivity, a form of critique, possible, which enables one to have an insight into the illusion of being able to control oneself, others and social situations. This form of critique is bound to the relational and formative conditions of subjection and therefore immanent in practices of social contexts (Ricken 2019, p. 111). It is only by relating critically and reflexively to oneself and social contexts that the post-sovereign insight into one’s own limited agency becomes possible.

A theoretical perspective on subjection enables an understanding of reflexivity as focused on the discursive conditionality of subjectivity and at the same time as containing the transformational potential for societal conditions. Reflexivity therefore seems to be a fundamental ability of the post-sovereign subject to influence the institutional and discursive norms, to question and shift them, which is, in our opinion, a crucial point of teacher education in a migration society.



### 3 Perspectivations of Postcolonial Theory

Our remarks on the theory of subjection can be extended by including aspects of postcolonial theory when addressing questions of teacher professionalization in the migration society. By *postcolonial* we mean approaches that deal with the aftermath of colonialism in the present. Colonial continuities in the form of processes of re-colonization or neo-colonization, the persistence of colonial knowledge, the legacy of colonialism as well as practices of resistance, processes of decolonization and liberation from hegemonic conditions are the focus of the analysis (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015, p. 17). The interest of postcolonial theory in the analysis of power relations and hegemony as well as the subject positions associated with unequal possibilities is based on normative orientations towards a productive shift of these relations. The hegemonic relations become an object of analysis and critique with the goal of societal and epistemic change.

Regarding teacher education, the relational connection between privileging and de-privileging as a central analytical focus of postcolonial theorizations is of interest to us. Postcoloniality refers to the phenomenon of ‘glocality’ – namely global dependencies and geographical (radical) contextuality – and to the material conditions of these global relations. In doing so, the capitalist modes of production come into view, subjugating ‘men and nature’ to the anonymous rule of the material constraints of surplus-value production and fueling the imperialist and racially-based project of nation-states (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015, p. 12). Postcoloniality emphasizes a historical contextuality that refers to the emergence of global dependencies and their social and epistemic orders. Postcolonial approaches ask about the epistemic, social and geographical places and contexts of thinking and saying, as well as how they emerged. They attempt to reflect on how knowledge generates orders of (global) inequalities and (de-)privilege, which manifest themselves especially in local practices and articulate themselves with and within subject relations.

If in postcolonial perspectivations the historicity of knowledge is emphasized on a global scale, then they not only draw attention to the repeated failure of unambiguous determinations, as Messerschmidt (2007) puts it, but also provide an insight into the fact that knowledge is historically and contextually situated. However, postcoloniality also describes the fact that specific views of the world and perceptions of the world are always inscribed in orders of knowledge. These orders privilege certain modes of knowledge, while other perceptions are de-privileged or marked as less legitimate, suppressed or completely extinguished

(Castro Varela 2016, pp. 48–49). This calls into question the limits and possibilities of structural and symbolic representation.

Postcolonial approaches allow us to analyze and intervene in the universalization and unambiguity of knowledge and norms and thus the conditions of subjection. Knowledge from this perspective is always to be understood as particular; it is seen as context-specific and geographically bound, just as it depends on the social position from which it is articulated. María do Mar Castro Varela emphasizes that knowledge is never universal and can never be applied without consequences (Castro Varela 2016, p. 53). In this analytical intention, not only one's own, but also the theoretical assumptions, the orders of knowledge and cognition, the epistemic preconditions of social practice are examined critically and every action, including critique, is involved in a practice that is structured by relations of difference and dominance.

From a postcolonial perspective, the connection between the epistemic order, social practice, and various subjectivities is articulated as global contexts in which privileging and de-privileging are thought of as relational to each other and intertwined. (De-)privileging has far-reaching consequences for the different subject positions and the associated recognizable self-perceptions and perceptions by others, because it enables the framework within which something can be wished for, thought of, described and done. This is to be understood as intervention in deficit perspectives and victimizing discourses, with which global material and epistemic oppressive relations are strengthened.

The postcolonial analyses of privileging and de-privileging are thus devoted to the scientifically generated hierarchizing and naturalizing classification of human beings. The construction of a radical, incompatible and essentializing difference between individuals and of their ways of life is conceived through the concept of othering (Spivak 1985; Riegel 2016). These processes can be identified in meanings that position the subjects unequally within circumstances. In the rough and violent distinction and division into, for example, a civilized, democratic European 'we' and the inferior and irrational, yet to become civilized 'others', the reality-constituting difference between a 'we' and 'the other' is produced (Saïd 1978; Hall 1992). The construction of *race* categories and their varying articulations in economic and gender relations is the focus of postcolonial analysis. Last but not least this racialized and racializing knowledge, which continues to have an effect to the present day, should legitimize the domination and oppression of individuals as well as their exploitation and enslavement.

A postcolonial perspectivation thus enables an analytical approach that can address the interdependence of global relations of difference and power as well as their historical, political and discursive situatedness. From our point of view, this

provides an important reflective angle for grasping pedagogical relations beyond the ordinary certainties and practices that tend to a technological understanding of handling pedagogical situations, but rather for critically examining the foundations that pre-structure school practices and also academic debates.

---

#### **4 Reflections on the Development of Critical Reflexivity in Teacher Education**

If we relate the outlined theoretical perspectives and their understanding of critical reflexivity to the context of teacher education, the basic assumptions and attentions associated with postcoloniality and subjection theory become significant in many respects: (1) The global and local orders pre-structure subjectivation in a way that offers different possibilities of positioning, representation, and articulation, which did not emerge naturally, but which maintain their ‘legitimacy’ in the context of social power relations. At the same time, they build the basis for subject formation processes of the actors in the context of teacher education. Educational actors, who exert a decisive influence on subjects and their subjection occurrence, are prompted to deal with “[t]he sovereign conceit” (Butler 1997a, p. 16). Teacher education operates often with the conceit of sovereignty and a technological understanding of taught abilities of (pre-service) teachers (Messerschmidt 2014). Our perspectivation in a certain sense calls for breaking with these rationalities, since, as Butler says, “agency begins where sovereignty wanes” (Butler 1997a, p. 16). The illusion of sovereignty and its recognition and awareness is the starting point for the development of critical reflexivity, which begins in the confrontation with the conditionality and relative unavailability of being and becoming. As Villa (2012, p. 55) formulates, the subject gains on critical agency, if it recognizes itself as dependent and entangled into discursive structures, as the degrees of freedom are immanent for the complex relationships between discourse and subject.

In our view, these degrees of freedom (2) become relevant when we address teacher education as a context of professionalization for the school, which can also be understood and analyzed as a ‘space of disciplining and power’, as Grabau and Rieger-Ladich (2014) phrase it. For our argument, two powerful moments of this space appear relevant: one of them is the naturalising of difference in the school context. Naturalized differences articulate subject positions and cognitive or performative abilities of subjects. The difference is represented by the specific, failing, a-normal subject. This difference, a set of articulated material elements (for example body) and discursive positions (for instance boy-girl),

is bound to unequal social possibilities and privileges. The focus on teaching according to the curriculum is likely to oversee this discursive and social mechanism of bringing differences to life in schools. This disciplining, subject-formative and forming mechanism create personal individuality. Connected to this, another powerful moment with a strong link to the naturalization of difference is canonized hegemonic knowledge, which defines possible social positions and (de)legitimizes subjectivities, activities, and ideas. In schools also a specific knowledge set is deemed valid, while others are excluded. In this context, those subject positions appear as privileged, which are articulated within the normal and are likely to acquire canonized (validated) knowledge, but are not linked with bodies, which represent migration – in Critical Race Theory this is often marked as legitimizing white supremacy. In this conception, the school can be conceived as a violent context of subjection and normalization that produces and re-produces inequalities; as a place where students not only acquire the knowledge set out in the syllabus, but also become acquainted with societal orders and their respective positions in these orders (Steinbach et al. 2020). For teacher education, it means to question a professional self-understanding based on the assumption of difference as natural and on reflexivity regarding the success of canonized knowledge transfer and to develop a self-understanding as involved in the maintenance of societal inequalities in the context of migration.

Theoretical considerations on subjection and postcoloniality (3) cause a shift that is repeatedly formulated in the critique of the concept of intercultural competence (Mecheril 2008). This critique demands a shift in attention away from knowledge *about* the others towards the contexts in which individuals *become* others (Messerschmidt 2007, p. 158). In this perspective professionalism should not only be understood as the ability to describe forms and norms of the recognition of subjects, but also as a questioning of the logic of subjection and recognition. The questioning of social orders with their specific rationalities, technologies, and subjection patterns should be a crucial element of pedagogical theory and practices to enable less violent educational institutions.

How can conditions be created in which the constitutive limitations and possibilities of subjectivity can be reflected in the context of the orders of difference and dominance in a migration society? How can new forms of recognition be established in which it would be possible for students, as Butler demands, “to solicit a becoming” (Butler 2004b, p. 44)? In other words, forms that refer to an open future of becoming and take into account the historical conditionality of the context in which subjection takes place (Villa 2012, p. 45).

(4) Within the perspectivalizations of the theories of subjection and postcoloniality, *critique* could be emphasized as a central component of pedagogical

professionalization. Namely critique as an instrument of analysis and reflection that would make it possible to analyze the subjection within the powerful social orders and to make violent practices of (de-)privileging that results from complex intersections of power formations. In this sense, and according to Rahel Jaeggi (2016, p. 286), critique could be understood as an immanent critique that does not confront reality with a normative ideal. It is the inherent element of a social situation guided by the necessity of tracking down contradictions and transforming them into something new (Jaeggi 2016, p. 287). According to these considerations, it would be less a matter of proposing a new, concrete vision of self and world relations but, as Jaeggi and Wesche (2016, p. 8) think, the critical movement, as a critique of the old word, might lead to finding a new one. This is relevant, because all subjects are subordinated in social powerful formations and restricted to recognizable subjectivities. Criticizing these power formations might lead for all subjects to less restriction and violence.

In any case, critique should be understood as a moment with a subversive, transformational potential for change, which does not take place beyond power relations, but which can nevertheless initiate a shift in societal relations. If, as Birgit Rommelspacher (1995) points out, hegemonic orders of knowledge and the social relations of dominance and difference are based not only on explicit approval, but also on a lack of criticism and the absence of criticism effectively means approval (see also Messerschmidt 2009, p. 96), then neither universities nor schools can be understood as 'neutral' places. An understanding of pedagogical institutions as places that are involved in the reproduction of hegemonic social relations becomes significant. For the professionalization of teachers in a migration society, this would mean to reflexively refer to the 'pretended given reality' in order to develop new pedagogical standards and modes of practice. This includes actively producing alternatives which dismantle usual images and orders, enabling less restrictive self-images and self-relations in the migration society context.

In the sense of post-sovereignty, this would mean a different ability to act than is currently dominant in teacher education – not a compensatory, target group-oriented technological practice, but rather agency as critical intervention, as a shift and (re-)constitution of pedagogical and societal orders. Teachers, subjected within the idea of post-sovereign professionalization, would not stick to an illusion of sovereignty, which recognized their insufficient knowledge, the impossibility to acquire full knowledge about the pedagogical opposite nor to always know what the right thing to do is (Mecheril 2008; Wimmer 1996). A post-sovereign professionalization of a pedagogical ability to act would focus on a critical reflexivity in this sense as a crucial part of pedagogical practice.

The theoretical approaches proposed in this chapter make the societal significance of pedagogical action within the school as a subjection context recognizable. With these perspectives, the critical reflexivity of teachers concerning positioning and interpellation processes in the school space can be addressed in their significance for social transformation processes – for example where *race* categories seem to be natural and self-evident. This understanding of professionalism appropriate for a migration society does not focus on a better understanding of certain target groups. Rather, it focuses on a better understanding, recognition and interpretation of one's own powerful practices and the conditions of these practices, taking into account the question raised by Castro Varela (2013, p. 69): How could the social order be established that we seem to – although not totally undisputedly – consent to?

Gayatri Spivak's ideas would make it possible to relate the claim of (re-)constitution to the following aspects in the pedagogical context: pedagogical practice would be oriented towards an idea of education that does not think of education as instrumentalized in the neoliberal-capitalist sense. Instead, it cultivates an understanding of education that is beyond these logics and makes the imaginative an important object of education (Spivak 2012, p. 1). This requires the ability to think and create a space that seems impossible (Castro Varela 2002, p. 47).

In a (postcolonial) reflection, pedagogical action in a migration society would be oriented towards taking seriously the idea of teaching at both ends of the spectrum. This means cultivating a pedagogy that does not think of privileging and de-privileging as essentialist but as *relational*. It would be a matter of understanding the global context of positioning, of bringing about societal changes, of campaigning for one's own rights and of becoming aware of one's own privileges (Heinemann 2019, p. 47). When Alisha Heinemann (2019) writes,

while the training of the minds of the poorest aims at empowering them to take an active part in civil society and slowly change the oppressive hegemony, the training of the minds of the privileged aims more at un-learning their own haughtiness and sanctioned ignorance, (pp. 51–52)

she addresses this moment of pedagogy as a global context in which public-political orders are historically, socially, and geographically differently positioned but connected with subjects' agencies and their ability to intervene critically in hegemonic orders. Gayatri Spivak (2004) draws attention to the structuring dependencies of subjective desire on epistemic and material orders when she speaks of the necessary "*uncoercive* rearrangement of desires" (p. 526, emphasis in original). This critical-visionary moment of a pedagogy could be approached

in which the imaginative and affective structures of the subjects come together with the moments that structure them epistemically, thus allowing for rearranging desires by changing epistemologies (Spivak 2012, p. 2).

**Acknowledgements** We kindly thank Ana Rovai for the translation of the text and Soniya Alkis for creating the bibliography for this chapter.

---

## References

- Balzer, N., & Ludewig, K. (2012). Quellen des Subjekts. Judith Butlers Umdeutungen von Handlungsfähigkeit und Widerstand [The subject's sources. Judith Butler's reinterpretations of capacity for action and resistance]. In N. Ricken & N. Balzer (Eds.), *Judith Butler: Pädagogische Lektüren* (pp. 95–125). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Berndt, C., Häcker, T., & Leonhard, T. (Eds.). (2017). *Reflexive Lehrerbildung revisited. Traditionen – Zugänge – Perspektiven* [Reflexive teacher training revisited. Traditions – approaches – perspectives]. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Butler, J. (1995a). Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of “Postmodernism”. In S. Benhabib, J. Butler, D. Cornell & N. Fraser (Eds.), *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (pp. 35–59). London & New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1995b). For a Careful Reading. In S. Benhabib, J. Butler, D. Cornell & N. Fraser (Eds.), *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (pp. 127–145). London & New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997a). *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997b). *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: University Press.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (2nd ed.). London & New York: Routledge. (Original work published 1990)
- Butler, J. (2001). *What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue*. Retrieved May 11, 2020, from <https://transversal.at/transversal/0806/butler/en>.
- Butler, J. (2002). Ein Interview [An interview]. In H. Bublitz (Ed.), *Judith Butler zur Einführung* (pp. 123–133). Hamburg: Junius.
- Butler, J. (2004a). *Undoing Gender*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2004b). *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London & New York: Verso.
- Castro Varela, M. (2002). Interkulturelle Kompetenz – Ein Diskurs in der Krise [Intercultural competence – a discourse in the crisis]. In G. Auernheimer (Ed.), *Interkulturelle Kompetenz und pädagogische Professionalität* (pp. 35–48). Wiesbaden: VS.
- Castro Varela, M. (2013). „Parallelgesellschaften“ und „Nationalmannschaften“ – Überlegungen zur Kritik in der Kritischen Migrationsforschung [‘Parallel Societies’ and ‘National Teams’ – considerations on critique in critical research on migration]. In P. Mecheril, S. Arens, C. Melter, E. Romaner, & O. Thomas-Olalde (Eds.), *Migrationsforschung als Kritik? Konturen einer Forschungsperspektive* (pp. 65–78). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

- Castro Varela, M. (2016). Von der Notwendigkeit eines epistemischen Wandels: Postkoloniale Betrachtungen auf Bildungsprozesse [On the necessity of epistemic change: postcolonial observations of educational processes]. In T. Geier & K. U. Zaborowski (Eds.), *Migration: Auflösungen und Grenzziehungen. Perspektiven einer erziehungswissenschaftlichen Migrationsforschung* (pp. 43–59). Wiesbaden: VS.
- Castro Varela, M., & Dhawan, N. (2015). *Postkoloniale Theorie: Eine kritische Einführung* [Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction] (2nd rev. ed.). Bielefeld: transcript.
- Combe, A. (2015). Schulkultur und Professionstheorie [School culture and profession theory]. In J. Böhme, M. Hummrich & R.-T. Kramer (Eds.), *Schulkultur: Theoriebildung im Diskurs* (pp. 117–135). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Grabau, C., & Rieger-Ladich, M. (2014). Schule als Disziplinierungs- und Machtraum: Eine Foucault-Lektüre [School as a space of discipline and power: A Foucault reading]. In J. Hagedorn (Ed.), *Jugend, Schule und Identität* (pp. 63–79). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Hall, S. (1992). The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power. In S. Hall & B. Gieben (Eds.), *Formations of Modernity* (pp. 275–333). Cambridge: Polity Press, Blackwell Publishers.
- Heinemann, A. M. B. (2019). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Adult Education – Rearranging desires at both ends of the spectrum. *Postcolonial Directions in Education*, 8(1), 36–60.
- Helsper, W. (2008). Ungewissheit und pädagogische Professionalität [Uncertainty and pedagogical professionalism]. In Bielefelder Arbeitsgruppe 8 (Ed.), *Soziale Arbeit in Gesellschaft* (pp. 162–168). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Helsper, W. (2016). Lehrerprofessionalität – der strukturtheoretische Ansatz [Teacher professionalism – the structural theoretical approach]. In M. Rothland (Ed.), *Beruf Lehrer/Lehrerin: Ein Studienbuch* (pp. 103–125). Münster: Waxmann.
- Jaeggi, R. (2016). Was ist Ideologiekritik [What is ideology critique]? In R. Jaeggi & T. Wesche (Eds.), *Was ist Kritik?* (pp. 266–299). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Jaeggi, R., & Wesche, T. (2016). Einleitung: Was ist Kritik? [Introduction: What is critique?]. In R. Jaeggi & T. Wesche (Eds.), *Was ist Kritik?* (pp. 7–23). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Karakaşoğlu, Y., Mecheril, P., Shure, S., & Wojciechowicz, A. A. (2017). *Angekommen in der Migrationsgesellschaft? Grundlagen der Lehrerbildung auf dem Prüfstand* [Arrived in the migration society? Putting foundations of teacher training to the test]. Essen, Germany: Stiftung Mercator. Retrieved May 11, 2020 from <https://www.stiftung-mercator.de/de/publikation/angekommen-in-der-migrationsgesellschaft/>.
- Mecheril, P. (2008). „Kompetenzlosigkeitskompetenz“. Pädagogisches Handeln unter Einwanderungsbedingungen [“Competencelessness competence”. Pedagogical action under immigration conditions]. In G. Auernheimer (Ed.), *Interkulturelle Kompetenz und pädagogische Professionalität* (2nd ed., pp. 15–34). Wiesbaden: VS.
- Messerschmidt, A. (2007). Wessen Wissen? Postkoloniale Perspektiven auf Bildungsprozesse in globalisierten Zonen [Whose knowledge? Postcolonial perspectives on educational processes in globalized zones]. In L. A. Pongratz, R. Reichenbach, & M. Wimmer (Eds.), *Bildung – Wissen – Kompetenz* (pp. 155–168). Bielefeld: Janus Presse.
- Messerschmidt, A. (2009). *Weltbilder und Selbstbilder: Bildungsprozesse im Umgang mit Globalisierung, Migration und Zeitgeschichte* [Worldviews and self-images:



- educational processes in dealing with globalisation, migration and contemporary history]. Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel.
- Messerschmidt, A. (2013). Vorwort [Preface]. In J. Seyss-Inquart (Ed.), *Schule vermitteln. Kritische Beiträge zur Pädagogischen Professionalisierung* (pp. 9–12). Wien: Löcker.
- Messerschmidt, A. (2014). Bildung und Forschung im falschen Leben – Kritik an der Universität [Education and research in the wrong life - a critique to the university]. In H. Bierbaum, C. Bünger, Y. Kehren & U. Klingovsky (Eds.), *Kritik – Bildung – Forschung: Pädagogische Orientierungen in widersprüchlichen Verhältnissen* (pp. 57–73). Opladen: Barbara Budrich.
- Ricken, N. (2019). Bildung und Subjektivierung: Bemerkungen zum Verhältnis zweier Theorieperspektiven [Education and Subjectivation: Remarks on the Relationship between Two Theoretical Perspectives]. In N. Ricken, R. Casale, & C. Thompson (Eds.), *Subjektivierung: Erziehungswissenschaftliche Theorieperspektiven* (pp. 95–119). Weinheim & Basel: Beltz.
- Riegel, C. (2016). *Bildung, Intersektionalität, Othering: Pädagogisches Handeln in widersprüchlichen Verhältnissen* [Education, Intersectionality, Othering: Pedagogical Action in Contradictory Circumstances]. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Rommelspacher, B. (1995). *Dominanzkultur: Texte zu Fremdheit und Macht* [Dominance Culture: Texts on Otherness and Power]. Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag.
- Säid, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Spivak, G. C. (1985). The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives. *History and Theory*, 24(3), 247–272.
- Spivak, G. C. (2004). Righting Wrongs. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103(2–3), 523–581.
- Spivak, G. C. (2008). Foreword. In G. C. Spivak (Ed.), *Other Asias* (pp. 1–13). Boston: Blackwell.
- Spivak, G. C. (2012). Introduction. In G. C. Spivak (Ed.), *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Steinbach, A., Shure, S., & Mecheril, P. (2020). The racial school. Die nationale Schule und ihre Rassekonstruktionen [The national school and its race constructions]. In J. Karakayali (Ed.), *Unterscheiden und Trennen. Die Herstellung von natio-ethno-kultureller Differenz und Segregation in der Schule* (pp. 25–45). Weinheim & Basel: Beltz.
- Villa, P.-I. (2012). *Judith Butler: Eine Einführung* [Judith Butler. An Introduction] (2nd rev. ed.). Frankfurt am Main & New York: Campus.
- Wimmer, M. (1996). Zerfall des Allgemeinen – Wiederkehr des Singulären. Pädagogische Professionalität und der Wert des Wissens [Fall of the general – return of the singular. Educational professionalism and the value of knowledge]. In A. Combe & W. Helsper (Eds.), *Pädagogische Professionalität: Untersuchungen zum Typus pädagogischen Handelns* (pp. 404–448). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.



---

# Hopeful or Hopeless? Teacher Education in Turbulent Times

Vini Lander

---

## Abstract

Education policies and schooling in England continue to sustain if not exacerbate the simultaneous notions of assimilation into the mainstream whilst maintaining the discourse of the “Other” within. Teacher education continues to be part of an education system designed to assimilate Black, Asian and minority-ethnic school students be they newly arrived children of migrant families or born in England. The increasingly diverse pupil population is contrasted with a predominantly White teacher workforce which is mandated to promote fundamental British values, to act as state instruments of surveillance and to advance Eurocentric curricula to perpetuate the dominant discourse of whiteness. So, amidst this turbulent social and political milieu, how can teacher education be cultivated as a place for hope and change? This chapter shows how the whiteness of teacher education can be disrupted to advance student teachers’ understanding of race and racism, and how they can become catalysts for hope and change.

---

## Keywords

Teacher education · Racism · Whiteness · Critical race theory

---

V. Lander (✉)

Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality, Carnegie School of Education,

Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK

e-mail: [vini.lander@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:vini.lander@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

© Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH, part of Springer Nature 2021

L. Heidrich et al. (eds.), *Regimes of Belonging – Schools – Migrations*,

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-29189-1\\_26](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-29189-1_26)

419

## 1 Introduction

The chapter is a reflection on race and racism in teacher education in England. My research seeks to illuminate the deficiencies within teacher preparation with respect to race, racism and education and how best to educate teachers to work within ethnically diverse schools.<sup>1</sup> This chapter sets out how the teacher education landscape in England has changed over the last eight years and how these changes, in turn, are set against the turbulent political and social climate which has beset Britain since the vote to leave the European Union (EU) in June 2016. In many pluralist democracies the liberal expectations of equality are taken for granted. However, in recent times it seems that such societies have become less tolerant of racial diversity. This in turn is reflected within schools as evidenced by the rise in the number of racist incidents since June 2016 (Okolosie 2019). In addition, the war on terror against radical Islamists has elided into the classroom and teachers' professionalism (Department for Education 2011). Teachers have been mandated to promote fundamental British values, a term which has silently and seamlessly slipped from the government's anti-terrorist legislation, Prevent, to the Teachers' Standards (Department for Education 2011). As such this has cast teachers as agents of state securitisation to monitor and police classrooms for youngsters at risk of radicalisation, whereby the gaze of scrutiny has fallen predominantly on Muslim students who have become targets of surveillance.

The theoretical frameworks of critical race theory (CRT) and whiteness are utilised to analyse the recent changes and the persistent inertia to adequately prepare newly qualified teachers to teach in ethnically diverse schools in England. The chapter presents an analysis of teacher education in England as a practice of whiteness (Lander 2014). It concludes with suggestions for improvement to facilitate teacher education which meets the needs of our multicultural classrooms and constitutes progression in terms of race equality in teacher education.

---

<sup>1</sup>Schools in which there are pupils from different ethnic heritage groups such as Indian, Black African, Black Caribbean, Chinese etc.

## 2 Political and Social Climate in Britain

Contrary to popular belief, the so called post-racial era (Dawson and Bobo 2009; Nyak 2006) was no more than a construct to distract academics and society at large from the ongoing work required to progress race equality. Recent events in Britain, such as the rise in racist incidents following the vote to leave the EU (O'Neill 2017, p. 6), the climate of intolerance of the 'Other' (Mompelat 2019), the achievement gaps between students of colour and those from the hegemonic majority at university level (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2018; Universities UK and National Union of Students 2019), the persistent pay gap between people of colour and the majority (Chapman 2019), as well as the rise of racism in schools (Okolosie 2019) evidence the persistent and pervasive presence of racism in our society.

As people from Britain's colonies arrived on its shores in the post-war years, the new immigrants, most of whom were people of colour from the Caribbean, India and Pakistan, came to fill the labour shortage but encountered hostility on their arrival. The signs in boarding house windows stating, 'No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs', signalled their status as unwelcome outsiders whose contributions in the Second World War was short-lived in the memories of the government and its populace. Successive legislation to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of race have supported a climate of tolerance but racism has continued to be a malevolent spectre. This is starkly evident in the treatment of people who migrated to Britain on the ship the *Empire Windrush* from the Caribbean and who found themselves denied British citizenship, some of whom have been deported to the Caribbean because they did not possess documentation to prove their citizenship (Olusoga 2019). This situation arose from the lack of documentary procedures on the part of the authorities. The "hostile environment" (Grierson 2018) created by the Home Office, the UK ministry of internal affairs, against migrants has led to deportations or threat of deportation for the 'Windrush Generation' many of whom arrived in Britain as children with their parents. The far right has been growing in Britain and Europe (BBC 2019). However, it has always been present in Britain in the form of the National Front and Britain First. Recently the far right has gained vicarious legitimacy from the Brexit campaign of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) which based its campaign on ridding the country of immigrants, so it is not surprising to learn that the number of race-hate crimes rose after the EU referendum in 2016 (O'Neill 2017).

### 3 Teacher Education in England

In the last census in Britain in 2011 about 14% of the population identified as Black, Asian or minority ethnic<sup>2</sup> (BAME) (Office for National Statistics 2012). The fastest growing group are people of mixed heritage backgrounds. Just as the population as a whole is changing to become more ethnically diverse, so is the school population in England. 33.1% of primary pupils in state-funded schools are of minority ethnic origins, as are 30.3% of secondary pupils. The ethnic diversity of English classrooms has continued to increase year on year (Department for Education 2018a). 21.2% of primary pupils and 16.6% of secondary pupils are exposed to a language other than English at home (Department for Education 2018a).

Whilst over a third of the secondary and primary pupil population in England is composed of children and young people from BAME backgrounds, the teacher population does not reflect this ethnic diversity. In 2017, the majority of school-teachers in England (whose ethnicity was known) were White British (86.2%), compared with 78.5% of the working age population of England that was White British in the last census in 2011 (Department for Education 2018b). There are very few teachers from other BAME groups: 1.9% of teachers whose ethnicity was known were from the Indian ethnic group; 1.1% Pakistani; 1% from the Black Caribbean group; 3.8% from the Other White ethnic group and 1.6% from the White Irish group; this compares with 3.0%, 5.6% and 1.0% of the working age population of England in 2011, respectively (Department for Education 2018b).

The management of schools in England rests predominantly with those from the hegemonic majority since 93.0% of headteachers (principals) are White British as are 90.0% of deputy or assistant headteachers. Department for Education (2018b) data shows that headteachers were least likely to be from Mixed White and Black African, Bangladeshi, Chinese or from Other Black backgrounds. The BAME population of postgraduate pre-service teachers, which amounts to 18% according to the Department for Education (2018d), is higher than the teacher population. However, this statistic relates to entrants and previous research (Carrington and Tomalin 2000; Cole and Stuart 2005; Jones and Watson 1997; Jones and Maguire 1998; Lander and Zaheerali 2016) shows that BAME student

---

<sup>2</sup>This term is widely recognised and used in Britain to refer to people of colour or visible minorities.

teachers' journeys through their initial teacher education or training programmes is challenging with the result that many do not complete, or take longer to gain, qualified teacher status.

There is clearly a wide ethnic difference between the pupil and teacher populations. This racial disparity<sup>3</sup> is described by Chiu, Sayman, Carrero, Gibbon, Zolkoski, and Lusk (2017) as cultural dissonance, meaning there is a lack of understanding or disconnect between majority White teachers and their ethnically diverse students in schools. BAME children and youngsters are more likely to be taught by White teachers, and they are unlikely to see their ethnicity reflected in the body of people who teach and have power over them. Therefore, it can be assumed that the pedagogies employed by teachers from the hegemonic majority are likely to reflect majority values, knowledge and understandings. Yet how do we prepare our teachers to deal with race and racism in schools and classrooms?

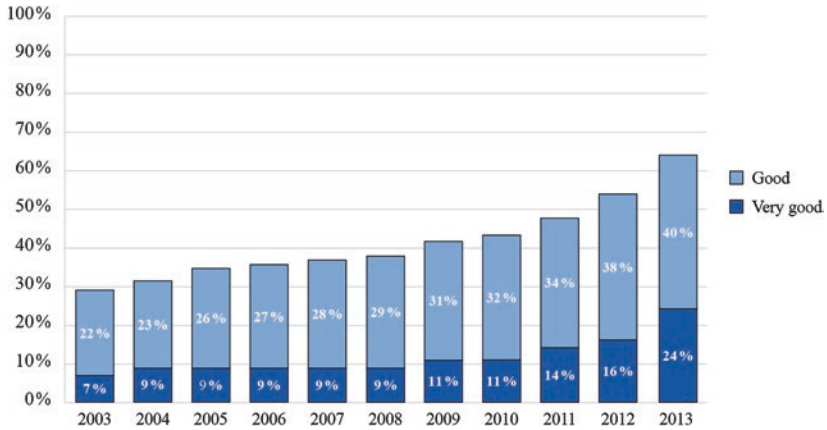
Given the social and political climate, key questions which must be asked are: How do we prepare pre- and in-service teachers in England to deal with racism in schools? How confident are our teachers in relation to topics such as race and can they deploy anti-racist pedagogies to counter the rising threat of racism? There are no specific data related to how well we prepare our future teachers to teach in a multicultural society.<sup>4</sup> However, each year the Department for Education issues a survey for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) to ascertain how well they were prepared by their universities or other non-higher education establishments for the teaching profession. The instrument, the Newly Qualified Teacher Survey is issued to all new teachers and notoriously the response rate is poor but nevertheless much import is placed on the outcomes of the survey. In 2013, the survey consisted of eighteen questions aligned to the Teachers' Standards (Department for Education 2011) designed to ascertain the effectiveness of teacher education programmes. Between 2003 and 2013, there was one question which arguably could be considered to gauge NQTs' preparation to teach within a multicultural society which was 'How good was your training in preparing you to teach pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds?'

Figure 1 shows the slow increase in NQT satisfaction regarding their preparation to teach pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds as good or very good.

---

<sup>3</sup>This term refers to the difference between the BAME pupil population compared to the BAME teacher population in schools. BAME pupils do not see their ethnicity reflected in the teacher workforce.

<sup>4</sup>A multicultural society comprises people from different ethnic groups, cultures, traditions, faiths and linguistic backgrounds living together in communities within a country.



**Fig. 1** Primary NQT Survey: How good was your training in preparing you to teach pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds? *Source* Department for Education 2013, p. 20

Given the low response rates to the NQT survey, approximately 40% of new primary teachers did not feel sufficiently well prepared to teach pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, so entered the profession feeling insufficiently well prepared in this respect. There are no qualitative data on how these teachers fare within ethnically diverse classrooms. We do not know how they manage the learning and achievements of these pupils as new teachers. What stereotypes or deficit notions do teachers operate with when engaging with these pupils? Are these teachers left to sink? Or do they survive equipped only with classroom craft knowledge rather than a deeper understanding about the theory and practice of teaching in a racially diverse society?

From 2005 to 2013, I was seconded to the Teacher Development Agency (TDA)<sup>5</sup>-funded project called Multiverse which produced web-based resources and provided training to help providers of initial teacher education and training to better prepare pre-service teachers to teach in our multi-ethnic society. As the data from the NQT survey indicates, there was growing confidence in new teachers' preparation to teach in ethnically diverse classrooms. In England, it is widely recognised that the NQT survey is a weak indicator to gauge teacher confidence

<sup>5</sup>The TDA was a government quango set up to improve teacher education, recruitment, selection and retention.

since there is a low response rate, but it is the best national indicator we have to date. The growing NQT confidence in teaching pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds was borne out of the resources and training provided by Multiverse. But the arrival of a new coalition government in 2010 led to the withdrawal of funds for Multiverse and the archiving of all its resources.

There have been passing references to race in the previous Teachers' Standards enveloped in the term 'cultural diversity'. In the current Teachers' Standards there is no mention of how new teachers should be prepared to teach in multicultural classrooms and even the phrase cultural diversity has disappeared. The only reference to diversity is in relation to teachers' preparation to teach pupils for whom English is an additional language. Also, in 2014 the NQT survey questions changed from: 'How good was your training in preparing you to teach pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds?' to 'How well did your training, including your school placements, prepare you to teach pupils from *all ethnic* backgrounds?' (Department for Education 2018d, emphasis added). This appears to be a rather odd question since we *all* have ethnicity. Ethnicity appears to be interpreted as a facet or sole characteristic of those racialised as Black, Asian or minority ethnic, in other words people of colour. But if we all possess ethnicity the question is really asking how well we prepare our teachers to teach all children and young people! This is a bizarre paradox. Race seems to have been erased from the Teachers' Standards and the NQT survey. This is a serious omission within two key documents related to teacher training which in the presence of increasing ethnic diversity in our schools appears anomalous.

This change begs the question, has anything changed in the NQT Survey with the re-phrasing of this question? Table 1 illustrates that new teachers still interpret the phrase 'pupils from all ethnic backgrounds' as referring to racialised pupils of colour.

It seems little has changed since 2013. Newly qualified teachers still do not feel well prepared to teach pupils from minority ethnic groups: 51% of new primary teachers reported to be prepared to teach pupils from all ethnic backgrounds in 2017. Yet in 2013, 58% reported their training prepared them well in this aspect. It is imperative that initial teacher education does better. There has been a notable increase in the number of pupils from minority-ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language since 2006 and yet 11 years later just over half of English NQTs feel prepared to teach pupils of all ethnicities. The pupil demographics in themselves demand we better prepare new teachers for multi-ethnic and multilingual classrooms. But this does not appear to be the case.



**Table 1** Percentage of NQTs who felt Initial Teacher Training prepared them well for each aspect of teaching, by training provider

	All NQTs	Primary (A)	Secondary (B)
Promote British values such as democracy, liberty, mutual respect and tolerance	74	72	75
Teach pupils from all ethnic backgrounds	53	51	56
Teach pupils with English as an Additional Language	39	37	41

Source Department for Education 2018c.

## 4 Critical Race Theory and Whiteness

The policy silences related to race within teacher education as evidenced by the lack of references to race or cultural diversity in the standards and the erasure of race from the NQT survey perhaps indicate the post-racial approach to race, ethnicity and racism within the training of new teachers in England. In analysing these silences, I utilise CRT and whiteness; specifically, I deploy the tools of whiteness (Picower 2009) to analyse the present absence (Apple 1999) of race within pre-service teacher education policy, curriculum and practice.

CRT was started by Black scholars and has its origins in legal studies in the United States. It “comes from a long tradition of resistance to the unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources along political, economic, racial and gendered lines in America and across the globe” (Taylor 2009, p. 1). CRT advocates that racism is not just acts of violence, hatred or name calling, but is an ever-present facet of society (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). It is evident through inactions, silent acts of omission, or deletion, acts of exclusion, or the apparent innocence of polite inclusion which fails to acknowledge the racialised experience of people of colour. This is the type of racism which goes unnoticed. It is embedded within policy and everyday practices. It pervades institutions and remains unchallenged. Gillborn (2008) refers to these as the “hidden operations of power” (p. 27) which construct and lead to disadvantage.

CRT represents a movement of activists and academic activists who study the manifestation of power, race and racism. They seek to disrupt and transform the

cycles which perpetuate race inequalities (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). CRT questions the concepts of liberalism and meritocracy which have been insufficient in addressing everyday and structural racism. Indeed, CRT scholars argue these deeply embedded, benign and seemingly unquestioned concepts are hegemonic constructions which serve to maintain the status quo of race inequality. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017) CRT advocates that, “our system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material, for the dominant group” (p. 9). Importantly, CRT highlights the social construction of race, which has no biological basis, but is used as a tool by dominant society to manipulate, to switch it on and off, as it sees fit. Leonardo (2009) asserts, “whites created race in order to divide the world, to carve it up into enlightened and endarkened continents, and to delineate the white subject from the black object of history” (p. 124). Thus, this led to differential racialisation to suit the needs of a dominant society (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). For example, in Britain, workers were needed to restart the economy and industry after the Second World War. The majority of these workers came from Commonwealth countries such as India, Pakistan and the Caribbean. They were people of colour, with different religions, such as Sikh, Christian, Hindu and Muslim. At that point in history they were, perhaps not welcomed with open arms, but they were essential to the country’s economic growth. Now, these people of colour and their descendants, in the case of British Muslims, are cast as extremists and terrorists. Differential racialisation is a tool implemented by the hegemonic majority to fulfil its interests. CRT exposes how any gains in equality for BAME people are only accommodated when such gain converges “with the interest of powerful Whites” (Taylor 2009, p. 5). This phenomenon is referred to by CRT scholars as interest convergence, a concept forged by Derrick Bell, one of the founders of CRT. There are many cited examples of interest convergence in the US. For example, Bell noted that the civil rights gains for Black people were made in the period of the Cold War when the US needed to attract trade from nations in Africa and South Asia, nations populated by Black and Brown people who would be influenced by media images of the oppression of people of colour in the US as they struggled for their civil rights.

CRT postulates that if race is a socially constructed concept promoted by whites to stratify humanity whereby those belonging to the white group are superior, then this has led to racism as a facet of daily life. Taylor (2009), asserts, “the assumptions of White superiority are so ingrained in political, legal, and educational structures that they are almost unrecognizable” (p. 4). White superiority is ever-present and to most White people it is invisible, yet they benefit economically, politically and educationally from its potent power. White supremacy is, however, painfully visible and its effects tangible in the lives of people of colour.

The examination of whiteness enables the exposure of persistent structural and everyday racism and its perpetuation. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) note that the legal definition of whiteness in the US emerged from immigration law as the courts determined who would be afforded the privilege of living in the US. Unsurprisingly, the whites were defined “in opposition to blackness or some other form of otherness, an opposition that also marked the boundary between privilege and its opposite” (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, p. 87). Whiteness is a social, political and cultural construct underpinning structural racism (Garner 2010). It is a racialised discourse established over time to privilege those who are white and to maintain the interests of white groups. This is how it is linked to white people and how they gain from whiteness as a hegemonic discourse in most western societies. It is often silently assumed that Black and minority ethnic people are the deficient and the aberrant ‘Other’ (Said 1978/2003) which is a persistent myth to maintain white privilege and disadvantage people of colour. However, discussions of whiteness shift the gaze from people of colour to the white hegemonic majority. Turning the spotlight to illuminate whiteness and how it facilitates historical and contemporary advantage on those racialised as white causes guilt, discomfort and inevitable hostility against those who dare to expose white racial advantage and privilege. When whiteness is exposed white people seek to defend and protect it.

Picower (2009) describes whiteness as an unthinking and uncritical stance towards race and ethnicity. She delineates the “tools of Whiteness” (Picower 2009, p. 197), or strategies used by those racialised as white to shut down or divert and deflect discussions about whiteness, race or racism. She describes the first as the emotional tools of whiteness manifest in anger, defensiveness, guilt or evident in phrases such as ‘I can’t change anything so why bother’, or exclamations of innocence like ‘I don’t have a racist bone in my body’. The second are the ideological tools which are beliefs which maintain and protect white positions reflected in phrases such as ‘we’re all equal now’ or ‘we just need to be nice’. These ideological tools rely on maintenance of the ethical good self and can draw on colour-blindness as a means to protect the ethical good self from the scrutinising spotlight used to expose the advantages accrued through whiteness. The third, Picower (2009) refers to as the performative tools of whiteness used to protect extant beliefs and practices. Silence is often used as a form of resistance, protection and control when issues related to race or racism arise. These tools of whiteness are thereby used to maintain the power of whiteness and the structures that uphold it.

## 5 Narratives of Whiteness

CRT and whiteness form the key theoretical framework relevant to the study of race and initial teacher education in England. Teacher education is imbued with hidden operations of power. These operations are evident in the lack of ethnic diversity in the teacher and headteacher populations, in the teacher education curriculum where references to race, racism or even cultural diversity are absent and where, most starkly, power operates through teacher educators and the race-absent pedagogical approaches they employ to prepare teachers for ethnically diverse classrooms. As will become clear later in the text, the structures of power are so entrenched in initial teacher education that, “Addressing racism in teacher education is a process of systematic and cultural change rather than a short term ‘fixing’ of a problem” (Sleeter 2017, p. 164). As I have argued previously, the assimilationist approach to policy making in teacher education in England and the de-professionalisation of teachers has resulted in the inadequate preparation of new teachers to teach in schools where one third of pupils have Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds (Lander 2014).

One way in which whiteness is maintained in teacher education is through the predominantly white teacher-educator workforce (Lander and Santoro 2017). In this section I examine data from research undertaken in an education department at a university in southern England. The research consisted of unstructured interviews<sup>6</sup> with twenty-five teacher educators (20 females and five males), who had completed successful careers in schools; all of them were white, and the majority had no experience of teaching in multicultural settings. Their lack of experience working in multi-ethnic schools and environments meant they had given very little thought to race or racism. It was likely they brought their limited experience or perhaps even their racial stereotypes into teacher education and may have had difficulty engaging with, or indeed may have been hostile to, debates on race, ethnicity and racism in education. However, these teacher educators should support student teachers, as Chiu et al. (2017) postulate,

---

<sup>6</sup>After gaining institutional ethical approval, teacher-educators were invited by email to participate in the research. Interviews were arranged at convenient times and venues for the participants. The interviews were one to one, and one and a half hours in length. The participants were asked to reflect on the ITE provision related to race and racism on their courses.

to view the classroom as a microcosm of the world and that each student is a unique representation of diverse experiences, values, abilities, understandings, approaches and beliefs. Pre-service teachers should be given the opportunities to think critically about diversity and culture in a reflective manner, (p.47)

and I would contend to understand the operation and effects of racial power and privilege.

What emerged from the interviews were narratives demonstrating and upholding whiteness. Using Picower's (2009) tools of whiteness to analyse the teacher-educators' narratives revealed the use of the emotional and ideological tools of whiteness. Space does not permit the full range of data to be shared or discussed so a small sample is presented here. When asked how race or ethnic diversity featured in her teaching, one respondent noted, "My modules don't lend themselves to cultural issues". This straightforward denial of ethnic diversity is an element relevant to this tutor's pedagogical approach. The use of this emotional tool of whiteness absolved her from engaging with the issue of racial and ethnic diversity within her subject area thereby not only maintaining its extant whiteness, but consciously avoiding the integration of race or cultural diversity within the subject. Therefore, I would argue, providing a narrow and impoverished curriculum devoid of other cultural perspectives which constituted a poor curriculum role model for student teachers. When another respondent was asked about the inequality of outcomes for children from certain BAME groups, she said that she, "didn't have time to fit everything in" but gives time "to do EAL"<sup>7</sup>. This was another example of the use of the emotional tools of whiteness. It was not an outright denial but a deflection, a move designed to provide a crumb of information which may serve to, as they say, "cover her back" in relation to teaching about diversity, but it was also a means to avoid further conversation about this educator's responsibility with respect to preparing student teachers for ethnically diverse classrooms. The mere fact that she admits to covering EAL indicates a "box-ticking" approach to the subject of racial and ethnic diversity which is conceived neatly as related to children for whom English is an additional language, not all of whom will be from visible ethnic minority groups. In reality, some of these children may well be from white Eastern European backgrounds yet this tutor associates the term EAL with children of colour. This misconception may be transmitted through her teaching to student teachers.

---

<sup>7</sup>English as an additional language.

It is not surprising that ex-teachers who have become teacher educators demonstrated a liberal, caring and measured approach to race in order to preserve the image of the teacher as a good and ethical being. In doing so they revealed how they deployed the ideological tools of whiteness to maintain white innocence and niceness. For example, one teacher educator said, “our students are nice people” and another noted, “we don’t want to add to our student teachers’ layer of worry, they are good people”. In using these semantic constructions both teacher educators were indicating that teaching student teachers about race and racism would be worrisome for them on top of all the other aspects of teaching with which they had to contend, as well as implying that race and racism were not important aspects of the students’ preparation to teach. When discussing passive racism with one respondent and how inaction with respect to racism could be construed as racist (the interviewer meant it was insufficient to merely be non-racist), she exclaimed, “That’s harsh! We don’t do that [...] we are nice [people]”. The invocation of teachers and teacher educators as “nice” was a key ideological tool of whiteness used frequently within the interviews. The teacher-educators used niceness to uphold their status and that of student teachers as ethical, caring and good beings who could never be associated with such an ugly and aberrant process as racism. No doubt, their conception of racism as the domain of far-right racist thugs jarred with their conception of themselves as nice, middle-class liberals who considered themselves as non-racists. From their white perspective they failed to comprehend the omnipresence of racism in everyday life, a fact painfully obvious to BAME teacher-educators, teachers and children. These white teacher-educators were complicit in the structural racism within teacher education and their failure to be actively anti-racist through the resources and pedagogies they employed simply contributed to perpetuating whiteness and maintaining structural racism in teacher education, thus maintaining the status quo of white supremacy (Gillborn 2008; Lander 2014).

Another tutor was “utterly, utterly shocked” that students on another course had not wanted to be taught by a Black tutor. This expression of shock can be analysed as an ideological tool of whiteness. This was another example of how this teacher-educator assumed that such an overt act of racism on the part of the students distanced her from this aberrant act and most importantly re-inscribed her liberal niceness and its associated and assumed non-racist status. However, this utterance of shock exposes her whiteness and complicity in maintaining racist structures within teacher education, such as a predominantly white curriculum, which insufficiently prepares student teachers for ethnic diversity. Overall these utterances reveal how the processes of racialisation and socialisation have served to inculcate whiteness in such a way that it seems innate. Such is the character

of whiteness it is seen as a natural and ‘normal’ way of being. Thus, the power which sustains whiteness lurks unseen behind the curtain of normality and the tools of whiteness are deployed to ensure the curtain remains firmly closed. This is why teacher education is a practice of whiteness (Lander 2014).

---

## 6 Implications and the Way Forward

If the small selection of views discussed above are prevalent in one institution, they are likely to be reflected in others. Then student teachers’ understanding of how race and ethnicity affect pupils’ learning and achievement, or any racial stereotypes or myths which pre-service teachers hold are going to go unchallenged and not developed beyond their everyday understandings by the educators who teach them. These tutors are not agents of change; they merely serve to consolidate and perpetuate the dominant discourse of whiteness which is often reinforced on school practicums. Thus the status quo is maintained through policy silences and the lack of opportunities to talk about and develop student teachers’ understanding about race, ethnicity and racism. What then are the implications of this lack of preparation to teach in our multicultural classrooms for student teachers? As illustrated above in the NQT survey results, they feel under-prepared for the ethnic and cultural diversity of our classrooms. Racism is embedded in teacher education through the policy gaps and silences related to preparing teachers to teach in multicultural schools, through a predominantly white curriculum and through the tools of whiteness deployed to ensure there is a lack of preparation within pre-service teacher education to serve the needs of our multicultural society. The pervasive and persuasive hegemonic nature of whiteness remains centred and unshaken. It is dutifully replicated through pre-service teacher education and thus white advantage succeeds.

However, if there are agents of change within initial teacher education willing and able to instigate change and shake some aspects of whiteness, then some hope and change is possible. As Sleeter (2017) contends, instigating any change in teacher education with respect to overcoming whiteness will require massive cultural change. I was able to do this on a small scale within one institution through introducing a citizenship specialism which developed student teachers’ understanding with respect to equality and diversity and deepened their understanding of race and racism in education. In addition, as a manager in initial teacher education, I possessed the agency and position to mandate equality and diversity education for all student teachers across the three years of their initial teacher education programme. These programme modifications developed some

students' commitment to race equality; they acted as catalysts and agents of change in their student groups and on practicum. They developed confidence in engaging with their peers and tutors on matters related to race and racism. One student was even able to intervene in a racist incident she witnessed at a bus stop. In an email to me she said, "Please be encouraged, you are making a big difference" (personal communication, June 22nd 2013). Teacher-educators with genuine commitment, knowledge and courage can carve out a space in teacher education to offer hope and provide tools for change in turbulent times to better equip our newly qualified teachers to be the hopeful agents of change in multicultural classrooms.

---

## References

- Apple, M. (1999). The absent presence of race in educational reform. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 2(1), 9–16.
- BBC. (2019, February 18). *Islamophobia behind far-right rise in UK report says*. Retrieved June 30, 2019, from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47280082>
- Carrington, B., & Tomalin, R. (2000). Towards a More Inclusive Profession: Recruitment and Ethnicity. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 23(2), 139–157.
- Chapman, B. (2019, July 9). Ethnicity pay gap: lowest earning groups paid a fifth less than white British workers. *The Independent*. Retrieved July 22, 2019, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/uk-ethnicity-pay-gap-figures-british-chinese-indian-workers-a8997556.html>
- Chiu, C. L., Sayman, D., Carrero, K. M., Gibbon, T., Zolkoski, S. M., & Lusk, M. E. (2017). Developing Culturally Competent Preservice Teachers. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 19(1), 47–52.
- Cole, M., & Stuart, J. S. (2005). 'Do you ride on elephants' and 'never tell them you're German': the experiences of British Asian and black, and overseas student teachers in South-East England. *British Educational Research Journal*, 31(3), 349–366.
- Dawson, M. C., & Bobo, L. D. (2009). One Year Later and the Myth of a Post-racial Society. Editorial Introduction. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 6(2), 247–249.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical Race Theory. An Introduction*. New York: University Press.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical Race Theory. An Introduction*. New York: University Press.
- Department for Education (2011, July). *Teachers' Standards. Guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies* (DfE Publication No. 00066–2011). London, United Kingdom. Retrieved May 31, 2019, from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/665520/Teachers\\_\\_Standards.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/665520/Teachers__Standards.pdf)
- Department for Education (2013, November). *Newly Qualified Teachers: Annual Survey 2013. Sector Level summary* (DfE Research Report No. RR306). London, United



- Kingdom. Retrieved May 19, 2020, from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/255659/DFE-RR306.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/255659/DFE-RR306.pdf)
- Department for Education (2018a, June). *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2018* (DfE Statistical Publication). London, United Kingdom. Retrieved May 22, 2019, from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2018>
- Department for Education (2018b, July). *The School Workforce* (DfE Statistical Publication). London. Retrieved, May 22, 2019, from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/811622/SWFC\\_MainText.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811622/SWFC_MainText.pdf)
- Department for Education (2018c, September). *Newly Qualified Teachers: Annual Survey 2017* (DfE Research Report No. RR834). Retrieved May 31, 2019, from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/738037/NQT\\_2017\\_survey.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/738037/NQT_2017_survey.pdf)
- Department for Education (2018d, November). *Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Census for the academic year 2018 to 2019, England* (DfE Statistical Publication). London. Retrieved May 22, 2019, from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/759716/ITT\\_Census\\_2018\\_to\\_2019\\_main\\_text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/759716/ITT_Census_2018_to_2019_main_text.pdf)
- Department for Education (2019, June). *The School Workforce* (DfE Statistical Publication). London. Retrieved, May 22, 2020, from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/811622/SWFC\\_MainText.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811622/SWFC_MainText.pdf)
- Garner, S. (2010). *Racisms. An Introduction*. London: SAGE.
- Gillborn, D. (2008). *Racism and Education. Coincidence or Conspiracy?* Abingdon: Routledge.
- Grierson, J. (2018, August 27). Hostile environment: anatomy of policy disaster. *The Guardian*. Retrieved June 14, 2019, from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/aug/27/hostile-environment-anatomy-of-a-policy-disaster>
- Higher Education Funding Council for England (2018, March). *Differences in Student Outcomes. The effect of student characteristics* (HEFCE Report 2018/05). Retrieved June 14, 2019, from <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180405115303/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2018/201805/>
- Jones, C., & Maguire, M. (1998). Needed and Wanted? The school experiences of some minority ethnic trainee teachers in the UK. *European Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 9(1), 79–91.
- Jones, C., Maguire, M., & Watson, B. (1997). The School Experience of Some Minority Ethnic Students in London Schools during Initial Teacher Training. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, 23(2), 131–144.
- Lander, V. (2014). Initial Teacher Education: The Practice of Whiteness. In R. Race and V. Lander (Eds.), *Advancing Race and Ethnicity in Education* (pp. 93–110). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lander, V., & Santoro, N. (2017). Invisible and hypervisible academics: the experiences of Black and minority ethnic teacher educators. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 22(8), 1008–1021.
- Lander, V., & Zaheerali, A. S. (2016). One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: The Continuing Saga of Minority Ethnic Teacher Recruitment and Retention in England. In C. Schmidt & J. Schneider (Eds.), *Diversifying the Teaching Force in Transnational Contexts: Critical Perspectives* (pp. 29–34). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

- Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. New York: Routledge.
- Mompelat, L. (2019, March 21). *Connecting the dots: structural racism in 2019*. Runnymede. Retrieved June 10, 2019, from <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/connecting-the-dots-structural-racism-in-2019-and-beyond>
- Nyak, A. (2006). After race: Ethnography, race and post-race theory. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29(3), 411–430.
- Office for National Statistics. (2012, December 11). *Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales: 2011*. Retrieved June 20, 2019, from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11>
- Okolosie, L. (2019, May 31). Racial Abuse in the Playground? That's just England in 2019. *The Guardian*. Retrieved June 3, 2019, from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/31/racial-abuse-playground-schools-racism>
- Olusoga, D. (2019, June 16). Windrush: archived documents show the long betrayal *The Guardian*. Retrieved July 1, 2019, from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/jun/16/windrush-scandal-the-long-betrayal-archived-documents-david-olusoga>
- O'Neill, A. (2017, October 17). *Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2016/17. Statistical Bulletin 17/17*. London, United Kingdom: Home Office. Retrieved June 25, 2019, from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/652136/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652136/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717.pdf)
- Picower, B. (2009). The unexamined Whiteness of teaching: how White teachers maintain and enact dominant racial ideologies. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 12(2), 197–215.
- Said, E. (2003). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin. (Original work published 1978)
- Sleeter, C. (2017). Critical Race Theory and the Whiteness of Teacher Education. *Urban Education*, 52(2), 155–169.
- Taylor, E. (2009). The Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education: An Introduction. In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn, & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.), *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* (pp. 1–13). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Universities UK & National Union of Students. (2019, May 2). *Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: #Closingthegap* (Report). London. Retrieved Mai 19, 2020, from <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf>



---

# Teacher Education for Social Justice in the Canadian Context

Clea Schmidt

---

## Abstract

Social justice priorities are seen as some of the most compelling issues presently facing teacher education in transnational contexts. Yet such efforts are not without controversy and challenges even within relatively progressive policy environments such as Canada. Presently, educational priorities emphasizing anti-racist, decolonizing, and transnational perspectives are being redefined in new ways in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the momentum around the Black Lives Matter movement. I argue in this chapter that teacher education needs to move beyond reflective practice and incorporate more critical approaches if social justice is to be robustly enacted in schools and society. Drawing on the decolonial theory of Brazilian scholar Santos, I use his concept of abyssal thinking to analyze prevalent racist stereotypes held by some teacher candidates in a Manitoba teacher education program, and advocate for critical discourse analysis as a promising methodology for challenging and overcoming such stereotypes.

---

## Keywords

Teacher education · Transnationalism · Social justice · Critical approaches · Discourse analysis · Diversity

---

C. Schmidt (✉)  
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada  
e-mail: [Clea.Schmidt@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Clea.Schmidt@umanitoba.ca)

## 1 The Canadian Context

Canada is characterized by diverse kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) school demographics that include high numbers of migrant students among other diverse learner groups. In terms of immigration, 22% of Canada's population of 36 million were first generation immigrants in 2016, with projections that within 15 years this number is likely to be closer to 30% (LaRochelle-Côté and Uppal 2020). This context of robust cultural and linguistic diversity intersects with other complex facets of identity, including race and socioeconomic status, and sociopolitical influences such as activism in response to cases of police brutality among other injustices.

The high numbers of migrant learners coincide with provincial policies and federal reconciliation mandates that enshrine inclusive educational programming and address Canada's legacy of colonial genocide in its educational, social, and political interactions with First Nations peoples (for example, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 2019; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015). The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (n.d.) provides a description of the residential school system which underpins the need for reconciliation:

For over 150 years, residential schools operated in Canada. Over 150,000 children [mainly Indigenous] attended these schools. Many never returned. Often underfunded and overcrowded, these schools were used as a tool of assimilation by the Canadian state and churches. Thousands of students suffered physical and sexual abuse. All suffered from loneliness and a longing to be home with their families. The damages inflicted by these schools continue to this day. In 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada began a multi-year process to listen to Survivors, communities and others affected by the Residential School system [...]. to create a place of learning and dialogue where the truths of their experiences were honoured and kept safe for future generations. They wanted their families, communities and all of Canada to learn from these hard lessons so they would not be repeated. They wanted to share the wisdom of the Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers on how to create just and peaceful relationships amongst diverse peoples. (The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, (n.d., right column))

Therefore, teacher education that reflects social justice priorities is seen as one of the most compelling issues presently facing Canadian teacher education (Schmidt and Gagné 2016). Yet such efforts are not without controversy and challenges even within a relatively progressive policy environment in which inclusive education, student well-being, parent engagement, and anti-racism all feature explicitly in educational policy mandates and teacher education program content

across Canada (Campbell 2020). In the context of Manitoba, for example, to prepare teachers to respond to curriculum mandates in these areas, the University of Manitoba's Bachelor of Education offers courses on inclusive special education, student well-being and well-becoming, and contested spaces (featuring anti-discrimination and the needs of marginalized communities).

Presently, educational priorities emphasizing anti-discriminatory, decolonizing, and global perspectives are being redefined in new ways in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately harmed low-income communities, and the momentum around the Black Lives Matter movement generated by recent and egregious acts of police brutality against people of colour (Collie 2020). An unprecedented systemic response is finally seeing the ubiquitous and unjust killing of black people by police as a crime. The impact of these two major events on all levels of society is significant, and parallel efforts to argue for a guaranteed basic income (Collie 2020) and to challenge racism in the school system are accelerating and deepening (the editors of *Rethinking Schools*, 2019–2020).

---

## 2 A Note About Author Positioning

Teacher education that can be considered socially just in terms of challenging racist, discriminatory, and colonial educational practices is not only about the 'what' and the 'how' of teacher education theory, pedagogy, programming, and policy, but also about the 'who'. Mirroring the imbalance between the kindergarten to grade 12 teaching force and school student populations, a significant mismatch still exists between school communities and teacher candidates, teachers and teacher educators of migrant and Indigenous backgrounds (Schmidt and Schneider 2016), and I and my work as a white, Canadian-born researcher with a settler (that is, non-Indigenous) heritage are implicated in that imbalance.

In my 20-year career, I have striven to ensure that principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion underpin teacher education in my university. I have engaged in-depth with the research literature on teacher education in transnational contexts, recognizing that mobility within and across contexts is characterized by politicization (Gagné et al. 2017). I have partnered with organizations serving marginalized communities to enact critical programming and research, and designed, implemented, and researched a range of equity-based educational initiatives. These include efforts around diversifying the Manitoban teacher workforce, facilitating the safety and success of LGBTQ+ teachers in transnational settings, and providing professional development to challenge gender-based

violence in the academy. I have learned that part of working toward social justice means that I, along with my scholarship and professional practices, am constantly a work in progress, with the ever-present need to regularly revisit and challenge my own position, practices, and priorities.

---

### 3 Research Question and Methodology

I have learned in the course of my career that teachers' critical engagement with educational discourses is neither automatic nor guaranteed. It is necessary to prepare teacher candidates<sup>1</sup> to adopt a lens that challenges commonplace stereotypical discourses about migrants, such as problematic assumptions around migrants' educational backgrounds, motives for coming to Canada, and engagement with the school system. I acknowledge that teacher candidates themselves comprise a diverse group, and while not all teacher candidates in the program in which I work are white, monolingual, and Canadian-born, most are.

Starting with analyzing teacher candidates' own texts has been crucial, and subsequently informs how they engage with policies, media, and other social discourses. I take the stance that such critical analytical approaches are essential for teachers to identify inequities in mainstream educational contexts in which power dynamics are often deliberately erased (Rogers 2011). Teachers can then develop robust agendas for action that recognize and enact the vital role these play in systemic change.

In the remainder of this paper I address the following guiding question: In light of the Canadian context and momentum generated by current social, political, and educational activism, what are some of the key considerations for teacher education theory and practices that advance social justice in comprehensive and robust ways? Relevant literature, rather than presented in a stand-alone literature review, is interwoven throughout the chapter.

I analyze an example from my professional practice to consider my guiding question, arguing for an approach to teacher education that prepares teachers to engage in critical discourse analysis (Cots 2006; Pacini-Ketchabaw and de Almeida 2006; Souto-Manning 2006), which is also my approach here. Critical

---

<sup>1</sup>A teacher candidate is defined as a pre-service teacher or teacher in training, preparing to work in the kindergarten to grade 12 education system. In my university, this means completing a two-year Bachelor of Education degree after first completing a Bachelor's degree in Arts, Sciences, Music, or other discipline.

discourse analysis addresses both “the linguistic aspects of discourse, [...] mak[ing] use of close analysis of texts, [...] but in addition consider[s] broader issues such as the social context of discourse, the role of discourse in social practices, and the function of specific texts” (Bloor and Bloor 2013, p. 2). Teachers need to be supported within teacher education programs to re-search – that is, to look again – so they are able to formulate sound questions and develop and enact appropriate methodologies to challenge inequities in the education system (Rymes et al. 2008). This holds true not only when teacher candidates encounter racism and injustice from other sources, but also when the discourses in need of closer interrogation and more critical analysis are voiced by teacher candidates themselves. I have found it particularly useful to aid teacher candidates in developing the approach of critical discourse analysis, beginning with their own texts, so that as needed they may move beyond their traditional roles as mere consumers of policy and media discourses, recognize the discriminatory nature of the ways they sometimes characterize migrant learners and families, and disrupt the status quo in future.

---

## 4 Theoretical Lens

Santos’ (2007) concept of abyssal thinking informs this research. Abyssal thinking is defined as follows:

Modern Western thinking is an abyssal thinking [...] invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of ‘this side of the line’ and the realm of ‘the other side of the line’. The division is such that ‘the other side of the line’ vanishes as reality, becomes non-existent, and is indeed produced as non-existent [...] Whatever is produced as non-existent is radically excluded because it lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of inclusion considers to be its other. (Santos 2007, p. 48)

Abyssal thinking helps explain why in some instances predominantly white, middle-class, monolingual, Canadian-born teacher candidates represent the experiences of migrant learners and their families in such problematic ways that serve to render those experiences foreign, invisible, and invalid. For example, it is not uncommon for stereotypes and overt racism to prevail in the language some teacher candidates use to describe migrants and students of colour (Solomon et al. 2005). Over my 20 years of teacher education practice, I have witnessed anti-immigrant sentiments play out in the teacher education classroom and heard numerous derogatory characterizations of migrant learners and teachers (Schmidt 2010b).

## 5 Example from My Teacher Education Practice

I regularly teach pre-service teachers on topics related to educational supports for migrant learners and families, multilingual development, and how to integrate language and content area instruction across curricular disciplines. In one assignment I often use with teacher candidates, I ask them to engage with multimedia accounts of the lived experiences of refugee and immigrant learners and families, in order to extrapolate insights for their professional practice including how they can best honour different backgrounds and realities and most appropriately meet the needs of the students and families they serve (Schmidt and Gagné 2016).

However, in the first term of piloting this assignment it became clear that, despite the careful selection of a range of sources intended to complicate assumptions about migrant youth and families, the evidence presented was not always penetrating the abyss (Santos 2007). For example, despite viewing videos in which young Syrian refugees spoke proudly of their home country and their desire to return as soon as possible to aid in its rebuilding, in some instances the problematic belief prevailed among teacher candidates that all refugees are or should be grateful to be in Canada because they had been saved from the inferior conditions of their home countries, to which they surely would never want to return.

In response to this and other problematic views that were being articulated, running contrary to the purpose of the assignment and indeed having entirely unintended harmful outcomes, I developed a teaching resource (Table 1) that reflected some of the most common stereotypes evident in the discourse of many teacher candidates across different groups and courses I was working with.<sup>2</sup> I used composites of these discourses to a) clearly identify the problematic discourse, which served to raise awareness of it and allow me to concretely stipulate for teacher candidates why the discourse is a problem, and b) propose alternate ways of conveying the salient messages in the discourse without resorting to discriminatory stereotypes. Use of the chart with teacher candidates is accompanied with instruction, support, and practice in conducting critical discourse analysis (Cots 2006; Pacini-Ketchabaw and de Almeida 2006; Souto-Manning 2006). After teacher candidates gain confidence and experience applying this

---

<sup>2</sup>A common teaching load for teacher educators at my institution is five half-courses per year, with approximately 35 students per course section.



methodology to their own texts, I often use critical discourse analysis as an approach to other teacher education assignments including curriculum and policy analysis.

## 6 Analysis and Discussion

In Table 1, the left-hand column represents composite examples of the types of deficit discourses or abyssal thinking generated by teacher candidates. In other words, I did not directly quote or single out any one person's comments; rather, after repeatedly encountering similar comments reflected in numerous teacher candidates' written discourses, I produced a composite, fictionalized example that incorporated the stereotype. The right-hand column is my own alternative discourse that reframes the comments from the first column in a way that is more

**Table 1** Sample stereotypes and alternative discourses

<p><b>From judgment...</b></p> <p>Namrita's parents only have a grade 6 level of education. Thus, the home doesn't provide a supportive environment for her learning.</p>	<p><b>To validation...</b></p> <p>Though Namrita's parents didn't have the opportunity to go to school beyond the grade 6 level, they are very invested in her success in Manitoba schools. They take turns working shifts at nearby factory to ensure Namrita has a good place to live and the company of one parent at all times so she feels safe and confident with her schoolwork.</p>
<p><b>From deficit...</b></p> <p>Lihui can't speak any English. She doesn't share when we do group carpet time, and doesn't pay attention during the storybook reading.</p>	<p><b>To difference...</b></p> <p>Lihui is at the beginning stage of EAL (English as an Additional Language) learning and is showing signs of being in a silent period. I partner her with a Chinese-speaking peer during carpet time where she enthusiastically talks in her first language and I pre-teach the vocabulary in the storybook for the day.</p>
<p><b>From recrimination...</b></p> <p>In spite of explaining the rules of the class game to José, he ignored them and did his own thing instead the whole time the class was playing. Our school has a strict policy around safety, so José will have to sit out the next time if he doesn't follow along.</p>	<p><b>To reorientation...</b></p> <p>José did not appear to be following the rules of the game. I checked with him and realized he didn't understand and that having some key visuals alongside the oral explanation would be helpful. I'm going to try using these the next time we play a game; put up the visuals as a reminder to all students.</p>
<p><b>From certainty...</b></p> <p>Byron doesn't work well with girls. The culture he comes from doesn't respect gender equality.</p>	<p><b>To questioning...</b></p> <p>There appear to be some challenges for Byron in interacting in mixed gender groups. I wonder what his experiences have been?</p>

appropriate, inclusive, and supportive. Moreover, the alternate discourses provided suggest pedagogical strategies and adopt a questioning stance in instances where certainty cannot be assumed and where more information is needed.

I apply critical discourse analysis in my work with teacher candidates by first sharing with them the left-hand column. We critically analyze the text to identify words, phrases, meanings, and connotations (explicit or implicit) that may reflect a deficit or negative discourse about students, their parents, or newcomers in general. I then ask students to work in small groups to discuss and propose alternative wordings which they then share with the wider class. As an additional resource, or in the event that teacher candidates struggle with how they might appropriately reword the sample text, I then share my own examples of the reworded text.

In the first example, 'From judgment to validation', the stereotype involves the often cited yet erroneous belief that migrant parents of lower educational status and/or income tend to be ill-equipped to support their children's education. The work of scholars and advocates such as Carl James have clearly refuted the idea that it is in any way legitimate for teachers or schools to frame parents' contributions in such inaccurate and derogatory ways (James 2012). Rather, actors in the education system must recognize parents' efforts in supporting their children, even if the support is provided in ways typically rendered invisible by abyssal thinking. Homework help and attending school events are by no means the only form of parental engagement possible (Schmidt 2010a), even though traditionally they have been the only ones valued by mainstream education.

The second and third examples, 'From deficit to difference' and 'From recrimination to reorientation', reflect the problematic assumption that students learning the language of instruction – that is, multilingual, multicompetent language users as first defined by Cook (1992) – are 'problems' on account of their inability to be immediate and fully proficient participants in all classroom routines conducted in the dominant language. Such attitudes again reflect abyssal thinking: that is, what is on "this side of the line" (Santos 2007, p. 48) is the only viewpoint and approach that matters, with any deviation from expectations to be met with derision and the threat of exclusion and punishment. Moreover, this discriminatory stance ignores translanguaging as a crucial dimension of multilingual students' linguistic repertoires (Muller et al. 2019).

The fourth example, 'From certainty to questioning', reflects a particularly nebulous yet commonplace stereotype, that ironically positions learners from particular migrant backgrounds as less tolerant and progressive than Canadian-born people, assuming that any time a male student from that background has a difficult or negative interaction with a female peer or teacher, the source must be gender bias. As Todorova (2018) points out, gendered violence needs to be carefully

analyzed within frames of reference that span the local or vertical and the global or horizontal, to be accurately understood as complex and rooted in power. Simplistically framing Canada as a zone free of gender violence whose violations are introduced solely by migrants is inaccurate and discriminatory.

---

## 7 Recommendations and Conclusion

To challenge highly problematic stereotypes in teacher education, such as those reflected in the discourse samples above, calls for direct confrontation and action. As Solomon et al. (2005) suggest, and as my own professional practice amply supports (Gagné et al. 2017), anti-racist and inclusive educational policies alone do not imbue teacher candidates with a critical pedagogy. In fact, superficial reflection on anti-discrimination can serve to reinforce existing notions of privilege, for example when educators respond to anti-racist movements such as Black Lives Matter with the declaration that ‘All Lives Matter’, thereby ignoring the legacy of imbalance and injustice and the everyday experiences of people of colour. Corresponding initiatives such as Black Lives Matter in Schools (the editors of *Rethinking Schools*, 2019–2020) offer support for the idea that educators at all levels need to move beyond reflective practices and more deliberately engage in tangible activism and action. On the basis of my analysis of discourses prevalent among teacher candidates, I therefore advocate for the following outcomes.

Teacher education should explicitly challenge deficit discourses related to migrant learners and families, and other learners from marginalized backgrounds including students of colour. It is crucial to recognize and support the fact that the sacrifices many migrant parents make to ensure a safe and comfortable life for their children *is* a form of educational support, beyond conventional expectations around homework help and attending school events. Likewise, migrant learners who engage in potentially more limited or different ways should not be threatened or punished for their modes and levels of engagement. The challenges that accompany learning how to function in a new language in a novel system and environment should not be conflated with thwarting the teacher’s agenda.

Educators should be explicitly engaged in positioning themselves, such as I did at the outset of this paper. Without acknowledging personal histories or recognizing individual stances and the lenses and experiences that inform practices, educators have little hope of understanding the histories, stances, and viewpoints of learners and parents.

Finally, given the pervasive and ingrained nature of abyssal thinking (Santos 2007), educators need to be shown how their discourses can be problematic and

explicitly taught and supported to suspend judgment and develop alternate ways of representing migrant learners and families. Critical discourse analysis offers a promising methodology for facilitating both awareness and transformation in this respect.

---

## References

- Bloor, M., & Bloor, T. (2013). *The practice of critical discourse analysis: An introduction*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Campbell, C. (2020). Educational equity in Canada: the case of Ontario's strategies and actions to advance excellence and equity for students. *School Leadership & Management*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1709165>
- Collie, M. (2020, June 21). Racialized groups will 'lose' in the post-pandemic economy. Experts aren't surprised. *Global News*. Retrieved July, 22, 2020, from <https://globalnews.ca/news/7077024/coronavirus-economic-recovery/>
- Cook, V. (1992). Evidence for multicompetence. *Language Learning*, 42(4), 557–591.
- Cots, J. M. (2006). Teaching “with an attitude”: Critical discourse analysis in EFL teaching. *ELT Journal*, 60(4), 336–345.
- Gagné, A., Schmidt, C., & Markus, P. (2017). Teaching about refugees: developing culturally responsive educators in contexts of politicised transnationalism. *Intercultural Education*, 28(5), 429–446. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2017.1336409>
- James, C. E. (2012). Students “at risk”: Stereotypes and the schooling of black boys. *Urban Education*, 47(2), 464–494.
- LaRochelle-Côté, S., & Uppal, S. (2020, May 1). *The social and economic concerns of immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic* (Statistical Publication No. 45280001). Statistics Canada: Ottawa, Canada. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00012-eng.pdf>
- Muller, S., Schmidt, C., & Weber, J.-J. (2019). Perceived legitimacy and translanguaging: Exploring the interconnectedness of pedagogy and policy. In K. Horner & J. Dailey-O’Cain (Eds.), *Multilingualism and (Im)mobilities: Language, Power, Agency*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from <http://nctr.ca/about.php>
- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. (n.d.). *Our mandate*. Retrieved July 22, 2020 from <https://nctr.ca/about/about-the-nctr/our-mandate/>
- National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). *Reclaiming power and place: The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (Report, Vol. 1a & 1b). Retrieved July 22, 2020, from <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>
- Pacini-Ketchabaw, V., & de Almeida, A. A. (2006). Language discourses and ideologies at the heart of early childhood education. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 9(3), 310–341
- Rogers, R. (2011). *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

- Rymes, B., Cahnmann-Taylor, M., & Souto-Manning, M. (2008). Bilingual teachers' performances of power and conflict. *Teaching Education, 19*(2), 93–107.
- Santos, B. de Sousa (2007, June 29). Beyond abyssal thinking. From global lines to ecologies of knowledges. *Revista Critica de Ciencias Sociais 80*. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from <https://www.eurozine.com/beyond-abyssal-thinking/>
- Schmidt, C. (2010a). Multilingualism in Canadian schools: Current issues and perspectives. In U. Neumann & J. Schneider (Eds.), *Schools with migrant students: Viewing diversity as a resource*. Münster: Waxmann.
- Schmidt, C. (2010b). Systemic discrimination as a barrier for immigrant teachers. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education, 4*(4), 235–252.
- Schmidt, C., & Gagné, A. (2016). En(gauging) criticality in teacher education: Assignments with a critical edge. In M. Hirschkorn (Ed.), *What should Canada's teachers know? Teacher Capacities: Knowledge, Belief, and Skills* (pp. 515–535). Ottawa: Canadian Association for Teacher Education.
- Schmidt, C., & Schneider, J. (Eds.). (2016). *Diversifying the teaching force in transnational contexts: Critical perspectives*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Solomon, R. P., Portelli, J. P., Daniel, B., & Campbell, A. (2005). The discourse of denial: How white teacher candidates construct race, racism and 'white privilege'. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 8*(2), 147–169.
- Souto-Manning, M. (2006). A critical look at bilingualism discourse in public schools: Autoethnographic reflections of a vulnerable observer. *Bilingual Research Journal, 30*(2), 559–577.
- The editors of Rethinking Schools. (2019–2020). Black lives matter at school: From the week of action to year-round anti-racist pedagogy and protest. *Rethinking Schools, 34*(2). Retrieved July 22, 2020, from <https://rethinkingschools.org/articles/black-lives-matter-at-school-from-the-week-of-action-to-year-round-anti-racist-pedagogy-and-protest/>
- Todorova, M. S. (2018). Studying sexual and gendered violence prevention in higher education: Local/vertical, global/horizontal, and power-based frames. *Canadian Woman Studies, 32*(1, 2), 6–19.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Calls to action* (Report). Winnipeg. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from [http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

---

## Editors and Contributors

### About the Editors

**Lydia Heidrich** is a research assistant and PhD candidate in the Unit for Intercultural Education, Faculty of Pedagogy and Educational Sciences at the University of Bremen, Germany. Her work and research focuses on school and migration, discrimination, teacher professionalization, theories of social practices, and ethnography, as well as on science and research management.

Contact: [heidrich@uni-bremen.de](mailto:heidrich@uni-bremen.de)

**Dr. Yasemin Karakaşoğlu** is a Professor in the Unit for Intercultural Education, Faculty of Pedagogy and Educational Sciences at the University of Bremen, Germany. Her work focuses on migration studies in educational science with regard to schools, higher education and teacher professionalization.

Contact: [karakasoglu@uni-bremen.de](mailto:karakasoglu@uni-bremen.de)

**Dr. Paul Mecheril** is a Professor at the Faculty of Education at Bielefeld University, Germany. His main research interests include migration and subjectivation, racism, cultural studies, and pedagogical professionalism.

Contact: [paul.mecheril@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:paul.mecheril@uni-bielefeld.de)

**Dr. Saphira Shure** is a research assistant at the Faculty of Education at Bielefeld University, Germany. Her work and research focuses on education in the migration society, teacher professionalization, racism, and difference, as well as on discourse theory.

Contact: [saphira.shure@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:saphira.shure@uni-bielefeld.de)

## About the Contributors

**Dr. Muriel Armijo-Cabrera** is a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Educational Justice at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Her work focuses on social inclusion/exclusion, educational policies, childhood, subjectivation, virtuality and visual ethnography.

Contact: [muriel.armijo@uc.cl](mailto:muriel.armijo@uc.cl)

**Dr. Ş. Erhan Bağcı** is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Medicine, Department of Medical Education at Çukurova University, Adana, Turkey. He is also a guest lecturer at Helmut-Schmidt-University, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hamburg, Germany. His work and research focuses on adult education, medical education, Documentary Method, theories of learning, sociology of education, migration, globalization and critical education.

Contact: [erhanbagci@gmail.com](mailto:erhanbagci@gmail.com), [ebagci@cu.edu.tr](mailto:ebagci@cu.edu.tr)

**Natalia Bekassow** is a research assistant, lecturer and doctoral student at the Faculty of Social Science at Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany. Her main research interests include migration, transnationalism, citizenship, discrimination and racism research.

Contact: [natalia.bekassow@rub.de](mailto:natalia.bekassow@rub.de)

**Dr. Beatrix Bukus** is a lecturer at the Department of German as a Foreign and as a Second Language at the Faculty of Linguistics and Literary Studies at Bielefeld University, Germany. Her work and research focuses on child migration, educational integration and language development of newcomer pupils and teacher training.

Contact: [beatrix.bukus@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:beatrix.bukus@uni-bielefeld.de)

**Dr. María do Mar Castro Varela** is a Professor of Pedagogy and Social Work at the Alice Salomon University of Applied Science in Berlin, Germany, with a focus on gender and queer studies. She holds a combined degree in psychology and pedagogy and a PhD in political science. Her research focuses on gender and queer studies, postcolonial theory, trauma studies, critical migration studies and critical education – with a special focus on adult and political education.

Contact: [castrovarela@posteo.de](mailto:castrovarela@posteo.de)

**Dr. Theopoula-Polina Chrysochou** is a postdoctoral research associate (IKY state foundation scholarship) at the Faculty of Education of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece. Her work and research focuses on epistemology, informational society and digital communities of practice, critical pedagogy and critical science education, sociology, philosophy and political economy of education, research methodology, as well as on labour relations and class analysis.

Contact: [tchryso@primedu.uoa.gr](mailto:tchryso@primedu.uoa.gr)

**Dr. Aysun Doğmuş** is a research assistant at the Faculty of Social Science at Helmut-Schmidt-University Hamburg, Germany. Her work and research focuses on school and pedagogical professionalization shaped by migration, racism and intersectionality as well as on reconstructive social research.

Contact: [dogmusa@hsu-hh.de](mailto:dogmusa@hsu-hh.de)

**Dr. David Gillborn** is a Professor of Critical Race Studies and founding director of the Centre for Research in Race & Education (CRRE) at the University of Birmingham, UK. David is author and editor of 13 books and more than 200 articles, chapters and reports. David is best known for his research on racism in educational policy and practice and, in particular, for championing the growth of Critical Race Theory internationally.

Contact: [d.gillborn@bham.ac.uk](mailto:d.gillborn@bham.ac.uk)

**Susanne Gottuck** is a research assistant at the Institute of Education at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. Her research focuses on theoretical and conceptual perspectives for inclusive teacher education and professionalization, Cultural Studies, the analysis of social orders of difference and pedagogical professional knowledge production, and qualitative research methodology.

Contact: [susanne.gottuck@uni-due.de](mailto:susanne.gottuck@uni-due.de)

**Dr. Yotam Hotam** is a senior lecturer at the faculty of education at the University of Haifa, Israel. His research focuses on the relations between the 'secular' and 'religious' in modern culture, society, politics and education.

Contact: [yhotam@gmail.com](mailto:yhotam@gmail.com)

**Dr. Akiko Ito** is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Humanities, Department of Education and Clinical Psychology at Fukuoka University, Japan. Her work and research focuses on comparative studies in Germany and Japan with regard to intercultural education, migration, and discrimination, as well as on practices for living together in multicultural settings.

Contact: [akikoi@cis.fukuoka-u.ac.jp](mailto:akikoi@cis.fukuoka-u.ac.jp)



**Dr. Oxana Ivanova-Chessex** is a research assistant at the University of Teacher Education in Zurich, Switzerland. Her research focuses on education in the context of migration and societal inequalities, teacher professionalization and on the relations between parents and school.

Contact: [oxana.ivanova@phzh.ch](mailto:oxana.ivanova@phzh.ch)

**Natascha Khakpour** is doing her PhD at Freiburg University of Education, Germany, with a scholarship from the Hans Böckler Foundation. Her research interests include language(s), hegemony, racism and cultural studies.

Contact: [natascha.khakpour@ph-freiburg.de](mailto:natascha.khakpour@ph-freiburg.de)

**Daniel Krenz-Dewe** is a research assistant at the Faculty of Education at Bielefeld University, Germany. His research interests focus on education, subjectivation and agency, political literacy, racism and cultural studies.

Contact: [daniel.krenz-dewe@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:daniel.krenz-dewe@uni-bielefeld.de)

**Dr. Vini Lander** is a Professor of Race and Education at Leeds Beckett University, England. She is director of the Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality. Her research uses the framework of Critical Race Theory to examine race inequalities in education, specifically in teacher education. Vini's research focuses on the preparation of teachers to teach in ethnically diverse schools and society. She works as an activist-scholar in partnership with teachers to transform practice in schools with respect to race and racism.

Contact: [vini.lander@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:vini.lander@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

**Dr. Gregor Lang-Wojtasik** is a Professor of Educational Science (Education of Difference) at Weingarten University of Education, Germany. His research focuses on international and intercultural comparative educational science, educational innovation and professionalization and on the philosophy of educational science.

Contact: [langwojtasik@ph-weingarten.de](mailto:langwojtasik@ph-weingarten.de)

**Dr. Marguerite Lukes** is the Director of Research and Innovation at the Internationals Network for Public Schools in New York, USA, and an affiliated faculty member at New York University's program in the department of Applied Statistics, Humanities and Social Sciences. Her work focuses on educational language policy, language and literacy development among minoritized populations, multi-lingual/multicultural education, and educational equity.

Contact: [marguerite.lukes@nyu.edu](mailto:marguerite.lukes@nyu.edu)

**Dr. Jabari Mahiri** is a Professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California Berkeley, USA. His work focuses on multicultural cultural education, equity and inclusion, and educational leadership development.

Contact: [jmahiri@berkeley.edu](mailto:jmahiri@berkeley.edu)

**Dr. Arnd-Michael Nohl** is a Professor for the Foundations of Education at Helmut-Schmidt-University Hamburg, Germany. His work and research focuses on intercultural education, qualitative research on transformative learning, education, and socialization, as well as on qualitative methodology.

Contact: [nohl@hsu-hh.de](mailto:nohl@hsu-hh.de)

**Dr. Nicolle Pfaff** is a Professor of Migration and Inequality Research at the Faculty of Education at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany, where she teaches and conducts research on educational inequality, social and educational segregation, youth cultures and civic education.

Contact: [Nicolle.pfaff@uni-due.de](mailto:Nicolle.pfaff@uni-due.de)

**Dr. Ann Phoenix** is a Professor of Psychosocial Studies at the Thomas Coram Research Unit in the Social Research Institute, part of the Institute of Education at University College of London, UK. Her research is mainly about social identities and the ways in which psychological experiences and social processes are linked and intersectional. It includes work on racialization, gender and narrative identities.

Contact: [a.phoenix@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:a.phoenix@ucl.ac.uk)

**Dr. Ludger Pries** is a Professor of Sociology at the Faculty of Social Science at Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany. He taught and did research in Brazil, Mexico, Spain and the USA. His main fields of research are the sociology of migration in international comparison, transnationalization, organizations, work and labour regulation.

Contact: [ludger.pries@rub.de](mailto:ludger.pries@rub.de)

**Matthias Rangger** is a research assistant at the Faculty of Education at Bielefeld University, Germany. His research interests focus on education and subjectivation, pedagogical professionalism, racism and hegemony theory.

Contact: [matthias.rangger@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:matthias.rangger@uni-bielefeld.de)

**Dr. Andrea Riedemann** is a researcher at Universidad Bernardo O'Higgins, Santiago de Chile. Her work and research focuses on migration, racism, education, citizenship and human rights in Chile.

Contact: [andrea.riedemann@ubo.cl](mailto:andrea.riedemann@ubo.cl)

**Dr. Clea Schmidt** is a Professor of Second Language Education at the University of Manitoba, Canada. Her work focuses on critical teacher education, transnational and intercultural education, teacher diversity, LGBTQ-inclusive education, and anti-violence in educational contexts.

Contact: [clea.schmidt@umanitoba.ca](mailto:clea.schmidt@umanitoba.ca)

**Dr. Dorothee Schwendowius** is a Professor for International and Intercultural Education Research at the Faculty of Humanities at Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg, Germany. Her research focuses on education and learning in relations of difference and power, discrimination in schools and higher education, educational biographies and professionalization in migration society, as well as qualitative research methodology.

Contact: [dorothee.schwendowius@ovgu.de](mailto:dorothee.schwendowius@ovgu.de)

**Dr. Anja Steinbach** is a research assistant at the Institute for Pedagogy at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany. Her work and research focuses on teachers' perspectives in the context of (migration) social orders of difference, teacher professionalization, subjectivation theory, critical race theory, and reconstructive social research.

Contact: [a.steinbach@uol.de](mailto:a.steinbach@uol.de)

**Dr. Simona Szakács-Behling** is a senior researcher at the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research (Member of the Leibniz Association) in Braunschweig, Germany. Her work focuses on transnational dynamics in education occasioned by cross-border mobilities of persons, discourses and practices, more specifically on Europeanization, global cultural change, and post-socialist transformation in secondary formal education.

Contact: [szakacs@leibniz-gei.de](mailto:szakacs@leibniz-gei.de)

**Dr. Ewald Terhart** is a Professor emeritus in the Institute of Education at the University of Münster, Germany. His main research interests are theories and research on teaching, on teachers, and on teacher education.

Contact: [ewald.terhart@uni-muenster.de](mailto:ewald.terhart@uni-muenster.de)

**Saskia Terstegen** is a research assistant at the Faculty of Education at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany. Her research focuses on power, qualitative methodology and discourse studies as well as on theories of subjectivation, difference and discrimination in education.

Contact: [terstegen@em.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:terstegen@em.uni-frankfurt.de)

**Dr. Anja Tervooren** is a Professor at the Institute of Education at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. Her work focuses on childhood studies, inclusion with an emphasis on disability studies and on qualitative research in educational science.

Contact: [anja.tervooren@uni-due.de](mailto:anja.tervooren@uni-due.de)

**Dr. Dita Vogel** is senior researcher in the Unit for Intercultural Education, Faculty of Pedagogy and Educational Sciences at the University of Bremen, Germany. Her current research focuses on the question of how schools and society deal with migration and mobility, including irregular and refugee migration.

Contact: [dvogel@uni-bremen.de](mailto:dvogel@uni-bremen.de)

**Jan Wolter** works at the Institute for Pedagogy at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany. His work and research focuses on education in schools of migration society and questions of the professionalization of teachers' pedagogical practice, mainly in the German context. He is interested in educational and subjectivation theories as well as in theories of racism and difference.

Contact: [jan.wolter@uol.de](mailto:jan.wolter@uol.de)