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## More students with migration backgrounds at Universities of Teacher Education. Theoretical reflections and empirical insights on potential aspects and challenges from the perspectives of pre-service teachers and lecturers

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*“Our journey will not be complete until the demographic imperative has been completely ameliorated” and “all students have highly effective, culturally responsive teachers who value diverse cultural heritage and who spark the genius in every child.”*  
*(Neal, Sleeter & Kumashiro, 2015, p. 14)*

### *Abstract*

Continuous migration processes are shaping the social reality in Switzerland and their education system, thus also the Universities of Teacher Education. However, the growing migration-related diversity in the student-population is not reflected among pre- and in-service teachers, since to date only few successful young adults with migration backgrounds decide to become teachers. While the migration-related diversity of the student-population in schools has been receiving a lot of attention for some time, up to date there are still hardly any meaningful studies about pre-service teachers with migration backgrounds in Switzerland. Due to the lack of empirical data so far, it can only be speculated what the potential aspects and challenges could be if the percentage of students with migration backgrounds at Universities of Teacher Education were to increase. In this context the research project DIVAL (= Diversity of pre-service teachers: focus migration / Diversität angehender Lehrkräfte: Fokus Migration) was conducted at the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen. It consists of two sub-studies: Based on an online survey the migration-related diversity of all students was assessed. During focused group discussions, students with and without migration backgrounds as well as lecturers were asked about the relevance they attribute to migration backgrounds during teacher education.

## 1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, the social reality of Switzerland is marked by ongoing migration processes. The resulting diversity impacts the Swiss society and its education system, thus also the Universities of Teacher Education. This leads to the following challenges: Firstly, in Switzerland as well as in many other countries, students with migration backgrounds are often disadvantaged within the school system (e.g. SCCRE, 2014). Secondly, all students, regardless of their backgrounds, need to be prepared to live in a globalized, diverse world. In this context questions arise in public debates and in scientific discourses about how to better prepare pre-service teachers to deal effectively with the diversity of their student body. Or to say it in the words of Neal, Sleeter and Kumashiro (2015, p. 14): how can we make sure that in every classroom “all students have highly effective, culturally responsive teachers who value diverse cultural heritage and who spark the genius in every child.”

In recent years research on teachers’ competencies has demonstrated that their professional knowledge *and* their beliefs, values and norms about cultural diversity impact the quality of their instruction in diverse classrooms. Hence, in order to prepare teachers, it is crucial to “actively encourage teacher candidates to be open to the cultural backgrounds of their students” (Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder, Anders & Kunter, 2015, p. 53) because this attitude can lead to more support for students with migration backgrounds. Based on empirical evidence, teachers’ professional competence is to be understood as the “interplay between content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, generic pedagogical knowledge, and teachers’ beliefs, values, motivational orientations and self-regulatory abilities” (ibid., 2015, p. 47).

Against this background, Universities of Teacher Education need to adequately support pre-service teachers in the development of their pedagogical professionalism in dealing with the migration-related diversity of their future students. As a major result of the so-called ‘Bologna-Reform’, since around 10 years, teacher education in Switzerland has taken place at the tertiary level at one of the sixteen newly organized Universities of Teacher Education that train pre- and in-service teachers from kindergarten to upper secondary school level. Since this restructuring process was implemented, all pre-service teachers have received instruction in dealing with migration-related diversity in their future classrooms. Methods, scopes and contents of the teacher trainings may vary and so far hardly any information is available about what exactly is being taught and done in this regard at different Universities of Teacher Education (Edelmann, 2009; Sieber & Bischoff, 2007).

When it comes to preparing teachers for diverse classrooms, we believe that one part of the quality of teacher training results from the curricula and the teaching

methods. Just as important, in our opinion, is the way Teacher Universities themselves deal with diversity issues and latent constructions of normality (Edelmann, 2014). The topic of pre-service teachers with migration backgrounds in particular leads then to questions regarding the significance that is ascribed to the diverse biographical and educational experiences of students, and whether and how these are acknowledged as potential learning opportunities for all members at Universities of Teacher Education. Therefore the goal for every University of Teacher Education should be to become “a place of enlightenment” that enables all members “to critically examine their own cultural stereotypes and to challenge the validity of these within a pluralistic society” (Karakasoğlu, 2014, p. 22). Within universities, the idea of comprehensive resource-oriented organizational strategies is currently referred to as the concept of diversity management (e.g. Lutz, 2013; Kappus, 2013). This implies that Universities of Teacher Education are obliged to not only deal with education and training concepts in order to approach the migration-related diversity in the classrooms but also examine how they as universities deal with the migration-related diversity of their own students, “enabling everyone to experience that diversity is a fundamental feature of the institution, especially essential to the goal of comprehensive intercultural opening” (Karakasoğlu, 2014, p. 14).

It is, however, an empirical fact that in Switzerland – as in many other countries – the growing societal diversity is not yet reflected in the pre- and in the in-service teacher force. Therefore, Universities of Teacher Education still have to be considered as ‘mono-cultural islands’ in a ‘transnational education space’ (Edelmann, 2013; Howard, 1999). This social fact contradicts, firstly, the objectives of Swiss integration policies which deem the integration of people with migration backgrounds as unfulfilled until all members are represented equally in socially relevant positions and organizations, such as schools and Universities of Teacher Education (EKA, 2005). Consequently, educational policies must focus on increasing the representation of people with migration backgrounds in teaching positions because they are *representatives* of society. In this context, the concept of ‘migration mainstreaming’ is often referenced that is based on the concept of ‘gender mainstreaming’ or on the concept of ‘diversity management’ (ibid.).

Secondly, it is a fact that the ‘gap’ between the migration-related diversity of the student population and the homogeneity of the teaching force stand in clear contrast to findings of international research – especially U.S. American research – that have illustrated for some time that the migration-related diversity in the teaching force underlies a fundamentally potential, as it can contribute to broadening perspectives in terms of “world views” (Sleeter & Milner, 2013, p. 179). These “world views” (ibid.) can support the teaching force to adequately meet the needs of their increasingly diverse student population.

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It is, thirdly, desirable to close the ‘gap’ between the migration-related diversity of the student population and the teaching staff, in the majority female, Christian and middle class. This means that teacher education programs need to be more persistent and innovative in attracting a more diverse teacher force. This desideratum is also to be understood as a “demographic imperative” (Neal et al., 2015, p. 14).

So far hardly any empirical findings exist about the situation of pre-service teachers with migration backgrounds at the Universities of Teacher Education in Switzerland, neither about possible potential aspects nor challenges (Edelmann, 2014). Against this background, the research project DIVAL<sup>1</sup> (= Diversity of pre-service teachers: focus migration / Diversität angehender Lehrkräfte: Fokus Migration) was developed to explore the migration-related diversity of pre-service teachers at the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen<sup>2</sup> (cf. section 3). The research project DIVAL consists of a quantitative study (cf. section 4) and a qualitative study (cf. section 5). Before selected results will be presented, an overview of the state of research is demonstrated (cf. section 2). The article will finish with a conclusion regarding central findings and future developments (cf. section 6).

## 2. State of research with a focus on the situation in Switzerland

The theoretical considerations have so far, at least in Switzerland, been sustained by very little empirical evidence. While the migration-related diversity of the student population in schools has received a lot of attention in education policy as well as in educational research for some time, to date there are still no broad studies about pre-service and in-service teachers with migration backgrounds (Edelmann, 2007, 2014).

The issue was investigated for the first time in a national study commissioned by the COHEP (= Swiss Conference of Rectors of Universities of Teacher Education). This study addressed the value attributed to ‘intercultural education’ in teacher education at the beginning of the 21st century (Sieber & Bischoff, 2007). Among other aspects, research was conducted on whether and how Teacher Universities reduced potential barriers to teacher education as experienced by students with migration backgrounds. It was clear from the results of the study that this requirement was only met sporadically (ibid., p. 26 f.). The first explorative study with pre-service teachers was carried out at the Thurgau University of Teacher Education (Luginbühl & Kosorok Labhart, 2013). In an exploratory investigation 14 pre-service teachers, half of them with migration backgrounds were interviewed using qualitative methods. One of the main findings of the study was the fact that pre-

service teachers with migration backgrounds appreciated it if their migration-related resources were addressed during their teacher training.

The question of how in-service teachers deal with the migration related diversity of their classes was the focus of a qualitative study by Edelmann (2007, 2013). A total of 40 teachers in Zurich were interviewed using qualitative methods, nearly half of them with migration backgrounds (based on self-assessment). The reason that only less than half of the interview partners reported to having migration backgrounds was due to the fact that at the time there were not more primary teachers with migration backgrounds who taught in Zurich. The analysis of the interviews, based on a typology-constructing method ('empirische Typenbildung') by Kelle and Kluge (2010), made it clear that many teachers without migration backgrounds ignored the various socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students. This was not the case with teachers with migration backgrounds, whose teaching practices were guided by multicultural attitudes. The majority of these teachers also had higher expectations of the academic performance of their students with migration backgrounds. At the same time it was very important for them not to be assigned the role of 'cultural' mediators or representatives at their schools. Further findings on in-service teachers with migration backgrounds can be expected from the ongoing study 'Pathways to Success'<sup>3</sup> that is being conducted by the Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies at the University of Neuchâtel. This research project focuses on the social mobility of in-service teachers with migration backgrounds. In another current research project that is being conducted at the University of Teacher Education Zug,<sup>4</sup> biographical experiences of in-service teachers with migration backgrounds are being investigated.

In English speaking countries, studies on so-called 'minority teachers' or 'teachers of color' have appeared since the late 1980s (for detailed research overviews, see e.g. Georgi, Ackermann & Karakaş, 2011; Mantel & Leutwyler, 2013; Rotter, 2014). In Germany, research has increased considerably in recent years, most notably in light of the fact that the federal states of Germany are bound to adhere to the National Integration Policy and therefore have increasingly recruited pre- and in-service teachers with migration backgrounds (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2010). Thus a qualitative study about the experiences of students with migration backgrounds in teaching practices and teacher internships was conducted by Karakaşoğlu, Wojciechowicz and Kul (2013). Results of a learning/teaching and research project at the University of Cologne with pre-service teachers with migration backgrounds are also available (Lengyel & Rosen, 2012). In several comprehensive studies about in-service teachers with migration backgrounds that have been carried out in Germany (for detailed research overviews see e.g. Bräu, Georgi, Karakaşoğlu & Rotter, 2013; Georgi et al., 2011) it has also been

demonstrated – similar to the findings of the study by Edelmann (2007, 2013) – that these teachers do not want to be ‘reduced’ to their migration backgrounds but at the same time find it challenging when their backgrounds are being ignored.

### 3. The research project DIVAL

The research project DIVAL was developed in the context of the aforementioned backgrounds and also as a result of conversations with students with migration backgrounds in the context of lecturing activities of the members of the research team (cf. authors of this article). The main objective of the research project DIVAL was to explore the possible significance of the migration-related diversity from the perspective of pre-service teachers with and without migration backgrounds – henceforth also called students – and lecturers. The study was carried out at the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen by the Institute of ‘Education and Society’<sup>5</sup>. The DIVAL research project was the first one to gather empirical data regarding students at the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen (henceforth called UTED/SG). The research project is based on three questions:

1. Who are the students with migration backgrounds at the UTED/SG?
2. What relevance is attributed to the migration backgrounds of students at the UTED/SG: on the one hand, from the perspective of pre-service teachers with such backgrounds (= self-attributions / Selbstzuschreibungen), and on the other hand, by pre-service teachers without migration backgrounds and lecturers (attribution by others / Fremdzuschreibungen)?
3. To what extent is the migration-related diversity of students at the UTED/SG interpreted and taken into account as a potential aspect and/or a challenge during teacher training?

In order to investigate these questions two sub-studies were conducted. Initially, a quantitative online survey was conducted in autumn 2013 regarding the different diversity characteristics (especially social and national origin, linguistic background, and religion) of all students at the UTED/SG (cf. section 4). In spring 2014, focused group discussions were carried out with students with and without migration backgrounds and with lecturers (cf. section 5).

### 4. The quantitative part of the DIVAL research project

The diverse composition of the pre-service teachers at the UTED/SG is to-date not known with regard to the characteristics of migration backgrounds and gender, as well as the social backgrounds. For this reason, an online survey was conducted at the UTED/SG in autumn of 2013 with the aim of collecting these diversity charac-

teristics. All 1 250 students who were enrolled at the UTED/SG at the time were contacted and 891 students completed the questionnaire, which corresponds to a response rate of around 70 %.

During the same period, the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) conducted a survey called 'Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life 2013' (FSO, 2014a), in which all students enrolled at all Swiss Universities (= U/CH) were questioned. The survey of all students at all U/CH has been conducted at regular intervals for many years. However, in the survey conducted in 2013, the birth countries of the students and their parents were recorded for the first time, which made it possible to generate a differentiated picture about their migration and socio-economic backgrounds. The results of the quantitative survey of students of the research project DIVAL at the UTED/SG can thus be compared across various fields with data from the national study about all students at Swiss Universities of Teacher Education (= UTED/CH) and with students at all other Swiss Universities (= U/CH).

In the following, results from the research project DIVAL that refer exclusively to the students at the UTED/SG are first presented due to a lack of comparable data about students at other Universities in Switzerland. Secondly, results from the DIVAL project are compared with data about all students at all UTED/CH and all students at all U/CH.

The results of the DIVAL project show that approximately 90 % of the students at the UTED/SG state that they were born in Switzerland. The other 10 % were born in 20 different countries. According to the students, their fathers come from 27 and their mothers from 32 different countries. At around 75 %, the majority of foreign-born students come from the neighboring countries Germany, Austria and Liechtenstein. 89.8 % of the students state that they only speak German or a dialect of German as their main language. On the basis of the definition of the FSO (2014b), the main language was defined as the language that a person speaks best and the language in which they usually think, according to their self-assessment. 9.4 % of all students stated that they spoke a second main language in addition to German. Only 0.8 % of students stated that their main language is not German. In terms of religious affiliation, 85.1 % of the surveyed students stated that they belong to a Christian denomination (predominantly Catholic), 3 % specify a Muslim community, 0.5 % a different religion, and 11.4 % say that they do not belong to any faith community.

The following table (cf. Tab. 1) lists descriptive values that relate to the diversity characteristics of migration backgrounds, gender, and social backgrounds, separated according to the UTED/SG, all UTED/CH and all U/CH. For the following calculations the migration background was operationalized according to the defini-



tion of the FSO (2014a, p. 9). This definition makes it possible to differentiate between first and second generation students, as follows: “Students who are first generation immigrants were born abroad. Second generation immigrants include those whose parents immigrated to Switzerland, i.e. students who were born in Switzerland but whose parents were born abroad” (ibid.). There is one exception for students with Swiss citizenship, for whom only one parent was born abroad: According to the definition of the FSO (ibid.), they do *not* have a migration background. Based on this definition, the population in Switzerland in 2013 was as follows (FSO, 2014c): “34.8 % of the permanent resident population aged 15 or over in Switzerland, i.e. 2 374 000 persons, have migration backgrounds. A third of this population (836 000) has Swiss citizenship. Four fifths of persons with migration backgrounds are themselves immigrants (first generation foreigners and native-born and naturalized Swiss citizens), whereas one fifth were born in Switzerland (second generation foreigners and native-born and naturalized Swiss citizens).”

Table 1: Key figures of diversity characteristics (migration backgrounds, gender, social backgrounds), separated according to the UTED/SG, all UTED/CH and all U/CH (sources: Beck, Bischoff & Edelmann, 2014; FSO, 2014a)

	Students		
	UTED/SG	UTED/CH	Tertiary CH
Migration Background (MB)	17.0%	15.8%	28.2%
First Generation	9.3%	9.7%	19.7%
Second Generation	7.7%	6.2%	8.5%
Certificate CH	94.6%	91.3%	82.4%
Female	78.5%	75.3%	48.0%
Female X MB	13.8%	12.4%	14.8%
Male X MB	3.1%	3.4%	13.4%
Tertiary Parental Education* (total)	43.0%	47.8%	58.0%
Tertiary Parental Education* (no MB)	44.4%	48.5%	58.1%
Tertiary Parental Education* (MB)	35.6%	43.6%	57.8%
Parental Occupation Status** (total)	61.3 (19.5)	56.8 (22.7)	59.4 (22.1)
Parental Occupation Status** (no MB)	63.0 (18.5)	57.7 (22.3)	60.8 (21.3)
Parental Occupation Status** (MB)	53.5 (22.3)	50.6 (24.3)	55.3 (23.7)

UTED/SG = University of Teacher Education St.Gallen; UTED/CH = Universities of Teacher Education Switzerland; Tertiary CH = Students in Tertiary Education Switzerland; Certificate CH = Certificate of access to higher Education acquired in Switzerland; \* = Highest Parental Education: ISCED 5 or 6; \*\* = Mean and Standard Deviation of ISEI.

As table 1 illustrates, a total of 17 % of all students at the UTED/SG have migration backgrounds. Of these, 9.3 % are first generation and 7.7 % are second generation immigrants. In comparison, only 15.8 % of all students at all UTED/CH have migration backgrounds. Of these, 9.7 % are first generation and 7.7 % are second generation immigrants. In relation to all U/CH, at 28.2 %, significantly more students have migration backgrounds. Of these, 19.7 % are first generation and 8.5 % are second generation immigrants. Compared to the 34.8 % of the permanent resident population with migration backgrounds aged 15 or over in Switzerland, students with migration backgrounds are underrepresented at all Swiss Universities, but especially at Universities of Teacher Education.

### *Access to Higher Education*

Nearly 95 % of all students at the UTED/SG gained their Certificate of Access to Higher Education ('Studienberechtigung') in Switzerland. They are therefore referred as "students with Swiss entrance qualification (= 'Bildungsinländer/innen')" (FSO, 2014a, p. 10). The other 5 % are so-called "students with foreign entrance qualification" (= 'Bildungsausländer/innen') (ibid.). The percentage of students who obtained their Certificates of Access to Higher Education in Switzerland is slightly lower at 91.3 % at all U/CH, and with 82.4 % even lower at all UTED/CH.

### *Gender issues*

A clear difference can be seen with regard to male students with migration backgrounds. At 3.1 %, they are distinctly underrepresented at the UTED/SG compared to 13.8 % of female students with migration backgrounds. The percentage is comparable to male students with migration background at all UTED/CH which is at 3.4 %. In contrast, male students with migration backgrounds are better represented at all U/CH with 13.4 %. However, the low rate of male students in teacher education does not only apply to male students *with* migration backgrounds. Instead, the percentage of male students at all UTED/CH is generally low, at around 25 %. Across all the U/CH, male students are at 52 % better represented than female students.

### *Family backgrounds of the students*

The educational backgrounds of the parents was operationalized using the 'International Standard Classification of Education' (= ISCED) (cf. FSO, 2008). Here, we can see significant differences based on the university degree criteria. At the UTED/SG, the percentage of students who come from families with tertiary education as the highest level of education is at 43 %. This percentage is lower compared

to the students at all UTED/CH, where it is at 47.8 %. Even higher is the percentage of students from families with tertiary education as the highest level of education at all U/CH where it is at 58 %. The differences related to the criterion ‘migration backgrounds’ become particularly clear: Of all students with migration backgrounds at the UTED/SG, 35.6 % come from families with tertiary education. At a percentage of 43.6, the share is slightly higher at all UTED/CH. In contrast, the percentage at 57.8 is distinctly higher among students with migration backgrounds at all U/CH.

The difference in educational backgrounds between students at all UTED/CH and the total amount of students at all U/CH may be due to the fact that entering a UTED/CH in order to become a teacher is (still) perceived as a social mobility option, especially by students with migration backgrounds and students without migration backgrounds who are from families without tertiary education as the highest level of education. On the other hand, it is clear that far fewer young educationally successful people with migration backgrounds choose to study at a UTED/CH instead of any other U/CH. To date, we can only speculate about the reasons due to lack of empirical data. Assumptions about the causes of this low representation range from formal and/or psycho-social barriers (Sieber & Bischoff, 2007) to voluntary self-selection due to a lack of occupational prestige of teachers (SCCRE, 2014).

For the professional status of the parents, operationalized by the highest level of the ‘International Socio-economic Index’ (ISEI) (Ganzeboom, de Graaf & Treiman, 1992), the mean values and standard deviations have been calculated. Students with migration backgrounds at the UTED/SG come less frequently from families with privileged social backgrounds: their ISEI-values were significantly lower on average<sup>6</sup> than that for students without migration backgrounds at UTED/CH. Likewise, the composition of students with migration backgrounds differs significantly at all UTED/CH<sup>7</sup> from the population of all students without migration backgrounds at all U/CH. Overall, students in Switzerland with migration backgrounds come significantly more often from socio-economically less privileged family backgrounds than students without migration backgrounds<sup>8</sup>.

## 5. The qualitative part of the DIVAL research project

In spring 2014, focused group discussions based on Schulz (2012) were conducted with students with and without migration backgrounds and lecturers at the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen. This method is especially suitable to explore new topics because group discussions enable everyday interactive situations (‘alltagsnahe Interaktionssituation’, cf. Flick, 2010, p. 249) and contribute to stimu-

late new and unexpected patterns of discussion that may not develop in the context of individual interviews (Schulz, 2012, p. 12). It is particular about this method that the moderator uses an interview-guide (Interviewleitfaden) based on an interview-technique according to Witzel (2000) that records three to five relevant areas to be discussed. This technique enables as well narrative flows and a wide degree of openness, as demanded of qualitative research approaches (Edelmann, Schmidt & Tippelt, 2012), as a certain level of comparability between different group discussions. The following areas were discussed in an open order during the group discussions with the students:

1. The motivation to become a teacher and the reaction of the social environment about this career-choice;
2. The perceived relevance of migration backgrounds at the University of Teacher Education;
3. The perception of how the topic of migration-related diversity is dealt with at the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen (as a topic in seminars and lectures and among students);
4. The future perspectives of the students in the sense of how they want to deal with migration-related diversity once they work as teachers;
5. Opinions concerning the idea ‘more students with migration backgrounds’ at Universities of Teacher Education.

In the discussions with the lectures questions two, three and five were at the center of the discussion. Furthermore, the lecturers were asked about their experiences with students with migration backgrounds. The questions were meticulously prepared so they were formulated in an open way and invited the participants explicitly to discuss about potential aspects and challenges.

The recruitment of students for the focused group discussions was based on their agreement to participate in such a group when they were asked about it during the online survey of the DIVAL project (cf. chapter 4). A total of eighteen students were interviewed during eight group discussions (with two to four participants)<sup>9</sup>, including fourteen students with and four without migration backgrounds. Students with and those without migration backgrounds participated in separate focused group discussions. We decided to set up separate groups in order to prevent that certain topics were avoided because of ‘political correctness’ and also because data analysis of a comparison of the statements by students with and without migration backgrounds aided in identifying migration-specific aspects. The students with migration backgrounds represented, as expected, a heterogeneous group: Some had immigrated to Switzerland as children or only a few years ago (first generation),

others were born to parents who had immigrated to Switzerland (second generation). They also came from different countries.

For the focused group discussions with the lectures, we recruited those lecturers who teach in areas in which migration-related diversity plays an *explicit* role: German as a second language, religion/ethics, dealing with heterogeneity, cooperation between schools and families. Four focused group discussions were conducted with four to five participants, i.e. a total of 17 lecturers. Only two of the lecturers had a migration background (Germany) which represents the average lecturing staff at the University of Teacher Education in St.Gallen. The focused group discussions with the students lasted between 60 to 75 minutes and those with the lecturers about 45 minutes. Each discussion was moderated by a member of the research team.

The focused group discussions were recorded and then fully transcribed according to “literary transcription” (‘literarische Umschrift’, Mayring, 2002, p. 89). The interviews were analyzed according to the method of qualitative structured content analysis by Mayring (2010), supported by the software MAXQDA.

In the following section, we present the perspectives of students with and without migration backgrounds and lecturers expressed during the group discussions concerning the focused theme, what potential aspects and possible challenges could be if the proportion of students with migration backgrounds at Universities of Teacher Education were to increase.

### 5.1 Perspectives of the students

Concerning a possible increase of the proportion of students with migration backgrounds at the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen, the interviewed students mentioned either positive or no special expectations. The assumption that *all* students (regardless of their backgrounds) could benefit from biographically related experiences and competences of students with migration backgrounds during teacher training was not directly taken into consideration. The potential aspects primarily referred to personal benefits for themselves as pre- and in-service teachers with migration backgrounds. Above all, students who were of this opinion mentioned that an increase in the proportion of students with migration backgrounds would mean that ‘they’ would be better represented and would no longer – or at least no longer as obviously as nowadays – be the only representatives of a ‘national-ethno-cultural group’ and thus feel as if they were seen as ‘the others’ (Reuter, 2002). This expectation was formulated especially clearly by a student whose migration background is obvious because of her appearance:

When I started here I was, I believe, the only dark-skinned student. And now at undergraduate level there are, I think, two or three more dark-skinned students that have recently started. And I think that's good. (G4\_S1)

Although she does not express this explicitly, we can assume that this student feels less 'exotic' now that she is no longer the only student with dark skin at the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen. Without going into further detail, she talked about difficulties she expected in her career if she also turned out to be the only dark-skinned teacher at her future school:

I think that if I am the only dark-skinned teacher among a hundred others, it will clearly be difficult for me and [...] I would absolutely encourage more dark-skinned people to begin studying. That would also be a supportive fact for me and my later career if I'm not the only dark-skinned teacher among the teaching staff. (G4\_S1)

Another student also points out possible difficulties in her future career. In her opinion, these difficulties could be reduced if more teachers with migration backgrounds were trained at Universities of Teacher Education and entered the teaching profession:

I think it's good for us too, because then we know: hey, we are really wanted in that profession. Because it is also something that scares people away, that you don't know, especially in this profession, whether you will be accepted in the professional field itself or not. (G3\_S1)

Knowing that students with migration backgrounds are welcomed and represented at the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen would have made it easier for another student in her decision-making process about what and where to study:

I have asked myself this question before I started teacher education: If I become a teacher as a person with a migration background, how many other such students are currently at this University? Will I be the only one? And if you already know, aha, yes, there are other students with a migration background at this University and it is seen as something positive, then you simply don't need to have this discussion with yourself and worries at the beginning. (G3\_S3)

Other students who participated in the discussion believed that increasing the number of students with migration backgrounds would not lead to any changes with regard to their situation as students at the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen. One student's explanation was quite typical, saying that students with migration backgrounds have indeed "*come far*" in their educational career and because of this there were no longer "*such big differences*" (G2\_S1) between 'them' and students without migration backgrounds. The student referred especially to the Certificate of Access to Higher Education ('Studienberechtigung') that is needed in order to be accepted at the University of Teacher Education. This would level out any differences between students with and without migration backgrounds. Another

student explained her statement that all students at the University of Teacher Education in St.Gallen “*are seen as the same*” (G6\_S2).

All three students without a migration background who discussed the question of potential aspects and possible challenges in the event of an increase of the number of students with migration backgrounds – the fourth student did not add anything to this debate – stated that their expectations were primarily positive. A potential benefit is an increased exchange between students with and without migration backgrounds:

It would certainly be interesting to get to know different cultural backgrounds, also different religious backgrounds. (G8\_S1)

One student even regrets that such an exchange cannot occur in her study group at the moment due to the lack of students with migration backgrounds:

Well, the advantages, or where students can benefit, is certainly in this exchange. So I find it a pity that at the moment we have no one in our study group who can tell us about other backgrounds. (G7\_S2)

As possible challenges, two students sketched difficulties based on “*different mentality*” (G7\_A2) using fictitious examples. For instance, the different approach to life and studying by a student from Italy “*who perhaps sees everything a little more relaxed than we Swiss do*” (G7\_A2) might result in conflicts during group work. Another example refers to a fictitious student from Spain whose “*fiery mentality*” (G8\_A2) is on the one hand seen as positive personality trait, on the other hand, the student assumed that this student might not take punctuality as seriously as “*we Swiss do*”. These students’ statements show that their ideas with respect to students with migration backgrounds are at least partially informed by prejudices and stereotypes. However, one of the students added that such issues are probably rarely problematic because all students at the University of Teacher Education have usually already gone through and succeeded in the Swiss education system. Two students suggested that challenges were more likely to be expected outside of the university because in small communities, teachers with migration backgrounds may not be readily accepted by the parents.

## 5.2 Perspectives of the lecturers

The four focused group discussions with the lecturers developed in partly different directions when the participants talked about potential aspects and possible challenges if the number of students with migration backgrounds at Universities of Teacher Education were to increase. Two focus groups (G1 and G2) attributed little relevance to the migration backgrounds of students: “*It would not change much*” (G1\_D5). By basically disregarding differences between students due to migration

backgrounds, the discussion participants did not associate any potential aspects or challenges with an increase in the number of students with migration backgrounds. In contrast, they pointed out the importance of pre-service teachers' personalities and thereby disregarded migration backgrounds as part of the personality. Another lecturer followed up on this statement and highlighted the "*inconspicuousness*" of migration backgrounds by explaining that several conditions must be met before students can commence studies at a University of Teacher Education:

I think it is relevant that there is already a filter on their education journey until they start here. Or there are even several filters. It takes a certain work attitude, a certain personality, and a certain support system. I think that by the time they are here, they are truly – to put it in a positive way – integrated, or put in a negative way 'refined' ('geschliffen'). (G1\_D5)

Another member of the discussion group added an argument in which he deliberately emphasized the similarities between *all* students:

But in principle, I am convinced that similarities must be more emphasized than differences; we teach this in intercultural education as well. And that's why in my mind it is of course simply like this: I think, hey, this is a person, this is a woman, and this is a student. And I don't think: this is – and maybe I don't even know if she is – this is a woman from another culture. (G1\_D2)

Overall, the lecturers in these two discussion groups were critical of the education policy objective which states that the migration-related diversity in society should also be represented among the students at their university. They argued that additional criteria and differential characteristics would also need to be taken into consideration accordingly like gender issues, talents, or even urban and rural origin of the students. Another lecturer expressed the opinion that the people with migration backgrounds would, after a certain time, automatically be reflected in the composition of students at Universities of Teacher Education, and therefore no special effort was needed:

And the more foreigners are living in Switzerland, the more foreigners will then attend our schools, Universities, and the Universities of Teacher Education. 15 years ago, there were barely any students from Ex-Yugoslavia here, and now they suddenly are here. I think it happens automatically. The people who live here get to know the education system and become educated as teachers, and they are absolutely good, like the Swiss. I just don't think that there are any differences. (G2\_D4)

In contrast, the need for more students with migration backgrounds was clearly expressed by the participants of another group (G3). They argued that society should to some extent be reflected by the students:

I also think it would certainly be desirable that a society is somehow reflected in a social institution, and the education system is one of them. So I think it would be well worth it to invest in this, to do an effort to increase the proportion. (G3\_D3)



Two lecturers highlighted multilingualism as a specific potential aspect that could become stronger if the number of students with migration backgrounds were to increase. One of the participants also expressed the expectation that a better representation of students with migration backgrounds at Universities of Teacher Education would break down widespread prejudices and stereotypes about the people with migration backgrounds in society.

In addition to these expected potential aspects, the participants also mentioned possible challenges. One lecturer considers it to be a challenge that an increased number of students with migration backgrounds would mean that the way religion is taught at the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen would need to change because the seminar is based on Christian perspectives. With regard to the language skills of students with migration backgrounds, another lecturer speculates that students who grew up bilingually could possibly have difficulties in written work and consequently the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen would have to develop courses to improve their language skills:

That would mean the more students with migration backgrounds would be here, the more supporting programs we'd have to offer, and these are foster programs that go beyond what is available now. (G3\_D1)

The discussion in the fourth group (G4) developed in a very different direction. The question of increasing the number of students with migration backgrounds was primarily discussed in the context of teachers for foreign languages and cultures. Even when the moderator talked about 'students with migration backgrounds' the participants typically used the term 'foreign teachers' because this was their common sense description for the idea of 'students with migration backgrounds'.

## 6. Conclusions

Due to the fact that the Swiss society and its educational institutions are shaped by ongoing migration processes, it is necessary to train teachers in order to deal effectively with the migration-related diversity of their students, and to ensure that they are able to prepare all their students – regardless of their backgrounds – for a globalized diverse world. As discussed in this article, the growing empirical research shows two major findings that need to be considered during teacher training: teacher's professional competences are shaped by content knowledge *and* beliefs. The latter are more successful for teaching a diverse student population if they "entail the idea that group differences and cultural backgrounds should be acknowledged and viewed as enriching" (Hachfeld et al., 2015, p. 46). So they are to be understood in opposition to color-blind-strategies, implying that "people should see beyond 'color' when interacting with people from different backgrounds and cul-

tures” (ibid.). Hence, “teacher education programs should actively encourage teacher candidates to be open to cultural backgrounds of their students” and make them aware “that culture and language matter in all subjects” (ibid., p. 53). In order to reach this goal it is important to consider how Teacher Universities themselves deal with the migration-related diversity of their student population within the meaning as role models (Edelmann, 2014).

In contrast to these desiderata, the results of the DIVAL research project show – at least for the University of Teacher Education St.Gallen – that the idea of treating all pre-service teachers equally regardless of their backgrounds seems to be the preferred strategy. Only a minority of lecturers and students expressed the opinion that it would be beneficial if more students with migration backgrounds enrolled at Universities of Teacher Education. Among them especially pre-service teachers with migration backgrounds pointed out that it could help to overcome stereotypes and prejudices about their group. In addition to articulating fears of matching up with the ‘Swiss’ students when entering the Universities of Teacher Education, they expressed doubts about their acceptance in the school field.

Against this background, further education trainings for lecturers at Universities of Teacher Education that support effective strategies for dealing with the migration-related diversity of their students has to be pointed out as an essential pedagogical consequence. The goal should be that lecturers can recognize the potential of the diversity of their students in seminars and lectures. It is conceivable, for example, that the following areas are important: What it is like to grow up multilingually, to maintain a transnational family network, to belong to a religious minority group, to grow up with parents who do not know much about the local education system or to experience exclusion and discrimination?

Nevertheless, a reflective approach to dealing with the migration-related diversity is essential since over-emphasizing ‘differences’, which has been criticized for a long time in the context of intercultural education and cultural studies, leads to processes of ‘culturalization’, ‘othering’ and even ‘essentialisation’ of certain backgrounds (Karakaşoğlu, 2014). On the other hand, ignoring differences in the sense of a lack of awareness and recognition of students’ individual national and ethno-cultural identity constructions and backgrounds in favor of ‘equal’ treatment of ‘unequal’ individuals can ultimately lead to processes of assimilation and discrimination (cf. Edelmann, 2007, 2014). This ‘dialectical contradiction’ (ibid.) between emphasis and non-emphasis on migration-related differences shows that the issue is strongly related to competences that allow critical and reflective decisions about *when, why, and how* it makes sense to address or ignore the migration-related backgrounds of individuals.

In order to support the cultural process of opening up of the University of Teacher Education – and this is another pedagogical consequence we would like to emphasize – it is crucial that “the cultural and social capital within the university milieu must be recognized, and individuals must be given the opportunity to further develop that capital and make a productive use of it both at the university and with regard to expanded professional prospects” (Karakaşoğlu, 2014, p. 14).

As indicated at the beginning of this article, until now, there are hardly any significant studies in Switzerland on the subject of students with migration backgrounds at Universities of Teacher Education. With the research project DIVAL, an important step towards more empirical based knowledge has been made. However, many questions remain open and more studies are needed, ideally at a national and international-comparative level.

### Notes

1. For further information see <http://blogs.phsg.ch/dival/> (15/05/2015).
2. For further information see <http://www.phsg.ch/web.aspx> (15/05/2015).
3. For further information see [elitesproject.eu/pathways-to-success/switzerland](http://elitesproject.eu/pathways-to-success/switzerland) (15/05/2015).
4. For further information see <http://www.zg.ch/behoerden/direktion-fur-bildung-und-kultur/phzg/university-of-teacher-education-zug/research-and-development/izb-international-cooperation/reference-projects/teachers-with-an-immigrant-background/#study-teachers-with-an-immigrant-background> (15/05/2015).
5. For further information see <http://www.phsg.ch/web/forschung/institut-bildung-und-gesellschaft.aspx> (15/01/2015).
6.  $t(162.4) = 4.52, p < 0.001$ , two-sided t-test, unequal variances.
7.  $t(2164.5) = 11.38, p < 0.001$ , two-sided t-test, unequal variances.
8.  $t(58148.16) = 39.8, p < 0.001$ , two-sided t-test, unequal variances.
9. Prior to the study we focused on a minimum of three students per group. Sometimes for not foreseeable reasons a student could suddenly not attend. Nevertheless we then decided to still carry out the discussion with the present students who made the effort to attend.

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