

# Discrimination in Munich Schools in the Guest Worker Regime: The Intersection of Language, Nationality and Gender

Mona Bergmann & Ulrike Fettke

**Summary:** After the recruitment stop of guest workers in 1973, a high proportion of migrants lived in Munich and faced a separating, marginalizing schooling situation. Using an intersectionality approach, we show how migrant pupils were particularly marginalised by the overlapping social categories of language, nationality and gender. According to our empirical observations for the period from the 1970s to the 1980s, the segregation into nationally homogeneous dual-language classes reproduced a structure of social exclusion. Our findings illustrate how past schooling policies have doomed the educational and occupational opportunities of a generation of guest workers' children. As some of the discriminatory grievances can still be seen in today's neoliberal conjuncture of racism, the results shed new light on contemporary (Bavarian) school policies towards migrants.

**Keywords:** Intersectionality, social exclusion, dual-language classes, educational discrimination, migration

**Titel:** Diskriminierung im Bayerischen Schulsystem an der Intersektion von Sprache, Nationalität und Gender während der 1970er und 1980er Jahre. Eine Münchener Fallstudie

**Zusammenfassung:** Nach dem Anwerbestopp für Gastarbeiter im Jahr 1973 sah sich ein hoher Anteil migrantischer Mitbürger:innen in München einer ausgrenzenden Schulsituation gegenüber. Mit Hilfe des Intersektionalitätsansatzes zeigen wir für das Schulsystem in München im Zeitraum der 1970er und 1980er Jahre, wie migrantische Schüler:innen über die zusammenwirkenden sozialen Kategorien Sprache, Nationalität und Gender marginalisiert wurden. Die Beschulung in national homogenen *Zweisprachenklassen* reproduzierte eine Struktur der gesellschaftlichen Ausgrenzung, womit die damalige Schulpolitik die Bildungs- und Berufschancen einer Generation reduzierte. Da es auch heute noch ausgrenzende Strukturen gibt, werfen die Ergebnisse ein neues Licht auf die (bayerische) Schulpolitik gegenüber Migrant:innen.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Intersektionalität, Soziale Exklusion, Zweisprachenklassen, Bildungsdiskriminierung, Migration

## 1 Introduction: The educational situation of immigrants in Germany

Education is an important marker for a person's social status. The German federal education system has been criticized in school performance studies for reproducing and amplifying social inequities, especially for immigrants (Ha 2016a: 181). Segregating education measures point to persisting institutional racisms (Dean 2020: 310), like intentional allocation of students into different elementary classes according to markers like foreign names or ethnicities and special integration courses for immigrants (Ha 2016a: 180). Separate schooling is being

discussed again, although it had already counteracted social inclusion during the guest worker regime half a century ago.

In 1972, the Bavarian capital started a schooling model of dual-language-classes [*Zweisprachenklassen*] that existed for almost two decades. Students were divided into nationally homogeneous groups, expelled from regular classes and predominantly taught all subjects in the official language of their country of origin, whereas German was taught as a second language. Following ministerial guidelines of the Conference of Ministers of Education [*Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK)*], these classes became the regular form of schooling for students of guest worker parents in all of Bavaria by 1976 until the end of the 1980s. As numbers illustrate, more than half of the dual-language class-students failed at the general final exams in the first years in Munich (Kristen 1978) showing that this generation was only granted limited chances for education.

The educational separation during the 1970s and 1980s in Munich has not yet been examined with an intersectionality approach. A perspective of intersectionality allows for an examination of how individual dispositions of immigrant students were turned into social disadvantages by the educational system. In sociology, the catholic daughter of working class parents from the countryside has long been the generic *pars pro toto* for showing that educational chances depend on certain social characteristics (Dahrendorf 1968). The Munich case complements the criteria of social exclusion in education with migration-related markers and thereby also provides a new perspective for current debates in education politics. Structural racisms in educational institutions are commonly justified with the merit principle of performance.

After an introduction of the intersectionality approach and the research design applied (Chapter 2) the Munich case (Chapter 3) is illustrated. Then, the discriminatory effects of the Bavarian schooling practice on the guest workers' children are highlighted. The analysis is carried out along the social markers nationality, language and gender (Chapter 4). Lastly, the findings are theoretically framed and connected to debates on educational (in)equity (Chapter 5) and a conclusion (Chapter 6) is drawn.

## 2 Theoretical frame and research design

By applying an intersectionality perspective on empirical material from Bergmann's masters thesis (2017), the marginalization of guest workers' children by discrimination in the education system becomes evident.

Firstly developed by Crenshaw (1989; 2004) in studies of Black Feminism and Critical Race Theory, the concept allows analysis of the intersection of social categories that produces unique forms of discrimination and oppression. The approach stresses the discrimination of societal groups along certain social dispositions (Walgenbach 2009; Chebout 2011) generated by hegemonic structures of power and leading to unequal political representation (Ganz/Hausotter 2020: 19). The social dispositions may develop and overlap in complex ways (Scherr 2012: 3) and have to be considered in the context of their social conditions and processes of construction (Rodríguez 2011: 78 f). The intersections of social categories entail specific inequities that reproduce the social structures, practices, and identities they consist of.