

Lengyel, Drorit; Rosen, Lisa

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Tertium comparationis 21 (2015) 2, S. 153-160



Quellenangabe/ Reference:

Lengyel, Drorit; Rosen, Lisa: Minority teachers in different educational contexts. Introduction - In: *Tertium comparationis* 21 (2015) 2, S. 153-160 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-246390 - DOI: 10.25656/01:24639

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-246390>

<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:24639>

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Minority teachers in different educational contexts: Introduction

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Over the last decade, the implementation of intercultural receptiveness in education systems across Europe has focused on the guiding idea that teachers need to be prepared to teach in culturally and linguistically heterogeneous schools on account of growing diversity in society. Increasing recruitment of minority teachers and pre-service teachers has thus been discussed in education policy as one strategy to enhance social justice in the system and provide all children with equal opportunities.

In English-speaking OECD countries, research on minority teachers or teachers of color, has been carried out since the 1980s. For the German-speaking context, Viola Georgi summarizes research carried out in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom according to three core themes (Georgi, 2013, p. 92 ff.; for a summary of the research in the United States and the United Kingdom see also Karakaşoğlu, 2011, p. 123 ff.): (1) Studies that highlight the representation and recruitment of minority teachers; (2) Researchers' focus on minority teachers' experiences (of discrimination) during their educational careers, at primary and secondary school and also as educators at the university level; and (3) Studies which investigate to what extent minority teachers act as mentors, role models and agents of change, and how they influence ethnic minority students. Despite such long-standing research on minority teachers – especially when compared with research from German-speaking countries – numerous gaps remain. For instance, there are

no studies to date that examine the positive effects of minority teacher recruitment for intercultural receptiveness (cf. Georgi, 2013, p. 94). Furthermore, it remains to be seen whether these teachers directly contribute to minority students' educational success as role models and mentors (ibid., p. 96). These open questions do not belie the fact, however, that the international, Anglophone state of research is substantial. Alice Quiocho and Francisco Rios (2000) demonstrate this in their review of literature for which they yielded 476 records up to the year 2000 using the key word "minority group teachers" (cf. p. 487). Their investigation of empirical studies included scholarly journals only, and excluded conference presentations, chapters in books and other such publications. After reducing the results to 39 studies between the years 1989 until 1998, the two authors summarize:

We know that the number of minority group people who are prepared for and interested in teaching as a career is limited. As we reflect on this review, it is evident that many barriers will ensure that these numbers remain low. Barriers to teacher certification include negative perceptions of the profession, inequities in testing and admission into teacher education, and the incongruence of minority group preservice teachers' experiences with traditional teacher education curriculums. Once minority group members have their credentials, they face discrimination in employment practices, culturally discontinuous school climates and taboos about raising issues of racism, lack of promotion opportunities, and failure of others to recognize their leadership skills (ibid., p. 522).

Based on their survey, Quiocho and Rios can chronologically identify underrepresentation and discrimination along the career trajectories of minority teachers, thereby connecting the first two of the aforementioned core themes of research. With reference to the third theme of expected effects, they conclude their contribution with the statement that they "are convinced that schools, at all levels of the educational system, will be enriched through the power of the presence of minority group teachers" (ibid., p. 524).

This evaluation is also corroborated in two reviews of the international state of research for the German-speaking context: Josef Strasser and Corinna Steber (2010) write cautiously that the expectations placed on the recruitment of teachers with migration backgrounds seem to be at least partially justified (p. 117). Carola Mantel and Bruno Leutwyler (2013) also hint at "a broad variety of different aspects of possible potentials connected to teachers with minority backgrounds" (p. 241).

In Austria, Germany and Switzerland, however, research in this field is still at an early stage and the call within education policy for more minority teachers in our schools is just about a decade old. Interestingly, emerging studies reconfirm some of the international findings and expound the problems of the dilemma of reification (Georgi, Ackermann & Karakaş, 2011; numerous articles in the collective volume by Bräu, Georgi, Karakaşoğlu & Rotter, 2013; Rotter, 2014). Whereas

most research activities have concentrated on minority teachers, research in Austria, Germany and Switzerland over the past five years has started to address pre-service teachers from immigrant families at university (for Germany in particular, see among others Bandorski & Karakaşoğlu, 2013; Kul, 2013; Lengyel & Rosen, 2012; Panagiotopoulou & Rosen, 2015; Schlickum, 2013; Wojciechowicz, 2013). These studies have examined minority teachers' professional beliefs, roles ascribed to them in schools, their motivation, resources and support requirements, and experiences of racism. Because there continues to be an even greater need for research on minority pre-service teachers than for minority in-service teachers, this issue focuses on recent studies in this particular field. Considering the international research, it is clear that we are dealing with a broad range of research questions and perspectives. We hereby sketch a point of entry that we consider to be important as well as to provide food for thought for future research activities.

Since the 1990s, the Anglophone discourse has been preoccupied with the conceptualization of teacher education that is shaped by taking diversity of pre-service teachers into account and providing equal opportunities to them. This does not necessarily mean pursuing certain unexploited talents nor, in the broader sense, considering the effectiveness of minority (pre-service) teachers. Rather than functionalize minority statuses, this discourse highlights anti-discrimination. According to this perspective, the crucial argument for recruitment is not the supposed (inter-cultural) competencies of minority teachers, but their proper representation (cf. Téllez, 1999, p. 557). Along with university programs that recruit and support minority teachers¹ and the concomitant research, there are approaches that critically examine whether teacher education and the university as an institution appropriately address the realities of migrant societies. The experiences of pre-service teachers during teacher education play a central role in these studies (Haddix, 2008; Rosebud, 2001; Watts Pailliotet, 1997; see Clark & Flores, 2001 for illustrations of the development of teachers' self-conception), for example during the course of teaching practice (Téllez, 1999; Mujawamariya, 2010) or in intercultural education modules (Amos, 2010; Krummel, 2013). Many of these predominantly qualitative studies reveal overarching themes of marginalization and exclusion:

Minority preservice teachers feel silenced and overlooked in teacher education programs where curriculum and practice are designed and shaped to meet the needs of a majority White, monolingual, middle class, and female teacher population (Haddix, 2008, p. 214).

This silencing power can be understood as a result of White resistance to equal opportunities and treatment at the university (cf. Fennimore, 2001). In the German-speaking discourse, such a (power-theoretical) critical perspective on the university as an institution, its actors and the pedagogical activities of university teachers (especially in the context of intercultural education) has only just begun to take

hold. The articles in this issue address this perspective at least insofar as they illuminate the perspectives of pre-service teachers and allow for indirect inferences about their experiences, including ascriptions by other parties.

About the articles in this issue: The first three articles focus on the university as educational context. *Drorit Lengyel* and *Lisa Rosen* investigate minority pre-service teachers' perspectives on the role that is ascribed to them by educational policy in Germany which calls for the recruitment of more minority teachers to support the immigrant student population. Using grounded theory, they analyze focus group discussions and portfolio entries conducted during a university seminar. Overall, the findings reveal the group members' ambivalent attitudes towards the expectations of educational policy. On the one hand, the students are willing to contribute to the reduction of educational disadvantages; on the other hand, they doubt that this policy strategy is sufficient to change the educational environment in a sustainable way.

The second article also presents results from a research project that was conducted in the institutional context of teacher education. It addresses the policy demand for more diversity in the staff room. As in Germany, policy in Austria seeks to incentivize qualified immigrant students to pursue teaching careers, thereby increasing the representation of immigrants in teaching professions. *Marion Döll* and *Magdalena Knappik* present results from the publicly-funded project 'Diversity and multilingualism in pedagogical professions'. Instead of highlighting the perspectives of minority students, however, they concentrate on teacher educators. The data was collected via expert interviews at seven universities of education in Austria. The interviewees reproduce general tenets that dominate the discourse on migration and multilingualism among teachers and pre-service teachers. Language ideologies, particularly 'native speakerism', are used to legitimize reactionary measures by teacher educators. This means that, unlike the expectations contained in educational policy, the students' multilingualism is not perceived as a resource but as a detractor or as unprofessional.

The third article comes from Switzerland. Here, as in Austria and Germany, minority teacher numbers are low when compared with both the rising proportion of minorities in the general population and the student population. Taking this situation as a starting point, *Doris Edelmann*, *Sonja Bischoff*, *Michael Beck* and *Angelika Meier* describe two studies from the DIVAL research project ('Diversity of pre-service teachers: focus migration'), which is being conducted at the University of Teacher Education, St.Gallen. The qualitative part of this project reveals the relevance ascribed to migration backgrounds by both pre-service teachers and lecturers. One finding from focus group discussions is that they prefer color-blind approaches: Only a small number of lecturers and pre-service teachers expressed the

opinion that it would be beneficial if more minority students enrolled at universities of teacher education. Further to this, student diversity was assessed using an online survey. The authors compare these results with data from a national study of all students at Swiss universities of teacher education and with students at all other Swiss universities.

Argyro Panagiotopoulou and *Lisa Rosen* take minority pre-service teachers' views concerning linguistic diversity and language practices in Germany as their starting point. The authors reveal that minority pre-service teachers argue in favour of monolingualism, thus not considering their personal multilingualism to be an educational resource. This finding led to the development of the research project 'Migration-Related Multilingualism and Pedagogical Professionalism', which is presented here. The project's internationally comparative design seeks to answer the following research question: Do the experiences gained by pedagogical professionals in multilingual educational settings interrelate with their views on migration-related multilingualism, linguistic diversity and language practices at school? If so, how? Panagiotopoulou and Rosen provide a first look at the empirical data using excerpts from expert interviews with multilingual (minority) teachers at German Schools in Athens and Montreal concerning their views on migration-related multilingualism, linguistic diversity and language practices.

The fifth article addresses another perspective that has rarely been highlighted until now, namely that of students' opinions concerning minority teachers.² Rather than the university, this article turns to the school as educational context. *Josef Strasser* and *Wiebke Waburg* conducted group discussions with students on their views of their minority teachers. Initial results indicate that teachers' minority status become relevant only in certain situations that are closely linked to other dimensions (e.g. age, gender, class) that are salient for students.

Each article conceives of 'minority' or 'migration background' in specific terms. We decided to uphold the different terminological approaches of the various authors, rather than streamlining terminology in what is a very heterogeneous field. On the one hand, we hope that the terminologies that prevail in German-speaking countries remain visible. On the other hand, we hope to connect this context to the Anglophone discourse. The authors of the respective articles explain the backgrounds and considerations for their choices in terminology.

All studies in this special issue were presented at two symposia as part of Network 7 'Social Justice and Intercultural Education' which we organized at the European Conference of Education Research (ECER) in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2013 and in Porto, Portugal, in 2014. Our intention with this special issue remains that of the aforementioned symposium, namely to contribute to the ongoing discussion about minority teachers in nationally shaped educational systems and to connect research

activities and findings from English-speaking countries with those from German-speaking countries. The Tertium Comparationis therefore seems to be the perfect publication setting for this endeavor.

We would like to thank the authors for their contributions to this issue and İnci Dirim for assuming the role of ‘acting editor’.

Notes

1. See Young, Grant, Montbriand & Therriault, 2001, p. 3 f. for a survey of programs aimed at recruiting minority teachers that were already established before 2001.
2. Carolin Rotter (2014) was the first researcher within the German-speaking discourse to present research results in this field.

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