

German Education Policy and the Challenge of Migration

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1 Introduction¹

The current debate in Germany about the role of schools in an immigration society arises from two main issues: first, evidence of a high percentage of migrant students with low school performance and low German language skills and second, reports about violent conflicts at schools often codified as resulting from an unwillingness or incapability of migrants, especially of Muslims with a migration history, to adapt to the culture of the host society. The proposed solutions focus on the improvement of German language skills and on the individual responsibility of migrants, particularly parents of schoolchildren, as well as on network-building on a local level. Beyond the undoubtedly crucial question of migrant students' school achievements and how to support them, this study explores how migration and cultural or religious diversity is perceived in educational policies and schools.

Migration and cultural diversity pose a challenge to the self-conception of the German nation as culturally and religiously homogenous. Public schools have a central role in communicating the substance of a 'national identity' and the modes of a national 'political culture' to children and youth as future adult citizens. This not only happens through school laws, policy papers, curricula and text books, but also through the institutional rules of schools and everyday behaviour, rituals and dominant perceptions of 'normality' in a certain culture (Schiffauer et al. 2004).

Questions concerning the integration of conflicting cultural values and the evaluation the rights of groups vs. individual rights have become major issues, particularly in the context of the global debate on 'Islam' and 'Western culture'. These questions are also increasingly contentious in the school education arena. It seems that the discourse on schools and Islam is both an indicator of existing problems in the accommodation of cultural/religious diversity, as well as the result of codifications of other phenomena as being 'cultural' and 'Islamic' such as social or gender disparities and individual or youth conflicts.

In this paper, we therefore argue that education policy in a culturally diverse society has two complex, often conflicting tasks: on one hand, to accept and accommodate cultural/religious diversity and on the other, to try to detect genuine, often multiple reasons of certain conflicts and in doing so, to deconstruct the discourse on migrants and particularly Muslim migrants.

In the following I will briefly provide a theoretical framework by reflecting on the scientific debate on education and intercultural pedagogy. After a sketch of the German school system and its discriminatory effects, I will reflect the discourse on the low achievements of migrant students, on 'problematic schools' and on the 'threat of Islam'. Second, I will analyse education policies and recommendations on the national and state (*Länder*) levels. Finally, I will give some insights into practices in Berlin schools as well as investigate the statements of three headmasters and an elected parents' representative. Apart from interviews with these four central figures in their respective school policies, the study is based on interviews with policy makers and experts in the field of education and integration, conducted between June and August 2007,² as well as on the review of policy papers and secondary literature. Special focus is given to the State of Berlin, an urban centre with a relatively long lasting history of

¹ I would like to thank my colleague Werner Schiffauer for his helpful suggestions and assistance throughout the project, Susanne Schultz, Maja Stolle and Sara Merdian for assisting me with parts of the fieldwork, Susanne Schwalgin for her fruitful comments on an earlier version of this paper, and Carrie Hampel for language editing.

² See appendix.

immigration and cultural diversity, from which the related issues may be investigated more in depth.³

1.1 The scientific debate on intercultural education

Within German speaking pedagogical science, until now the topic of education in the context of migration has been marginalised and is still a secondary domain within teacher-training. Nevertheless, the literature on ‘intercultural education’ easily fills its own library section and includes a broad variety of theoretical approaches and practical material.⁴

Pedagogy started dealing with immigration issues in the 1960/70s when increasing numbers of children of so-called ‘guest workers’ started attending public schools in West-Germany.⁵ The so-called ‘foreigners’ pedagogy’ (*Ausländerpädagogik*) was based on the assumption that ‘foreigners’ children’ attended pre-school and school with considerable deficits resulting from their conflicting experiences of two cultures: the one they knew from their home country or their parents and the new culture of the host society. Their parents were perceived as being unable to absorb this ‘cultural conflict/shock’ (e.g. Roth 1985). ‘Foreigners’ pedagogy’ was based on the idea of the ‘otherness’ of a seemingly homogenous group of migrants who would need to be treated with a special pedagogical approach; this has had the consequence of contributing to migrants’ separation and incapacitation.

Traditional intercultural pedagogy is opposed to the approach of assumed deficits and emphasises different but equal cultural affiliations. The pedagogy of recognition aims to enable educators and children to perceive and respect difference. According to a universalistic approach, different cultures are principally perceived as being of the same value while at the same time universal values provide a common and transnational basis. Pedagogy in this sense aims to educate towards autonomy, autarky or rationality and also towards the maintenance of ‘cultures’ (Tumat et al. 1986). Subsequently, supplementary text-books and material with generalising descriptions about e.g. ‘the Turkish’ or ‘Islamic culture’ have been published (see e.g. Rabitsch 1982).

The approach reflected in these textbooks has been criticised for applying a static concept of culture, reproducing and intensifying stereotypes, and applying uncritical cultural relativism. Furthermore, the ambivalence resulting from the statement that on one hand every culture is equal while referring to a common framework of values on the other, is often solved by then referring to the international convention of human rights as a common ethical authority – which again is a form of defining Western values as universal. Finally, by perceiving dialogue between different cultures as the means to solve conflicts, a harmonising picture of reality is drawn that ignores the unequal status of different cultural groups and the structural dimension of discrimination.⁶

³ This is not to say that the situation in Berlin is representative of other Federal States (*Länder*) or regions. The situation in more provincial areas and regions with less migrant residents particularly need careful examination. Nevertheless, the Berlin case has served as an initiator for debates in other *Länder* in the past.

⁴ For an overview see e.g. Auernheimer 2003; Gogolin/Krüger-Potratz 2006; Nohl 2006. The following rough overview cannot encompass proper consideration to the variety of approaches and research in the field of education in a plural society, like for instance, human rights pedagogy, democracy learning and historical learning, and in particular, Holocaust teaching (Hormel/Scherr 2006; Georgi 2003), or reflections on anti-Semitism in the context of the crisis in the Middle East (Fritz Bauer Institut/Jugendbegegnungsstätte Anne Frank 2006; see also teaching material developed by the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung and edited by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2006).

⁵ On education policies in the aftermath of WW II with separate schooling for various national groups of Displaced Persons, see Gogolin/Krüger-Potratz 2006.

⁶ On the other hand, during the 1970s the protagonists of a school reform did not take into account the specific situation of migrants (see Auernheimer 2006a).

The focus of a third strand of pedagogy and education-related social sciences is concerned with modes of institutional discrimination and the effects of hierarchical structures. The goal of this approach is to concentrate more attention on the institutions of the majority rather than migrants themselves; in fact, individual agency is subordinated under social structures. Systemic or structuralistic approaches refute the relevance of 'culture' and argue that by taking 'culture' into analytical consideration one would culturalise and therefore disguise, social structures and power relations (e.g. Hormel/Scherr 2004; Radtke 2006; Gomolla/Radtke 2002).

In contrast to the anthropological approach which seeks a common universal framework for all cultures as a point of departure, is the postmodernist assumption that cultural orientations or 'forms of discourse' – being hybrid, subject to change, and increasing in their plurality – do not coexist in harmony but in a permanent state of conflict or antagonism without a dominant mechanism for solving these conflicts. In this sense intercultural pedagogy has the task of providing the educational possibilities and capabilities regarding different discursive practices and conflict resolution strategies (e.g. Ruhloff 1992).

Intercultural pedagogy in line with cultural sociology or reflexive anthropology applies a constructionist concept of culture and aims to identify processes where 'culture' is used to legitimise power or inequality. In contrast to structuralist approaches, this reflexive intercultural pedagogy regards 'culture' as relevant in identifying differences of experience, world perceptions and the practices of groups. It is assumed that cultural difference does exist not as a firm attribute but as a purposeful act performed by the individual in order to distinct her/himself from others. 'Cultural distinction' is perceived as both, an answer to objective structures as well as a result of individual agency. Reflexive intercultural pedagogy therefore critically questions general pedagogy. It questions the norms or normality applied in education, if for example, the history of minorities is only derived from the 'master narrative'.⁷ It perceives 'culture' as not homogenous, but variously shaped, not static but dynamic, and hybrid (e.g. Koller 2002).

With respect to the individual, intercultural pedagogy aims to enable intercultural capacities on different levels ranging from an understanding of the different phenomena that reveal cultural or social disparities, the reasons contributing to these phenomena and a capability to reflect on these phenomena from different viewpoints; to the ability to reflect own perceptions and behaviour in a multicultural context and being able to take part in a modern, plural, open-minded and democratic environment (Gogolin 2003).

Reflexive intercultural pedagogy may have concrete effects on different levels and subjects such as: equal access to education, equal opportunities (permeability of the school system, employment requirements for teachers of migrant background), teacher training, curricula, the accommodation of minority needs (such as religious and/or cultural holidays, dietary requirements and dress codes) and questions of dominance and separation – defining 'normality' and 'otherness'.⁸ From a theoretical perspective the concept seems to provide a framework for enduring and negotiating the antagonism between individual and collective rights and deconstructing cultural ascriptions. However, the concept is far from being realised

⁷ See e.g. the ethnographical research by Schiffauer et al. 2004. On reflexive intercultural pedagogy see Gogolin/Krüger-Potratz 2006, Hamburger 2003; Mecheril 2004.

⁸ Intercultural pedagogy deals with questions of the definition and the power of definition of 'culture', 'normality' and 'otherness', the acceptance of difference and deconstructing culturalism, the accommodation of particular interests and common values, institutional discrimination and the intersectionality of power relations. These questions are at the core of the theoretical multicultural debate (e.g. Favell/Modood 2003, Phillips 2007). Interestingly enough, multicultural theory and intercultural pedagogy barely seem to interact with each other.

in schools,⁹ and obviously schools may not be considered the only institutions responsible for addressing these conflicts.

2 Migrant students in German schools and the public discourse on education with regard to immigration

Since the results of the PISA-survey (2003) revealed that migrant students achieved poorer school results than their native German peers, public debate has focused on the selective effects of the German school system, the importance of German language acquisition and the responsibility of migrant parents to supervise their children's education and career opportunities. A second strand of debate revolves around the problems of teaching classes with a high percentage of migrant children and the 'threat of Islam' in German schools. All of these issues are fundamentally tied to the general debate on both migrant integration and to school reform and development.

2.1 The German school system

Schooling is compulsory in Germany for children from the age of 6 (in some *Länder* at age 5) until the age of 18 (including vocational training) respectively for 12 years after enrolment. In 1964 compulsory education was extended to include the children of migrants. During the 1960/70s school attendance of migrant children was a contentious issue, as many parents were not properly informed about the school system (Kischkewitz/Reuter 1980).¹⁰

Children attend elementary school until grade 4, in Berlin and Brandenburg regularly until grade 6, after which they are streamed into different types of secondary schools (*Hauptschule*, *Realschule* or *Gymnasium*) on the basis of their school achievements at elementary/primary school (Secretariat KMK 2006, also on the following).¹¹ 'Special-needs schools' (*Sonderschulen*) are established for pupils "whose development cannot be adequately assisted at mainstream schools on account of disability" (ibid.).¹² *Hauptschule* is a type of school at lower secondary level providing a basic general education, focusing on practical matters (grades 5-9/10). *Hauptschule* is regarded as the 'school for the rest', namely socially disadvantaged children and immigrant students. *Realschule* (grades 5-10) is also a type of school at lower secondary level providing pupils with a more extensive general education and the opportunity to go on to upper secondary level courses that lead to vocational or higher education entrance qualifications. Graduates from *Hauptschulen* and *Realschulen* may begin a vocational education and training within a dual system combining work and school,¹³ or attend various *Fachoberschulen* (technical colleges for grades 11 and 12), which prepare students for *Fachhochschulen*, universities of applied sciences. The *Gymnasium* covers both lower and upper secondary level (grades 5-13 or 5-12) and provides an in-depth general education aimed at gaining general higher education entrance. At present almost all *Länder*

⁹ Today, various methods and material labelled 'intercultural' is used in schools, but only a few seem to correspond to the approach of reflexive intercultural education.

¹⁰ On the exclusion of refugees and undocumented migrants, see below.

¹¹ See also the diagram in the appendix. In some of the federal states grade 5 and 6 are combined to form educational units, called the *Orientierungsstufe* (orientation course) or the *Förderstufe* (advanced course), prior to beginning one of the three above mentioned school paths in grade 7. Most schools in Germany are 'public schools', meaning state funded schools for the public. Private schools exist but they are less established than in other European states.

¹² Also known as *Förderschule*, *Schule für Behinderte* or *Förderzentrum*.

¹³ Provided they find an apprenticeship training position, which is not easy – given the current high unemployment rates, especially among young school graduates and even more so among those with a migrant background.

are reducing the required number of years of *Gymnasium* from nine years to eight, making the *Abitur*-level degree (graduation of years 11 to 13 courses preparing for University entrance) or *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* (University entrance qualification) possible after grade 12. Although students may change school streams, these are in fact generally only permeable in the downward direction.

Comprehensive schools (*Gesamtschulen*), a cooperative or integrated type of secondary school, have been regarded as alternative structures. In the ‘cooperative’ comprehensive schools, the three courses of education (*Hauptschule*, *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*) are brought under one educational and organisational umbrella; they simply replicate exactly the same streaming system as the other schools. At ‘integrated’ comprehensive schools the three courses form an educational and organisational whole. The provision of *Gesamtschulen* varies in accordance with the respective educational laws of the *Länder*.

Most German schools are half-day schools. In 2003 the German government began granting financial support enabling *Länder* to introduce full-day schools (Bundesministerium 2007).

2.2 Migrant students in German schools

In 2005 at least 27.2 per cent of children and adolescents under 25 had a ‘migration history’, meaning that they, or one or both of their parents of the first or second generation, had migrated to Germany. Two thirds of this group were born in Germany and receive their schooling entirely within the German school system, the other third have migrated themselves, some going to German schools after attending schools in their home countries (Konsortium Bildungsberichterstattung 2006: 178).

The majority of migrant students with foreign passports are of Turkish origin or descent (411,600 in total, including primary schools).¹⁴ Other quantitatively relevant groups – each accounting for about 10,000 to 25,000 students – have a migrant background from the former states of Yugoslavia, Albania, the Russian Federation, the Ukraine, Morocco, Afghanistan, Iran, Lebanon, Vietnam, as well as a high number of refugees – who most probably, generally come from Palestine/Lebanon (included in the category of stateless or unclear citizenship in table 1).

¹⁴ Until 2000 children of migrants with a foreign passport did not acquire German citizenship when they were born in Germany. Only since the amendment of the Citizenship Law in 2000 citizenship according to the *ius soli* is possible. I will use the term ‘migrant student’ as a synonym for ‘student with a migration history’.

Table 1: Students according to citizenship and school types in school year 2004/05

Country of Citizenship	Total (incl. primary and other public schools)	<i>Hauptschulen</i> (basic, general secondary school education)	<i>Sonder-schulen</i> (special-needs schools)	<i>Realschulen</i> (more extensive general secondary school education)	<i>Gymnasien</i> (secondary schools enabling higher education entrance)	<i>Gesamtschulen</i> (comprehensive secondary schools)
Europe						
EU-Countries	173 614	38 174	10 833	19 873	24 880	10 917
Non-EU-Countries	590 548	144 689	43 113	61 441	48 841	44 746
Albania	18 069	4 710	2 963	1 195	657	989
Bosnia, Herzegovina	20 811	4 015	1 304	2 420	2 447	1 478
Croatia	20 353	3 697	1 048	3 082	3 475	862
Macedonia	7 843	1 791	553	614	489	460
Rumania	3 762	992	160	387	758	170
Russian Federation	24 561	4 483	664	2 112	6 031	1 449
Switzerland	1 894	192	22	198	662	169
Serbia, Montenegro	56 566	14 579	8 123	4 292	2 750	2 411
Turkey	411 641	105 819	27 671	44 299	25 488	35 285
Ukraine	12 358	1 468	168	1 345	4 271	796
Other	12 690	2 943	437	1 497	1 813	677
Africa	37 000	8 988	2 788	3 360	2 428	3 769
Morocco	12 972	3 087	1 116	1 324	676	1 694
Tunesia	2 678	682	227	274	275	306
Other	21 350	5 219	1 445	1 762	1 477	1 769
America	15 498	2 990	510	1 252	2 910	1 919
Asia	123 130	24 659	6 876	11 262	18 615	10 118
Afghanistan	14 962	2 631	821	1 670	2 252	2 325
Iran	11 892	1 551	406	1 216	3 161	1 234
Libanon	13 205	3 819	1 714	758	337	1 265
Pakistan	5 455	1 043	393	603	490	593
Sri Lanka	6 001	835	253	679	690	589
Vietnam	14 779	1 823	240	1 347	4 192	656
Other	56 836	12 957	3 049	4 989	7 493	3 456
Australia, Oceania	700	110	17	57	174	73
Stateless, unclear citizenship	10 824	1 698	3 284	623	523	496
Total	951 314	221 308	67 421	97 868	98 371	72 038

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (2006)

The majority of residents with a migrant background live in former West-Germany, due to the guest worker recruitment schemes of the 1950s and 1960s and resulting from internal East-West migration since 1989. Moreover, migrants and their descendants predominately live in urban centres.¹⁵

Highly diverse migration histories and countries of origin, not to mention social, cultural, and religious diversity, present significant challenges to the German school system. This has been exacerbated through the inactivity of education and policy makers over the last couple of decades in developing and implementing systematic concepts to deal with immigration or discrimination. The difficulties currently facing German schools, such as social and ethnic

¹⁵ See map on <http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/bundestagswahl2005/onlineatlas/atlas.svgz> (accessed: 13.11.2007)

segregation, have been a direct consequence of this failure to develop and implement integration policies in educational, social and political matters.

In Berlin, the proportion of students speaking a ‘non-German native language’ is significantly higher in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods such as *Kreuzberg*, *Neukölln*, *Wedding* and *Moabit* where, during the 1960s and 1970s, ‘guest workers’ found affordable, low standard housing. In the new¹⁶ Berlin borough of *Mitte*, which includes *Wedding* and *Moabit* 56 per cent of students speak a ‘non-German native language’; 48 per cent in *Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg*; and in *Neukölln* 47 per cent. In comparison, the more socially privileged boroughs of *Steglitz-Zehlendorf*, or the former East Berlin parts of the city, are comprised of respectively 14 per cent and between 4 and 15 per cent of students of non-German first language.¹⁷ However, percentages of migrant students cannot be equated with specific conflicts or challenges, as the figures do not detail the potentially specific capacities and needs of the students, not to mention the significant differences within individual boroughs. Despite this, these figures are officially used to compose classes and to calculate extra hours for German language training and serve as evidence of ‘problematic’ or ‘bad’ schools in public debate. Increasing numbers of middle class families move out of these neighbourhoods as soon as their children have reached school age, significantly adding to the increase of social segregation (Häußermann/Kapphan 2004).

Several studies, including surveys undertaken under the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) that have dominated media representation, have revealed that in Germany there is the highest correlation between social/migrant background of students and educational achievement in comparison to other industrialized countries (OECD 2006; Deutsches PISA-Konsortium 2001; European Forum for Migration Studies 2001; Auernheimer 2006b). The first federal educational report with special reference to students with a migration background based on micro census data,¹⁸ confirmed that migrant students have more difficulties than their German native peers in accessing and remaining in a *Gymnasium* (Konsortium Bildungsberichterstattung 2006).

In 2000, 32 per cent of grade 9 students with a migrant background attend the *Hauptschule* – the type of school at the low end of the multi-track school system – which is nearly twice the number of their peers whose parents were born in Germany. Only 25 per cent go to the *Gymnasium* – which prepares students for university entry – compared to 33 per cent of their German native peers (see table 2). The situation is even more dramatic amongst the largest group of students of Turkish origin. Every second German-Turkish pupil attends a *Hauptschule* whereas only every eighth attends the *Gymnasium* (ibid.). Even if they have the same reading competence as their peers, migrant children are less likely to receive a recommendation to enrol in the *Gymnasium* than German natives (Konsortium Bildungsberichterstattung 2006). About 20 per cent of the male pupils of immigrant origin leave a *Hauptschule* without any graduation (ibid. 73). The distribution of students in German schools points to the existence of segregation processes. Every fourth migrant student, but only every twentieth German native, attends a school with a majority of other migrant students (ibid. 162). Moreover, the percentage of migrant students attending the ‘special-needs school’ (*Sonderschule*) for ‘students with a learning disability’, a type of school not taken into account in the PISA-survey, is disproportionately high. In 1999 4.5 per cent of all

¹⁶ In 2001 23 administrative Berlin districts were merged into 12.

¹⁷ Figures of school year 2005/2006, Senatsverwaltung Bildung 2006c: 9.

¹⁸ Until now, school administration record data according to citizenship: As children of migrants born in Germany often do not acquire German citizenship but count as ‘foreigners’, this statistical account is misleading. In addition, ‘ethnic German’ migrants from Eastern Europe (*Aussiedler*) are guaranteed German citizenship and hence are not recorded as ‘migrants’.

foreign students and 2.33 per cent of German students attended a *Sonderschule* (Kornmann 2006).

A further central finding of the national PISA-surveys was the relationship between German language skills and school achievement and the respectively low level of German skills amongst migrant students.¹⁹

Table 2: Proportion of 15 year-old students in 2000, with/without a migration background in the different school types according to regions of origin (in per cent)

Migration Background/ Group of Origin	Hauptschule	Realschule	Gesamtschule	Gymnasium
No migration background	16,6	38,6	11,6	33,2
Total number of students with a migration background	31,8	29,7	14,0	24,6
Turkey	48,3	22,1	17,0	12,5
Other states of former guest worker recruitment scheme	30,0	31,4	13,6	25,1
Ethnic Germans (<i>Spät-)Aussiedler</i> (former Soviet Union)	38,4	33,6	9,8	18,2
Other	20,5	29,3	15,5	34,6

Source: Konsortium Bildungsberichterstattung 2006: 152.

One main reason for this considerable discrimination against students with a migration history can be found within the highly selective streaming of the multi-track school system, although some policy-makers still deny its exclusionary effect.²⁰

2.3 Discriminatory effects of the German school system

Compulsory education does not generally apply to children of refugees and undocumented migrants. In fact, their right to education is restricted by German immigration law, although in the mean time, some *Länder* have extended compulsory schooling to refugees and some have implemented a system for refugee children, which is called the ‘right to schooling’ (*Schulbesuchsrecht*). Nevertheless, because of administrative, financial, legal and organisational reasons the ‘right to schooling’ is not able to guarantee schooling to all refugee children. Moreover, undocumented children are completely excluded from the public school system in the majority of federal states. The fact that headmasters are obliged to call the immigration office if they receive information about an undocumented student further reduces the chances of school education for this group (Terre de homes/Harmening 2005; United Nations Human Rights Council 2007).

There is evidence to suggest that streaming schoolchildren has a particularly negative effect on children from poor families, migrant children and children with disabilities (UN 2007). Some academics infer that students are not primarily disadvantaged because of being migrants, but rather because of their socially disadvantaged position (Kristen 2006), which often coincides with a ‘migration background’. Other scholars point to inherent mechanisms in the school system contributing to discrimination against migrant children. Apparently, authorities attach disproportionate weight to the linguistic competence of schoolchildren,

¹⁹ On differences in educational performance between Federal States see e.g. Hunger/Thranhardt 2006; Britz 2005.

²⁰ See e.g. the reactions in defense of the school system in response to the Munoz-report (UN 2007), by the association of philologists in Baden Wuerttemberg: „Gleiche Bildungschancen für alle, aber nicht durch ungerechte ‚Gleichmacherei‘“, 21.03.2007, <http://bildungsklick.de/pm/51967/gleiche-bildungschancen-fuer-alle-aber-nicht-durch-ungerechte-gleichmacherei/> (accessed: 03.07.2007)

since one of the key elements in the classification assessment is their proficiency in German. This element has the effect of discriminating against schoolchildren of foreign origin whose mother tongue is not German (UN 2007). Several migrant children have been classified as having learning-disabilities simply because of sub-standard German language skills (Kornmann 2006). Beyond the early streaming process feeding the multi-track school system specific organisational structures and traditions in German schools have exclusionary effects on migrant students.

Gomolla/Radtke (2002) analysed modes of institutional discrimination resulting from routines, habits and established practices in internal school organisation. Headmasters, teachers and administrations would often inadvertently act in a discriminatory way, simply by following the organisational logic of the system, e.g. primary schools oriented to the capacity of secondary schools in the neighbourhood not to the skills of the children. Children who did not attend *Kindergarten* – mostly migrant children – were often put back a year or sent to ‘introductory classes’ (*Vorbereitungsklassen*) irrespective their real competences. Often teachers would regard the wishes of Turkish parents to send their children to a *Gymnasium* as unrealistic – hence preconditioning their failure.²¹ Latently educators would not feel responsible for their migrant students.

Schiffauer et al. (2004) compared the different roles that schools play in four European countries in creating a national specific ‘political culture’ and how it is transmitted to migrant students. This ethnographic study revealed the relevance of the ‘hidden curriculum’, which subtly and selectively guides educational practices, defines ‘normality’ and codifies migrant students as the ‘other’ – for example, when even well-meaning educators only refer to them as ‘experts’ on their parents’ home country. Based on a negative model of national identity, the aim of German ‘civil enculturation’ is to teach pupils to think and feel democratically and to create a citizenry that acts according to internalised principles. The authors draw attention to the fact that this concept contradicts the legal position that many migrants find themselves in, a contradiction teachers observed in this study apparently did not realise.

Radtke (2004) stresses that “ethnic disintegration emanates from the centre of society”. In urban centres, schools compete for pupils with the most potential. Within this competition the central medium is the privileged parents’ will and their fear of social descent. These parents tend to avoid ‘problematic’ schools, while schools tend to refuse pupils they regard as ‘problematic’. Schools increasingly function with a market-orientated logic by developing specific school profiles. Within these selection processes social *habitus* and distinction play a major role. Underprivileged students and the majority of migrants are at the losing end of this competition.

The PISA-surveys on under-achieving pupils in Germany in general and migrant pupils in particular have been a trigger for debates on educational reform and integration measures. Public debate mainly concentrates on emphasising school reform and development in order to improve individual pupils’ achievements. Central aims of a school reform are to implement equal opportunity structures, to increase the autonomy of individual schools and to introduce whole-day schools. Still, policy makers refuse to abolish the multi-track school system. Even the abolishment of the *Hauptschule*, which is scheduled in several *Länder*, is a highly controversial issue, and especially opposed by middle-class native Germans fearing a lowering of school standards and the loss of the privilege that they perceive the system as affording their children.²² The general debate on school reform is characterised by the idea of

²¹ See also on the concept of “stereotype threat effects” by Schofield et al. 2006.

²² There are some initiatives to abolish the *Hauptschule*. It is doubtful that the aforementioned discriminatory effects may be overcome if a two-track *Realschule* is established instead, without questioning the whole system of streaming – like recent developments in Rhineland-Palatinate, see “Rheinland-Pfalz schafft die Hauptschule

the flexible individual and the aim to create human capital. People are surveyed from *Kindergarten* onwards throughout 'life-long learning' for their economic usability (Radtko 2004, 2006).

Within this general debate, the specific needs of migrants and issues of cultural diversity have not been seriously taken into consideration (Gomolla 2006). Since the publication of the PISA-findings, the debate on educational integration focuses on the improvement of German language skills and migrant parents' involvement as further outlined in this paper.

2.4 'Problematic' schools, the fear of Islam and the general integration discourse

In March 2006 teachers from a Berlin *Hauptschule* addressed the public with an open letter declaring that they were not able to teach anymore.²³ The proportion of students with non-German background had risen to account for 83 per cent of all their students, of which 35 per cent were of Arabic origin and 26 per cent of Turkish origin. The teachers, all German natives, claimed that the atmosphere in class was characterised by aggression, disrespect and ignorance towards them. Pupils would destroy school property, attack teachers and refuse to learn. The addressors of the letter demanded a general school reform as well as ad hoc support.

This "emergency call" caused a huge political and media debate about the alleged failure of multiculturalism, the lack of German language skills amongst migrants, the responsibilities of migrant parents, teacher shortages and the failings of the school system. Particularly under scrutiny was the institution of the *Hauptschule* as the school 'for the rest' – the 'rest' being the socially disadvantaged and a disproportionately high percentage of pupils 'with a migration background'.

The debate about 'over-burdened schools' is directly connected with the discourse on Islam as a threat to social cohesion and democratic standards in schools. In the aftermath of 9/11 as well as of several events on the international, national and local levels (e.g. the headscarf affair in Germany, the murder of the film director Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands, the so-called honour murder of a Turkish woman in Berlin and the debate about the introduction of Islamic religious instructions in German schools) teachers and non-Muslim parents spoke out against what they interpreted as the increasing influence of Islam and respectively Islamism in schools.

Teachers reported that Muslim students have pressurised other Muslims if they did not behave according to Islamic rules and that non-Muslims have been insulted as 'impure'. They complained that young males behave in a misogynist/sexist way against non-Muslim female pupils and teachers. Cases of violent and aggressive boys of Arabic or Turkish origin acting in an anti-Semitic way have also been described. After a young Turkish woman was murdered by her brothers because she had been living independently as a single mother, some migrant pupils expressed their sympathy for this 'honour murder'.²⁴ Simultaneously, Islamic

ein bisschen ab" (Kathrin Schmiedkampff), Spiegel online, 30.10.2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/schulspiegel/wissen/0,1518,514461,00.html> (accessed: 06.11.2007). In contrast, the Berlin Senate has launched a pilot scheme of community schools (*Gemeinschaftsschulen*) starting in 2008, „Bildungssenator Zöllner legt Fahrplan für Gemeinschaftsschule vor“, bildungsklick.de, 20.02.2007, <http://bildungsklick.de/pm/51416/bildungssenator-zoellner-legt-fahrplan-fuer-gemeinschaftsschule-vor/> (accessed: 06.11.2007).

²³ Documentation of the *Rütti*-school letter, 30.03.2006,

<http://www.spiegel.de/schulspiegel/0,1518,408803,00.html> (accessed: 06.04.2007).

²⁴ On the case Hatun Sürücü see http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatun_S%C3%BCr%C3%BCc%C3%BC (accessed: 14.09.2007).

organisations have been accused of exerting pressure on schools threatening the co-education of boys and girls. One organisation was condemned by teachers and other migrant organisations for distributing application forms exempting students from swimming lessons amongst Muslim families. Generally questions are raised about basic democratic rights and whether they are still valid in schools, and if those same liberal rights have been applied to all people irrespective of their religion (or non-religion). With regard to Islamic religious instruction, teachers fear a loss of control over educational content and question the democratic basis of Islamic religion generally (e.g. Senatsverwaltung Gesundheit 2004; Kleff 2005; Gesemann 2006).

The media often take up these issues in a particularly subjective manner, focusing on conflict and the fragmentation of society allegedly caused by Islam or some Islamic groups.²⁵ The debate is embedded in the general issue of migrant integration, focussing mainly on the failure of integration that is exemplified by migrants living 'parallel lives/societies'. The concept of 'parallel lives' is a catch-word applied to Muslim migrants (of whom the majority are Turkish) who allegedly live closed-off from majority society, lack German language skills and customs and obey Islamic rules and educational concepts. These rules are depicted as backward, traditional, narrow-minded, and oriented to principles like nemesis, honour, submission, women's oppression and male predominance etc. (see also reports WP 1+2 of the EMILIE-project). Consequently, the responsibility for the school failures of migrant students and for aggression and violent conflicts in schools is ascribed to the individual students and their parents. According to this point of view Islam critic Necla Kelek resumes:

"The German school has to be a German space in terms of culture and language. When one enters it, nationality should remain at the front door like a suitcase. How this finally takes form is up to the teachers. But youth need this chance to get to know an alternative."²⁶

In a more liberal approach, several *Länder* have initiated so-called *Islamforen* or similar round-table discussions to bring policy makers together. Here, governmental or communal representatives, migrant and Islamic organisations and other social interest groups and individuals are to discuss conflicts and possible solutions within immigration society, especially with regard to Islam and majority society. These discussion forums symbolise a new level within the integration discourse. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether they will meet their goals or primarily serve symbolic needs.²⁷ However, public discourse concerning these processes tends to ignore the massive efforts made by migrant representatives in the past in getting sufficient attention from officials and educators to state their needs and offer their cooperation (I. 9, I. 10). The new communicational structures also

²⁵ E.g. "Muslime verbieten Mädchen Schulsport. Hamburg: Integration gefährdet. Schwimmen oder Sexualkunde ist für die Hälfte der muslimischen Töchter immer noch tabu" (Geneviève Wood), Hamburger Abendblatt, 17.04.2004, <http://www.abendblatt.de/daten/2004/11/17/365239.html> (accessed: 10.08.2007).

²⁶ E.g. „Diese Kinder leben im Niemandsland“, Interview with Necla Kelek, focus, 13.07.07, http://www.focus.de/schule/schule/unterricht/integration/integration_aid_66405.html?drucken=1 (accessed: 10.08.2007)

²⁷ Just how fragile these new round-tables and conferences really are, has been exemplified in the run-up to the second national integration conference. After the government tightened immigration rules, some migrant representatives refused to participate in the conference and demanded that the government withdraw the amendment. With this they aimed to reveal the discrepancy between official rhetoric and symbolic policies on the one hand, and restrictive immigration policies on the other. They criticised the fact that they had not been involved in the amendment process. In response, politicians and the media nearly unanimously accused the representatives of not behaving according to democratic rules and of lacking maturity with regard to integration and therefore negated the possible legitimacy of the migrants' claims, see "Boykott sorgt für Ärger" (M. Rey), Der Tagesspiegel, 12.07.2007; "Integrationsgipfel: ‚Türkische Gemeinde‘ will klagen", faz.net, 12.07.2007 (accessed: 17.07.2007).

pose a challenge to migrant organisations, which are far from unified regarding their aims concerning education policies.

Irrespective of to what degree the different parties in this debate attribute the causes of integration problems to the influence of Islam or to the existence of ‘parallel societies’, they generally share the aim to, broadly put, improve the situation at German schools in order to guarantee better achievements of all students, including migrant students. The main means to reach these goals are presumed to be improving migrant children’s German language skills and increasing the involvement of migrant parents in education. The role of the school, its failures in the past concerning German language teaching, communication with parents, and generally integrating native with non-native children are barely reflected.²⁸

3 Education policies and programmes with regard to migration

German schooling is subject to State supervision.²⁹ Education policies are a matter of the Federal States. The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* (*KMK*) coordinates the investigation of cross-national issues and formulates recommendations and agreements – these resolutions do not have any binding effects on the *Länder* policies, but may serve as guidelines and mutual commitments. The National Integration Plan (2007) – the result of the first governmental conference with representatives of migrants’ organisations and other NGOs – is perceived as a decisive step forward towards a successful integration of migrants. It also contains recommendations and commitments regarding the school system. Although the Integration Plan also only formulates recommendations and statements, it reflects the dominant view of current challenges and reasonable strategies. For this reason, recent policy papers of the *KMK* and the National Integration Plan are analysed in the first part of this chapter. In the main part of this chapter, specific education policies are discussed with regard to immigration and cultural diversity on the *Länder* level.

3.1 Recommendations on the national level

Early *KMK*-recommendations reflect the marginalised status ascribed to migrants. Briefly summarised, in 1964 the *KMK* recommended common compulsory schooling and the support of language skills for migrant children, both in German and their native languages. Recommendations made in the 1970s were also related to the support of language acquisition and general school performance. In 1985 the *KMK* encouraged a dialogue on cultural values and interests between migrants and native Germans in order to foster mutual understanding. As a response to increased racist attacks in the early 1990s, the conference appealed for tolerance, solidarity and the respect of ‘other cultures’. Influence of the European Community is reflected in agreements from 1978 and 1990, which aimed to intensify the European dimension in education, foster the willingness to trans-cultural open-mindedness and to reduce stereotypes. The 1994 *KMK*-paper on foreign language teaching is similarly influenced by the increasing relevance of the European dimension (see Kultusministerkonferenz 1996).

In October 1996 the *KMK* agreed on a resolution regarded as the most elaborate agreement on intercultural education. The recommendation “Intercultural Education in Schools”

²⁸ The dominant perspective concerning the role of parents includes the assumption that migrant parents were not interested in their children’s education and furthermore distracts from the responsibilities of the school institution. The issue of ‘parental involvement’ (*Elternarbeit*) needs further investigation.

²⁹ Basic Law (GG), Art. 7.

conceptualises intercultural education as a concern of both minorities and mainstream society (ibid.). The *KMK* claimed that pupils should “become aware of their own cultural socialisation, gain knowledge about other cultures, develop curiosity, openness and an understanding of other cultures, recognize their fears and endure tensions, (...) respect otherness, reflect own standpoints (...) and solve conflicts resulting from ethnic, cultural or religious affiliation in a peaceful manner” (ibid. 5). It formulated concrete suggestions in the implementation of these goals as a task for *Länder* policy makers and schools, who should reflect the multilingual and multicultural reality of pupils in curriculum content and teaching methods.

What is most notably absent in these recommendations is the acknowledgement, or even discussion, of the hampering and exclusionary effects of the school streaming system.³⁰ A further oversight is that the *KMK* has applied a concept of culture as self-contained and more or less static. The recommendations may however, provide some guideline parameters towards a more open-minded and cultural diverse school culture rather than one of assimilation and adaptation to a monolingual and mono-cultural situation.

Similar to the *KMK*-recommendations from 1996, the Weimar Appeal from 2003, a result of a conference of the *KMK*, experts and community representatives on the role of the education system regarding the integration of Muslims in Germany, emanates from the perspective of religious and cultural diversity as enriching, and defines integration as “mutual acceptance” while underlining democratic rules as a common basis. The declaration quite specifically refers to questions of everyday school life and declares as “examples of good practice (...) the observance of Islamic dietary rules at school festivals and celebrations and the exemption of pupils of Muslim belief from lessons on Muslim religious holidays.” (Lerngemeinschaft 2003: 140). It underlines that schools “should be aware of how much stress can be placed on a pupil if he or she becomes the subject of disagreements between the school and their parents” and that they know that “pupils who wear a headscarf for religious reasons are protected by (...) the Basic Law” (ibid.). On the other hand, in cases where Muslim students had been exempted from biology or from class events because of religious reasons, compulsory schooling is stressed and that parents “can trust teachers to take appropriate care of their children” (ibid.). The declaration reflects the good intent of mutual understanding and is quite liberal and progressive in terms of accommodation of religious needs. For the purpose of reflecting the extent to which the declaration has transposed itself in *Länder* policies, the *Islamforen* may be of further interest. Of vital importance is that school practices receive further analysis and attention.

In July 2007, the Federal Government submitted its National Integration Plan, which had been precipitated by the Integration Conference beginning in 2006. The chapter on “Education, Vocational Training, and Labour Market” details that the importance of educational integration was “to meet future needs of skilled personnel and to stay competitive on an international level” (Bundesregierung 2007: 65). The Plan therefore maintained that the most important requirement is good German language skills. The paper underlines the general necessity of an educational system that “opens up chances and develops potential” (ibid. 63). Intercultural competence is regarded as a specific potential in migrant children, rather than a general educational aim. Teacher qualifications should be improved and teachers with a migrant history should be increasingly employed, in particular in schools with a high percentage of migrant pupils – as if they were expected to be able to solve the problems that education policies and German teachers have been incapable of until now. There are no specific suggestions about education, curricula contents or the accommodation of various

³⁰ See e.g. UN 2007; Gomolla/Radtke 2002.

cultures and religions.³¹ However, the preamble of the Integration Plan takes a clear standpoint with respect to cultural diversity. It states that the basis of integration is “our moral concepts (...) our cultural self-concept (and) our liberal and democratic order, as it has developed from German and European history (...)” (ibid. 12)

In contrast to the *KMK*-recommendations, the National Integration Plan with respect to education does not reflect any real acceptance of, or approach to, difference and cultural heterogeneity, but refers to seemingly clear-cut concepts of the national cultural self and to ‘Western tradition’ of liberalism and democracy. In response to the international competition among skilled personnel the plan also focuses on a school reform with the aim to make better use of human capital.

3.2 The Federal States (*Länder*)

Until recently most *Länder* have not developed comprehensive concepts dealing with migration and cultural diversity in school systems or teacher training. Since the 1960s, migrant pupils who were not capable of following regular instructions in German were taught in preparatory classes (*Vorbereitungsklassen*). In many *Länder*, contrary to the actual aim of enabling students to switch to regular classes, these preparatory classes became permanent institutions. In Berlin, until 1995 it was legal practice to concentrate children with foreign passports into so-called “regular foreigners’ classes” (*Ausländerregelklassen*) if their proportion in a regular class exceeded 30 per cent. In these classes instruction could be given by migrant teachers “in the language of the sending country for a transition period” (see Gogolin et al. 2001: 60) – according to the perception that migrants were only temporary residents in Germany. Migrants could be exempted from foreign language classes (normally English) in order to take extra lessons in German, but then had to pay the price of not being eligible for a further qualifying exam. It was common practice to classify students according to their (foreign) citizenship. In the meantime, this category has been changed or supplemented by the criterion ‘non-German first language’. These ‘non-German first language’ students are supposed to be integrated into regular classes and are entitled to special support in German (Gogolin et al. 2001; Engin 2003) (see also below).

Today most of the *Länder* have designed general integration concepts and started to revise their educational programs and curricula in response to the aforementioned 1996 *KMK* - recommendations.

3.2.1 Concepts on immigration and culture

Until the early 2000s most educational programmes have generally depicted migration as problematic and primarily focused on conflicts within areas with migrant populations, while only some have drawn a positive picture of immigration as enriching. Migrant issues typically receive less attention in the former East-German *Länder* since their migrant populations are smaller and because these states have been primarily occupied with the adaptation of the school system to the West-German model during the 1990s (as an exception see: Saxony). However, confronted with an increase in right-wing extremism, the state of Brandenburg for instance, has addressed the issue as a central problem in their educational programme (Elverich 2004; Gogolin et al. 2001).

³¹ The chapter “Integration on the ground” (“*Integration vor Ort*”) of the National Integration Plan, claims that schools should become spaces of intercultural dialog in order to revalue these neighbourhoods. Special tasks are applied to migrant organisations. The recommendations for mainstream members of the public only are to volunteer as ‘readers’ or ‘reading mentors’ in schools taking on a role through which they can identify themselves as helpers of migrants. No additional financial or organisational means are allocated for these aims.

Some *Länder* emphasise the task of schools as being one of forming one homogenous cultural identity. According to Bavarian school law pupils “are to be educated in the spirit of (...) the affection to the Bavarian home and to the German nation (...)” (Bekanntmachung 2007: Art. 1)³². Others, like Hamburg, clearly object to concepts of assimilation and support the preservation of a multitude of cultural identities, also proposing bi-lingual teaching (see Gogolin et al. 2001). In contrast, a few *Länder* aim to reflect the construction of ‘the own’ and ‘the other’ (Saxony, Elverich 2004).³³

Some *Länder* indicate areas of institutional exclusion, demanding measures to improve conditions in integration, to foster justice in education, or to abolish direct discrimination. The educational aim of ‘tolerance’ is referred to as regarding cultural and religious diversity, although it must be said that this aim remains quite general in the sense of “a liberal attitude” (Elverich 2004: 314).³⁴

On the whole, most policy programmes are based on the view of ‘cultures’ as homogenous, self-contained collectives. An awareness of the hybridity of cultures is most often notably absent, and the challenges that migration poses on the German nation are barely taken into account. However, some approaches do at least reflect a certain degree of openness to cultural diversity and change. As an example, the educational policy statements of Berlin are investigated in the following.

3.2.2 The Berlin Integration Program

The city of Berlin, which is a Federal State in itself, is considered as having progressive and open integration policies. The Berlin pilot scheme of bilingual German-Turkish alphabetisation has influenced national debate. (see Gogolin et al. 2001). High numbers of migrants from various countries (13.9 per cent of 3.34 mill. residents are ‘foreigners’ meaning they do not have a German passport) and cultural diversity have been officially appreciated attributes of the city’s image for some years. A guideline for teachers on intercultural education states that a multicultural society “questions our practices and unsettles our accepted truths, forcing us to renew our perspectives” (Senatsverwaltung Schule 2001: 7). However, if we take a closer look at recent education programmes, the policies of the Berlin Senate still have not internalised this statement and the recommendations of the Conference of the Ministers of Culture from 1996 on intercultural education.³⁵

The Education Commission of the *Länder* Berlin and Brandenburg dedicated one chapter of its 2003 report to the disadvantages Berlin pupils face due to their social, ethnic or cultural background (Bildungskommission 2003). The main tenant of the report is that schools face major problems as a result of migration and that the scope of schools to solve these problems is limited since politics and society bear a huge part of this responsibility. The authors accentuate the necessity of teaching migrant children with native Germans in mixed classes – an objective which makes sense if we recall that until 1995 it was legal practice in Berlin to separate children with a foreign passport into so-called ‘regular foreigners’ classes’. According to the report, the central aims of educational integration are to teach German

³² See also the debate on displaying religious symbols, esp. the crucifix in class, e.g. Esser 2000.

³³ Interestingly enough, those *Länder* with an autochthonous national minority (e.g. Sorbs in Brandenburg and Saxony, Danish in Schleswig-Holstein) follow education policies that support and maintain the national culture of these groups, but do not relate to migrants and their children generally (Elverich 2004; Gogolin et al. 2001).

³⁴ Many federal school laws refer to basic human rights as part of the general educational task. Beyond that, some *Länder* stress the importance of reconciliation between peoples, peaceful cohabitation and understanding beyond national boundaries. Generally, an in-depth analysis of the education policies in the *Länder* and a comparison of their historical paths would be necessary to fully understand integration policies in Germany.

³⁵ Beside these programs, the implementation of policies and the outcome of several initiatives – such as pilot schemes, round tables and expert meetings launched by the Berlin Senate, especially by its Ombudsperson for Integration and Migration Matters – need further examination.

language skills and the “norms and values of the majority society” (ibid. 137). Moreover, the authors state that integration can only succeed if the language of instruction is German and that “cultural matters” of school would “basically originate from a *Western* tradition” (ibid. 146, *Italic in orig.*). Facing the “multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual diversity of the pupils”, schools had the “task of cultural homogenisation” (ibid.). Apparently, the only answer on cultural heterogeneity the authors can think of, is to unify and homogenise: in other words to make the minorities assimilate to the majority. This homogenisation would open up chances for migrant families to adopt the culture of the majority of society. Nevertheless, the authors are aware of the problematic implications of simple assimilationist approaches as these would provoke resistance in migrants and their retreat into “migrant cultures” (ibid. 147/8). The commission also refuses a naïve culturalist approach of tolerance, which would also eventually stabilise migrant cultures. Instead, the task of schools would be to educate children without repression to reflect and revise their norms and to become convinced of the values of the majority as relevant to their own lives. Again, the means of such a process of adoption is supposed to be the German language. At the end of the chapter the authors admit that multilingualism may be positive for the personal development of students. But because of a lack of distinct scientific research and because of limited feasibility of multilingualism in schools, the issue is again marginalised. Also, the brief comments on the necessity to revise curricula seem rhetorical, as they are not taken up in the concluding recommendations. To summarise, the report basically argues in favour of a cautious or pedagogically considered way of assimilation.

In January 2004 the Berlin House of Representatives amended the Berlin Education Law. Apart from the general idea of increasing the autonomy of the individual schools it introduced an educational aim:

“to enable pupils (...) to learn about and understand their own and other cultures; to encounter people from different backgrounds, religion or world-view without prejudice; to participate in cultures cohabiting peacefully by developing intercultural competence and to stand up for the rights and dignity of all humans.”
(Senatsverwaltung Bildung 2004, § 3 (3.3))

Still, the recommendations on how to put this principle into practice are quite vague, especially in comparison to those concerning gender equality. While gender equality would have to be realised by ‘gender mainstreaming’ which implies an active and straight-forward implementation, of cultural diversity it is said that “cultural (...) skills, talents, interests and bents (...) should be supported and stimulated to fulfil each students full potential” (ibid. §4 (4)).³⁶

Despite the principally ‘intercultural’ approach manifested in the school law, subsequently published programmes on education in Berlin again basically take deficits among migrant pupils as given and focus on teaching German language, norms and values.³⁷ In 2005 the Berlin Senate published its first Integration Plan “Supporting Diversity – Strengthening Cohesion”, which was upgraded and revised in 2007 (Senatsverwaltung Integration 2007). Generally, although it expresses the appreciation of cultural diversity when referring to

³⁶ In a separate paragraph explicit measures are dealt with regarding the support of pupils of non-German first language (§ 35a). See also paragraphs on ethics, religious and world-views education (*Weltanschauungsunterricht*) (§§ 12, 13).

³⁷ See also the paper by the Berlin Minister of Culture ‘Integration through Education’, Senatsverwaltung Bildung 2006c, which emphasises, with bias, the necessity to teach the German language, the structures and norms of the host country, as well as an understanding for and the acceptance of the host country.

education, it focuses on promoting German language skills, the reduction of structural barriers so that equal opportunities can be fostered, and the responsibility of migrant parents.³⁸

Only one paragraph that presents “leading projects” refers explicitly to accommodating cultural diversity in schools, a topic omitted from the chapter concerning general objectives. Interestingly enough, the authors apparently immediately associate “problems” and “antidemocratic influences” with the issue of “freedom of religion”. The text about “education of values” (*Werteerziehung*) starts by saying: “The realisation of the constitutionally stated freedom of religion in school does not proceed without problems. Fears of antidemocratic influences lead to a reconsideration of the quality of religion as a school subject.” (ibid. 41) Subsequently, one “leading project” is portrayed that aims to “support schools in dealing with topics likely to cause conflict” (ibid. 42). The text identifies the following problem areas in schools: non-participating of pupils in: sex education, physical education, class trips and other school activities. Apparently, the problems at the centre of interest relating to religious diversity and in particular, as it becomes clear in the course of the text, to Islamic culture are those experienced by the schools, not the pupils. Therefore, issues like the provision of culturally specific meals, accommodation of religious holidays, dress codes or discrimination of religious/cultural minorities are not touched.³⁹

The programmes prioritise school achievement, which is one but not the only genuine task of school education, and subordinates intercultural principles. While religious or cultural difference is generally depicted as positive and enriching, when it comes to everyday school life, it is regarded as causing problems and even more so, when the ‘other’ religion is Islam.

3.2.3 *Qualitative standards*

The majority of the states have developed a catalogue of criteria for establishing the quality of a schools functioning standard. These criteria are applied for external and/or internal evaluations.⁴⁰ As schools in Berlin are not obliged to publish the evaluation assessments, their effectivity remains restricted (I. 8). The criterion used to assess functioning quality standards reflect the subordinated role that the issue of cultural diversity plays in federal educational policies. These assessments generally demand open-mindedness, orientation towards democracy, tolerance, non-violence, communication, solidarity and fairness etc. More currently, issues of gender equality and the integration of disabled students have been included in the regulations of almost all the states. With respect to migrant students, the assessment criteria require specific support in German language acquisition. However, most often the acknowledgement of cultural diversity is hardly mentioned.⁴¹

In the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg it is at least a requirement that schools ensure that “all students with different socio-cultural backgrounds can participate in school life” and that schools should have regulations in order to overcome parents’ language obstacles (Landesinstitut 2006: 26, 29) whereas Brandenburg is more explicit, describing one quality indicator as: “(...) acceptance of otherness: the ability and willingness towards intercultural

³⁸ Furthermore, the aim of networking within the neighbourhood is stressed.

³⁹ One element of this project is a working group consisting of representatives from politics, administration, sciences, migrant organisations etc. who have spent over two years developing an information brochure for educators concerning these issues. The other element is the offer of intercultural retraining by the Berlin Institute for Schools and Media (*Berliner Landesinstitut für Schule und Medien – LISUM*). In practice these activities seem to expand the narrow focus of the sketched integration program (I. 3, I. 13).

⁴⁰ The assessment criteria of the following out of all 16 *Länder* have been reviewed for this paper: Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg, Schleswig-Holstein, North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony, Saxony, Rhineland-Palatinate.

⁴¹ E.g. Berlin (Senatsverwaltung Bildung 2006b), North Rhine-Westphalia (Ministerium Schule 2006), Schleswig Holstein (Ministerium Bildung 2005), where the questionnaire is provided in six languages.

communication and cooperation, as with living with people from other cultural groups.” (Ministerium Brandenburg 2004: 12) Moreover, it asks for course options concerning social learning and in particular regarding “gender equality and the ability to learn with and live with people with and without disabilities as well as those from different cultures” (ibid. 21). The assessment criteria for schools in Rhineland-Palatinate appear to be quite explicit in this matter. They demand that pupils are recorded within categories of “migration background”, “non-German native language” as well as the “socio-economic status of the parents (...) e.g. educational attainment, employment status, extent of home library, internet-access, personal computer ownership, migration background, and family language” (Ministerium Rheinland-Pfalz 2007: 10). With these means, the Ministry goes beyond hitherto existing categories of citizenship or “(non)-German native language”, and attempt to acknowledge the relevance of different socioeconomic factors. Similarly, the criteria suggest that teachers should “consider living conditions of the parents (e.g. shift work, single parents, migration background and educational background), when offering information events or consultation-hours” (ibid. 21). The main objective with respect to migrant students is to improve their school performances. The central means are first, to increase migrant parents’ involvement. The paper lists specific criteria how to improve parents’ participation and demands “special offers for parents with migration background, e.g. for Muslim women, in order to support their active participation” (ibid.). Second, special concepts for students with migration background are required concerning individual promotion. Finally, the integration of migrants should be fostered through “intercultural encounter opportunities, e.g. festivals, theme evenings” (ibid. 19). Although the framework takes cultural diversity into account, focus is only given to individual achievement and parents’ involvement and does not truly go beyond static concepts of culture. Moreover, the school institution is not challenged by the assessment criteria: Rhineland-Palatinate has one of the few criterion that lists certain topics of advanced teacher training but does not mention issues like intercultural pedagogy, anti-discrimination or diversity training in this regard.

3.2.4 German language acquisition and multilingualism

The results of the PISA-surveys have intensified the perception that German language skills and good school performances were the main criteria for successful integration of migrants and their descendants. Therefore integration measures are focussed on language acquisition. The federal programme supporting children and teenagers with a migration history (*FörMig*)⁴² aims to utilise German teaching methods that encompass all streams and grades. Although there has been a need of German language teaching over decades, methods and teaching concepts have yet to be further developed and implemented.

All of the *Länder* test potential students’ German language skills before school enrolment, some even denying entry if German skills are considered insufficient. Methods and realization of these tests are still under revision. Berlin is the only state where children have to pass the test irrespective of their ethnic origin so as not to separate them.⁴³ Consequently, the

⁴² Based on the expertise by Gogolin et al. (2003) the Federation-States Commission (*Bund-Länder-Kommission*) for Educational Planning and Research Promotion introduced a support programme (2004-2006) with a budget of 12.8 million Euros, which is currently under the administration of the states (*Förderung von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit Migrationshintergrund – FörMig*). The programme aims to foster innovative approaches in language education by the Federal States, to evaluate them and facilitate a transfer of good practice while supplying data for future educational planning, <http://www.blk-foermig.uni-hamburg.de/web/de/all/prog/index.html> (accessed: 03.05.2007).

⁴³ See also innovative models in Schleswig-Holstein and Saxony with continuous support during a students’ entire schooling period. At the lower secondary level new migrants are entitled to extra preparatory classes but only if they attend the *Hauptschule*, which infact excludes them from the other school streams of the *Realschule* and *Gymnasium* and contributes to the unequal distribution of migrant students in the school system, Elverich 2004.

responsibility of teaching German language skills is given to *Kindergarten* and pre-school institutions despite the fact that the teachers and carers normally lack the time and necessary skills to do so (I. 9). Second, migrant parents are considered accountable for sending their children to *Kindergarten* and for support their German skills.

In public schools courses in “German as a second language” (*Deutsch als Zweitsprache – DaZ*) are allocated according their numbers of children with a non-German first language. This concept neither takes existing skill levels among migrant students nor the deficiencies in German language skills among native Germans into account – a problem that is unmistakably evident in some schools (I. 1, I. 7) Berlin, meanwhile, has legalised the former practice of some schools to teach *DaZ* to those children really in need of this support, for both migrants and non-migrants. The concept of *DaZ* is still under debate as the assigned lessons are often simply misused as substitutes for regular class, e.g. if a teacher drops out because of sickness (which reflects the general problem of teacher shortage at German schools) (I. 8).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the countries sending ‘guest workers’ and most West-German *Länder* worked in mutual cooperation to give migrant pupils the opportunity of attending native-language classes, normally organised by the diplomatic institutions in addition to regular classes (*muttersprachlicher Ergänzungsunterricht*). Some of these classes contained nationalistic content, particularly from those countries with authoritarian regimes at the time, such as Greece, which provoked anger and criticism amongst migrant parents.⁴⁴ The history of ‘foreigners’ regular classes’ and ‘native-tongue additional classes’ reflects the perspective that migrants would return to their home countries. The revision of this perspective has, in a way, contributed to the revival of assimilationist approaches and the perception that the acquisition of German language skills was the magic and only means of integrating migrants. For instance, because the assumption that students would return to their (parents’) countries has now been abandoned, authorities in the state of Hesse now refuse to support native language teaching generally insisting that students with a migrant background should fully adapt to German society (Gogolin et al. 2003).

Although several federal Ministries acknowledge the importance of supporting the first languages of migrant children and despite migrant parents’ organisation demanding respect and support of their native languages in schools (I. 9, I. 10, I. 11), only some pilot schemes and projects have been developed, mainly in primary schools. In Berlin a pilot scheme of bilingual German-Turkish alphabetisation was initiated and running between 1983/84 and 1993/94 but has not been implemented on a larger scale. The continuation of this course was prevented for reasons of feasibility, financing and the prioritisation of German languages skills (see Gogolin et al. 2001).

Another innovative scheme is the State Europe School (*Staatliche Europaschule*) where class instruction is bilingual and the school accommodates one half of German native-speakers and the other of native speakers of another language. In the school year of 2005/06 there were 18 primary and 13 secondary such Europe schools offering in Berlin. The prioritisation of West-European languages is apparent in that it has taken so long just to establish one German-Turkish primary school (1995) (I. 9). In the last five years one secondary school has also integrated one German-Turkish class in each grade as part of the pilot scheme. However, the idea of half/half, German/Turkish native-speakers has not been realised as the proportion of Turkish native-speakers is about 70/80 per cent of the student population (the school is situated in a district with a majority of socially disadvantaged migrant residents and does not receive enough applications by German natives).

Although the aforementioned Federal-States program *FörMig* aims to foster innovative approaches in both German language education and bi- or multilingualism, in practice they in

⁴⁴ Migrant parents’ from Greek and Spanish origin were quick to organise and improve their children's educational environment, e.g. Gaitanides 2006.

fact focus on the former. Multilingualism – at least in the Berlin schools participating in the pilot scheme – is not addressed; teachers are overwhelmed with multilingual teaching methods as long as students show significant difficulties with the German language (I. 2, I. 14).

One consequence of the general debate about the improvement of school performances and early learning is that schools tend to teach second languages (most: English) from primary school onwards.

3.2.5 Religious instruction

According to German Basic Law religious instruction is a regular subject in many state funded schools⁴⁵ and is taught in accordance with the principles of ‘religious groups’ (*Religionsgemeinschaften*) (GG Art. (3)). Since the 1980s in several *Länder*, Islamic groups have been lobbying for the introduction of Islamic religious instruction in German schools but have been rejected by the Ministries of Culture because they are not accepted as ‘religious groups’ in the sense of the Law. The main criterion of a ‘religious group’ – the existence of a representative person – contradicts the organisational structure of Islamic communities. Furthermore, Islamic organisations, as was the case with immigration in general, was regarded a temporary phenomena in Germany – hence not fulfilling the criteria of constancy. Eventually, Islamic organisations were, and still are, suspected of not conforming to the German constitution, which is another precondition of being accepted as a ‘religious group’.

As a consequence, Islamic religious instruction was banned from German schools and has only taken place in backyard Mosques⁴⁶ and private Koran classes. Some *Länder* integrated ‘Islamic schooling/briefing’ (*Unterweisung*) – a more of a descriptive subject not including the orientation to denomination – into the aforementioned native-language classes. As an alternative, Islamic or Turkish organisations founded private schools, although they too have encountered resistance. In German schools Muslim children could take part in Christian religious instruction classes or had to be otherwise supervised by the school. Since the mid 1970s increasing numbers of secessions in the Christian Churches and therefore non-participation in religious instructions have resulted in the implementation of the non-confessional and neutral subject ‘Ethics’ as a substitute, a subject also regarded as an alternative to Islamic religion instruction for Muslim pupils. Some *Länder* argue that the subject of Ethics (Hesse) or comparative ‘religious studies for everybody’ (Hamburg) sufficiently covers the issue of Islamic instruction (Treml 1994).⁴⁷

Since the late 1990s the general resistance to finding a solution beyond the strict definitions of ‘religious groups’ has slowly decreased. The official acceptance of Muslims and of Islam as a social reality in Germany, the wish to prevent Islamic fundamentalism and ‘parallel lives’ and to control the contents of Islamic lessons, practices and teacher training, have paved the way for, at least a start in the process of finding solutions for implementing religious instruction in German schools. This reflects the German ideal of a ‘civil religion’ (Schiffauer 1997): the integration of constitutional principles and religious denomination.

In 1999/2000 North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) initiated a pilot project with ‘Islamic religious briefing’ in German as a regular subject. The NRW-government aims to transfer the subject to ‘real’ Islamic religious instruction – including orientation to denomination – and to establish it

⁴⁵ So-called non-confessional (*bekennnisfrei*) schools are exempted from this rule, on further exemptions see below.

⁴⁶ In the past, Mosques were usually hidden in old factory buildings or buildings tucked away off the street front. Meanwhile, in some cities, representative Mosques have been erected, although native German neighbours often object to them, Şen/Sauer 2006, ZfT no date.

⁴⁷ In the ‘new’ (former East German) *Länder*, the relevance of the subject Ethics is even greater, since the numbers of Christian pupils are significantly low.

on a broader scale until 2010. Apparently, there is the willingness to accept single Islamic associations as ‘representatives’ in order to forward the issue. Similar initiatives and pilot projects exist in Bavaria, Baden Württemberg, Bremen, Rhineland Palatinate and Lower Saxony. Also, some *Länder* have introduced the subject into teacher training in German Universities to provide for educators socialised and trained in the national education system.⁴⁸ Since the school year of 2001/2002 and that of 2002/2003 respectively, two Islamic organisations in Berlin offer religious instruction in some primary schools according to an approved curriculum. After court proceedings that lasted for years, this legal allowance has at least been possible because religious instruction in Berlin is not a compulsory subject.⁴⁹ The instruction offered by the Islamic organisations is still under suspicion of contradicting the German constitution from sections of the public and the lessons are regularly investigated by unannounced visits from the Berlin Schools Administration.⁵⁰ (Şen/Sauer 2006, ZfT 2004; Behr 2005; Mannitz 2002; Mohr 2006; see also Nusser 2005)

3.2.6 *Curricula and textbooks*

In response to the *KMK*-recommendation in 1996, some states have anchored intercultural learning in an all-encompassing task within their school curriculum, while others have designed detailed directives and guidelines. For instance, Berlin and Schleswig-Holstein explicitly oppose forms of educational compensation based on assumptions of a pre-existing deficit in migrant students. Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania has developed a framework largely corresponding to the *KMK*-recommendation (Elverich 2004; Gogolin et al. 2001).⁵¹

Teaching History and Social Studies are some of the most important means of shaping national identity and constructing a community. Pupils are confronted with images of the nation, its place in history and the perception of the ‘other’. We therefore examined Berlin secondary school curricula in History and Social Studies subjects, particularly in relation to their presentation of Islam, migration and cultural diversity.⁵²

The framework for History subjects generally prescribes a chronological passage through German and partly European history. Apparently in these quite rough guidelines Islam appears either as an enemy or as a threat in the form of Islamism: First, Islam is mentioned in relation to the crusades in the Middle Ages.⁵³ The second mentioning regards “the interrelation between globalisation and new totalitarian ideologies, e.g. Islamism”, which is listed as a leading question for grades 9/10 (Senatsverwaltung Bildung 2006a: 42).

⁴⁸ „Beide Seiten müssen sich entgegen kommen. Islamischer Religionsunterricht ist an Schulen überfällig“ (Schraml, P.), in: Deutscher Bildungsserver, 20.04.2006, <http://www.bildungsserver.de/innovationsportal/bildungplus.html?artid=514> (28.11.2007); „Islamischer Religionsunterricht in Baden-Württemberg“, Justizministerium Baden-Württemberg, <http://www.jum.baden-wuerttemberg.de/servlet/PB/menu/1200963/index.html> (28.11.2007); Güneysu 2006.

⁴⁹ Berlin – like only a few other *Länder* – is exempted from the constitutional rule that religious instruction is a regular subject in public schools (Art. 7(3), see above). The so-called *Bremer Klausel*, GG Art. 141, states that this clause does not apply to those *Länder* in which a different rule was already in force on 01.01.1949.

⁵⁰ Kleine Anfragen zum Thema Schule, Bildung, Katrin Schultze-Berndt, CDU, Kontrolle der Anbieter von Religionsunterricht, Abgeordnetenhaus BERLIN, Drucksache 15/11 851, 15. Wahlperiode, http://www.cdu-fraktion.berlin.de/im_parlament/kleine_anfragen/schule_bildung/kontrolle_der_anbieter_von_religionsunterricht (accessed: 28.11.2007)

⁵¹ Other initiatives such as the federal-program ‘To learn and to live democracy’ aim to foster the democratisation of schools on all levels and to open up schools to other institutions or NGOs, see <http://www.blk-demokratie.de/>. Most elements of the programme are not specifically linked with immigration or cultural diversity.

⁵² Our interviewee from the Berlin Senate stressed the necessity to revise the curricula (I. 3). On curricula in Baden-Württemberg, Brandenburg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony see Ohliger et al. 2006.

⁵³ See for grades 7/8 Senatsverwaltung Bildung 2006a; for grades 11-13 Senatsverwaltung Bildung 2006d.

Concerning the period of the foundation of the German Empire in 1871 until today, the curriculum for grades 9/10 includes Immigration and Cultural Diversity as sub-themes, but hardly covers the situation of migrant students today. Under the heading of “Migration” the first topic is the emigration processes of Germans in the 19th century; the second, immigration of Poles to the *Ruhr*-area in the late 19th and early 20th century – which in most accounts serves as a positive example of integration despite compulsory assimilation measures at that time; third, the period “1945-1949 in Central Europe”, which obviously mainly refers to the expulsion of ethnic Germans; and finally “Germany and Europe as immigration regions until today” – a very broad phrase, which depending on the school or teacher may or may not include the recruitment of guest workers, immigration of family members and refugees (ibid. 35). Similarly, in the upper level of secondary school the focus is put on historical migration processes, like of the Huguenots; emigration into the US and migration ‘due to poverty’. A further sub-theme is titled “Dealing with the Unfamiliar, or Foreigners and Foreign Lands” (*Umgang mit dem Fremden*), which is specified as: “Christians and Muslims, Christians and Jews, Europe and Abroad, and From Colonisation until Today” (ibid.). With these titles the issue of cultural diversity is probably covered, but apparently from a perspective of a majority who is “dealing with the unfamiliar”, i.e. Muslims or Jews in opposition to Christians, rather than from a perspective of one heterogeneous social entity of equal members.

In contrast, within the subject Social Studies it is obviously an educational aim to raise the students’ awareness of social diversity. The curricular guidelines state that pupils should “describe and compare life conditions of different social groups, e.g. children, teenagers, women, men, migrants, old people, disabled people.” (Senatsverwaltung Bildung 2006e: 26) Moreover, the issue of migration is mentioned within the context of human rights. Students should find out “reasons and consequences of migration processes and research possibilities for getting involved in human rights issues” (ibid. 29).

The approach found in school textbooks is dominated by a division between native Germans and migrants/descendants from migrants. The dualism of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ or ‘the foreigners’ characterises most accounts. Moreover, migration is often depicted as being a problem, partly for migrants themselves, especially with the concept of the ‘culture shock’, but with even more reference to creating obstacles for the ‘host’ society (like in the form of unemployment). Other illustrations suggest a patronising role model of the members of the majority being supporters of ‘pitiable migrants’ (Geiger et al. 1997; Mannitz 2005; Ohliger et al. 2006).

Apart from mainstream textbooks, there are several examples of material developed by individual teachers that may address the heterogeneity of the pupils in a more adequate way (see Gogolin et al. 2003; I. 12, I. 7).

3.2.7 The appointment and training of teachers

In general, intercultural or diversity pedagogy is regarded as an extra teacher qualification rather than a basic one. It is only in few states that knowledge in intercultural learning or German as a second language is obligatory within teacher training. At many universities these subjects are only offered in postgraduate studies. Only Hamburg has implemented intercultural learning as an interdisciplinary principle within undergraduate studies (Elverich 2004; Gogolin/Krüger-Potratz 2006).

There is a broad spectrum of advanced teacher training related to cultural diversity; where focus is put on methods of German language teaching and intercultural learning in primary schools. Other topics concern right-wing extremism, prevention of violence, mediation and conflict resolution. Seminars on migration, integration, support of students with a migration history, human rights, or anti-Semitism etc. are offered less frequently. These offers compete

with other subjects in advanced teacher training, which is generally voluntary (see Kleff 2005; Elverich 2004). Within the 2007 National Integration Plan the *Länder* have agreed upon the objective to increase their offer of advanced teacher training in the area of language acquisition. But in Berlin for instance, the courses offered have just been reduced by fifty per cent for financial reasons in the previous year.⁵⁴

The proportion of teachers with a migration history is significantly low. Only about one out of fifty graduated teacher students is educated in Germany but does not have a German passport (Ergin/Berendt 2005). Teachers with a qualification from another country are normally not equated with German qualifications. In most cases they are assigned to teaching lessons in their native language or social work. Apart from the aforementioned obstacles within the German education system, and discrimination in recruitment procedure (I. 9), migrant teachers are discriminated against by the German legal framework. Teachers are normally categorised as public servants (*Beamte*) provided they are German citizens. Due to restrictive naturalisation regulations, aspirants with a migrant background are disadvantaged if they want to pursue this career. This is probably still the case after the amendment of the Citizenship Law in 2000, which has improved the chances of gaining German citizenship in some respects, but has become even more restrictive towards numerous Muslim applicants in other regards (Schiffauer forthc.). The prohibition of headscarves for teachers further excludes female Muslim migrant teachers from public schools (Amir-Moazami 2007).⁵⁵ Moreover, school administrations have been denied the possibility of purposefully raising their proportion of migrant teachers, since this would violate the legal requirements of neutral job postings for public sector positions. Today, several states plan to appoint more migrant teachers, particularly in schools with a high percentage of migrant pupils, for example by including specific language skills as a pre-requisite in position postings (I. 3). German-Turks are explicitly encouraged to become educators in (pre-) schools as they could function as ‘bridges between cultures’. In reality it is hard to imagine why this group would aspire to teaching at ‘problem schools’ as the policy makers would have it, while these schools’ infrastructure and atmosphere remain sub-standard. Teachers with a migrant background often complain that they are not accepted as professional equals by their native German colleagues and are commonly reduced to ‘migrant specific’ tasks (Ergin/Berendt 2005).

4 Some insights into Berlin schools

In order to get a glimpse of how cultural and religious diversity is dealt with in Berlin schools and how educators reflect on related challenges, I will present the results of interviews with representatives of migrant organisations, educators and one chairperson of the elected parents’ board of Berlin.

4.1 Multicultural every day life?

For some years, schools in Berlin – especially those with a high percentage of socially disadvantaged pupils from ethnic minorities (primary schools and *Hauptschulen*) – have developed reform projects and cooperated with migrant associations, intercultural or antiracist projects, bilingual social workers, volunteers, cultural institutions, potential employers etc. Several schools are affiliated with organisations and networks with self-identified education

⁵⁴ „Türken an die Tafel. Endlich entdeckt die Politik gut ausgebildete Migranten als Pädagogen. Sie sollen die Integration ausländischer Schüler erleichtern“ (M. Spiewak), *Die Zeit*, N. 37, 06.09.2007.

⁵⁵ See also, „Der Krampf um das Tuch“ (J. Gerlach), *Die Zeit*, N. 29, 12.07.2007.

reform standards, some of which correspond to, or include, some intercultural principles.⁵⁶ Some access the broad variety of material on intercultural pedagogy and retraining seminars. It seems that especially primary schools or some very committed teachers design their own progressive and intercultural teaching material and methods. However, these developments only seem to be a beginning and far from being standard on a general level. In fact, the variety of support programmes and short-term pilot schemes also pose the problem that these schemes lack inter-related coordination and continuity (I. 2, I. 7). Beyond this, these activities often depend on the commitment of individual teachers.

Several educators apparently greatly appreciate particular, or all attributes of cultural diversity in migrant students. This attitude, though well intentioned can reduce students with a migration background to these very attributes. For instance, students with parents from Turkey are referred to as experts on Turkish history, girls with headscarves as experts of Islam – presupposing their expertise and reducing the children to this singular focal point. Moreover, Turkey and Islam appear to the students as ‘migrant topics’, not as general subjects (Schiffauer et al. 2004).

On the other hand many schools and their headmasters have been ignorant of these issues over years or simply overburdened as the following examples may illustrate. One teacher at a school with hundred per cent pupils of non-German first language has started to organise a parents’ café (*Elterncafé*) together with another colleague. The two of them have to do this in extra hours. They receive no support from the other colleagues – such as phoning parents to invite them – but are confronted with reactions like, “You’re crazy. There’s no point.” (I. 7: 4) The interviewed teacher describes his colleagues as burnt-out and ignored by politicians. One Arabic migrant organisation we talked to offers (apart from advice and German language courses for Arabic speaking parents), seminars for teachers and ‘project days’ at schools on intercultural communication, open-mindedness, differences and similarities of different cultures and their mutual influences. They said that when they had directly offered their expertise to schools in the past, it had been rejected. Only recently have some schools started cooperating with this organisation of highly qualified bi-lingual and bi-cultural pedagogues and social workers (I. 10).

All of the interviewed migrant representatives – all of whom were from an Arabic or Turkish background – explicitly demand more flexibility in schools, especially with respect to languages. They perceive the strict mono-lingualism at most German schools as exclusionary, disintegrative and a symbol of dominance and non-acceptance (I. 9, I. 10, I. 11).⁵⁷

Furthermore, migrant organisations still report discriminatory practices and a lack of sensitivity and open-mindedness amongst the teachers, as the following examples may illuminate. Although Muslim and Jewish students are allowed to stay at home on their high religious holidays (Christian holidays are official holidays), schools deal quite differently with these festive days. Some integrate the meaning and rituals of these days into general class; some simply accept the absence of the students; and others know neither about dates nor meanings of non-Christian holidays. Educators complain about increasing numbers of children fasting during *Ramadan*. The suggestion of an Islamic organisation that teachers might not schedule written tests during *Ramadan* seems beyond discussion (I. 12, I. 13).

Similarly, the accommodation of cultural specific meals seems to be half-hearted with minimal response to the needs of students. Generally, schools providing lunch also offer one meal without pork. Nevertheless, *halal* meat (prepared according to Islamic rules) is, as far as I am told, not offered in schools or on school outings. If there is also no vegetarian meal

⁵⁶ E.g. <http://www.ups-schulen.de/index.php>; <http://www.blickueberdenzaun.de/>; <http://www.schule-ohne-rassismus.org/>.

⁵⁷ On this debate see also the case of the *Hoover*-school, e.g. “Weddinger Hoover-Schule erhält Nationalpreis”, *Tagesspiegel*, 25.05.2006.

offered, orthodox Muslims may not take part in school lunch. Many teachers apparently do not know or are not interested in accommodating the specific food requirements of observant Muslims.⁵⁸ Some complain if there's no pork sausage sandwich served in the school cafeteria and that they are always having to satisfy Muslim needs all the time (I. 7).

The issue of Muslim dress codes is a highly sensitive and politically tense topic. This particularly concerns the question of Muslim woman teachers being able to wear headscarves, (which is not allowed in Berlin or in almost every other federal state). The question was negotiated before the Constitutional Court and fiercely debated in the media (Amir-Moazami 2007). The dominant argument against it was that the Muslim headscarf is not only a religious, but a political symbol. The case has certainly contributed to more Muslim girls proudly wearing their scarves as a symbol of protest.

In the media, cases of Muslim girls not taking part in co-educated (male and female) swimming or physical education lessons due to religious reasons (which is legally allowed) are depicted as happening in alarming numbers and used as proof of the assumption that Muslims separate themselves into 'backward, traditional parallel lives'.⁵⁹ A recent survey proves that these cases – at least the registered ones – are entirely singular.⁶⁰ The attention in this debate is entirely focused on Muslims and their behaviour as the cause of conflict and on their non-adaptation to majority rules. The schools as institutions, teachers and other parents are barely perceived as any part of the conflict. In fact, the sensitivity towards culturally specific sense of shame or respect towards dress codes seems to be quite low amongst teachers. A spokesman from an Islamic organisation reported cases in which Muslim boys were verbally pressurized and in one case physically forced by a teacher to take their bathing trunks off while taking a shower after swimming class. In other cases, girls wearing headscarves were insulted by teachers, such as one teacher who said to a student: "No wonder your marks are so low – your brain can't get any oxygen under the headscarf." (I. 12: 15). If these are singular cases or happening on a broader scale needs further investigation.

As cited in the beginning of this paper, teachers and the media focus on issues such as non-participation in class-trips, physical education etc., violence, anti-Semitism, sexism or homophobia. These conflicts are frequently reduced to being perceived as exclusively Islamic and Muslim issues. Certainly, these situations are hardly simple and unambiguous. For teachers it might indeed not be easy to identify whether for example: a girl herself wishes to be exempted from a class trip because of moral or religious reasons, or if her parents have put pressure on her, or whether she has other entirely individual reasons for wanting to stay at home. Obviously, a communicative relationship between teachers, pupils and families is extremely important right from the beginning – and not only in the case of conflict. Solutions proposed by some migrant organisations to let a strict, female Muslim pedagogue accompany the class trip often encounters reluctance among German teachers because this would be in opposition to their own pedagogical principles (I. 10). In addition, economic and institutional factors may influence students being able to participate in class outings. For instance, refugee

⁵⁸ In one case a Muslim father asked a teacher if there would be a vegetarian meal served on their two week class trip as the son would not eat lamb or chicken which was not prepared according to Islamic rules. His request was approved, but in the end, the son had to eat bread all days because there was no vegetarian meal (I. 12). Another more general problem regarding meals is the fact that many socially disadvantaged families cannot afford school lunch for their children which is becoming more and more expensive.

⁵⁹ "Diese Kinder leben im Niemandsland" (These Children Live in No-mans-land), Interview with Necla Kelek, focus, 13.07.07; "Muslime verbieten Mädchen Schulsport. Hamburg: Integration gefährdet. Schwimmen oder Sexualekunde ist für die Hälfte der muslimischen Töchter immer noch tabu" (Muslims Ban School Sport for Girls. Hamburg: Intergration at Risk. Swimming or Sex Education still tabu for half of Muslim Daughters) (G. Wood), Hamburger Abendblatt, 17.04.2004, <http://www.abendblatt.de/daten/2004/11/17/365239.html>.

⁶⁰ "Deutschland: Schwimmunterricht wird von Muslimen nicht boykottiert", Newsletter Migration und Bevölkerung 7/2007.

students are sometimes not taking part in class outings simply because as refugees they are subjects to legal restrictions to travel according to their residency obligations (*Residenzpflicht*) (I. 11), in other cases their families just cannot afford it.

4.2 Acknowledging cultural differences or drawing stereotypes

In order to get a deeper understanding of everyday practices in German schools and the reasons behind them I will present some perspectives on some of these issues based on the interviews I conducted with three headmasters and one chairperson of the elected parents' board – all of whom were men and native Germans.

The three secondary schools⁶¹ were selected for two reasons, first because they represent those schools which are generally regarded as 'problematic' schools. 50 to about 70-80 percent of the children were of non-German descent with a majority of Turkish- and Arabic-Germans. The schools are situated in two districts of Berlin characterised by increasing social deprivation. Second, the selected schools stand out as they describe themselves as quite progressive, committed to integration and democracy learning on their school websites or they are depicted as such in the media. We therefore expected quite reflective insights and viewpoints concerning cultural diversity in education.

The schools have tried to intensify their communication with parents with different methods, for example: working with a Turkish speaking social pedagogue; establishing a so-called parents' café; cooperating with a Turkish parents' organisation; and by the schools trying to integrate the topic Islam or the situation in countries of origin of the pupils' families into various school subjects.

The school directors shared the official approach that the main challenge of education in times of migration is the need of migrant children to significantly improve German language proficiency. Second, they shared the view that parents of migrant students should get more involved in school life and that respectively the communication between school and parents had to be improved. Bi- or multilingualism was generally not an issue or an aim. In contrast, the schools had implemented the rule that German was the only language allowed to be spoken during class, not only in order to improve German language skills but also to show respect towards others speaking a third language. One head teacher is also trying to enforce the rule that German is spoken during the breaks and on the playground.⁶² One of the schools takes part in a project scheme with Turkish-German classes. Although these pupils are partly taught in Turkish by a teacher of Turkish descent, the headmaster does not want her to speak Turkish with the pupils during the breaks, especially when a German joins them. With respect to communication with parents, the head teachers deliberately do not make advances in terms of language to those who are not proficient in German – except when a conflict with a child has arisen. Headmaster B. interprets this as a means to foster integration and stresses:

“It is very important to us that parents understand from the beginning that they are here in Germany and that chances in Germany open up, also when they have left school, via the correct use of the German language.” (I. 5: 11)

A recurrent topic of the interviews was if and how ethnical, cultural or religious affiliation were relevant in understanding the current conflicts or challenges in school. It was striking

⁶¹ Two integrated *Haupt- /Realschulen* (grades 7-9/10) and one comprehensive school also providing upper secondary level *Gymnasium* (grades 11-13).

⁶² See also the debate on the first publicly known school in Berlin to implement this rule as a result of mutual commitment from students, parents and teachers, e.g. “Weddinger Hoover-Schule erhält Nationalpreis”, *Tagesspiegel*, 25.05.2006.

how strictly the headmasters dissociated themselves from issues of culture or ethnicity. Moreover, the concept of multiculturalism was openly dismissed by the some interviewees.

Instead, the interviewees stressed that the problems they had to deal with were not caused by cultural difference but by social segregation. By emphasising social disadvantages, school teachers have taken a clear standpoint against the ethnic and racial depiction of integration and school phenomena in dominant public discourse. They specified that the reasons behind non-engagement at school and the low performance of some pupils lay with a „distance from education“ (*Bildungsferne*) – a new euphemism for low social class and education in German discourse. The term points to the importance of an educated, literate environment for the education of children, which socially underprivileged families often cannot offer. The term *Bildungsferne* seems to count as a new explanation for social behaviour irrespective of any other factors.

As a consequence the headmasters point to the limits within which schools are able to act – as long as the social structure of the neighbourhood remains unchanged. At the same time they describe themselves as “doing the real work” while they have been ignored by politicians for decades. Concepts of intercultural pedagogy are deemed “romantic” and “idealistic (...) without any political relevance” (I. 4: 12).

Despite this strong refusal to approach school phenomena with reference to culture or religion which may have intersecting effects with class or gender, at least two of the interviewees seemed to have a very firm picture of the families of their Turkish-German and Arabic-German students. Headmaster A. explains that problems of integration and school education were a consequence of Islamic culture, which he depicts as being very static and homogenous, even if he admits that there were “always some exceptions”. He describes the families of the students at his school as living “in a relatively closed ethnic community, with an infrastructure that is no longer German” and explains: “You cannot expect from them that they could transcend their situation. (...) From the gynaecologist (...) to the funeral parlour everything is Islamic“ (I. 4: 5). In his view the German-Turkish and German-Arabic migrant families belong to a culture “far from enlightenment”. It would be “no cliché” that the families would have low competence in German as well as in Turkish or Arabic (ibid. 7). If one would live these “awfully narrow lives” education would only have “relatively low chances” (ibid.). From this standpoint it is not surprising that he declares different cultures as “by no means on a par”: “If they were on a par (...) one had to assume that in all cultural areas the same standards of argumentation, logic and responsibilities were to be found and implemented. But this is not the case, by no means.“ (ibid. 21) The educator declares that the “ritualised behaviour” of the families was “comparable to that in the 16th century” and could not be called “culture” (ibid. 18). The task of pedagogy was to dissolve the differences in respect to the living conditions of the youngsters on the one side and “our perception of culture and standards” on the other side (ibid.).

While these statements reveal a conviction of hierarchies of cultures and a clear-cut view of Islamic and Christian culture, the second interviewed headmaster argued in a far more cautious and differentiated way. But he also quite easily generalised from one case of a German-Turkish family to others. After describing the case of a father who did not see any reason to encourage his son to strive for better marks in school because the family would find a livelihood for him anyway, the headmaster concludes: “Perhaps a practical example, but it seems to be symptomatic to me (...). Basically in the heads of many it is similar.” (I. 5: 3)

Interestingly enough, when asked if there is discrimination against Muslims at his school he immediately reasoned that some teachers felt threatened by Muslim youngsters – especially after 9/11 – and that it was therefore probably only a sign of helplessness if they made insulting and Islam phobic comments.

The third head of school I talked to emphasised the necessity of differentiation and looking at every individual student with affection and sympathy. In the course of the interview he hesitated to make generalising statements. Instead he underlined cross-cultural phenomena like the fact that some German Christian socialised students also do not eat pork or that some girls decided to wear the headscarves against their parents' wishes. Although he denied the relevance of culture, in the end he made some statements about “the violent Palestinians” or about fixed gender structures in Islamic families (I. 6: 20/22). His reluctance to think about culturally or religiously specific needs may result from a general leftist and atheist viewpoint. Claims from any religious group seem suspicious to him and he is quite happy that there is currently no relevant group of students who show any interest in religious instruction. Although this school’s general approach seems quite convincing and self-reflective, there seems to be a lack of conceptualisation in the reflection of culturally or ethnically influenced needs and capacities, apparently for fear of falling into the trap of stereotypes.

It is doubtful and would need further investigation if the approach of showing affection and sympathy with the individual student can replace an explicitly culture-sensitive or reflexive intercultural pedagogy.

The fourth interviewee is a German parent elected on the level of the Federal State Berlin as a representative according to the Berlin School Law.⁶³ Generally, he is very committed to supporting the interests and needs of the individual pupil. The board has put the issue of violence in schools, and of teachers offending students in particular, on the agenda (insult, denunciation, bullying, or physical violence). Nevertheless, when it comes to the issue of migrant students the interviewee no longer argues from the perspective of the individual child but reinforces stereotypes and accusations against migrants.

First, he denies that migrant students were disadvantaged at German schools as there were positive counter-examples:

„But there are students who – no matter where they come from – are completely integrated, who (...) finish their school career perfectly, study and so on. We cannot say that someone would not have a chance if he comes from Lebanon. That is not the case. Instead, we see again and again (...) that it works.“ (I. 8: 14)

In his view the basic problem lies in the high proportion of students of non-German first language and their behaviour in groups.

„We have these three groups with whom we have trouble: those from Turkish, Arabic and Russian origin. They deliberately separate, they simply do not want to integrate, and they want to live in their own world. And they place themselves at the margin of society and consequently react aggressively, partly also against others.“ (ibid.)

Consequently, the institution of the school is not considered responsible for any problems. He continues:

„One now has to ask: who is excluding whom? It is no longer the case that (...) the pupil from Lebanon is excluded, but that they partly separate themselves from the

⁶³ Parental involvement in decision making is clearly defined by law in all schools. The parental institutions concerned with decision making consist of the parent-class representative and the parent-school representative. Parents are represented at the school conferences, the highest level of school decision making. The parent-class representatives and school conference representatives have the right to take part in department conferences and general conferences. Parent-class representatives elect their representatives on the district and Berlin state levels.

others. (...) In the school they are a strong group, they dominate. (...) I don't want to say that the school is responsible for the misery we are in." (ibid. 15)

The solution he proposes is that schools should regulate the ethnic composition of pupils.

Similar, the interviewee avoids the question of whether Islam phobia or offences against Muslim students were issues in their debates and observations concerning violence at schools. Instead, focuses on a "potential threat" by Muslim students.

„Certainly, if I have to deal with a group whose members are strongly committed to Islam and who openly speak about *Sharia* being their basis. And we have the debates about the murder (...) and students say (...) they approve honour murder⁶⁴ – then we experience a fundamental rejection of our values. Of course fears are stoked. That is, there is a potential threat, in the end it is there, and we experience it. And I do not know what is going on in this group of students and in their environment. Discrimination surely accrues from a sort of fear." (ibid. 22)

When asked how migrant parents' might be motivated to participate in the representation of parents' interests in schools, similar to the other interviewed headmasters, he emphasised the irrelevance of the cultural background in contrast to being „distanced from education“ (*bildungsfern*). He asks himself, "How do I get the Turkish or Arabic families into the school?", and refuses to regard any culturally or migrant specific factor: "I also do not always manage to get German parents to come. If they are *bildungsfern*, they are *bildungsfern*. Then they won't come anyway, this has nothing to do with language at all." (ibid. 5)

Furthermore, he opposes any special quota rules for migrants, a demand which has been made by a Turkish parents' organisation. He is aware of the problem that migrants often do not attend parents' meetings if the school does not make any specific efforts, for example with bilingual meetings. However, the elected representative stressed that he believed that migrant parents often do not behave appropriately. While native German parents, whom he calls "normal parents", would apparently advocate parents' interests in a reasonable way, a Turkish father, for example, would be elected as a parent-class representative "by his people", only because of his affiliation with one national group and "not because he had the best concept" or "represented himself well". Afterwards he would not get involved in his task anymore. In fact, he would "slow down the entire parents' activities" (ibid. 5).

On the other hand the board refused to participate in a congress about education in an immigration society organised by migrant parents' organisations because as an elected board it could not represent partial interests. Apparently the board did not consider any other forms of cooperation or support either.

The presented interviews do not constitute a representative selection, moreover, the topics analysed here do not represent the entire interviews with the headmasters and the parents' representative. Nevertheless, they point to an assumedly more general concomitance among numerous educators, being critical, open-minded and dedicated to the individual child while at the same time, being quite reluctant to accept a culture/migrant-sensitive approach or reflexive intercultural education. In public debate educators are often generally blamed as soon as conflicts among youths arise. As the analysis of the educational system has shown, individual educators should not be solely regarded as being responsible for broader social phenomena. Instead, schools and educators need specific support in infrastructure, training and supervision, in order to implement reflexive intercultural education.

⁶⁴ On this case of an 'honour murder' in Berlin, see footnote 24.

5 Conclusion

German education policies, currently under much debate, are trying to respond to migration and cultural diversity challenges. It seems that the focus of official policies has significantly shifted within the last decade. In its recommendations from 1996, the Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* formulated relatively far reaching intercultural and multilingual principles, although structural mechanisms of discrimination were not systematically taken into consideration. Later recommendations and concepts on education focus on the improvement of individual achievements and the responsibility of single migrants. Improving German language skills is regarded as the central task of education of children with a migrant history. Moreover, the programmes demand school reforms in order to establish equal opportunities, with the further aim to make better use of the potentials of all pupils – including migrant pupils.

Reasons for this shift may be found in the broader public debate in which policies on education are embedded, namely on the general debate on integration with its focus on Muslim minorities and on school development. For the first time, immigration has been officially accepted as a permanent feature of the social landscape and an ongoing dialogue with migrants' representatives has been implemented. Nevertheless, within the dominant discourse, migrants and especially Muslims, are depicted as living in backward and closed parallel societies and as not being willing to integrate. The discussion is highly influenced by the debate on fears of fundamentalist Islamist terrorism and the alleged incompatibility of Islam and the 'Western values'. Furthermore, education policies – as part of the general debate on school development and school reform – can only be interpreted within the context of the international competition for highly-skilled personnel. The high emphasis on a 'pedagogically considered assimilation' and on the improvement of individual achievements is part of this debate.

Nevertheless, the *Länder* Ministries of Culture and several individual schools are working on school reforms, new curricula and teaching methods for either principal or often pragmatic reasons. Still, a general and systematic implementation of intercultural principles and equal opportunities is far from being realised. Even if migration issues are considered, the dualism between 'them' and 'us' still seems to dominate the process.

The interviews with heads of Berlin secondary schools and the parents' representative have given further insight into the reflections of schools representatives on these issues. First, while it became obvious that schools (particularly those with a high proportion of socially disadvantaged students from migrant families) face considerable restrictions, at the same time, the suggestion of problematic social structures can also provide a convenient excuse for school failures. Second, the interviewee's reluctance to accept or acknowledge concepts of culture or religious affiliation was quite striking. All of the three headmasters came from a social reformist or leftist background and obviously tried to avoid falling into the trap of stereotypes, at the same time and probably as a consequence of this reluctance they – to different degrees – reinforced stereotypes and clichés, especially about Islamic or German-Turkish/Arabic families.

As a conclusion I would plead for integration policies that not only focus on the individual migrants but put high emphasis on the institutions of the 'majority society' and the support of individual figures in their intercultural competence. Consequently, apart from implementing social equal opportunities there is a need for better and compulsory intercultural teacher training and supportive supervision, criteria for school quality, monitoring and evaluation processes with practical consequences for schools and individual educators.

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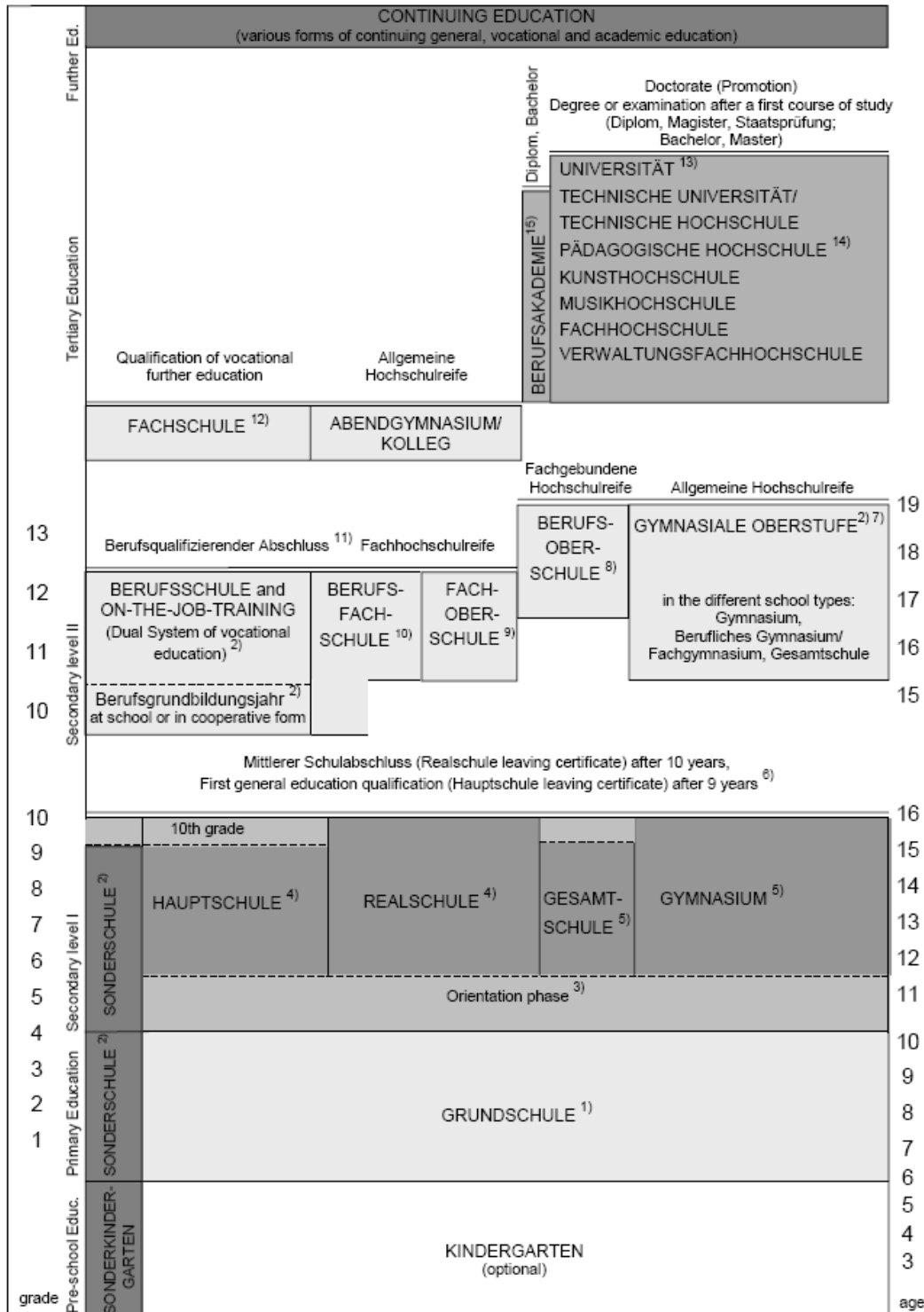
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Appendix

Diagram German school system

Basic Structure of the Educational System in the Federal Republic of Germany



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Interviewees

- I. 1 Journalist, *Die Tageszeitung*, Berlin, departments migration, education, female, 1 June 2007
- I. 2 Two scientific evaluators of the BLK-program *FörMig* Berlin, both female, 5 June 2007
- I. 3 Member of Berlin Senate Department for Education, Science and Research, Working Group „Islam and School“; curricula planning (Political Education, Ethics), male, 25 July 2007
- I. 4 Headmaster, comprehensive secondary school (grades 7-9/10), also providing the upper secondary level of *Gymnasium* (grades 11-13), Berlin, male, 13 July 2007
- I. 5 Deputy Headmaster, integrated secondary school B. (grades 7-9/10) (*integrierte Haupt- und Realschule*), Berlin, male, 10 July 2007
- I. 6 Headmaster, integrated secondary school C. (grades 7-9/10) (*integrierte Haupt- und Realschule*), Berlin, male, 11 July 2007
- I. 7 Teacher, integrated secondary school D. (grades 7-9/10) (*integrierte Haupt- und Realschule*), Berlin, male, 6 June 2007
- I. 8 Chairperson of the elected parents' board of Berlin (*Landeselternausschuss*), male, 24 July 2007
- I. 9 Chair of a Turkish parents' association Berlin Brandenburg, male, 10 July 2007
- I. 10 Chair of an Arabic association for advice and support of families of Arabic origin, Berlin, female, 9 July 2007
- I. 11 Chair of an Arabic parents' association, Berlin, male, 2 August 2007
- I. 12 Deputy Chair of an Islamic association Berlin, male, 31 August 2007

Participating observation:

- I. 13 Internal meeting of the Working Group „Islam and School“, Berlin Senate Department for Education, Science and Research, 12 participants, 27 September 2007
- I. 14 Project Meeting of *FörMig* Berlin participants, 6 June 2007