

QUALITY AND EQUITY ISSUES RELATED TO THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANT STUDENTS IN EDUCATION

Abstract

The integration of immigrant students is a major concern in many countries. Children who immigrate with their parents to another country (first generation) typically face a number of challenges in adjusting to the new environment. Yet, even children of immigrants who were born and raised in their parents' new country of residence (second generation) are often less successful in school than their peers from native families. The process of integration is complex and involves several aspects, as the distinction between structural, cultural, social and identity-related integration implies. In addition, factors at various levels have been suggested to affect the integration process in education, such as state-level regulations for immigration and integration, the composition of neighbourhoods and schools, and approaches to language teaching and learning. The presentation will provide an overview of research findings on some of these facets, with a special focus on factors that are specific to an immigration background rather than the socioeconomic status of the family. These include issues related to identity and language. If time permits, research findings on effects of the student composition in classrooms will be discussed as well. The presentation will close with an outline of remaining challenges and open questions.

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assessment of student achievement in Germany. She has been involved in several cycles of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), such as co-authoring with Gayle Christensen a thematic report on the situation of immigrant students in international comparison. In her research, Petra Stanat focuses on questions related to ethnic and social disparities in education, determinants of immigrant students' educational success, second-language teaching and learning, reading achievement and large-scale assessment of student achievement. She is involved in several professional organisations and advisory boards. Among other things, she is an elected member of the Review Board of the German Research Foundation (DFG) for the area of Education Sciences.

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Immigration and integration: The context

Every year, millions of people leave their homes and move to another country. In 2007, more than 4.4 million people settled in one of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Although immigrant inflows decreased to below 3.8 million in 2010, they seem to be on the rise again since 2011 (OECD, 2013a). These immigration movements also affect the student composition in schools. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), in 2012 about 11 per cent of 15-year-olds in OECD countries had an immigration background (OECD, 2013b). Among the OECD countries where the proportion of immigrant students (first and second generation) in schools was higher than 20 per cent were Australia, Canada, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United States. In another 11 OECD countries, including Germany, the proportion ranged between 10 and 20 per cent (OECD, 2013b).

These numbers imply that many countries face the challenge of integrating immigrant students into their school systems. Yet, the nature of this challenge varies considerably. In addition to the proportion of first- and second-generation students, immigrant populations differ between countries in terms of their socioeconomic and educational background. This is partly due to variations in immigration policies (Stanat & Christensen, 2006). While some countries, including Australia, typically base entry decisions for immigrants on their qualifications and other background factors, this is much less prevalent in, for example, European countries. Accordingly, while in Europe the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) is generally lower for immigrant students than for their peers from native families, this is not the case in Australia (OECD, 2013b). Here, even the ESCS of first-generation students is, on average, comparable to that of non-immigrant students. Most importantly, both first-generation and second-generation immigrant students in Australia reached significantly higher scores on the PISA 2012 mathematics test than their peers from native families, suggesting that structural integration is ensured at the system level (OECD, 2013b).

This, however, does not imply the absence of challenges. One general challenge immigrant students typically have to master is the negotiation of two cultural contexts: the cultural context of their family's country of origin and the cultural context of their family's country of

residence (Berry, 1980, 1997). These two broad perspectives are relevant for several aspects, most notably for identity development as well as for language use and proficiency. The question, then, becomes what role the orientations toward the two contexts play for the structural integration of immigrant youth, namely their educational success.

Acculturation orientations¹

Acculturation refers to the changes that occur when two cultures come in contact with each other for extended periods of time. This entails changes on the collective level as well as on the individual level. In his seminal work on acculturation, Berry (1980, 1997) distinguishes two theoretically independent dimensions: a person's orientation toward the cultural context of the country of origin (CO-culture) and an orientation toward the cultural context of the country of residence (CR-culture). Depending on the degree to which these dimensions are high or low, four prototypical orientations can result. These are depicted in Figure 1.

This distinction suggested by Berry has also been applied to the concept of cultural identity, which can be construed as an aspect of psychological acculturation (e.g. Phinney, 1990; Phinney, Berry, Vedder & Liebkind, 2006). Within the framework of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), cultural identity is conceptualised as the sense of belonging to a specific social group (e.g. Horenczyk, 2008; Phinney, 1990, 1992). The identification with a social group, then, is assumed to influence how people see themselves and their self-esteem.

The extent to which the four prototypical identity orientations are more or less conducive to immigrant students' psychological adaptation and education success is unclear. At least five theoretical positions are discussed in the literature (Edele, Stanat, Radmann & Segeritz, 2013):

- (Neo-)assimilation theory suggests that a strong orientation toward the cultural context of the country of residence is decisive for the integration of immigrants. According to this view, students identifying with the CR-culture (assimilated or integrated) should be most successful in school, whereas the degree to which they also identify with the CO-culture should largely be irrelevant.

¹ This section is largely based on Edele, Stanat, Radmann and Segeritz (2013).

Orientation toward the cultural context of the country of origin

		Low	High
Orientation toward the cultural context of the country of residence	High	Assimilation	Integration
	Low	Marginalisation ²	Separation

Figure 1 Prototypical acculturation orientations of immigrants (based on Berry, 1980, 1997)

- ▶ A second, contrasting view assumes that a strong orientation toward the cultural context of the country of origin is conducive to psychological adaptation and, hence, to educational success (e.g. Phinney, 1990; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997). Students with strong ties to the CO-culture presumably have access to resources that can, for example, motivate learning and serve as a buffer against experiences of prejudice and discrimination (e.g. Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, Schmeelk-Cone, Chavous & Zimmerman, 2004; Wong, Eccles & Sameroff, 2003). With regard to the role of a person's identification with the CR-culture, however, this theoretical position makes no explicit predictions.
- ▶ Another frequently advanced hypothesis is that a strong orientation toward both the CO-culture and the CR-culture presents the optimal constellation for psychological adaptation and structural integration of immigrant youth (e.g. Altschul, Oysermann & Bybee, 2008; Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006; Berry, 1997; Oysermann, Kimmelmeier, Fryberg, Brosh & Hart-Johnson, 2003). According to this view, then, students with an integrated orientation should be most successful in school.
- ▶ In addition, some researchers predict negative effects of a separation orientation; that is, the combination of a strong identification with the CO-culture and a weak identification with the CR-culture (e.g. Esser, 2009;

Oysermann et al., 2003). Oysermann et al. (2003), for example, suggest that immigrant students who do not relate to the CR-culture may also distance themselves from the educational institutions associated with this culture and hence from trying to be successful in school.

- ▶ Finally, most theoretical accounts view a lack of identification with both the CO-culture and the CR-culture (marginalisation) as problematic, and suggest that students with this type of orientation are likely to disengage from school.

A few studies have explored the relationship between immigrant students' cultural identity and indicators of school success, but the evidence is mixed. Some findings support the neo-(assimilation) perspective, indicating that students' orientation toward the CR-culture is a significant predictor of achievement, whereas their orientation toward the CO-culture is largely irrelevant (e.g. Hannover et al., 2013; Horenczyk, 2010; Trickett & Birman, 2005). The findings of other studies, in contrast, provide support for the notion that an integrated orientation is most conducive to educational success (e.g. Berry et al., 2006; Oysermann et al., 2003). In addition, various investigations found that separation and marginalisation tend to be associated with poorer educational outcomes than other patterns (e.g. Altschul et al., 2008; Berry et al., 2006; Hannover et al., 2013; Oysermann et al., 2003).

One major shortcoming of this research, however, is that most studies relied on self-reported grades rather than on objective measures of achievement. To address this shortcoming, Edele et al. (2013) explored the relationship between cultural identity orientations

2 The term 'marginalisation' has been criticised in the literature, as weak ties to both the CO and the CR do not necessarily result in social exclusion, as the label implies (Maehler, 2012; Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001). Because it is the most commonly used term in the international literature, however, it is adopted here as well.

and student performance in PISA 2009. In Germany, the national PISA 2009 consortium (Klieme et al., 2010) included two items in the student questionnaire that pertained to immigrant students' cultural identity. More specifically, the students were asked to indicate the degree to which they feel that they belong to each of the following social groups: a) 'the people from the country of your parents' and b) 'the people from Germany'. The 3-point rating scale had the response options 'not at all', 'somewhat' and 'very much'. Controlling for socioeconomic background, gender and the language spoken at home, immigrant students with an integrated cultural orientation reached similar levels of reading achievement as their peers from native families. This was also the case for students with an assimilated orientation, whose mean achievement even exceeded that of non-immigrant students when the language spoken at home was controlled. Mean achievement of students with a marginalised identity orientation, in contrast, was significantly lower than mean achievement of students from native families. Thus, marginalised youth seems to be particularly at risk of falling behind. Due to the cross-sectional nature of the PISA data, however, the causality underlying this association cannot be discerned; this would require longitudinal analyses.

Language

For questions related to language acquisition of immigrant students, the two general dimensions distinguished by Berry (1980, 1997) are relevant as well (Esser, 2006). Immigrant students often have to learn the language used in classroom instruction as a second language (L2), and most school systems respond to this challenge by providing some kind of support for second-language learners (Stanat & Christensen, 2006). The role that students' first language (L1) plays for second-language learning, however, is highly controversial and unclear. According to the highly influential transfer hypothesis by Cummins (1979, 1980), promoting immigrant students' proficiency in their L1 will have positive effects on their L2 development. This prediction was based on the notion that conceptual and linguistic knowledge in L1 would feed into a common underlying proficiency and thereby transfer to the L2. Thus far, however, the transfer assumption has only been explored in small-scale studies, typically involving very small numbers of students.

In an attempt to test the transfer hypothesis more generally, based on data from a larger sample, we

developed basic listening comprehension tests in the two most common first languages of immigrant students in Germany, namely Turkish and Russian (Edele, Schotte, Hecht & Stanat, 2012). These tests were administered in the 9th grade cohort of the National Educational Panel Study (NEPS) in Germany (Blossfeld, von Maurice & Schneider, 2011). Starting from the Simple View of Reading (Hoover & Gough, 1990), which holds that (in addition to decoding skills) listening comprehension is a major determinant of reading comprehension, we tested the prediction that listening comprehension in L1 would be positively associated with reading comprehension in L2 (Edele, Stanat, Kristen & Schroeders, 2013; Edele, Stanat & Kristen, 2014). Based on Cummins's (1979) threshold hypothesis, moreover, we expected this relationship to be more pronounced at higher levels of L1, thus showing a polynomial trend. The results of our analyses largely supported these predictions, although the polynomial relationship emerged only for the Turkish-speaking group (Edele et al. 2013; Edele et al. 2014).

These findings thus lend support to the transfer hypotheses purported by Cummins (1979, 1980, 2000) and others, but they need to be replicated with longitudinal data before definite conclusions can be drawn. Most importantly, establishing the occurrence of transfer has no direct implications for the question of how language support for immigrant youth should be organised. To establish whether L2 support is more effective if the L1 is supported as well, it is necessary to carry out intervention studies. Due to methodological limitations of the investigations published thus far (e.g. Limbird & Stanat, 2006; Söhn, 2005), it is currently not possible to draw sound conclusions on this issue.

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