

Challenges to multicultural education in the 21 century

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Abstract: Post-war immigration into Germany did not challenge education for a long time since work migration was regarded as temporary in the fifties and sixties of the last century. When workers began to settle – mainly as a result to the stop of recruiting workforce in 1973 – education had to deal with the situation of migrant children attending German schools in large numbers. The first answer to this new challenge was the concept of migrant education (Ausländerpädagogik). Multicultural education (‘intercultural education’ in the German diction) was developed in Germany rather reluctantly in the eighties as a second answer to this challenge when the concept of migrant education was no longer regarded as an adequate one by many educationalists in practice and research.

In this paper we will discuss more recent challenges to multicultural education. First we will deal with the fact that multicultural education is now sometimes regarded as a concept of international education dealing with the cultures of the world. Although this is a necessary approach in our world of global relationships, it tends to neglect local diversity. Future challenges to multicultural education concern the combination of local and global aspects within this concept. There is a further problem to be considered with regard to a multicultural education that deals mainly with global relationships: The needs of children from migrant families. The recent PISA study (OECD 2001) has clearly pointed out that the German school system has failed so far to give them access to a good school career that is, moreover, a precondition for economic and social participation. It is a great challenge to improve this situation without falling back into concepts of migrant education. In the third section we will deal with another challenge: While education - though not on all levels of educational policy in all European countries - has acknowledged the fact of a permanent immigration, which demands measures of integration and the preparation of all inhabitants - majority as well as immigrants - for a multilingual and multicultural society, there are also new developments in forms of migration to be taken into consideration. A main point is the question whether the model of integration in the concept of multiculturalism is compatible with transmigration, where migrants live in more than one social and spatial context, either at the same time, in following periods or in a way where social and geographical spaces are split or overlap. We will refer to citizenship education, language education, media education, intercultural communication and the European dimension in these aspects, though with different intensity. Media education will be highlighted in a short section that will end this paper instead of a conclusion.

1. How to deal with global and local diversity in multicultural education

Multicultural education in Germany developed as a counter-concept to migrant education when it became clear that migrant education could not solve the problems that schools and students faced (cf. Luchtenberg 1997).

The main differences are:

- All students as the target group instead of an education that addresses migrant students only;
- Orientation towards differences instead of deficits;
- Integration – not assimilation – as a main goal.

Thus, local diversity was the main reason for the development of multicultural education in Germany. 'Encountering' soon became a keyword in the sense that students with different backgrounds should meet each other, learn from each other and enrich one another. From the beginning, multicultural education laid great emphasis on culture and mutual cultural exchange. In the beginnings of multicultural education, relativism of cultures was taken for granted whereas the current view is that the reflection on cultures is more complex. There are two implications to be found in the importance of culture:

1. Mutual learning about cultures requires an awareness of cultural differences in all questions, which supports a division into the own and the other – an important point in the multicultural education discourse;
2. The focus on culture also made it easier to include global aspects, e.g. cultures of different nations and people.

The focus on culture has been criticized by educationalists but the name 'intercultural'/'multicultural' is too strong, so that, for example, students in general define multicultural education as 'dealing with foreign cultures', which includes the cultures of migrant students, since their cultures are regarded as foreign as well. Therefore, one of the challenges multicultural education has to face is to overcome the focus on culture and instead to deal with individual diversity.

It should be mentioned that, from the beginning of its development in Germany, there was a second main concept within multicultural education. This concept focused on racism, discrimination and inequality – barriers that have to be overcome before mutual exchange is possible.

Multicultural education with a focus on local diversity has helped to open schools, curricula and schoolbooks for diversity due to migration (cf. Hoff 1995).

The challenges of the European Union in 1993 and the implementation of the European dimension into

the educational system in Germany, due to the European directive of 1988, gave main impulses to broaden the concept of multicultural education to European and global perspectives. European education and multicultural education were used nearly as synonyms in the late eighties and early nineties, and this had an interesting side effect: While multicultural education had only reluctantly been accepted into the educational administration, the word now became quickly accepted (cf. Luchtenberg 1996). Certainly, there is a necessity for global openness, even more so in the light of a coming united Europe for European education, but the danger is, that the more multicultural education is regarded as global or European education, the less interest there will be in local diversity and the challenges it includes.

This can be shown with regard to the above listed aspects:

- Language education: Multicultural education in Germany supports bilingual education of migrant students, though mainly in an uncoordinated way. They get extra help in learning German and they are in general entitled to receive mother tongue instruction, but these lessons are not coordinated. They are simply additional offers while they attend the regular German classes. Bilingual classes in the proper sense would make it necessary to separate migrant students and offer them instruction in linguistically homogenous classes, which is a contradiction to the ideal of integration. There are very few exceptions, like the concept of bilingual literacy courses where migrant students attend regular classes but learn to read and write parallel in both languages with the help of coordinated teamwork between the classroom teacher and the mother tongue teacher;
- In recent years, mother tongue instruction has experienced two contradictory views: While the role of the mother tongue has been praised and is highly valued within a multicultural society – at least by educationalists –, the “burden” of dealing with another language than German has been criticized as a barrier to learning proper German – mainly by politicians and the media. Furthermore, many teachers accept only reluctantly – if at all – the use of the mother tongue by migrant students among each other in school:
- Due to the development in Europe, the interest in languages has increased since the late eighties as administration, schools and parents have realized the necessity of linguistic competence for the future of students. A new type of ‘Bilingual classes’ was created. In general it addresses German students in regular classes, where they are taught more of their first foreign language (normally English) than usual in class 5 and 6. In addition to this, they are taught one or two subjects like geography or social studies in the target language from class 7 onwards;
- A foreign language is now taught in primary schools. In North-Rhine/Westphalia, English as a foreign language now replaces a concept that was created as part of multicultural education: The concept of ‘encountering languages’ (Begegnungssprachenkonzept). Here the focus was on languages that children can “meet” in their daily life. This refers to languages like Dutch and French at the Dutch and Belgian frontiers, and like Turkish, Italian or Portuguese, etc. in

schools where many children with these languages as their mother tongue guarantee the opportunity to practice them in interaction. English, of course, was favoured by many parents who hoped for advantages for their children in secondary school, though this was not at all the idea behind the concept. A further approach being considered for schools which do not accept one of the other approaches was "the language across the curriculum approach", which could also be combined very effectively with one of the other concepts:

- 'Multicultural learning' has become a goal in all language classes (English, French etc.) and foreign language didactics deal with multicultural learning. This type of multicultural learning focuses on British or French studies, either on contacts or exchanges with students in the countries of the target language or the occupation with the foreign culture.

Thus, the international view increases the interest in European languages but denies the necessity of promoting mother tongue instruction (cf. Luchtenberg 2001). The situation in schools has an interesting parallel in the media, where broadcasting in the mother tongues of the immigrants has been dramatically reduced in recent months.

There is a similar, though more complex development with regard to intercultural communication. Intercultural communication has always had a strong relationship to international communication since it was originally examined mainly with regard to business communication. Misunderstanding in communications with migrant workers led to research in intercultural communication in Germany between migrants and Germans (cf. Hinnenkamp 1989). In the following years, more research was done on intercultural communication in Germany, mainly in the workforce and in institutional settings. There are two points to be underlined: first, nearly all of these examinations dealt with the situation where the German person is representing the institution or is a superior person at the workplace. Until now, it has hardly been taken into consideration that in a multicultural society migrants in the second or third generation can be at least equal colleagues or even superiors or those representing the institution. Secondly, there is only very little research on intercultural communication in schools, despite the fact that intercultural communication often takes place in this institution. Instead, again, there is a strong interest in intercultural communication in foreign languages and their didactics. So once more, the global perspective wins an important field whereas, in Germany itself, the local diversity should be at least equally important// significant - and this especially, though not only, in schools.)

A further point should be mentioned with regard to intercultural communication that is related to multicultural education: The focus on culture. The similarity lies in the fact that cultural differences are taken as given, which not only divides into the own and the other but also predicts behavior and misunderstandings (cf. Hinnenkamp 2001). This attitude holds true with regard to research on

intercommunication within Germany as well as in international intercultural communication.

Neither media education nor citizenship education have played a dominant role in multicultural education in Germany so far, though the importance of a political approach is slowly gaining recognition and media education certainly includes an intercultural media competence (cf. Luchtenberg 2003).

Summing up, we can confirm the necessity of a multicultural education which combines dealing with local, European and global diversity, but which at the same time must give all three aspects a place. So this means that multicultural education with regard to the local diversity is not in a position to assert itself. On the contrary, there is a challenge to balance global and European perspectives and local diversity (cf. Vermeulen 1997 for the situation in other European countries).

2. How to improve the results of migrant students

There is an approach to multicultural education – also used in Australia – where multicultural education is regarded as an umbrella term with the two components:

Equal opportunities for migrant children -- Preparation of all to live in a multicultural society

Not only the PISA-study but also the annual school statistics show that the requirements for the first component is far from being fulfilled in Germany. According to statistics published by the Kultusministerkonferenz (2003), nearly 20% of migrant students left school in the year 2000 without gaining a certificate - which is about double the amount of German students without a certificate. Statistics have to be read with care, since there are only two categories 'German students' and 'foreign students', which in turn give only a very rough picture because of the focus on the passport¹. Many migrant students or students with migrant parents are not in the statistics because they have got German nationality. This is particularly relevant in the case of the group of the re-settlers ('Aussiedler'). These are the descendents of Germans who have settled in the former Russian empire since the 17th century. Since most of them suffered during World War II due to their German origin they are entitled to 'return' to Germany and, in most cases, to gain German nationality.

Most juveniles with a migrant background attend a 'Hauptschule'², which is the lowest secondary school within the German selective school system (cf. Jonen/Boele 2001 on the German school system). In 2000, nearly 40% of migrant students left school with a secondary school leaving certificate

¹ In the statistics you find information about different national groups within the group of non—German students as well as about differences with regard to the 16 German states

² Hauptschule is a school for the academically lesser gifted students which they can leave after 9 or 10 years – depending on the state – with a qualified certificate

of the 'Hauptschule' while only 28,5% of the German students left school with only this qualification. The most important difference between both groups can be found in the results for a certificate that qualifies students to begin a study at a university, at a Polytechnic or at a college. While 40% of the German students reached this level, only 13% of the non—German students did so.

These differences are rather severe if one reflects the fact that the secondary school leaving certificate of the 'Hauptschule' has lost its status in the last decade since many professions that could be learnt with this certificate nowadays demand a higher qualification.

Further facts undermine the poor situation of migrant children in the German school system:

- They attend special schools – especially those for children with learning difficulties - far more than German students;
- They have to repeat classes more often than German students;
- They stay longer in a preschool class.

PISA has given some hints on how to answer the question why this is so, though it has by far not explained all the facts (OECD 2001).

- The PISA study has shown that in Germany school fails to close the social gap between the students. Migrant students are particularly affected by this fact since many migrant families still belong to socially disadvantaged groups;
- A special part of the PISA—study within the German evaluation has found that teachers were not able to find out which of their students had the lowest ability in reading. The discussion about this fact has revealed that German teachers lack a competence in diagnosis that is not taught at university during their teacher training. Only the teachers qualified to teach German as a second language have been trained in diagnosis;
- A main problem is the lack of support that students in general and migrant students in particular experience in the German school system. This is partly due to its selective structure, in which students are sent to different schools when they fail in one, or at least they have to repeat one grade. It can be assumed that the half—day—school also does not leave enough time to give weak students further help and assistance or to coordinate extra lessons like mother tongue teaching and German as a second language.

It should not be denied that a lot of special programs have been established in the last years but most of them are only locally applied in some schools. Examples of these are

- Bilingual literacy classes in Berlin ('Zweisprachige Klassen'), Hesse ('Koala'), parts of North-Rhine/Westphalia ('Schubile'): Here mainly Turkish students who attend a regular

class learn to read and write in both languages within a coordinated system of mother tongue teaching, team teaching and classroom teaching. The German students are not forced to learn Turkish but some learn at least a bit. In the following grades of the primary school texts are read in both languages and grammar knowledge is deepened. Secondary schools are not included so far;

- Turkish is taught as a regular language in secondary schools in some regions, mainly in North-Rhine/Westphalia. In this state, student teachers can qualify in Turkish at the university of Essen (now: Duisburg—Essen, location: Essen) together with a second subject since it is the rule in Germany that a teacher teaches at least two subjects that he or she has studied at university;
- New programs have been developed in different states, e.g. in Bavaria and North-Rhine/Westphalia, partly in schools, partly in preschool institutions where not only the children are addressed, but also their mothers. The latter learn German (sometimes with the explicit aim that they are thus better prepared to help their children with their homework), but, in order to support bilingual competence, they are also encouraged to work with their children at home, in the same subjects that have been dealt with in school or kindergarten and using their mother tongue.

While such bilingual programs are being developed in some institutions, the mainstream discourse in politics and media has turned in a different direction. The general discussion about the new immigration law ('Zuwanderungsgesetz') that has not yet passed the Federal Upper House of Parliament ('Bundesrat') has deepened the call for integration which is increasingly regarded as a debt that migrants have to bring. While the immigration law focuses mainly on adults when integration is discussed, this discussion – together with the PISA—results – has brought the integration discussion back to schools as well.

Different measures are asked for:

- Tests for school beginners in order to make sure they know enough German to follow a regular school class. Partly bilingual tests are being considered, but not everywhere;
- Besides the criticism of such tests and their construction as well as questioning the facts they really give, the crucial question is, what should be done with and for those children who fail the test?
- Different answers occur to this question, which include the proposals to send them to a preschool until they have learnt enough German or to give them a crash course until the school year starts;
- The idea of using the preschool institutions for language teaching is also being discussed. This would affect mainly kindergartens. Here, another problem occurs: Kindergarten teachers are by no means qualified to teach languages and most institutions do not see their task in such a strict preparation for school;
- On the other hand, tests in Berlin for all school beginners have shown that many

German students have also failed. This could lead to two different measures: Either to changing the program in class 1 or to instructing kindergarten institutions to deal more with language competence for all children.

In this new political and media debate on the integration of migrant students, integration has to be understood as the demand that migrant students have to learn enough German before school so that they do not trouble the school. Logically therefore, the focus is mostly on German, but certainly not on bilingualism or intercultural communication. Citizenship education is also not discussed, though it would help migrant students to cope with their special situation and probably also help them to understand the political situation in Europe. This would draw a line to the European dimension.

(Intercultural) educationalists do not deny that the problem of school failure is strongly connected with insufficient knowledge of German. But they see the proximity of the programs and measures so far discussed to a deficit-oriented migrant education while the structure, programs, curricula of the institution school are not or only very little questioned, as might be necessary and appropriate in a multicultural society. Simple measures – as taken in New South Wales -- could be for example (cf. Board of Education 1998, 1998a, 1998b)

- To train all teacher students in German as a second language so that the math teacher or the teacher in chemistry knows about the difficulties of migrant students in coping with a subject in a target language;
- To refer to German as a second language in the curriculum for German;
- To integrate the mother tongue teachers and allow for more team teaching.

Summing up, we can state that the failure of many migrant students in the German school system has led to a disparity between politics and research in education as regards both the assessment of the causes and the search for an appropriate solution. Schools and teachers themselves feel overburdened by the tasks they have to face and unable to solve the problem without help (cf. Extra/Yagmur 2002 for the situation in Europe with a focus on migrant languages).

3. How to meet the challenges of transmigration in education

While in the early days of migrant education most educational programs for migrant students either aimed at a later return of those students into their countries of origin or were directed towards a full assimilation into the German society – with the exception of a short period where the educational bureaucracy demanded from schools that they work for both aims simultaneously – concepts of multicultural education take it – if often only implicitly -- for granted that the migration is a permanent one. Therefore, some measures or programs have got new explanations:

- The focus is no longer on the culture in the countries of origin but on migration culture;
- Mother tongue teaching is demanded no longer because of a possible return but because of the value of bilingualism or the necessity of a family language;
- The necessity of fluent competence in German is backed up by a professional career in Germany.

In the light of this fact, it is astonishing that there is such little reflection on a citizenship education that addresses migrant students (cf. Luchtenberg 2003). This is all the more astonishing since such a necessity has been reflected worldwide, as well as in Europe, for many years (cf. Banks 1997; Bell 1995; Friebel 1996; Hahn 1998; Ichilov 1998; Lynch 1992). There is an astonishing disparity between a multicultural education that emanates from the assumption of a multicultural society with permanent migration and the lack of enabling students – migrants as well as Germans – to understand the political conditions of this multicultural society and – beyond that– its place in Europe and in the world.

Yet, educational research within multicultural education also has to meet the fact that not all immigration is permanent, because there is an increasing trend towards transmigration processes (cf. Pries 2001). Permanent migration has been understood as a more or less unidirectional movement from one nation-state to another, including the possibility of remigration as a second step that can be regarded as a unidirectional movement as well since it is also a permanent process. Now we face different forms of migration in the late 20th and beginning 21st century where globalization plays a key role. Transmigration is understood as a specific type of migration in transnational social spaces (Glick Schiller/, Basch & Szanton Blanc 1997; Pries 2001). It is shown that migrants develop multidirectional patterns of migration with different social and spatial relations. These patterns may differ between groups as well as between individuals. These shifts in social reality challenge the framework for analysis in social science as well as in educational theory and practice, though the group of asylum seekers and refugees has always been regarded as non—permanent migrants, so that multicultural education could not completely focus on multiculturalism as a permanency. These patterns have been very much facilitated by the European Union where the workforce can work for an unlimited time in any of the member states, but also move to one or more other states during their working life. This has changed for e.g., the migration possibilities for migrants within Europe from Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal, since these states are now member states of the EU and thus their workers can come to and leave Germany without restrictions (besides the necessity of finding work). In contrast, migrant workers from Turkey, who might want to resettle in Turkey for a while, would lose their work permit in Germany. Yet a special phenomenon of transmigration can be observed within the Turkish community where members of the second generation tend to choose a partner from Turkey. This influences language acquisition and language behaviour and has to be taken into consideration in teaching.

The main challenges in education that result from new forms of migration are:

- So far, language education focuses far more on fluency in German than on bilingualism. We have to ask whether children from families with a high mobility are sufficiently trained in this way and what the alternatives could be;
- So far, schools have nearly no concepts for students who enter school in the course of a school year, but this can easily happen in families with high mobility;
- So far, multicultural education has a strong focus on social education – this can be explained by the fact that work and refugee migrants were so far mainly underprivileged and marginalized. Transnational migrants are often persons with a high qualification and a good social standing. It has to be asked whether the social education approaches have to be modified with regard to this latter group;
- So far, integration is the keyword in political as well as in educational discussions on migration. It has to be questioned whether the model of integration in the concept of multiculturalism is compatible with transmigration where migrants live in more than one social and spatial context, either at the same time, in consecutive periods or in a way where social and geographical spaces are split or overlap;
- The European development is a further issue here because the European Union not only supports transmigration in the described sense by its legislation, but also adds further aspects by pushing the development of European identity, which means that a new social and geographical space emerges. Yet, transmigration is not limited to European migrants as the search for IT—workers has quite recently shown.

The challenges of transnational migration have only recently been considered and are still not in the center of multicultural education. It would certainly not be appropriate to put transnational migration into the middle of multicultural education, but it has to be considered, especially in the sense that these different forms of migration – and thus migrant students – will all be together in classes, so that a broad range of concepts have to be put together to find a suitable education for all students. To some extent, this development leads to a new mixture of local, European and global aspects of multicultural education. This is certainly a task that can only be solved in a European if not global approach.

Summing up, we have to state that the migration pattern in Germany, as well as in other parts of the world, has become/is becoming more complex. At the same time, PISA has shown that the present educational approach in Germany is not adequate for its migrant students so that it will be difficult both to improve the present situation as well as to consider further challenges. Yet, there is a chance that the three levels of multicultural education shown in the first section will give help in the further development of a multicultural education that is able to meet new tasks (cf. Luchtenberg 2003a for European developments within multicultural education).

4. Further consideration

Migration and its consequences are an important part of the media discourse in multicultural society are in general reluctant and do not always support diversity, which is – to my findings from a German viewpoint – different in Australia with regard to leading print media (cf. Luchtenberg/McLelland 1998). While the media discourse on migration and multiculturalism is, in general, not on education but more on (dis)integration, there are some topics that are directly related to education. This is the question of integration of migrant students depending of their knowledge of German.

The main arguments in this part of the media discourse are:

- Bilingual education is not supported, sometimes even rejected;
- The political reduction of mother tongue teaching is only seldom questioned;
- A lack of German is regarded as a failure of the parents and the child him- or herself;
- The lack of German is regarded as a direct path into unemployment or even a criminal career;
- The lack of German is related to the ethnic communities. Sometimes, media refer to a 'ghetto' in order to describe ethnic communities. The functional infrastructure is seen as a hindrance of integration and the willingness to learn German;
- Media in the mother tongues of the migrants – especially satellite TV – are described as a hindrance to learning German and adopting the German culture;
- The role of the Muslim religion is seen as rather ambivalent but in general as 'strange' and a contributing factor to the lack of successful integration;
- The multicultural society is often questioned or regarded as having failed.

The influence of media with regard to an acceptance of multiculturalism and migration is so high because most people have no chance of finding out different facts themselves. Their only chance of relativism is to compare several media. This already demands a certain media competence that is best gained at school. Media education plays an important role in the German curricula, though it is not part of a specific subject. So far, multicultural media competence is not yet in the curricula, though it seems very important to teach students to deal with the many ways in which the media can influence our understanding of a diverse society. Multicultural media competence can be understood as part of multicultural education and multicultural communication and as a measure – among others – of meeting the educational challenges of migration.

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³ There is a large amount of literature in German on the questions discussed here, but I have tried to focus on literature in English for this paper

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