

THE ATTITUDES OF PARENTS-MIGRANTS ON INTEGRATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF BAVARIA

Maja Trifunović

Independent University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, trifunovic.maja@gmail.com

Abstract: In the last decade, we have witnessed a large number of economic and political migrants to the countries of Western Europe, especially The Federal Republic of Germany. Migration brings with it not only the provision of a job and accommodation. Leaving the country of permanent residence also opens up other issues, both for individuals and for entire families. Most often, one of the parents leaves first in order to take the family as soon as possible. The technical requirements for family reunification in The Federal Republic of Germany are clearly defined by the legal regulations of the state: salary, accommodation, language knowledge. However, general integration also implies adaptation that is difficult to measure with the forms of the Office for Foreigners. It is informal, unspecified, but somehow taken for granted. One of the integration levels is the adaptation of children and families to the educational system of the Federal Republic of Germany, that is, to the preschool and school system of some of its provinces. The paper discusses this type of integration and the experiences of parents-migrants. Their experiences were presented through conversation and summarized in attitudes from which the weight of informal integration can be clearly seen. The parents pointed to their own expectations, unpreparedness and ignorance of the system of another country, but also pointed out the benefits of good "passability" through the school system of Bavaria. Additionally, the parents pointed out the shortcomings of a large system like the school system in this German federal state, which does not recognize the knowledge acquired by students unless it can be expressed in the host language. This inflexibility of the system causes frustration for both the parents and children.

Keywords: the Attitudes of Parents-Migrants, Integration, the Educational System of Bavaria

1. INTRODUCTION

Every man has dreams. For those who survived the war, the dreams are mostly the same - peace and prosperity. In the last decade, we have witnessed a large number of economic and political migrants to the countries of Western Europe, especially The Federal Republic of Germany. For years, it was almost impossible for the citizens of "the third countries" or non-EU countries to move to Germany. Many educated people looked for a way to achieve this goal. After 2010, the border was opened for those with higher education from certain branches. They can, by fulfilling the prescribed conditions, get the so-called blue card, which gives them a residence and work permit for three years with the possibility of extending it and bringing their family. In addition to the blue card, there are other forms of work and residence permits (arbeitsagentur.de). Certain occupations that are not regulated in Germany are not subject to the mandatory recognition of professional education diplomas, while, for example, occupations in the field of medical and pedagogical sciences imply this. In both cases, the extension of a work and residence permit implies the submission of proof of employment, salary, accommodation, language knowledge, etc. These are some of the prescribed norms that are dealt with in detail by the Office for Foreigners at Public Administration Institutions. These are also formal segments of the integration of foreigners into the legal regulations of the Federal Republic of Germany.

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, we dealt with the issues of informal integration of families in terms of their adaptation to the educational system. Certain segments of the educational system in Germany are, just like in the countries of the Western Balkans, mandatory, while others are desirable, but not mandatory for parents and children, for example, attending preschool institutions. Families with younger children definitely try to get a place in the kindergarten for their youngsters, thus trying to provide their children with equal chances for success during schooling. In a group of peers, the child acquires a foreign language faster and easier, learns the rules of the system in which he/she lives and prepares for school. The adaptation of children to kindergarten in Germany is much better regulated than in the Balkans. There are different adaptation models where parents are active participants (Trifunović, 2023, p. 88). It is known that the school system in The Federal Republic of Germany is organized in three parts (Trifunović and Hot, 2024, pp. 70-71) and passability in the third level (from the 5th grade) is possible under certain conditions almost until the end of schooling. Attending educational institutions is mandatory until the age of 15, but it is expected for the education to be continued even after that. How children will fit into the new system of life is one of the questions that every parent asks himself. Their views on how much they as foreigners should fit in, and how much it is a question of the system of the country they come to, are different. This is precisely the subject of this study, which was conducted with the parents as an interview in the form of a walking dialogue. This method is not often used, but it has proven to be very successful in finding out the personal

attitudes of respondents formed on the basis of the experience gained in the first years of their residence in a foreign country. Parents' fears about the future of their children, as well as fulfilled or unfulfilled expectations from the host country, always come to the surface in a "one-to-one" conversation. The examination of the views of parents-migrants from "third countries" on the integration of their families into the educational system of the host country included 34 respondents, whose stay in The Federal Republic of Germany in the province of Bavaria does not last longer than 5 years.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through research, we wanted to determine to what extent parents themselves feel sufficiently integrated into the system of the host country, but it was even more important for us to find out to what extent parents see their children integrated into the society they brought them into. The parents-respondents are originally from the countries of the Western Balkans, more precisely the Republic of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Table 1 shows respondents by gender and professional qualification, numerically and percentageally.

Table 1: Gender and professional qualification

Respondents Total	Gender		Respondents' qualifications		
	Male	Female	High school	College	University Education
34	7	27	8 (23,53%)	8 (23,53%)	18 (52,94%)

Source: Author

It is observed that the number of respondents is uneven both according to gender and according to the professional training acquired in the homeland. It is always much easier to get women to be engaged in the dialogue, which does not imply that they are more interested in this kind of research. As we have previously stated, a large number of highly qualified workers leave their country and come to Germany for temporary or permanent residence. This is also confirmed by the number of respondents with a higher education degree, more than half of the total number, i.e. 52.94%. Percentage-wise, the number of respondents with secondary and higher education is even, which speaks of the needs of the host country for personnel of all profiles. According to the report of the German Agency for Labor and Employment, Bavaria needs a large number of qualified labor in areas such as IT, in the health profession, in engineering, but also workers of all craft professions (Statistik der Bundesagentur für Arbeit). *Invest in Bavaria* provides similar data regarding the need for qualified workers (Invest in Bavaria).

Table 2: Parents' attitudes on their own integration

Integration level	Parents' Integration by gender	
	Male	Female
Well-integrated	4 (57,14%)	9 (33,33%)
Partially integrated	3 (42,86%)	18 (66,67%)
Unintegrated	-	-

Source: Author

Table 2 indicates the attitudes of parents about their own integration. What is clearly visible in our research is the difference in the subjective experience of integration between men and women. The majority of the male respondents believe they are well integrated (57.14%), while two thirds of the female population declared they feel only partially integrated into the German system (66.67%). The reasons for this attitude of women are mainly lower paying jobs and poor language skills. Most of the respondents said that due to insufficient knowledge of the German language, they are reluctant to come into contact with the Germans, avoid going to official institutions on their own, and mostly seek the company of people from the same speaking area. These views are confirmed by OECD iLibrary research from 2018 (OECD, 2018), as well as by the authors of the study on gender and refugee integration from 2021 (Phillimore and Cheung, 2021). An encouraging fact is that, regardless of gender, no respondent feels unintegrated in the host country. Given the limited space, we had to give up tabular presentations of certain variables of this research, but we will definitely list them because we consider them important for the explanation of the obtained results. One of them is the information on the number of children in the respondents' families, which amounts to a total of 51 children in 34 families. Of the total number of respondents, 16 have children up to 6 years of age, that is, children who attend preschool institutions, 25 respondents are parents of children of younger school age, while 10 surveyed parents have children aged 10-19. When it comes to the ratio of the number of families with one and two children, it is 17 in both cases.

Table 3: Parents' views on the integration of children into the educational system of Bayern

The level of integration of the respondents' children	Integration of children according to age		
	Nursery and kindergarten	Grade I-IV	Grade V and older children
Well-integrated	13 (81,25%)	11 (44,00%)	3 (30,00%)
Partially integrated	3 (18,75%)	13 (52,00%)	6 (60,00%)
Unintegrated	-	1 (0,04%)	1 (10,00%)

Source: Author

We obtained the expected and interesting results by examining the attitudes of parents-migrants on the integration of their children into the educational system of The Federal Province of Bavaria (Table 3). Considering that half of the respondents are parents of two children of different ages, the expressed attitudes can be considered more relevant because the experience was gained simultaneously in two educational institutions. Their experiences are different for different institutions and not always positive. Table 3 shows an inversely proportional relationship between integration and the age of the child. The older the child was when he/she arrived in Germany, the lower the level of integration was. Parents-migrants see their older children, who transferred from educational institutions in their homeland to schools in Bavaria, to be the worst integrated. Although the number of children whose parents consider that they have not yet managed to integrate into the school system is equal to 1, the percentages indicate a significance (10.00%) among the oldest children-immigrants, as well as the level of partial integration (60, 00%). This could be partially explained by the influence of the period of adolescence in which these children are, which would probably affect school success in the homeland as well. Parents-migrants pointed out that the support program for children who change their language area by leaving their homeland is worse than expected and that The Federal Republic of Germany could take a more serious approach to this segment. Education is seen as the most important factor in children's success, and these children end up in the lowest level of high school in Bayern precisely because they do not know the language. As the language plays the biggest role in mastering the curriculum and integrating the children, the parents pointed out that it would be desirable to provide the children with a more intensive German language course lasting longer than one year. Thus, the children would have the opportunity to continue their education in realgymnasias or high schools, in accordance with the grades they had in the country they come from. Similar views were expressed in the works of other researchers on a similar topic. Many parents cite poor information about the specific requirements and possibilities of the German education system as a stumbling block (Huber, 2020, p. 134).

The fact is that Germany is a country with a constant influx of immigrants. The wave of immigration has been increased since 2015 with the arrival of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries. With the arrival of a large number of refugees, jobs were opened for qualified and unqualified personnel, so that their social, housing and other needs could be met. In accordance with this, Germany's immigration policy changed and continues to change, as well as the integration policy (Oltmer, 2017, p. 45). Migration and integration are closely related and represent a constant challenge to the German political and social scene. The constant effort to overcome both linguistic and cultural differences between immigrants and the local population, by strengthening the intercultural competences of both, is one of Germany's priority tasks in the 21st century.

4. CONCLUSION

As it can be seen from the results of the interviews conducted with parents-migrants, the attitudes differ in relation to the parents' gender and professional education, but also to the children's age when arriving in Germany. There is no person for whom change and novelty are not a challenge. For some, it causes fear, while for others it awakens a desire to overcome the obstacle. From whatever aspect it is observed, it depends on the personality whether this change will be experienced positively or negatively. In accordance with previous experiences and set goals, each individual will try to adjust, adapt or integrate in the new situation in the best possible way. And this study led us to the same conclusion. Regardless of the limitations of this research in terms of the size of the sample of respondents, our goal was to point out the different expectations and attitudes of parents-migrants regarding the educational system offered to them in The Federal Republic of Germany, specifically in the Federal Province of Bavaria, which we managed to achieve in the sample of 34 parents. In an effort to ensure a safer and brighter future for their own generation, parents will do everything in their power to make the integration of themselves and their children into the system of the host country as successful as possible. The time ahead of us is to show how ready the new generations are to adapt to the new system, to accept it and, in accordance with the regulations of the country in which they temporarily or permanently reside, make their lives more prosperous.

LITERATURE

- Bayerisches Landesamt für Schule. (2022). Bildungsbericht Bayern 2021. Gunzenhausen, Germany: Bayerisches Landesamt für Schule
- Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Familie, Arbeit und Soziales, Staatsministerium für Frühpädagogik München. (2019). Der Bayerische Bildungs- und Erziehungsplan für Kinder in Tageseinrichtungen bis zur Einschulung. Berlin, Germany: Cornelsen Verlag, 10. Auflage.
- Bundesagentur für Arbeit. (2024). The German Labour Market in 2023. Retrieved from https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Statischer-Content/Service/English-Site/Generische-Publikationen/German-labour-market-2023.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3#:~:text=URL%3A%20https%3A%2F%2Fstatistik.arbeitsagentur.de%2FDE%2FStatischer
- Huber, M. (2020). Migration und Bildung in Deutschland: Herausforderungen und Chancen. Springer.
- Laeven, H., Andres, B. & Hédervári, E. (2003). Die ersten Tage – ein Model zur Eingewöhnung in Krippe und Tagespflege. Weinheim, Germany: Beltz, 4. Auflage.
- Lenkers, J., Mindermann, I., & Schöpfer, C. (2021). (M)ein Kind auf dem Weg zur weiterführenden Schule. Augsburg, Germany: Auer Verlag in der AAP Lehrerwelt GmbH
- Miller, B. (2001). Kako ostvariti uspješan kontakt sa učenicima. Sarajevo: Sarajevska Tribina.
- OECD. (2018). Gender differences in immigrant integration. U Settling In 2018: Indicators of Immigrant Integration. OECD iLibrary. Preuzeto sa OECD iLibrary
- Oltmer, J. (2017). *Deutschland Einwanderungsland. Begriffe – Fakten – Kontroversen*. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH.
- Phillimore, J., & Cheung, S. Y. (2021). Gender and refugee integration: a quantitative analysis of integration and social policy outcomes. *Journal of Social Policy*. Preuzeto sa Cambridge Core
- Schopp, J. (2023). Eltern Stärken – Die dialogische Haltung in Seminar und Beratung, ein Leitfaden für die Praxis. Leverkusen, Germany: Verlag Barbara Budrich
- Trifunović, M. (2023). Adaptacija djeteta na predškolsku ustanovu – Berlinski model I mogućnosti njegove primjene u predškolskim ustanovama u Republici Srpskoj. *SVAROG Naučno-stručni časopis za društvene I prirodne nauke*, 27, 87-94.
- Trifunović, M., & Hot, T. (2024). School systems of Bavaria and the Republic of Srpska – similarities and differences, *SCIENCE International journal*, 3(1), 69-73.
- Vogler, J., Alisch, M., & westphal, M. (2023). Migration und Diversität. Leverkusen, Germany: Verlag Barbara Budrich
- Züchner, I., Schmidt-Hertha, B., Tervooren, A., & Martini, R. (2024). Datenreport Erziehungswissenschaft 2024. Leverkusen, Germany: Verlag Barbara Budrich.
- https://bavaria.org/news_post/bavaria-refines-german-apprenticeship-excellence/
Accessed on July 15, 2024
- <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/fuer-menschen-aus-dem-ausland/voraussetzungen-arbeiten-in-deutschland>
Accessed on July 22, 2024
- <https://www.km.bayern.de/ministerium/schule-und-ausbildung/schularten.html>
Accessed on January 22, 2024