

Social Participation of Migrant Youth in Switzerland

Dr. Thomas Geisen

The problem of the term ‚Integration‘

- ‘Integration’ as a new leading paradigm in modern societies
- ‘Integration’ is contributing to an ongoing distinction between us and them (e.g. migration background – 2nd, 3rd, ... Xth generation)
- Social limits of learning – nationalised learning institutions and structures
- Recommendations towards ‘integration’ are focussing most on language and cultural issues
- For research: ‘Integration’ needs to be replaced – ‘socialisation’ (Vergesellschaftung) might be an alternative
- Ambivalence of term and concepts of integration

Migrant Youth and ‚Integration‘ in Switzerland

- Population: 7.6 Million
- Foreign Population: 21.3%, more than 1.6 Million
- ‚integration‘ is perceived not only as an unsolved question but as an ongoing social and cultural problem
- ‚integration report‘ (2006) is listing the following ‚problem areas‘: language, vocational education, labour market, health, public security, situation of the approved refugees
- Focus: improving the regular structures and avoiding special measures, e.g. case management, vocational education for refugees, sport
- First priority: language, education, work
- Second priority: social integration in quarters
- Third priority: improvement of the general conditions
- Most important target group: young foreign persons
- General guideline: to make use of the potentials and to reduce marginalisation and discrimination

Recent developments in legislation

- 2008: ‚Asyl-‘ (AsylG) and ‚Ausländergesetz‘ (AuG, Art. 54)
- ‘integration-politics’ as a task of the state
- ‘integration contract’ as a active mean to promote integration
- Core issue: ‘support and demand’
- Critics: one sided obligation to ‘integration’; reduction of ‘integration’ to a single act; overemphasise on language knowledge as an indicator for ‘integration’; unbalanced power relations
- In focus: immigrants from third country states in the process of family unification; immigrants in danger to loose their right of residence; immigrants with teaching or other activities concerning home language, language and religion
- Possibility to apply sanctions towards those refusing to follow the commitment in the ‘integration contract’

The current situation of migrant youth in Switzerland

- Facing different kinds of difficulties: deficit in language skills, small proportion of foreign workers with a degree in VET, double the size of migrant youth in special training programmes (bridging-programme), more than double the size of the rate of unemployment,
- Special problems in early education measurements (in the responsibility of the cantons), in the transition from school to the vocational education system and from there into the labour market
- Not only discrimination but racism – focussed on certain groups of migrants
- Concrete measurements: Case Management (starting with the 7th grade) and enhance employee involvement and sensibilisation for 'immigration' issues

Core issues

- New emphasis on questions of ‘integration’
- According to the new neo-liberal agenda: ‘demand and support’ are promoting one-sided individual solutions for social problems
- There is a new and growing interest in migrant family and migrant youth, since it is especially the migrant family which is perceived as a hindrance for ‘integration’
- Childhood and youth in general are related to questions of developing stable identifications on gender, work, social issues and political orientation
- What does migrant youth make different?
- Plurality and heterogeneity of children and youth with migration background does not make things easy but hopeful



Thank you very much for your attention!