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Perspectives of Teachers of High Performing Immigrant Youth in a German Secondary School

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Abstract: This study examined the perspectives of teachers of immigrant youth in a high performing school, Gymnasium Baden (a pseudonym), in the southern region of Germany. Academic success in the region has been traditionally designated for ethnic Germans and non-natives who suppress their culture and assimilate into normative German culture. The consequences of failed intercultural education in Europe have prompted increased demands to consider diversity in teacher training and to provide more equitable opportunities for immigrants. In a broader context of limited access and opportunity to higher education among immigrants, this study documented the voices of teachers of high performing immigrant youth. The perspectives of culturally responsive teachers were documented through interviews, within a broader conservative region that has experienced dilemmas of integrating immigrants into school and society. An examination of interview transcripts and ethnographic field notes of student interactions revealed teachers who were overwhelmingly supportive and responsive to immigrant youth.

Keywords: *Immigrant youth, intercultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy.*

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Introduction

Welcome to Gymnasium Baden (a pseudonym), a secondary school located in the southern region of Germany where the high performing immigrant youth population, mostly third generation immigrants from Turkey and Croatia and born and educated in Germany, are welcomed and assimilated into the school context, on the basis of acquiring academic German and managing the demands of Gymnasium. The academic achievement of a few newly arrived Syrian refugees enrolled in the school context was attributed to similar schooling in Syria and newcomer language preparation courses offered in host communities prior to enrollment. Immigrant and refugee students who experienced trauma in their homelands were additionally provided emotional support services at Gymnasium Baden.

During the time of the study in 2016, Germany welcomed an influx of 1.4 million Syrian refugees who fled a brutal civil war and loss of the ability to conduct their daily lives in their homeland (Hindy, 2018). Chancellor Merkel facilitated multiple changes to European Union (EU) laws and an open-door policy, including the removal of a barrier requiring Syrian refugees to seek asylum in their first country of arrival (Hindy, 2018). Thus, 1.4 million people, the majority Syrian, have applied for asylum in Germany.

Germany has experienced large influxes of immigrant populations in its history, including Turkish immigrants who received contracts and arrived as guest workers beginning with Germany's labor shortage in the 1960s, but received no language and vocational courses to improve their skills because German officials assumed they would return to their homeland. The Turkish population remained into the economic recession in the 1970s and thereafter, and have been regarded as the least integrated minority in the country (Hindy, 2018). The concerted efforts to integrate Syrian refugees into the population are therefore unprecedented (Hindy, 2018). Few Syrian refugees were enrolled in Gymnasium Baden during the time of the study, a contrast from larger numbers of refugees in larger cities. Focal teachers informed the population was emerging in society in the region and that more Syrian refugees would enroll in the near future, on the basis of host communities that offered vocational training to improve skills and newcomer language preparation courses.

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Dilemmas at the societal level include the perspective in the dominant German culture that deems integrating Syrian refugees as assimilating to societal norms and suppressing their culture. Conversely, many Syrians would prefer to maintain their cultural traditions (Hindy, 2018). While the preference to sustain cultural norms presents a cultural conflict in society and school in the region, teachers' intercultural competence yielded a climate at Gymnasium Baden that welcomed the cultural differences brought by immigrant and refugee youth. However, rigid curricular requirements presented limitations of more fully merging students' culture into teaching content.

The struggles of intercultural education in Europe (Gaebel, 2012) have prompted increased demands to consider diversity in teacher training and to provide more equitable opportunities for immigrants. In a context of limited access and opportunity to higher education among immigrants, and uncertainty surrounding an increasing number of refugees deemed as a risk in society and school, this study documented the voices of culturally responsive teachers of high performing immigrant youth in Gymnasium Baden who demonstrated productive risk. The perspectives of culturally responsive teachers were documented through interviews, in the context of a conservative region that has historically and traditionally experienced dilemmas of integrating immigrants into school and society. In addition, ethnographic field notes captured student interactions in temporal school spaces and in one classroom.

Literature Review

Multicultural education is defined in Europe as the enactment of learning about other cultures to promote acceptance of other cultures (Holm & Zolliacus, 2009). The concept in the European context gained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s when government officials and educators rejected assimilationist pedagogies. The shift attempted to prepare children for a culturally diverse society. Most of the 16 German states shifted from the deficiency model to a model that critically examined the racist structures of the German school system (Gaebel, 2012). Most of the German states adopted guidelines and materials recommended by the ministers of education, but the implementation was not supported by the state government (Faas, 2008a). Alamdar-Niemann et al. (1991) claimed that instruction, in spite of policies toward multicultural education, have remained unchanged since the 1970s, reflected in Baden-Württemberg, which transitioned from professing an awareness of cultural diversity in Germany to focusing on Germany's identity within the EU (Gaebel, 2012).

Intercultural education emerged as a response to concerns that multicultural education is a passive coexistence of cultures and can be defined in the context of European schools as "the interaction of and relationship between different cultural groups in a culturally diverse setting" (Hill, 2007, p. 250; Holm & Zolliacus, 2009) and as "interactions, negotiations and processes" (Gundara, 2000, p. 233). Thus, intercultural education is interactive and promotes collaboration in classrooms between cultural groups. The Council of Europe and the EU Commission's policies have promoted the term intercultural education (Holm & Zolliacus, 2009) and made clear distinctions between intercultural education and multicultural education. However, failed intercultural education in Germany has yielded challenges for immigrant youth in secondary schools, related to access and opportunity.

The body of knowledge surrounding limited access and opportunity to college preparatory secondary schools among immigrant students in European schools is well documented (DeCoster, 2009; Heckmann, 2008; VanZenten, 1997). Although many European countries have attempted to adjust policies to integrate immigrants into society and schools, much needs to be done in Germany, related to immigrant Turkish youth who are children of immigrant parents, a population reflected in this study. Research suggests that Turkish immigrant youth perform poorly in primary and secondary school in Germany and demonstrate limited educational attainment (Kristen et al., 2008). Kristen and Granato (2007) claimed that second generation Turkish youth experience educational disadvantages, relative to their German peers. They claim that disadvantages stem from social inequalities. Moreover, factors of social class, education of parents, teacher expectations and integration policies posit that immigrant students in Germany are disproportionately tracked into lower level vocational programs (Heckman, 2008). Failed attempts at intercultural education reifies that academic success is intended for ethnic Germans and non-natives who suppress their culture and assimilate into normative German culture (Gaebel, 2012).

Limited educational attainment of Turkish immigrants is manifest in marginalization and segregation in the broader society, based upon cultural and religious practices that are dissimilar and devalued in the dominant German culture. The integration of the Turkish minority into German society is demarcated as a parallel and separate society (Mueller, 2006). Consequently, Turkish students are deemed invisible in school (Gaebel, 2012). Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel, has acknowledged that attempts toward a multicultural society within the realm of Germany's multicultural project have been a failure (Clark, 2010). Educational policies toward integrating immigrant populations are situated in failed attempts toward multiculturalism. Policies include curricular changes and youth summits. However, the failure of multiculturalism in German society and school is culturally and historically situated, in a nation where citizenship has been defined by ancestry and German nationalism that excludes cultural differences (Gaebel, 2012; Gokturk, Gramling & Kaes, 2007). The definition of citizenship and cultural belonging is rigid, situated in a national identity that is constructed by a common ethnicity and culture (Faas, 2008a). The remembered history has historically excluded most immigrants from access to college preparation programs and educational equality (Gaebel, 2012). Existing trends of marginalization of Turkish immigrant students and newcomer refugees are rooted in a remembered history, as the

Turkish population emerged in Germany in the 1960s and was not supported with vocational training and newcomer language classes. Turkish immigrants are currently regarded as not being well integrated into society (Hindy, 2018).

The consequences of failed intercultural education in Europe have prompted increased demands to consider diversity in teacher training and to provide more equitable opportunities for immigrants (Arneson et al., 2008). The Council of Europe's Steering Committee began in 2006, toward training teachers for challenges of emerging immigration patterns across national borders. They developed a three-tiered framework, beginning with an analysis of existing training of European states for diversity. A new framework was then developed for teacher competencies on diversity education, then reform efforts were initiated through training sessions and awareness raising with stakeholders (Arneson et al., 2008). More recently, a study of teacher education programs in Germany documented the implementation of one intercultural education course in teacher preparation programs (Deardorff, 2006; Tuncel, 2019). Although the course supported teachers toward developing intercultural competence, a more systemic approach is needed to accommodate different learning styles across the curriculum (Tuncel, 2019). Thus, an interdisciplinary approach is recommended to more fully develop the competencies toward implementing interculturalism in practice (Tuncel, 2019).

The US context is significant to this study because teacher preparation programs for teaching diverse students have been well documented over the last two decades to address changing demography (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter, 2008), whereas the need for including diversity education in teacher preparation programs in Germany has emerged over the last decade, as a response to changing demography (Arneson et al., 2008; Public Policy and Management Institute, 2017). The US context reveals the challenges of diversity education in teacher preparation as school populations are becoming more diverse and teachers are teaching students that are culturally, economically and linguistically different from themselves (Villegas, 2018). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, students of color account for 51.5 percent of elementary and secondary public schools in the US, 18 percent of teachers are of color, and 82 percent of teachers are White (Musu-Gillette, de Brey, McFarland, Hussar, Sonnenberg & Wilkinson-Flicker, 2017). Thus, the discourse surrounding teacher preparation for diversity in the US context centers around preparing White teachers for work in diverse teaching contexts, particularly as the student population has become more diverse over the past four decades, while the teaching force is overwhelmingly White (Flores et al., 2018; Gay, 2010; Sleeter, 2008; Villegas, 2018). In a context that has historically been racially segregated in terms of residency and schooling, White pre-service teachers have traditionally had minimal exposure to diversity and have not possessed cross-cultural and cross-racial awareness that is required to be culturally responsive (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 2008). While most teacher preparation programs include a few courses, programs do not provide comprehensive programming for teaching in racially diverse contexts and to develop cross-cultural and cross-racial awareness (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter, 2008). Consequently, Sleeter (2008) and Delpit (2006) claimed that a cultural mismatch emerges between teachers and students and that teachers maintain low expectations for low income students and students of color.

The Public Policy and Management Institute (2017) has documented similar trends in Germany, as the teacher population is racially homogeneous, the student population is becoming more diverse, and teachers are not well prepared toward teaching students from socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds that differ from themselves. Furthermore, the PPMI (2017) acknowledged the need for a comprehensive teacher education program that supports the development of intercultural competencies in order to respond to changing school demography.

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) conceptualized strategies toward effectively integrating immigrants into European nations (DeCoster, 2009). The strategies underscore communication between schools and families and mandated heritage language teaching. Such strategies are necessary, as findings from a 2014 Eurobarometer survey revealed that more than half of the EU population responded negatively to immigration population trends (European Commission, 2014).

According to Rodriguez (2018), risk discourse surrounding immigrants and refugees encompasses the perception that newcomers are a threat or problem in the EU. Perceptions of risk are associated with trauma refugees have experienced during the process of being abruptly uprooted from their homeland, as consequence of manmade crises, including war, conflict, and/or political unrest (Gokce & Acar, 2018). Thus, crisis is a concept that frames the movement of people into EU countries, including Germany, and underscores a risk to the society receiving immigrant and refugee populations, particularly about belonging and contributing to society and school (Gokce & Acar, 2018; Rodriguez, 2018). Rodriguez (2018) and Biesta (2013) disrupted commonly held assumptions of loss to explore how school and society can be productive on behalf of individuals whose departure from their homeland have posed risks to their well-being and livelihood. Moreover, the aspect of arriving, connecting, and intersecting in a new space contributes to a productive risk taken on behalf of refugees (Rodriguez, 2018). Gokce and Acar (2018) documented principals in Turkish schools receiving Syrian refugees who opened support rooms for students and maintained a close connection with families. Moreover, teachers facilitated academic literacy courses and cultivated opportunities to socialize with peers (Gokce & Acar, 2018). Somaskanda (2015) documented teachers in German schools receiving Syrian refugees who informed that effectively integrating refugees into school requires a combination of language training, resources, and emotional support, particularly for students who are coping with the trauma they experienced prior to their arrival. This study aims to contribute the perspective of culturally responsive secondary teachers with intercultural

competence that endeavored to provide possibility for immigrant youth, within curricular requirements, and an anticipated increase of Syrian refugees in the near future.

Culturally responsive teaching is the framework guiding teacher's interactions with students in this study and was coined by Ladson-Billings (1994) as including student's culture in the learning process. Culturally responsive teaching encompasses maintaining high expectations for students and sustaining positive perspectives of parents and families (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

In spite of trends that render inequities among Turkish immigrant youth in Europe, there is evidence of culturally responsive and inclusive practices in Berlin, within the frame of bilingual practices to support development of academic literacy (Orellana & Eksner, 2006). Specific to the German college preparatory context in the West, Faas (2008b) documented a middle-class inner-city Gymnasium that attempted to link instructional approaches with the European integration project. Turkish youth were given a voice as dynamics of social class and their cultural and political identities were acknowledged in the school context. The concept of Europe was situated from the lens of multiculturalism, in which the focus on multicultural openness presented a stark contrast from traditional notions of German nationalism. As part of the process, Turkish immigrant youth forged positive European identities and were able to relate to the European knowledge economy (Faas, 2008b). However, gaps in knowledge of culturally responsive practices in the German context persist, particularly the Baden-Wurttemberg region. While circumstances pertaining to Turkish immigrants is well documented in the literature, gaps in knowledge are evident in the region, within the scope of immigrant youth from other nations, including Africa, Asia, Brazil, and Croatia.

Thus, within the scope of a region that has historically and traditionally been known to marginalize immigrant youth in school and society, this study aims to fill the gaps in the literature by examining culturally responsive teachers of high performing immigrant youth at a Gymnasium in the Baden-Wurttemberg region.

Methodology

Site and Participants

Gymnasium Baden (a pseudonym) is among the top tier schools in the Baden-Wurttemberg region, with a population of 1300, and, according to faculty, the largest immigrant population of 130 in the school history was unprecedented. More recently, issues of immigration in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis have placed Germany on a global platform, and, in spite of concerted efforts, posed concerns about integrating newcomer refugees into school and society. The immigrant students are from nations including Turkey, Croatia, Brazil, and Africa. Most immigrant youth in the school context were third generation immigrants who were born in Germany to immigrant parents. A few students in the sample were first generation immigrants who immigrated with their families. During the time of study, Syrian refugees began entry into society, but not yet significantly into the school context. Two of the teachers interviewed reported teaching Syrian refugees in their classes.

Researcher Background

The researcher is the daughter of German and Jamaican immigrants, whose father grew up in the region. As a visiting student at a neighboring Gymnasium in the late 1980s, the researcher recognized that she was the only person of color. However, as she maintained contact with classmates who later became teachers in the region, she learned about and became interested in 1) the changing demography in the Gymnasium schools, 2) how teachers were handling demographic changes, and 3) the role of teacher preparation for diverse populations and changing demography.

The researcher is from the US, with a background in teacher comfort and discomfort with changing demography in suburban schools in the American Midwest. As a teacher educator, she additionally prepares pre-service teachers for urban and diverse contexts and, consequently conducts research about pre-service teacher perspectives about students whose cultural, economic and linguistic backgrounds differ from their own. Therefore, her interest in the study additionally stemmed from her research and teaching for diversity and social justice in the US.

Interviews were conducted in the endeavor of documenting the perspectives of culturally responsive teachers, high expectations for students and families, and knowledge of the school climate for immigrant youth. Teacher participants and the headmaster were recruited with the support of the researcher's trusted colleague at Gymnasium Baden who kept the researcher apprised of the changing demography in the region and school. The trusted colleague surveyed her colleagues for their interest in participating in the study. The colleague was a key informant who determined that focal teachers were responsive, on the basis of her observations of their positive interactions with students and her discussions about their positive perceptions of the students' families. Thus, teachers were selected on the basis of their responsiveness to immigrant students and their willingness to participate in the study.

The headmaster of the school agreed to participate in the study and was selected based on his endeavor of cultivating teachers toward an inclusive school atmosphere for immigrant and native students.

Data Collection and Analysis

In an era of uncertainty surrounding concerted integration efforts of Syrian refugees, the conceptual framework guiding this study is culturally responsive teachers of high performing immigrant youth in a region where they have traditionally experienced academic struggles. Grounded in qualitative methods, data collection included semi-structured teacher interviews that were conducted in English and German for clarifying terminology, as needed. Field-note observations of one classroom were gathered.

Teacher interviews (N=5) and one headmaster interview (N=1) were audio recorded to document teachers' expectations for newcomer and longtime immigrant youth, the overall school climate, and culturally responsive instructional practices for teaching immigrant youth. All interviews were transcribed. Interviews were conducted at Gymnasium Baden or at teachers' homes, in the Baden-Wurttemberg region over a three-week period in July of 2016. For purposes of confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to the school and all participants in the study. The researcher's relationship with a trusted colleague made it possible to acquire permission to enter the school context and to gain trust among participants. The trusted colleague permitted the researcher to document classroom interactions. Remaining participants did not allow for the researcher to make classroom observations.

Semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded during July of 2016. Informal classroom observations were conducted with one teacher, documented in field notes. Qualitative methods were employed, including affective coding that examined teachers' beliefs, emotions, and agency related to the support they provided to their immigrant students and for emerging themes related to the phenomenon of interest (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In vivo coding examined teacher's beliefs on the basis of evaluating their spoken words that were coded in the interview transcripts (Miles et al., 2014). Transcriptions were read and coded line by line for the following themes: 1) teacher's perceptions of high performing immigrant youth, including newcomer (less than one year) and longtime immigrant students (more than one year and/or second generation immigrant status), 2) the school climate for immigrant youth, 3) teachers' understanding of immigrant youth struggles 4) differentiated instruction for immigrant youth, and 5) teachers' preparation for teaching immigrant youth. Fieldnotes of informal observations were coded for the school climate for immigrant youth. Because the body of knowledge is dominated by failed attempts at intercultural education for immigrant youth in school and limited opportunities for Turkish immigrants to enroll in the Gymnasium, emerging themes aimed to contribute to gaps in the literature and document incidents of possibility for high achieving immigrant youth.

Research questions guiding the study: What are teacher's perceptions of high performing immigrant youth, including newcomer and second generation immigration youth? What is the school climate for immigrant youth? What do teachers understand about the struggles experienced by immigrant youth? How do teachers differentiate instruction for immigrant youth? What are teachers' experiences in teacher preparation for immigrant youth?

Findings

Teacher's Perceptions of High Performing Immigrant and Refugee Youth: Newcomer Status

The success of immigrant and refugee students was due to attending a newcomer school offered by the region where students received instruction in their primary language, while acquiring the German language. Simone, a language teacher of French, English, and German, provided additional insight about German preparation classes offered to newcomer Syrian refugees prior to attending the Gymnasium, along with the possibility of offering preparation classes at the Gymnasium if the refugee population increased:

Simone: There are special preparation classes for refugee children coming here and they get German lessons. This is done by the city, not the schools. The region is responsible for the refugees, for training the children.

Interviewer: It's outside of the school, but it's in society.

Simone: Outside of our school. I know that neighbor schools, just a few meters from here have preparation classes. Many schools in bigger German cities already have preparation classes. We don't have any at the moment.

Interviewer: You don't have them yet

Simone: We don't have them yet. Perhaps we will have one or two. In the next three years

Interviewer: As the population changes, support for the students may be offered.

All teachers interviewed maintained high expectations for immigrant students, regardless of newcomer or long-time status. High performing newcomer students transferred to the Gymnasium upon demonstrating language readiness, as indicated by Anne, a math teacher, who reported of one her high performing Syrian students in her math class that enrolled 20 immigrants and one refugee youth:

Anne : When they come, they have German learning from another school. One refugee student came and a few weeks later, she was on the [German]. The teacher there (at the preparation school) said she is good. You can bring her here. She was in a similar school (Gymnasium) in Syria.

Furthermore, Martin, a physics teacher, attributed newcomer student success to appreciating the calm atmosphere of Gymnasium Baden:

Interviewer: We experience that quite a bit in the U.S. The immigrants who come with high performing families have high expectations and they bring that to school with them. A lot of times, the kids that are already from here, maybe don't appreciate it as much

Martin: They take everything for granted.

Interviewer: It's a different kind of work ethic, probably.

Martin: Definitely.

Teachers cited referred to refugee youth who left their homelands during times of civil unrest and were appreciative about living in a calm society. According to Martin:

Martin: They show an appreciation. One student last year in the 7th grade told what it's like there living at the Turkish, Syrian border where every now and then, some little missile went over the border. They appreciate living here and then she takes much more effort.

Interviewer: Right, it's so calm here.

Martin: Yes.

Interviewer: So, so that's really interesting. Just that the work ethic that's brought and how that's instilled in the family. It really does make a difference.

Martin: It's more economically stable than Eastern Europe. Sometimes even from former Soviet Socialistic Republics, you know like Moldavia, or the Ukraine. They're often also a little bit more motivated because they know what it's like (there).

Similarly, Annette's extensive travels to third world countries and schools provided exposure to different cultures, including countries of origin among newcomer immigrants, which influenced her positive impressions of immigrant youth:

Annette: I'm very open to different cultures. I experience a lot from traveling in African countries, Asia, South America, in poor countries.

Interviewer: It's a completely different culture than here

Annette: I think that influences me a lot.

Interviewer: So you may have an understanding

Annette: I tell my students how lucky they are that they are here. And then I tell them it's your job. And other kids have to work

Interviewer: Right because maybe they haven't seen something but you may have students coming in who had similar conditions to what you've seen in third world countries.

Annette: Yeah.

Interviewer: And they really appreciate being here.

Annette: Being able to go to school.

Thus, she was aware of their appreciation for attending school in a calm atmosphere and maintained high expectations for them.

According to the teachers, most newcomer immigrants and refugees were high performing students in their homeland and reared in households where education was valued. Students arriving from countries in conditions of civil unrest maintained an appreciation for the calm atmosphere in school and society. Upon arrival into the Gymnasium, newcomer students performed as well or better than their native peers.

Perspectives of Longtime High Performing Immigrant Youth

Simone acknowledged the ambitious nature of longtime high performing immigrant youth:

Interviewer: Can you describe some of the characteristics of your longtime high performing students. For example, their family support system.

Simone: I would say high performing students are very ambitious. They're really motivated and they want to do well here in school. I also think that parents are ambitious for their children

Furthermore, Martin acknowledged refugee youth who were more prepared for Gymnasium than their German counterparts:

Martin: Here the Syrian refugees are very willing to learn and they bring a lot of education with them, actually more than the average German student

When asked about characteristics of high performing, long time immigrant youth, Anne attributed the success of her long time Sri Lankan students to their dedication to their religious studies outside of school:

Anne: They have to go on Sunday for 5, 4 hours in the church and they have to study books and have tests and have respect because they teach on Sunday that they have to, to have respect from the teacher and they're really nice. They make the door, they open the door for their teachers. Really!

Interviewer: Very nice.

Anne: Wonderful. It's really good. The students have really good notes and I've always told them in front of the class. I told them, it's very good. Do it again and it's great.

Interviewer: Wow. That's really good!

Anne: I asked them what does your teacher there do and they have tests after tests, it's not good on Sunday. They have to write a test on Monday again

Interviewer: Okay. So their Sunday school is very serious

Interviewer: And then they take the seriousness...

Anne: Yes. To this school. I am impressed with them.

All teachers cited acknowledged and attributed high performing students to work habits that were no different than high performing native students. The existing body of knowledge identified factors of social class, education of parents, low teacher expectations, and unsuccessful integration policies, which posit that newcomer immigrant students in Germany are disproportionately tracked into lower level programs, known as the Realschule and Hauptschule (DeCoster, 2009; Gaebel, 2011; Heckman, 2008; Kristen et al. 2008; Van Zanten, 1997). In contrast, the immigrant and refugee youth in the school population have assimilated into Gymnasium Baden. This is due in large part to culturally responsive teachers' high expectations and newcomer students who acquire academic German in a special school and demonstrate academic proficiency prior to being accepted into Gymnasium Baden. Thus, findings align more with culturally responsive and inclusive practices and high expectations that were acknowledged by Ladson-Billings (1994) and documented in Berlin (Orellana & Ekser, 2006) and in the West (Faas, 2008) and demonstrate evidence of responsiveness and teacher awareness of cultural differences through an asset lens in the Baden-Württemberg region. Anne's account of her long time Sri Lankan students' religious practices through an asset lens is a contrast from Mueller's (2006) documentation of immigrants' marginalization, based upon cultural and religious practices that are dissimilar and devalued in the dominant German culture.

School Climate for Immigrant Youth

Upon entering Annette's classroom, the students responded to the researcher's presence with excitement and curiosity, especially upon knowing that she was from the US. Of the twenty students in the class, five were immigrant students who reflected the following nations: Vietnam, Turkey, and Croatia. The immigrant youth, with the exception of the Vietnamese student who seemed shy, were proud to announce their heritage. The homeroom classroom was decorated with student generated posters that included personal pictures and aspects of their social worlds. Although the math lesson focused exclusively on the content, with teacher-led delivery, followed by partner-led collaboration across cultural groups and independent practice, the posters suggested there was a space for acknowledging students' interests. Moreover, upon my arrival to the classroom, the students prepared the radio with a song as a request for the teacher to dance, albeit briefly, before the lesson.

According to Annette, the rigid curriculum left very little time for including students' culture into the curriculum and social worlds, aside from time to dance before class or impromptu mentioning of students' interests. However, the overall classroom atmosphere was welcoming and provided designated spaces for students' interests to be represented. Intercultural education was present, as students collaborated across cultural groups.

According to the teachers cited, the teachers and students sustained a welcoming atmosphere for immigrant youth. Annette represents this perspective:

Interviewer: What is the greatest reward of teaching immigrant students? What is the benefit to the welcoming school atmosphere?

Annette: I think the best thing is that they can tell the Germans or the ones who never went abroad, I think the best thing is that they bring that culture with them

Interviewer: Do they acknowledge their culture?

Annette: Yeah

Interviewer: Like they're proud of it?

Annette: When they talk. In math it's really hard. In English you could talk about it and then you could practice the English, but in math then you have to make a time to talk about culture

Interviewer: You might talk about it before or after class but not during class

Annette: During class as well but not like...

Interviewer: Not a lot, not like the extensive dialogue

Annette: Sometimes I do

Interviewer: Okay

Annette: Sometimes I do but then yeah, it's hard to mix it with the math lesson

Furthermore, the Headmaster acknowledged the changing school demography, welcoming school atmosphere, and additional resources provided to ensure belonging:

Headmaster: Ten years ago the students looked like the teachers. But now it changed. We have also students from a lower social dynamic. We have students from different countries in Europe and all over the world. And the students don't look like the teachers. We don't say we have problems; we have challenges. If students have a problem in school or at home, or in the family, they can come to one of the social workers and they will try to help them. We have three persons for 1300 students. If you bring us your child in the school it's also our child.

Interviewer: Is it typical of any headmaster to believe that this is our child who has come here?

Headmaster: It's typical for our school. And therefore, a lot of parents want to bring their children to our school.

Thus, the teachers sought the resources of the school social workers to maintain an inclusive atmosphere, with the support of the Headmaster. The resources provided at Gymnasium Baden reflected those provided at schools documented by Somaskanda (2015).

Teachers' endeavors of being culturally responsive within a rigid curricular framework provided students a voice, although students' cultural and political identities were not acknowledged to the degree that was documented by Faas's (2008b) study of a middle class inner-city Gymnasium that attempted to link instructional approaches with the European integration project.

Teacher Knowledge of Immigrant Youth Experiences and Shifting School Policies in an Uncertain Atmosphere

Teachers overwhelmingly understood the circumstances faced by immigrant and refugee students and recognized the possibility for difficulty in school and society. Understanding among some teachers was attributed to being an immigrant themselves while living abroad. According to Martin:

Martin: I myself was as a child partially in the U. S.

Interviewer: So you have experience as an immigrant student yourself?

Martin: I know a little bit what it's like when you sit in a classroom as a kid and you don't understand a word at first. And that helps always a little bit that I have a certain sympathy.

Understanding was also instilled by living in communities in Germany that welcomed diversity. Conversely, Simone was aware of communities that did not embrace diversity:

Interviewer: because it's an unknown in how we deal with that.

Simone: So all these fears are coming to Germany now. That's my impression. I can't give you any numbers. But, I'm sure there will be statistics proving that German population society is rather

Interviewer: It's changing.

Simone: It's changing and the many people are afraid of these changes and they are not very well, I think there are two sides of the phenomenon. In the village where I live, just 40 kilometers away, there are also immigrants, refugees and they were welcomed.

There was a lot of help, people collected clothes for them and they were invited to play table tennis with the group and to sing with another group--they were really welcomed. On the other hand, you see that many people are afraid and perhaps with the news that they burnt houses down where refugees live so that's the other side of the coin.

Teachers cited acknowledged that schools in larger cities were experiencing higher rates of immigrant youth and uncertainty of how to teach the students. As a gymnasium receiving the higher performing students, the teachers claimed they had not experienced the same challenges, but expected an increase in immigrant and refugee enrollment and uncertainty, particularly as the city was receiving more refugee families in society.

Simone represented the perspective of the teachers cited:

Simone: This generation has been rather well integrated in our area here. It might be different if you go to big cities like Berlin. I think the situation there is very different from ours. This is a rather rural area. We haven't got so many immigrants and this mass immigration that has happened last year. That was something very new for us and I think the students are just entering our school. And it hasn't hit our daily lives, I would say. I'm sure it will, it will come so. If we come back in 3 or 4 years perhaps, we will be able to tell you more about it.

Interviewer: Right, because the problems that we hear about, when we hear from the US or we hear the media of the Syrian refugee crisis. My father's from here and his friends will call and say, you better come soon if you want to see Germany as you remember it because it's changing.

Simone: Yeah. It's changing, but it hasn't changed too much. It hasn't.

In a similar vein, Annette claimed the following about an uncertain future:

Annette: I think the challenge is ahead of us because of the millions who came. The challenge will come because most immigrant students which I have are born in Germany and the parents immigrated. But now with the refugees from last year, a lot of young people came and they will come to our school more and more with not knowing German very well. So, the immigrant students I taught so far.

Interviewer: They've been well assimilated

Annette: They didn't have any problems with German

Interviewer: Okay

Annette: So, the Syrian is the first...

Interviewer: So, the first wave that weren't born here coming from a place that's with civil unrest...

Annette: Yeah there was not refuge. Most of them came for work here.

Annette additionally acknowledged eased entry into Gymnasium that could contribute to an uncertain atmosphere for immigrant and refugee youth, given that acceptance into the Gymnasium was no longer as rigid as in previous years:

Annette: It's getting harder to teach. Because of the loss of the primary school review there are more challenges. Because they don't have to stick on that.

Interviewer: Not like they did before.

Annette: Yes.

Interviewer: It was a lot stricter?

Annette: Yeah, they had to do like if someone had a primary review and he wanted to put his child in Gymnasium he had to do a test to be able to go there. It was hard but now everybody can get in

The Headmaster offered additional insight about the primary school review, particularly the matter of documentation that could better assist teachers in their endeavor of supporting students:

Headmaster: This system is out since six years. We don't, the parents and the students, they have not to show the exam.

Interviewer: Oh, they don't show the exam?

Headmaster: Yes.

Interviewer: For five, six years they don't have to show that anymore?

Headmaster: That's it. Yes, and then we know only the name and the address, and the birthdate, and the school where they are; the grammar school where they are. But nothing more. I cannot say to a student, you cannot come. But if I know the exam and then I can look which is the best form of instruction or which teacher (to assign students to)

Interviewer: That helps your teachers.

Headmaster: And the parents

Interviewer: It helps you, for your planning. If you don't know, then you have to do it when they come here. Right?

Headmaster: If you don't know anything about the background. For the last five six years, we don't know enough about the students.

Interviewer: You didn't know enough of the educational background.

Headmaster: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, interesting. So, you're trusting the previous school, the former school to make the decisions for you without having the paper to show.

Headmaster: Yes, but we are not allowed to call to grammar school and to ask

Although entry into Gymnasium had become easier, success for the rigor of Gymnasium presented challenges for teachers and students because incoming students were not as academically prepared as students enrolled with primary school review documentation, nor were teachers informed enough about the students' academic background. Although the primary review was not implemented during the time of the study, the Headmaster informed that the primary review would return the following year as a result of elections, evidenced by the following excerpt:

Headmaster: This year in March we had elections too. Next year they have to show the primary review.

Interviewer: So they decided they do need to show that they can perform as well.

Thus, the return of the primary review was an indicator that teachers would be more informed about the students' educational background. The gradual changes and awareness of the circumstances in school and society led Lotte, a German literature teacher, to join a small collaborative of teachers at the school, in their endeavor of understanding their immigrant students and supporting more effective teaching with professional development. Of all teachers interviewed, Lotte was the only teacher who informed about forming a teacher collaborative:

Interviewer: Can you describe what you do as part of your collaboration with colleagues to support your teaching of immigrant youth?

Lotte: I needed more help with my immigrant pupils, more than from the Entwicklung (development) from the school. So I joined with some Kollegen (colleagues) who also wanted help. Support. We meet after school and read literature

Interviewer: What about the collaboration has been most helpful?

Lotte: We understand better our immigrant pupils and their struggles. We give them a chance. Talk about their possibilities and strengths. They bring more education than we have thought. The talk in society and on fernsehen (TV) about immigrants in school can be frightening for teachers, but it is not so at school.

Although Simone, Annette, Martin and Lotte indicated knowledge about the circumstances experienced by their immigrant students in a manner that contributed to the overall welcoming atmosphere at the school, Simone, Annette and Lotte's concerns aligned with the broader failure of multiculturalism in German society and school, in a nation where citizenship has been defined by ancestry and German nationalism that excludes cultural differences (Gaebel, 2012). Although the region had not experienced the challenges of mass immigration, Simone and Annette were aware of the potential for challenges in the near future.

Teacher Preparation for Teaching Immigrant Youth.

None of the teachers cited received formal training for teaching immigrant youth, although they acknowledged it was an option during their teacher training.

According to Simone:

Simone: I think when I did the teacher preparation school, that was 20 years ago and the situation 20 years ago was different from now. 20 years ago, I think I was well prepared. There was also special training for German as a foreign language. That was optional. You could do it. That was offered by the school and some of my German colleagues did it. Others didn't, so I didn't do it.

Interviewer: So it was an option back then

Simone: It was an option.

Interviewer: to do that.

Simone: Exactly. I think I was well prepared, but the situation was not asked 20 years ago, I would say.

Interviewer: If you were to think about today. Is teacher preparation changing to reflect the changing population as something that you've noticed?

Simone: Yes, definitely.

All teachers taught for 10 years or longer, and their teacher preparation/induction occurred during a time when teaching immigrant students was not a concern in the field. Their advice to colleges of education included mandating a strand that addressed cultural and linguistic differences, theoretically and through practicum experiences.

According to Anne:

Interviewer: What would you say that they would need to do to prepare a teacher who's just coming in to your school or any other school?

Anne: I think you have to give them a chance. The same chance as the others.

The Council of Europe's Steering Committee began 10 years prior to the study, in the endeavor of training teachers for challenges of emerging immigration patterns across national borders. Although the teachers cited were not supported for developing teacher competencies on diversity education as a part of their pre and in-service teacher development, they demonstrated high expectations for their immigrant students and a willingness to acknowledge and be responsive to their strengths.

Differentiating Instruction

Teachers overwhelmingly expressed that immigrant students were prepared to the degree that differentiated instruction was typically not a consideration or necessary. Of all teachers, however, Simone and Anne informed about minor adjustments to accommodate students. According to Simone:

Interviewer: In the US teachers often differentiate instruction for students learning English, such as offering instruction as needed in the first language. Do you differentiate instruction for your immigrant students?

Simone: In my normal classes, I haven't gotten any students who are not familiar with German. Their German is at such a high level that they haven't any problems with understanding me or understanding instructions. Besides when I teach English or French, I speak English or French, so there isn't any problem with German. I have got one class. This is a special spelling training class.

Interviewer: Do you differentiate for the students in that class?

Simone: This class, I've got 3 students or 4 who have still problems with German, also when they speak German. Also when they try to understand a task if they have problems, they call me and I'll explain to them.

Interviewer: So you offer extra clarification

Simone: But the teaching is the same.

Interviewer: The teaching is the same.

Simone: And they don't get any separate worksheets or anything. I put a dictionary for Spanish speaking students on if they have got any problems with words they don't understand.

Interviewer: They can look up words to help them in their first language

Simone: They can look them up, but that's the only thing I do.

While Anne did not adjust her practice, she offered students extra practice:

Interviewer: You don't have any different methods of teaching for your immigrant students typically.

Anne: No.

Interviewer: They're just like everybody else.

Anne: I always have the different types of how do you say it, Hausaufgabe?

Interviewer: Like homework

Anne: Yes. You have it in your bag and if you need easier stuff, you can take it and give it.

Interviewer: So, easier practice.

Anne: I always have different practice.

Similarly, Annette helped students differently, as needed, and provided more or less homework in accordance with their development and progress in her 6th grade math class that met for two-hour class sessions twice a week:

Interviewer: I noticed during your class you had the extended work time where they could work and then you could go from student to student and offer help that they needed, that made it possible to differentiate.

Annette: Yes, and the ones who did not work as quickly and did other things (needed more simplified work), had to do the rest for homework. And some which were really fast and did a lot, they had less homework. And they knew it.

Interviewer: Okay, so more or less homework if they didn't finish?

Annette: Yes.

For admitted students requiring continued support, the Headmaster informed about bringing in translators, as needed, to offer instructional support to students at Gymnasium Baden and students from surrounding schools in their native language, taught by teachers of their native heritage:

Headmaster: And the students come in the afternoon, from different schools, not only from our school. And they have two hour a week or three hours a week they have lessons in their mother language

Interviewer: Okay, so they're students here but they get resources from other teachers who can help give instruction in the mother language?

Headmaster: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. And it's my understanding too that if they're brand new, they just came here, that they go to another school before they come here.

Headmaster: Yes.

Interviewer: But then when they're here, they still get support if they need it.

Headmaster: But the teachers from Croatia or from so on, they have, they must be teachers, you know?

Interviewer: You can't just be somebody from there, you have to be a teacher.

Headmaster: And they must be teachers. We cooperate with the Turkish embassy. They send us teachers or with the Croatian embassy and they send us the paper (to confirm) he's really a teacher

Teachers' perspectives informed about minor additions to support students, as needed. In addition, the Headmaster's responses indicated that extensive bilingual practices to support development of academic literacy, as Orellana & Eksner (2006) documented in Berlin, was facilitated to complement students' preparation and development of academic literacy prior to enrolling at Gymnasium Baden.

Discussion

Findings in this study contrast with the existing body of knowledge that identified factors of social class, education of parents, low teacher expectations, and unsuccessful integration policies where newcomer immigrant students in Germany have been traditionally and disproportionately tracked into lower level programs (DeCoster, 2009; Gaebel, 2011f; Heckman, 2008; Kristen et al. 2008; Van Zanten, 1997). The immigrant and refugee youth in the school population have assimilated into Gymnasium Baden, due largely to culturally responsive teachers' high expectations. Findings align more with culturally responsive practices and high expectations recommended by Ladson-Billings (1994), similar to studies in Berlin (Orellana & Eksner, 2006) and in the West (Faas, 2008). Thus, findings demonstrate evidence of responsiveness and teacher awareness of cultural differences through an asset lens in the Baden-Württemberg region. While teachers at Gymnasium voiced the potential to be culturally responsive in practice, rigid curricular requirements yielded limitations for more cohesive culturally relevant pedagogies.

In addition, newcomer students' acquisition of academic German and proficiency prior to enrolling in Gymnasium Baden supports their assimilation and success in the school context. Findings in this study additionally reveal possibility when resources are provided to support language development prior to arrival, along with emotional support for students who have experienced trauma in their homelands, similar to Somaskanda's (2015) recommendations. The teachers cited challenged commonly held notions of risk described by Rodriguez (2018), as they demonstrated how school and society can be productive on the basis of providing language support prior to arriving at school.

Furthermore, Anne's account of her long time Sri Lankan students' religious practices through an asset lens is a contrast from Mueller's (2006) documentation of immigrants' marginalization, based upon cultural and religious practices that are dissimilar and devalued in the dominant German culture. Her acceptance of dissimilar religious practices and willingness to connect and intersect across cultures in classroom spaces to contribute to a productive risk for immigrant and refugee students.

The life experiences of teachers in the study yielded an understanding of the circumstances of experiences of immigrant and refugee youth, which was not reinforced during teacher preparation. The state of teacher preparation in the US and

Germany presents a need for teacher preparation programs to address demographic changes and provide comprehensive programs in the endeavor of ensuring that all teachers, regardless of background, are able to support students of different cultural, socioeconomic status, and linguistic backgrounds. Developing intercultural competence toward effectively implementing interculturalism in practice requires an interdisciplinary approach in teacher preparation programs (Tuncel, 2019).

Conclusion

This study documented teachers who represented teachers in Gymnasium Baden who maintained high expectations for all students, regardless of native or immigrant status. The teachers' willingness to teach through an asset lens is significant, given limited teacher preparation for diversity in Germany and findings in the US where teaching for diversity and social justice is more of a presence in teacher preparation, but not in practice. Gymnasium Baden serves as an example of a welcoming school atmosphere where teachers overwhelmingly sought to understand the cultural resources of immigrant youth and acknowledged the strengths and contributions that were brought by the students. Particularly salient was the manner in which immigrant youth desired to not stand out and preferred to fit in with everyone else. Gymnasium Baden was a space that promoted equality, access, and educational attainment, regardless of immigrant, refugee, or native status.

Limitations and Suggestions

Participating teachers overwhelmingly reported few challenges teaching immigrant and refugee youth, given their work ethic, family support, academic achievement in their homeland and previous preparation for acquiring academic German. However, participating teachers additionally cautioned the researcher to return in three years, as they anticipated more refugee students and fewer resources to support a seamless transition into the Gymnasium. Moreover, concerns were expressed about less oversight for enrollment, an indicator that students, regardless of native, refugee or immigrant status might not be as prepared to be successful. Although these concerns were expressed, the Headmaster's reporting of the return of the primary review may influence a shift in enrollment trends for immigrant and refugee youth. Future research includes a return to Gymnasium Baden and examining teacher and headmaster perspectives of demographic changes that will likely be unprecedented, along with their perspectives of the shift in the primary review.

Of all teachers interviewed, only one participated actively in a professional learning community. Continued research may include interviewing participating teachers in the learning community and participating in meeting sessions that are guided by reading and responding to professional literature aimed to support teacher's culturally responsive practices.

Lastly, in the endeavor of capturing the role of teacher preparation for increasing diversity in German schools, the researcher aims to document the perspectives of new teachers in Gymnasium Baden and elsewhere during their induction phase.

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