
**Migration and International Mobility as
Challenges to School.
Is Intercultural Education the Answer?**



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1. Preliminary Remarks

2. Introduction

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- **Intercultural Education:**
 - interpreted for a **specific national or regional context**
 - addressed as an answer to issues of cultural diversity or plurality evolved by migration and international mobility
- **Canada:** on the one hand a country of immigration on the other hand a colonial past and the genocide of the aboriginal people
- **Germany:** Nazi regime and the Shoah; handling of the seemingly unexpected stay of the former guest workers since the 1960ies as well as the recent dimension of refugee migration

-> These two cases may work as **tertium comparationis** for the Maltese case

3. Migration, Nations and School

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- “We live in an age of migration” (Steven Casles 2013) and in a world organized in nation states, based on the idea of “imagined communities” (Benedict Anderson 1983).
 - Implication for a **common sense** when it comes to the question what holds society together -> important **role of public schools**
- **Europe:** narrative of ethnically homogeneous nation states
- **Canada and the US:** narrative of immigrant societies, plurality of cultures and religions – at least as an ideal – as constitutive element of society.

3. Migration, Nations and School

- Globally **272 million people** are **on the move** according to the International Organization for Migration's 2020 report.
- **25,9 million** of them are **refugees** and **52%** of the refugees **under 18 years** of age.

3. Migration, Nations and School

General:

- Public schools as the **school of the nation (educating citizens of the nation state)** (Tröhler 2020)

Germany:

- Schools of originally **ethnically defined nation states** like Germany regard the **integration of immigrant children** in general not only as a **challenge** but even as a **threat** to the prevalence and efficiency of the system in place.

Canada:

- **Canada often presented as showcase** for success of multicultural approach.
- As a country of immigration that officially promotes **multiculturalism as a mainstreaming policy** the approach is seen as combining successful measures to support school performance of immigrant children with an overall **multicultural approach** to education.
- It is embedded in an **holistic understanding of inclusion**.

4. The long way of accepting reality – Germany's struggle with its transformation into a country of immigration and the impact on the field of education

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- **Canada 1971:** Multiculturalism was announced. **Cultural differences** were understood as **founding elements of individual and group identities**, should be acknowledged, maintained and celebrated.
- **Germany 1971:** School attendance became compulsory for foreign children.
- **Until the 1990ies:**
 - > **General non-acceptance of immigration** as an element of sustainable societal and cultural change.
 - > **Unsystematic reactions** of the German school system, Additional ad hoc measures
 - > Reactive and segregating approach, resulted in the concept '**Pedagogy for foreigners**' (Ausländerpädagogik)

4. The long way of accepting reality – Germany's struggle with its transformation into a country of immigration and the impact on the field of education

- An official German interpretation of '**intercultural education**' was developed only in 1996.
- The first **recommendations** of the German Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs were published to support the implementation of Intercultural Education in Schools. They remained recommendations **without any binding character**.

4. The long way of accepting reality – Germany's struggle with its transformation into a country of immigration and the impact on the field of education

Intercultural Education (KMK 1996) officially declared as a means:

- a) to foster self-awareness (ability for a change of perspective),
- b) to learn with and from one another,
- c) to develop anti-racist education,
- d) to prepare for living together in Europe as a common living ground,
- e) for joint integration of Germans and non-Germans,
- f) for introducing newly developed immigrant cultures in Germany.

4. The long way of accepting reality – Germany's struggle with its transformation into a country of immigration and the impact on the field of education

2013: the German Council of Ministers for Education (KMK) accepted a mission statement on Intercultural Education as a leading principle for school development.

- **shift in paradigms**, Germany is accepted as being a **country of immigration** with a **culturally diverse society**.

Realities:

- In big cities in Western Germany **the majority of children entering school are of immigrant origin**.
- Demographic developments are accompanied by a **heated debate on the prevalence of “Germany's leading culture”**.

4. The long way of accepting reality – Germany's struggle with its transformation into a country of immigration and the impact on the field of education

- Schools are in the **hotspot of the ongoing controversial discourse** on the scope and borders of “cultural tolerance” and “parallel societies” mainly focused on issues of language and religion.

- **Discussions:**
 - a) on the ban of Muslim headscarves in schools,
 - b) whether Islam should be regarded as a part of Germany,
 - c) on addressing German as the official state-language in the constitution,
 - d) on the restriction of the use of other languages in the school yard.

4. The long way of accepting reality – Germany's struggle with its transformation into a country of immigration and the impact on the field of education, references to Canada

Inclusive interculturality: role Model Alberta (Canada) (Schuett 2016)

- **English as a second language** throughout the whole school career
- instruction in and through **heritage languages**, support of **multilingualism**,
- implementation of **collaborative working relationships** among second language teachers and content area teachers,
- strategies for **increasing communication** (keyword: parenting centers and intercultural support workers, translation services)

- attempts for **diversifying the teaching force** and staff integration into a **multiprofessional team** at school

-> **Core idea: a fully inclusive school**

4. The long way of accepting reality – Germany's struggle with its transformation into a country of immigration and the impact on the field of education – references to Canada

Influence of the Canadian showcase on Germany:

- More **multilingual and multicultural pedagogical professionals**, especially teachers (with an immigrant/"migration background")
- introducing intercultural education and German as an additional or second language in **teacher training programs** in some of the Länder's curriculum
- More emphasis on (additional) measures that support **German as a second language** throughout the whole school career
- **Compulsory German language tests** for all children one year prior to their entrance into the school system
- Implementation of **interfaith or Islamic courses** in the school curriculum in some of the German Länder

4. The long way of accepting reality – Germany's struggle with its transformation into a country of immigration and the impact on the field of education – references to Canada

Discussions on the **social selectivity and effectiveness of the system:**

- The **German specific system** of parallel school tracks, sorting students directly after primary education is identified **as fostering social selectivity** and hindering school success of less privileged children.
- City-states are currently in the process of breaking through historical schooling structures and **inventing new comprehensive and inclusive systems.**

➔ **But:** Once again this year a heated debate has flared up on the necessity to **ban the use of any other language than German from schoolyards**

5. Critical discourses on Intercultural/Multicultural Education – Questioning the relevance of ,culture‘

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- Doubts about the compatibility of inter- or multicultural education with the rights for individual identity building beyond collective ethnic boundaries (Radtke 1994).
- Communitarian approach of multiculturalism would lead to **essentialization of cultural or religious affiliations** (Radtke1994).
- Implicit idea of **cultural relativism** would lead to discrimination and othering processes rather than acceptance of diversity (Radtke 1994).
- Qualitative research on experiences of migrant students showed evidence for the **culturalization and racialization of social problems** in schools (Weber 2003; Fereidooni/EI 2018).

➔ **Intercultural education cannot address institutional discrimination and exclusionist structures but individualizes racism and discrimination.**

5. Critical discourses on Intercultural/Multicultural Education – Questioning the relevance of ‚culture‘

German academic discourse develops with reference to post-colonial studies (Spivak) and with reference to Anglo-American **Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw et.al.1995)** its own Racism Critical Approach **“Rassismuskritischer Ansatz”**:

- Targets **racism as a strategy that structures societies**, rather than an individual attitude, shaping and fostering power relations in which the subaltern ‘other’ is identified by racial categories (Mecheril 2010; Messerschmidt 2016).
- **“Migration pedagogy”** (Mecheril 2010) gains increasingly acceptance both in academic and practitioners pedagogical discourses: Aims at **identifying** the historical roots and current phenomenon of **racism embedded in institutional logics** and structures and its manifestations in the attitudes and actions of teachers and other pedagogic personnel.

5. Critical discourses on Intercultural/Multicultural Education – Questioning the relevance of ,culture‘

Canadian context (Joshee et.al. 2016):

- colonial past and imbalanced power relations between the descenders of the white settlers and the aboriginal people are central to professional pedagogic discourses.
- Addressed by: postcolonial education, de-colonizing knowledge, indigenizing knowledge.
- Until very recently the discrimination against visible minorities and the full recognition of the rights of the aboriginal people of Canada has been an “unsolved issue”

5. Critical discourses on Intercultural/Multicultural Education – Questioning the relevance of ,culture‘

- The last reception schools for so-called ‘Indians’ closed their doors only in 1996
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission only in 2008 (up to 2015): started to develop measures meant to heal the state induced injustice against aboriginal people.
- Critical voices in the Canadian context ask whether multiculturalism can only be established at the expense of a “general” Canadian identity.
- In addition, the discussion about a complete acknowledgement of religious freedom as well as the demands of religious education and practices in the sense of “religious literacy” is – starting with 9/11 - becoming increasingly relevant.

6. Concluding remarks

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Paradigmatic Struggle on the appropriate pedagogical approach to education in a society shaped by international mobility and migration:

- **‘Racism Critical Approach/Migration Pedagogy’** (Mecheril 2010)
- **‘Reflexive or/and Critical Intercultural Education’** (Hormel/Scherr 2005)

➔ Prevailing relevance of **‘culture’** as both a **construct and a reality that is** brought into live and constantly shaped by the everyday practise and believe of people (Bhabha 2007). Culture still seems to be a necessary **means of orientation and element of identity** for individuals and groups.

6. Concluding remarks

Reflexive Intercultural education

- a) Is a crucial part of general education,
- b) Is a task for an overall transformation for all institutions of education, embedded into a holistic understanding of inclusion
- c) calls for a critical exploration of the circumstances, forms and impacts of ethnic, cultural and religious ascriptions and identifications and their social, political and individual meanings.
- d) aims at changing attitudes and actions,
- e) aims at questioning common patterns of interpretation of the meaning of culture through theories and practises in education (see Hormel/Scherr 2005).

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New analytical approaches are needed:

- **Intersectional perspective** to overcome essentialist perspectives on ‚culture‘ as the most influential category to explain social problems in societies shaped by migration.
- The intersectionality approach points to **complex interrelationships between forms of oppression**. The aim is to look at the links, overlaps and interdependencies between the socially constructed categories of class, gender, ‚race‘ and body (Crenshaw 1989).

6. Concluding remarks

My personal view:

If we still hold on to the idea of the relevance of culture (understood as a flexible and creative means to shape relations with each other and the world) for identity building processes of individuals and groups and if we want to acknowledge this in the field of education we should develop an understanding of “critical intercultural education” that takes notice of the findings and perspectives of **racism critical approaches** as well as the **intersectional links** to other dimensions of diversity: **diversity sensitive, discrimination critical** (Karakasoğlu/Mecheril 2019). In my view this would be a reasonable **basis of any kind of teacher training** and school development in all societies.

-> **What does that practically mean for teacher education? How can teachers support individual relations to ´ cultures ´ as a means to empowerment without the risk of essentialization?**

Thank you !

Forthcoming:

**Heidrich, L., Karakasoglu, Y., Mecheril, P., Shure, S. (Eds.) (2012):
Regimes of Belonging - Schools – Migrations. Teaching in
(Trans)National Constellations, Springer VS,
(ISBN 978-3-658-29189-1 – also available as e-book)**

Content: The volume analyses the role of schools in the production of belonging in a migration society. The guiding question is how teacher education and also school education must be designed from a transnational perspective. Examples from Chile, Turkey, Japan, USA, Canada, Israel, Germany, GB and other countries...

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