Contemporary challenges in German schools – The potential of the implementation of inclusive pedagogical approaches

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Contemporary challenges in German schools – The potential of the implementation of inclusive pedagogical approaches

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ABSTRACT

Although large-scale studies like PISA (OECD, 2019) and PIRLS (Hußmann et al., 2017) proved already in the beginning of the 2000s that students with a disadvantaged socio-economic background suffer from educational inequality in Germany, this situation has not changed significantly over the years: As it is evidenced by empirical educational research, those students still run a high risk to suffer from educational inequality compared to their fellow students without a disadvantaged socio-economic background (Pfeifer, 2017). But there is also a risk to experience educational inequality for students with immigrant/refugee background, as those two aspects are highly correlated, which is a challenge for schools in view of the refugees that came from 2015 on to Germany (Bogotch, Faubert, Pfeifer, Wieckert, Kervin, & Pappas, 2020; Pfeifer, 2014).

This contribution will provide a data-based insight into this development in Germany. Moreover, based on the example of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia an overview will be given of the structure of the German school system, which is characterized by external streaming. Finally, it will be discussed if the implementation of inclusive pedagogical approaches in schools can contribute to reduce educational inequality in German schools (Radhoff & Wieckert, 2017; Wieckert, 2013) by summarizing findings of the review of research as well as findings from a qualitative study.

1 Introduction

Although large-scale studies like PISA and PIRLS proved already in the beginning of the 2000s that students with a disadvantaged socio-economic background, which is highly correlated with an immigration background, suffer from educational inequality in Germany, this situation has not changed significantly over the years until now (Hußmann et al., 2017; OECD, 2019). As it is evidenced by empirical educational research, those students still run a high risk to suffer from educational inequality compared to their fellow students without a disadvantaged socio-economic background (Pfeifer, 2017).

This contribution will provide a data-based insight into this development in Germany, starting with an exemplary overview of the German school system. This is quite unique and characterized by external streaming, which can be seen as one factor for educational inequality in Germany (Emmerich, 2016). After this description a review of research concerning the reduction of educational inequality is given being followed by an insight into a qualitative study. This study has been conducted in the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia looking at four schools with different approaches of integrating refugee students in school life, as the large refugee arrivals from 2015 on is a current challenge for the education system (Bogotch et al., 2020). Furthermore, Germany has a long tradition in welcoming refugees even before 2015. As being a refugee leads to having an immigration background, large-scale studies summarize refugees under the construct of immigration background. In this regard, findings of studies as PISA or PIRLS – whose research sample tries to represent the population structure of the country – can be taken into account (Mang, Wagner, Gomolka, Schäfer, Meinck, & Reiss, 2019; Martin, Mullis, & Hooper, 2017).

Based on neoliberal values and ideals that are present in the society and, therefore, also effect educational spaces and practices (e.g. by giving schools the possibility of choosing educational concepts autonomously) heterogeneity is seen as given and a chance to implement understanding for one another. Having the opportunity of combining different perspectives and opinions in school and having discussions about those may contribute to widen the own perceptions of the world and may lead to more tolerance. Corresponding to this development it will be discussed, to which extent the implementation of inclusive pedagogical approaches in schools could contribute to reduce social inequality in German schools and create an atmosphere of welcoming difference (Radhoff & Wieckert, 2017; Wieckert, 2013).

2 The German school system and educational inequality

In this section an overview of the structure of the German school system, at the example of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, is provided. This is important with regard to socio-economic challenges in schools, since the German school system is characterized by external streaming. After that a data-based insight into aspects of educational inequality of the German school system will be given.

2.1 The school system of Germany at the example of North Rhine-Westphalia

Describing the German school system is not easy, especially as there is no common German education system. In Germany, primarily the federal states are responsible for their education policy. They have the so-called cultural sovereignty, so that the state governments can largely independently decide how they shape their education systems. This applies in particular to the design of the general education system, but there are also some differences between the federal states in the other education sectors (Edelstein, 2013).

In addition to many differences between the federal states, there is a significant commonality in the education system: In all federal states, there is the Primary School, to which a variety of secondary education school types follows (external streaming). Since the data collection in the context of the study – which is being discussed in section 4 – took place in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the school system of this federal state is described in more detail below.

2.1.1 The structure of the school system of North Rhine-Westphalia

After four years of Primary School, students attend one of the following secondary education schools of the North Rhine-Westphalian school system (MSW NRW, 2015; Studienkreis, 2018):
- Secondary Modern School (Hauptschule) – Grades 5 to 10
- Intermediate Secondary Modern School (Realschule) – Grades 5 to 10
- Secondary School (Sekundarschule) – Grades 5 to 10
- Comprehensive School (Gesamtschule) – Grades 5 to 13
- High School (Gymnasium) – Grades 5 to 12 (G8 – eight study years) or 13 (G9 – nine study years)

In addition to these school types there exist Special Schools focusing on different special needs. They can include grade 1 to 13, but there are various options how this is organized.

The educational path of a child begins in *Primary School* including grades 1 to 4. The children are individually supported from the beginning, their personal requirements and interests are taken into account. Basic skills like calculating, reading and writing as well as attainments and values are taught. Based on the achievements of the students in grade 4 the Primary School teachers make an individual recommendation for the school type following Primary School for every child.

The *Secondary Modern School* gives students basic general education. The lessons are highly practice-oriented and prepare students in particular for vocational training. During company apprenticeships students learn about the requirements of the field of work. In addition, the company apprenticeships prepare for career choice and vocational training.

The *Intermediate Secondary Modern School* imparts extended general education and lays the foundations for further vocational and academic education. In the classroom, practical and theoretical skills and attainments are equally promoted. Accordingly, the lessons are practice-oriented but also offer academic points of view.

In *Secondary School* students with different skills and abilities can learn together for a longer period of time. This school type prepares students for vocational training as well as for

transition to Comprehensive School or High School after grade 10. From the beginning, the lessons also offer High School standards and cover the grades 5 to 10. Each Secondary School has some kind of cooperation with at least one Comprehensive School or High School. This can help to simplify transitions to one of these other school types and make joint activities possible.

The *Comprehensive School* prepares in a differentiated teaching system for vocational education as well as for university education. Therefore, students with different learning abilities can learn together. There is no assignment of the students to the educational programs like the Secondary Modern School, Intermediate Secondary Modern School and High School. In order to meet the different knowledge and abilities of the students, the lessons in some subjects are offered at two levels (basic level and advanced level).

The *High School* provides a deepened general education. Students acquire knowledge and skills that are prerequisites for higher education or advanced vocational training. In a continuous education course, it comprises both – the lower secondary education (grades 5 to 10) and the subsequent two to three-year upper secondary education.

Students, who require special educational support due to disabilities or a lack of learning ability, can attend a *Special School* at the request of their parents. There are seven different types of special needs with corresponding Special Schools: Emotional and Social Development, Hearing and Communication, Language, Learning, Mental Development, Physical and Motoric Development, Vision.

The following figure illustrates the structure of the school system of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Figure: The structure of the school system of North Rhine-Westphalia

Secondary II Grades 10 to 13					G9	Special Schools
					G8	
Secondary I Grades 5 to 10	**Secondary Modern School** (Hauptschule)	**Intermediate Secondary Modern School** (Realschule)	**Secondary School** (Sekundarschule)	**Comprehensive School** (Gesamtschule)	**High School** (Gymnasium)	
Primary Grades 1 to 4	**Primary School** (Grundschule)					

2.1.2 Inclusion concerning special needs

As mentioned before, the external streaming of the German school system can be seen as one factor that causes educational inequality. Therefore, the development of creating more inclusive learning environments will be discussed because those can help to reduce such disadvantages.

Since 2014, inclusion has been enshrined in North Rhine-Westphalia's Education Act as follows: The school promotes the unprejudiced encounter of people with and without disabilities. At school, students are generally taught and educated together. Students, who are dependent on special educational support, are specially fostered according to their individual needs in order to enable them to achieve the highest possible level of educational and occupational integration, social participation and independent living arrangements (MSW NRW, 2014). Learning together of students with and without need of special support is the general rule. If special educational needs are identified, the school inspectorate must designate at least one suitable general education school for the student to attend. The parents have the choice between the general education school and a suitable Special School (MSW NRW, 2016).

2.1.3 Planned developments

With the change of the federal government in 2017, various plans for the educational landscape were decided in North Rhine-Westphalia.

On the Primary School level this includes, among other aspects, an effective substitute reserve and smaller classes for inclusion and integration. Core competences such as spelling should be strengthened. The English lessons in Primary School will be re-examined, which means that it will be discussed, from which grade on they should be part of the curriculum. In addition to religious instruction, ethics lessons at Primary Schools should also be available for students to study.

At the Secondary Schools the vocational orientation should be expanded. For High Schools one of the most important decisions is the planned return to G9 as general rule. Starting in the 2019/2020 school year, High Schools will have the choice to return to G9 (grade 5 to 13) or continue G8 (grade 5 to 12). In the past, High Schools had nine study years (G9) and were forced to reduce the study years to eight (G8).

2.2 Educational inequality in German schools

From the previous section it becomes obvious that North Rhine-Westphalia has a school system, which is characterized by external streaming. The official rationale concerning this external streaming is that each student should be supported in her/his development in a learning environment that has enriching effects for her/his specific needs without demanding too much or too less from a student. But findings from research studies show that especially students, who attend the Secondary Modern School, may suffer from educational inequality (Bos, Tarelli, Bremerich-Vos, & Schwippert, 2012; Bos, Wendt, Köller, & Selter, 2012). Since the economy tends to demand higher degrees of education of their future employees, many parents prefer to send their children to the High School, especially parents, who have a high aspiration towards education. This might lead to a situation, in which Secondary Modern Schools experience a lack

of a stimulating learning environment, as there might be a lack of students with higher capabilities because the parents of these students tend to send them to the High School. Therefore, there is also a development that many Secondary Modern Schools have to close down because they experience a lack of students (Rösner, 2007).

It has been proofed by large-scale studies (e.g. TIMSS and PIRLS) that students at the High School tend to have higher skills (e.g. in mathematics and reading), compared to students of the other secondary education school types, especially to students in the Secondary Modern School. But the same studies also prove that the strongest students of the Secondary Modern School have the capabilities of the weakest students of the High School (Bos, Tarelli, Bremerich-Vos, & Schwippert, 2012; Bos, Wendt, Köller, & Selter, 2012). This is one indication, which can imply that the external streaming does not function as it should be. But despite these findings it is a fact that many students of the Secondary Modern School, no matter which real capabilities they have, are seen as less abled by teachers. This might be the case because the Secondary Modern School is seen as the lowest secondary education school type, and their students are seen as the students with the lowest abilities compared to the students, who attend another secondary education school type. Thus, often school marks of those students are not corresponding with their real abilities (Hußmann et al., 2017; Wendt, Bos, Selter, Köller, Schwippert, & Kasper, 2016). In section 5 some ideas will be given how teachers, not only in Germany, can prevent such errors of assessment.

As it becomes clear, external streaming does not work properly in German schools: Students in school classes in the Secondary Modern School are not homogeneously low performing, and students in school classes in the High School are not homogeneously high performing as it was and still is intended by the educational policy and authorities in Germany.

Besides, the Secondary Modern School and, of course, also other school types, for example the Secondary School or the Comprehensive School, can have challenging circumstances (e.g. high number of students with a low socio-economic background), and, thus, as mentioned above, their students may experience educational inequality, too. But it also depends on the headmasters and teachers of each school how they support the students' learning development. Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll and Russ (2004) for instance emphasize that it is important that teachers of schools with challenging circumstances have high expectations towards the learning development of their students and foster them in a reasonable but also challenging way (neither underestimation nor excessive demands). In section 3 a closer look will be taken at aspects that may have the potential to support students in schools with difficult circumstances. But before that an insight into more detailed findings to which extent students in Germany experience educational inequality will be given.

2.3 Findings from large-scale studies on educational inequality in Germany

Although the topic of educational inequality has been discussed in Germany for a longer time (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1971), the attention of the public and the educational policy towards this issue raised in the early 2000s: After the first cycles of PISA it became clear that Germany is one of the countries where the link between the socio-economic status of the parents and the academic achievement of secondary education students is strong in comparison to the OECD average (OECD, 2019). To a lesser extent, this linkage also emerged from studies in Primary

Schools (e.g. TIMSS and PIRLS), which have also been carried out regularly since the beginning of the 2000s (Hußmann et al., 2017; Pfeifer, 2014; Wendt et al., 2016).

The findings of TIMSS from 2015 exemplify for the primary sector that overall social disparities have not diminished over the years. For example, in TIMSS 2015 students with a socio-economically disadvantaged background achieve 39 points less, compared to students, who have not a socio-economically disadvantaged background. These 39 points have a practical meaning of about one school year (Wendt et al., 2016). Compared to the findings from TIMSS 2011 (39 points) and TIMSS 2007 (41 points), it is clear that there is no statistically significant change in this respect. Thus, students with a socio-economically disadvantaged background are still disadvantaged in their mathematics achievement by just over one school year (Pfeifer, 2017).

This is also supported by findings from in-depth analyses, which were calculated as part of PIRLS 2006. The following risk factors for a weak reading performance could be determined by means of logistic regression analyses (Valtin, Hornberg, Buddeberg, Voss, Kowoll, & Potthoff, 2010):

1. Immigration background (at least one parent) *(Odds ratio 3.82*)*
2. Socio-economic background *(Odds ratio 2.32*)*
3. Level of education of the family *(Odds ratio 1.97*)*
4. Sex: Male *(Odds ratio 1.30)*
   (*p < .05)

As shown above, students with at least one parent born abroad are almost four times more likely to become weak readers than students with both parents born in Germany. For students with a disadvantaged socio-economic background this probability is more than twice as high, compared to students without a disadvantaged socio-economic background.

Also, findings of PIRLS 2016 proof that students with immigration background achieve 48 points less than students without an immigration background. This has a practical relevance of more than one school year (Hußmann et al., 2017).

From the findings described, it emerges that there is still an urgent need for research and intervention with regard to equal support for students with an immigration background and/or with a disadvantaged socio-economic background, especially if those students are taught in schools with challenging circumstances.

Therefore, in the following an overview of important influencing factors that have been shown to be relevant in empirical studies to reduce these disparities in schools will be provided.

3 Reducing social inequality in German schools – A review of research

In this section at first a broader data-based insight will be given about what headmasters and teachers can do to reduce social inequality in German schools. In this regard, findings from relevant research studies will be discussed.

After that related findings from an international research project on the integration of refugee students/newcomers in German schools in North Rhine-Westphalia will be presented.

3.1 Approaches of leadership

With regard to schools with a socio-economically disadvantaged or otherwise challenging context Stoll and Myers (1998) emphasize, that there are generally no quick and easy ways to help the students in such schools. But in theory-based as well as in empirical publications the following strategies at the school level have been proven to be effective looking at disadvantaged schools (Muijs et al., 2004; Pfeifer, 2014):

- Focus on teaching and learning,
- Decentralized (distributed) / instructional leadership,
- Creating an information rich learning environment,
- Creating a positive school culture and learning environment,
- Having high expectations on teachers, students and parents,
- Sustainable professional development.

But it is important to consider the stage of development of a school and its specific strengths or weaknesses. For example, while decentralized leadership is appropriate for successful, effective schools, schools in challenging circumstances may require a more top-down style of leadership to build basic structures first (Muijs et al., 2004). Other aspects also depend on the developmental stage of a school, such as the extent to which a school needs to focus on providing basic knowledge to the student body, despite a more sophisticated curriculum or in how far external support needs to be mobilized (ibid.).

Schools at an early stage of development or even so-called Failing Schools may require significant external support. In doing so, an authoritative leadership style can be supportive, so that basic structures can be created or improved in the school. For schools that already have this basic developmental step behind them and have already achieved some degree of effectiveness, decentralized leadership and more ambitious goals in developing the school structure, such as establishing professional learning communities, can be beneficial (ibid.).

As can be seen from this section, there are aspects on the school level that are adequate for schools with challenging circumstances, but overall the state of research concerning approaches of leadership for schools with challenging circumstances is still inadequate (Pfeifer, 2014; van Ackeren et al., 2016).

3.2 Approaches of classroom teaching

In the following also teaching related aspects will be focused, as common empirically based models on school quality, such as the Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness (Kyriakides et al., 2014), indicate that teaching related aspects may be influenced by leadership behaviour and can have a direct effect on the learning success of students.

In a meta-analysis of empirical studies on learning-promoting factors for students in schools with a socio-economically disadvantaged context Muijs et al. (2004) emphasize the importance of teaching related cooperation between teachers but also between the headmaster and teachers. It is stated that such cooperation can improve teachers' competences in teaching

related activities, such as joint teaching development, collegial support or evaluative analysis and, thus, the quality of teaching (Pfeifer, 2014).

Regarding the workload of teachers, Muijs et al. (2004) summarize that in schools with a challenging context teachers have to work much harder and more committed than their colleagues in schools with more favourable contextual conditions. It also becomes clear that these efforts need to be sustained, as positive developments can be short-lived and unstable, especially in such difficult conditions (Holtappels, Webs, Kamarianakis, & van Ackeren, 2017; Whitty, 2001). In this regard, Webs and Holtappels (2018) as well as Chapman (2007) emphasize the importance of institutionalized forms of cooperation, as they have a structural effect and can, therefore, be expected to be sustainable. To that effect, it is of central importance that teachers are able to cooperate with their colleagues. In this respect, Pfeifer and Holtappels (2008) as well as Ainscow, Muijs and West (2006) note that teachers need to have enough time to cooperate effectively. This, in turn, requires supportive headmasters but also additional working time quotas and additional resources (Connell, 1996; Guthrie, Guthrie, van Heusden, & Burns, 1989; Seeley, Niemeyer, & Greenspan, 1990). Harris, Muijs, Chapman, Stoll and Russ (2003) also stress that a relentless focus on teaching and learning is characteristic for effective and successful schools with a disadvantaged context. In particular, the focus on the students' achievement, on teaching methods that contribute to classroom interaction and the adaptive development of existing teaching methods have proved as key components of effective schools (Helmke, 2017; Meyer, 2016).

With regard to students with a disadvantaged socio-economic background, Reynolds, Sammons, de Fraine, Townsend and van Damme (2011) emphasize that a climate of warmth and support can prove beneficial in the classroom (O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Furlong, 2014; Spitzer, 2007). To value students and to make them feel that the school is not only a place of learning but also a place of life proves to be characteristic of effective and successful schools, too (Beutel, Höhmann, Pant, & Schratz, 2016; Connell, 1996; Lein, Johnson, & Ragland, 1997; Maden & Hillman, 1993). Harris et al. (2003) add that the positive reinforcement of students, the teaching of lesson contents in small units as well as giving students the opportunity to ask questions are further positive factors in this respect.

In addition, lessons in such disadvantaged schools should be more strongly influenced by direct instruction (Stockard, Wood, Coughlin, & Rasplica Khoury, 2018) and as close as possible to the real school context as well as demonstrating the practical, extracurricular benefits of learning (Henchey, 2001; Hopkins & Reynolds, 2002; Kember, Ho, & Hong, 2008; Montgomery, Rossi, Legters, McDill, McPartland, & Stringfield, 1993).

4 Findings from an international research project: Education of students with immigrant/refugee background in Germany

The following findings are based on classroom observations and interviews with 20 headmasters and teachers in schools in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany (Faubert, Bogotch, Pfeifer, Wieckert, & Arar, 2019). The studied secondary education schools in North Rhine-Westphalia have challenging contexts, as a high amount of their students has a low socio-economic background and/or an immigration background. The study focuses on demands and

methods concerning the integration of refugee students into school, as the refugee movement from 2015 on is challenging for schools in general (Bogotch et al., 2019). A content analysis of the data has taken place (Mayring, 2014).

When being asked about how to deal with students, who came from Syria to Germany, the teachers did not give any direct answers. They focused much more on the individuality of each student irrespective of her/him being a refugee or not. Based on the developments in the German school system, this is not surprising, since precisely questions of heterogeneity and inclusion are currently highly discussed and seen as important issues (Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für die Belange von Menschen mit Behinderungen, 2018; Wieckert, 2013). Student groups are becoming more and more heterogeneous, which means that the needs of the different students are, of course, very individual, and the teachers have the task to respond to this individuality as well as possible. The utopia of homogeneous learning groups is gradually being set aside. In this respect, the teachers try to see each student in her or his uniqueness and find out what each person needs to make learning processes as beneficial as possible. After longer exchanges between the researchers and the teachers, it becomes apparent that for another reason, teachers are not specifically looking at the group of Syrian students as one, which needs specific attention. They reported that most of the Syrian students in particular are motivated to learn, to acquire the German language and to find their way around the school as well as in society. Thus, the teachers also experience them as very inquisitive.

From the point of view of some teachers, other groups of students, specifically students from countries such as Albania, Bulgaria and Romania, are less motivated to learn the German language and to participate actively in school life. This is quite understandable, since the reason for immigration is often – at least as the researchers were told in the studied schools – that the parents, mostly the father, is in Germany to find a job, earn as much money as possible and then finally go back to the country of origin. As a result, some students from these countries of origin may see little sense in learning the German language or joining the school association. For this reason, precisely these students require a lot more attention from the teachers as the students, who fled Syria and came to Germany.

It should be noted, however, that these are, of course, individual statements of teachers, which cannot be generalized, as each learning group is different, and every child or each adolescent behaves differently in school and teaching contexts.

As Germany is a democratic state, students should get into contact with democracy and the concept of democracy in various ways while being in school. For many years now, a debate has been taking place about democracy education in Germany and the question of how democracy can be lived in school (Beutel & Fauser, 2011) considering those aspects. Students should be able to experience what it means to live in a democracy at school. The school offers itself as a kind of small society with democratic structures as a field of practice, since all the growing-ups visit this institution. In concrete terms, democratic fields of experience can be, for example, student councils, through which students can also participate with their perspectives at school meetings. In many schools, there are class councils, in which the students can discuss together for instance about conflicts, problems, upcoming acquisitions or even excursions concerning the class. Central to this are the idea of participating in school life and the opportunity to contribute one's own views. This should enable the students to accept the opinions of others, to think about them and to enter into a (controversial) exchange. For example,

during a classroom observation a German lesson took place, which was mainly characterized by playing games and singing songs focusing on the language. Thus, classical language teaching, for example by writing down vocabulary or giving theoretical explanations of grammar rules, was not performed – at least not in this lesson. Rather the students were given the opportunity to use the language in practice. This relaxed classroom atmosphere, which the researchers observed, can play a positive and playful role in conveying what it means to be part of a democratic society, to be taken seriously and to be able to bring in one's own thinking into discourses. The fact that lessons, which are as motivating as possible and characterized by humour, can be extremely helpful for the creation or maintenance of the joy of learning and the concomitant progress in learning is supported by study findings (Spitzer, 2007). In other lessons the teachers made sure to give the students space for discussion, to see controversies and to look at different perspectives concerning the topic.

In the studied schools two different approaches could be identified. In some schools there were classes initiated, in which only refugee students were learning together. The aim was to foster learning German as good as possible so that the students could follow the various lessons afterwards in mixed classes (MSB, 2018). The other schools used the so-called GO-IN-Model (Bezirksregierung Arnsberg, 2016). In this model the refugee students attended usual classes from the beginning. Of course, at first there was a certain language barrier in understanding the lessons and communicating with the other students in the class, who did not seek refuge but are familiar with the German language. This approach follows the idea that contact to German students can help finding German speaking friends as soon as possible, and, in this regard, the German language can also become a part of life outside the classroom more easily.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

As can be seen from the previously discussed aspects of the review of research in section 3, there is still a gap in the state of research on teaching and school aspects, which can be helpful for fostering competences of students with a disadvantaged socio-economic background.

The awareness of researchers and practitioners has to sharpen in order to be able to consider priorities in research and intervention projects to identify conditions for success at classroom and school level, so that students with a disadvantaged socio-economic background can be adequately supported concerning their learning process at school.

Of course, teachers should try their best to assess students' performances in school as objective as possible. Knowledge about the socio-economic background of the students should not have an influence on this process. When teachers give recommendations at the end of Primary School for the secondary education school type, which fits the best for the student, the achievements of the student should be the main focus. Considerations of teachers that parents may not be able to help the child with school tasks or that they will not be able to finance private tutoring if needed should not have a negative effect on the school type in favour, for example by recommending a lower school type as the achievements would suggest in order to prevent the student from experiences of failing because of an assumed lack of support.

Moreover, possible errors of assessment – which have been mentioned earlier in section 2.2 – should be known and minimalized as much as possible. For example, if a teacher tends to assume that a student will not be able to achieve good results in tests because the parents did not

achieve higher education the expectations will be low, and the process of grading might be not as objective as it should be. Therefore, tests could be graded with the names of the students covered, other teachers could be asked if they could have a second look on tests in question and the tests could be reviewed again after some time elapsed. Being aware of errors of assessment and reflect the own process of giving grades can help to develop an environment, in which students can really display their potential and widen it. This does not mean that some teachers try to hinder students from getting the education they are capable of on purpose. Sometimes, they may not be aware of it or think they are acting for the student's best. Hence, it is important to sensitize teachers accordingly. Errors of assessment need to be discussed during teacher training and the reflection of the educational practises should become a fixed part of cooperative exchange (Radhoff, Ruberg, & Wieckert, 2019).

A current international initiative in order to get an insight into practices of teaching refugee students is the research project Education and Immigration, also mentioned in section 4 (Faubert et al., 2019). As refugee students come into an unknown environment and mostly do not speak the language of the welcoming country, they need to get the chance to become a part of the society. Teachers face the challenge of integrating students into school, whose language skills need to be developed, while having to follow the normal course of the curriculum. In inclusive learning environments, in which external streaming is not in focus (e.g. following the GO-In-Model), students can help each other and become aware of the heterogeneity of the group and, moreover, the individuality of each student. Lessons, which try to meet this heterogeneity, for example by giving students the opportunity to learn at their own speed and by choosing tasks from different degrees of difficulty, can help to create an open learning environment, in which everyone can support the other. Therefore, lessons should also include joint activities, which can strengthen the social class structure. In times of trying to implement inclusive environments, schools are places, in which heterogeneity can be valuated, as individuals can show their special abilities and enhance the school life by bringing those together.

Last but not least, it is essential that education policies take into account the findings that emerge and enable their implementation in practice, thus, contributing to reducing educational inequalities.

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