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Teachers of immigrant origin in Switzerland: a literature review



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Acronyms

CDIP	Conférence des directeurs cantonaux de l'instruction publique Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education
COHEP	Conférence des rectrices et recteurs des hautes écoles pédagogiques Swiss Conference of Rectors of Universities of Teacher Education
EDK	German acronym for CDIP
HEP	Hautes écoles pédagogiques Universities of teacher education
HES	Hautes écoles spécialisées Universities of applied sciences
ISCED	International System of Classification of Education
PIC	Pédagogie interculturelle - intercultural education
SIO	Student of immigrant origin
TIO	Teacher of immigrant origin

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to reconstruct how the issue of teachers of immigrant origin (TIO) appeared as an important theme in the Swiss educational context and to draw a picture of the main topics developed in this frame. This paper is based on an analysis of policy documents and research conducted in Switzerland; it points at their framing as well as topics where the local scholars rely on research conducted in other countries, mainly Germany and the US.

The issue of TIO appears more prominent in the Swiss German part of the country than this is the case for the French speaking region, where the topic is mainly treated under the label of multilingualism¹. This unbalance is presumably also to be observed in the German and in the French literature altogether, yet it was not possible to explore this hypothesis in the frame of this paper.

The paper is structured in 3 parts: the first describes the presence of TIO in Swiss schools and in teacher training institutes and discusses the reasons of the reduced presence of children of immigrants in this profession. The second part discusses how this topic came to be a legitimate issue in Swiss pedagogical literature and which aspects of this issue have gained prominence. The third part shows on the other hand which aspects are rather ignored and the plausible reasons of the present focus.

1 TIO in the local teaching force

The presence of children of immigrants in the schools of their country of immigration is one highly visible indicator of the transformation of the immigration societies. Their presence increased sharply over 20 years in Switzerland: the proportion of school classes with more than 30% foreign pupils increased from 27% in the school year 1990-91 to 42% 2009-10². However, the now clearly multicultural immigration society is served by a largely monocultural school, as in the tradition of school entrusted with the task of nation-building. In her path breaking study on intercultural competences of teachers in the city of Zurich, the author Doris Edelman interviewed 15 primary-schools TIO with 10 years of teaching experience in the city of ZH: this was an exhaustive sample for the biggest city in CH. The Swiss federal statistical office was asked to quantify the gap between the multicultural school composition and the monocultural teacher force: using data based on nationality of teachers and students it showed that in school year 2010-11, Swiss schools were attended by 23.5% of foreign pupils, whereas foreign teachers represented barely a tenth of the overall foreign-student share: 2.3 % (Mantel and Leutwyler 2013).

¹ In the French context « communautarisme » is a much stigmatized way of thematising migration issues. The plea in favor of hiring a larger number of TIOs is often regarded as presenting the danger of essentialization of cultures and strengthening differences.

² <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/15/17/blank/01.indicator.403201.4083.html?open=1#1>

In the near future, the situation should not change significantly: in the mid-2000, TIOs represent barely 5% of the Zurich HEP students (Edelmann 2008)p.20. The presence of children of immigrants is limited in the Universities of Teacher Education (Hautes écoles pédagogiques HEP), although the recruitment pool for HEP is socially more inclusive than this is the case for Universities³. Yet (Luginbühl and Kosorok Labhart 2013) seems more confident that a change might occur: in her recently established HEP, foreign origin students represented 19% of the total in 2009 and have increased to 33% in 2012⁴.

Studies inquiring over the reasons for the limited presence of TIOs in Swiss HEP are lacking. Based on US literature, Edelmann mentions as possible causes emotional barriers, discouragement from families as well as fear of possible discrimination. It cannot be excluded that the wish for a high return on educational investment pushes successful children of immigrants into better paid jobs (Edelmann 2008: 22). The current Swiss Pathways study focusing on TIOs might shed some light on this topic.

2 TIOs : An emerging issue in CH

2.1 Coping with foreign pupils in schools: earlier approaches

The presence of children of immigrants in the Swiss school system and moreover their unsatisfactory school performance stimulated various approaches to tackle this issue and its worrying social consequences. The first approach up to the Seventies was labelled “Ausländerpädagogik“, a specific educational approach for “foreign” pupils, whose school failure was attributed mainly to their linguistic and cultural deficits. Ausländerpädagogik is a Sonderpädagogik (Edelmann 2008). In this frame, schools are discharged of responsibility in the unsatisfactory outcomes (Allemann-Ghionda 2006)⁵.

This perspective of “underdeveloped” children of immigrants was challenged in the mid-seventies and slowly replaced by a new approach designed under the auspices of the Council of Europe and labelled “intercultural education” (pédagogie interculturelle PIC) (Allemann-Ghionda 2004). Intercultural education addressed all pupils alike aiming at integrating all types of diversity. Allemann-Ghionda gives the following definition of PIC:

³ <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/15/17/blank/01.indicator.401203.4081.html>

⁴ Thurgau being very close to the border between Switzerland and Germany: the local HEP is attended by many German students who will join the Swiss teacher force later. If commuting Germans are included in the count, then the proportion of foreign HEP students reaches some 40%.

⁵ For a detailed account of the various approaches see Edelmann 2008 ch.2.5

„Eine Bildung, die sich nach der interkulturellen Idee richtet, anerkennt im weitesten Sinne in organisatorischer, inhaltlicher und methodischer Hinsicht die sprachliche und soziokulturelle Vielfalt. Sie bringt unterschiedliche, kulturell geprägte Inhalte und Perspektiven zur Geltung, vergleicht sie miteinander, setzt sie zueinander in Beziehung und betrachtet sie gegebenenfalls kritisch. Kulturen und Sprachen von nationalen und zugewanderten Minderheiten können je nach Zusammensetzung der Bevölkerung und nach Art des Bildungsangebots daran beteiligt sein.“ (Allemann-Ghionda 1997)

In this frame the questions of the teachers' competences and the teaching standards appear as crucial levers in order to bring about an improved school performance of children of immigrants. In spite of the criticized emphasis on cultural difference of the PIC, the new approach gained some form of recognition in the educational scientific and political arena in Switzerland, as it was endorsed by official bodies responsible for the coordination of the cantonal educational policies (COHEP 2007 ; EDK 2000). Indeed in the meantime the label "PIC" came to stand for a broader resource-oriented approach to diversity.

Beyond pedagogical reflections on pupils and teachers at class level, it is worth mentioning another scientific approach which gained momentum at the end of the Nineties. The Rosemund et al. study (Rosenmund et al. 1999) based on the perspective of the school improvement is emblematic in this respect by its focus on the way school systems deal with linguistic and cultural heterogeneity. Their case studies of various local schools with more than 20% students of immigrant origin (SIOs) identified four different ways of managing linguistic and cultural heterogeneity at school level:

- Avoiding any debate on heterogeneity in schools and their environment
- Showing some reflexivity, yet discourses on integration of children of immigrants and general school system are considered distinct, separate questions
- Implementing an integrative approach based on the characteristics of an adaptive school system (lernfähig)
- Implementing a highly integrative approach, incorporating reflexive mechanisms and coordinated problem-solving functions.

Educational debates and research at the end of the last century indicates two crucial focus of action in order to improve school outcomes of children of immigrants: teachers' competences and school system management. On one side, the Rosenmund study considered a stepping stone for the establishment of the QUIMS project⁶ in the city of Zurich, focuses on organisational and policy levels. On the other side, the 2007 report, mandated by the Swiss Conference of Rectors of Universities of Teacher Education (COHEP), a landmark in the slow institutionalization pace of PIC addresses the issue of teachers' competences and takes stock of the role given to PIC in the recently established Universities of Teacher Education. So far the question of teachers of immigrant origin is not a theme.

⁶ Qualität in multikulturellen Schulen ; Schulentwicklungsprojekt der Bildungsdirektion des Kantons Zürich (http://www.vsa.zh.ch/internet/bildungsdirektion/vsa/de/schulbetrieb_und_unterricht/qualitaet_multikulturelle_schulen_quims/quims-schulen.html)

2.2 Putting teachers competences high on the agenda

In the globalized world of the Nineties, enhancing teachers' competences becomes a priority in the definition of a nationally harmonized educational policy. One major aspect was the promotion of the tertiary education in Switzerland.

In this frame, the CDIP recommended in 1995 the upgrading at tertiary educational level (ISCED 5 and 6) of teacher training previously varying from canton to canton; its aims were upgrading education of future teachers and harmonizing teacher training standards across the country. The large political consensus of this priority gave way to a quite quick implementation of the recommendation. Consequently 17 new Universities of Teacher Education (Hautes Ecoles Pédagogiques HEP) have replaced at the beginning of the years 2000 previous institutions for teacher training at upper secondary level.

Since the creation of HEP most future teachers at compulsory school level are familiarized with migration issues and are taught how to teach local language as a foreign language (Edelmann 2013a). Yet, in its 2007 largest document on Intercultural Education the COHEP (Swiss Conference of rectors of Universities of Teacher Education) observes that this field has not been institutionalized so far in the HEP (Sieber 2007: 35). Moreover, Sieber insists on the fact that scope as well as philosophy of PIC training varies sharply across the various Swiss HEP.

2.3 Suggesting recruitment of TIOs

The issue of recruiting TIOs emerges in this special frame. It is brought to the fore by advising bodies at inter-cantonal level with no decision-making powers, CDIP and COHEP: their recommendations serve to define largely shared orientations which however are not binding for cantonal educational authorities.

Recommendations to recruit TIOs appear for the first time in an official document with the paper of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (CDIP-EDK) "Pour une formation des enseignantes et enseignants aux approches interculturelles"⁷. Observing the underrepresentation of foreign origin students in teacher training, the authors recommend making less complicated their access to this training.

En raison d'obstacles administratifs, institutionnels et psychosociaux, les étudiantes et étudiants allochtones sont fortement sous-représentés dans les formations pédagogiques. Une diversification plus grande des origines sociales, culturelles et linguistiques des étudiantes et étudiants permettraient d'aborder les questions de la PIC dans l'institut de formation comme une réalité quotidienne. CDIP 2000 p.33

⁷ <http://edudoc.ch/record/17371/files/D60.pdf>

The recommendations formulated by the COHEP report of 2007 aiming at strengthening the teachers' competences mentions explicitly the recruitment of TIOs.

Recommandation 5: Viser une ouverture nationale et internationale

Les établissements de formation des enseignantes et enseignants s'éloignent de leur tradition monolingue et monoculturelle en engageant des formatrices et formateurs et du personnel scientifique d'origine et de culture différentes ou issus de milieux immigrés (COHEP 2007) p.6

In this frame, the recruitment of future TIOs is intended as a way of boosting intercultural competences among the teacher force. Discussing pre-school attendance of children of immigrants, for instance, (Lanfranchi 2002) reports the positive impact of TIOs on the way young children enter public schools, TIOs being credited with the capacity of managing diversity "acquired in a non-institutionalized frame" (i.e. thanks to their personal experience).

2.4 Implementing the recommendations

The highly qualified and freshly educated staff of the newly created educational institutions HEP has all the tools to take up this issue of TIOs. They manage to re-translate the question of enhancing teachers' competences into an emerging organizational paradigm, that of diversity management.

The concept of diversity replaces previous polarization between national vs. non-national, since it is built on a "non-dichotomist and non-hierarchical perspective of differences" (Allemann-Ghionda 2013: 236).

The diversity management approach developed in the context of anti-discrimination organizational policy approaches; yet its very objective is not anti-discrimination but a way of promoting productivity in the business by a staff management that takes into account all sort of differences that might appear in the workforce (Schönenberger and Fibbi 2011). Based on the liberal concept of non-interference with the free allocation of resources, the main finality of this approach is productivity and not social justice⁸.

What makes this breakthrough possible? How come that this reformulation enterprise stands good chances of being translated into practice? A number of hypotheses appear plausible.

The institutional argument. The new institutional setting of HEP is quite open to innovation, more than old-time universities. The latter appear mainly focused on the gender equality principle, which is nowadays a legal obligation. In the meantime other aspects of diversity are increasingly taken into account, such as social, ethnic and linguistic background of students. As Universities are institutions regulated by public law, they are constitutionally bound to respect fundamental rights and comply with the principle of non-discrimination (Pärli and Wantz 2012: 12).

⁸ As it shares this common liberal background, this "individual recognition approach" resembles the equal treatment approach, promoting the performing individual as "woman" "Black", "handicapped" without the strong redressing aim present in other anti-discrimination approaches, such as equal treatment and equal results.

Moreover, the HEP share some institutional characteristics with the Universities of applied sciences (HES) which form in particular social workers. In this social field, diversity management is already a well-established approach to various forms of diversity.

The recruitment argument. To the HEP engaged in enhancing teacher competences, the diversity management paradigm offers a new field of action, namely that of the recruitment of students of immigrant origin (SIO) eager to become teachers. SIOs are a new target for HEP (Kappus 2013). Yet, there are only sporadic figures on the presence of SIO in the HEP, as the once mentioned in § 1, let alone quantitative targets to be implemented in order to insure a composition of the student body in HEP which represents the pupils in the respective schools. This is indeed one of the most frequent ways of implementing diversity management.

The construct TIO is indeed too fuzzy for a direct quantitative implementation of this aspect of the diversity management. As a matter of fact, it may include both foreign and native-born youth, foreign nationals and naturalized individuals, people educated in the country of immigration and abroad (Kappus 2013). Probably the most common profile of SIO in HEP are naturalized youth having attended local schools born to immigrant parents.

The experimental argument. SIOs represent a special field experience for HEP teachers (Kappus 2013), giving them the unique opportunity to develop a teaching sensitive to multiple identities, to diversity and to the intertwined and unstable links between origin, gender and class⁹. This is for instance reflected in the study aiming at assessing whether the personal migration background of SIO was incorporated in the teaching at the HEP. Results report an enthusiastic echo of such teaching among SIO (Luginbühl and Kosorok Labhart 2013). Indeed in this study, just like in Germany (Georgi et al. 2011), SIO in HEP appear to be more sensitive for valorization of multilingualism, migration and interculturality than majority students.

3 Research on TIOs in Switzerland

This quite new field of research in Switzerland, developed mainly in the frame of teacher's training and relied on knowledge derived from recent research in Germany and the US.

3.1 Focus on teachers' competences

The most extensive study so far on TIOs in Switzerland takes up the traditional question of teachers' intercultural competences and examine them in real life, i.e. beyond HEP, in the context of school classes in the city of Zurich. Edelmann (Edelmann 2006, 2008, 2009, 2013b) explores the perceptions and the experiences of single teachers in managing heterogeneous classes, depending on the institutional conditions under which they work. She studies whether TIO contribute with their special competences to the teaching team.

⁹ Intersectionality holds that various forms of oppression (racism, sexism and socio-centrism) are interrelated, creating specific systems of oppression at the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination.

Combining attitudes toward heterogeneity and modalities of strategic action (individual vs team / institution), she identifies six different models p.188:

- a. diversity is ignored
- b. diversity is acknowledged yet this does not bear consequences in school
- c. language diversity is acknowledged as a possible teaching tool, , yet single teachers perform single, isolated actions
- d. language diversity is acknowledged as a possible teaching tool; action is coordinated among teachers
- e. heterogeneity is acknowledged as a possible teaching tool, yet single teachers perform single, isolated actions
- f. heterogeneity is acknowledged as a possible teaching tool; action is coordinated among teachers

Edelmann confirms that personal experience does make a difference in a class, by observing that this last managing style is to be found only among TIO's or teachers who live in bi-national couples. Yet such managing style is not an exclusive prerogative of teaching staff with special personal experience: it can be found among teachers who have extensive practice in teaching local language as second language, that work in innovative teams and in model schools, and have a strong interest in migration and bilingualism (Edelmann 2008, 201).

Moreover Edelman assess the absence of certain shortcomings which often accompany situations of heterogeneity, such as folclorisation of culture, perception of diversity as a source of conflict, commitment to assimilation or even reject of pupils of immigrant origin. She explains these encouraging findings with the innovative urban environment of the city of Zurich, where old-time foclorisation is completely outdated and with the personal interest and dedication of the teachers enhanced by their reflexive work-milieu.

3.2 Relying on established scientific knowledge

Many other issues that are prominent in literature on TIOs are not addressed so far in the Swiss context. Scholars rely on scientific knowledge elaborated in countries where this topic has a longer tradition, such as Germany and, indirectly, the US. The linguistic and cultural proximity for Switzerland explains this permeability.

Positive expected impact of TIOs on children of immigrants in their classes can be usefully summarized in the formula "Vorbild Uebersetzer Vertraute" (Rotter 2014). Findings of field research in Switzerland are here contrasted with findings from other similar studies conducted abroad.

TIOs between role models for SIOs and role ambivalence

Engagement of TIOs is recommended as they can function as the living proof that social mobility is not a vain hope and the immigration society is – as promised – an open society.

Edelmann (2013) shows that in Switzerland TIOs are very proud to take up this role model function, and strongly valorize bilingual competences and transnational identities. According to Rotter (2013), the picture drawn by Edelmann for Switzerland corresponds to one possible reaction of TIOs to the expectations laid on them, a situation where self- attribution and hetero attribution coincide.

Based on empirical fieldwork in Germany Rotter identifies three different ways for TIOs to respond to role model expectations. Some teachers accept this role model yet they are wary to be confined only to the role as mediators, specialized teachers for special students. Indeed often TIOs risk to be defined according not to their personal performance but to their migratory/cultural 'background' (Rotter 2013), to become the token « professional ethnic ». Against this eventuality, it appears that yet other TIOs strictly refuse to endorse such a role as they wish to be considered as professionals.

TIOs expectations toward SIOs

Rotter (Rotter 2014) observes that the bare migratory background is no proper predictor of an accurate management of diversity in class; what really makes the difference is a reflexive attitude and multicultural beliefs of teachers, whatever their personal origin. She even uncovers a higher tendency to prejudice against SIOs, when comparing TIOs to majority teachers holding the same multicultural beliefs. Shepherd (Shepherd 2011) takes a similar skeptical position observing that TIOs hold relatively low expectations of minority students and of boys.

With their sophisticated empirical Berlin survey (Hachfeld 2013 ; Hachfeld et al. 2012) show that on a descriptive basis TIO are more competent in teaching students of immigrant origin (SIO), as they show greater enthusiasm and self-efficacy (motivational orientations) as well as multicultural orientations: however they are just as prejudiced as majority teachers (values and beliefs). Structural equation models however temper these results: as only enthusiasm in teaching SIO appears greater than in majority teachers. Moreover, all differences disappear when multicultural orientations are taken into account.

In contrast to those findings, Edelmann (2008) in Switzerland, just like (Georgi et al. 2011) in Germany, observe TIO's high expectations toward their minority students, which is supposed to yield positive outcomes.

TIOs between immigrant populations and immigration society

The third term of the trilogy was « Vertraute ». (Edelmann 2008) observes that TIOs are especially able to tie special trust relations to immigrant parents, especially if they use the same minority language. They are able to show empathy to immigrant families confronted otherwise with a school environment they perceive often as hostile. They are also especially sensitive to situations of institutional and personal discrimination: their acknowledgment authorizes immigrant parents to see TIOs as siding by them in possible conflict situations.

Yet, TIOs interpret mainly their role as speakers of the values of school and the immigration society – the very one which enabled them to climb up the social ladder and gave them their new respected role in majority society. So TIOs are also those who strongly require the respect of those values by immigrant parents.

Edelmann (Edelmann 2008) points at the fact that TIOs feel quite well accepted among their colleagues, confirming the individual in his /her role. Whether this is the particular situation of Edelmann's fieldwork - or, more generally, of a highly diversified urban context, or a widespread reality in the country has not been explored so far. Explorative fieldwork (Porta and Dahinden 2013) suggests that in periphery contexts TIOs might encounter more difficulties.

Research in the US and Germany does indeed attest that marginalization and subtle forms of discrimination are daily experienced by minority teachers in their professional activity (Gordon et al. 2000 ; Karakasoglu et al. 2013).

3.3 Missing perspectives

So far the comparison between Swiss findings and research from abroad singularized a quite enthusiastic attitude toward TIOs in this country in contrast with a more nuanced perception of their input in Germany.

Some topics however that have not yet captured the attention in the Swiss literature, while more developed elsewhere. As overlooked themes so far can be mentioned, for instance, trajectories of TIOs into this profession as a possible avenue of social mobility in comparison with other professional options, career development of TIOs in comparison with majority teachers, acceptance by colleagues and by their hierarchy, image of TIO's among majority and minority pupils, recognition by majority and minority parents, possible regional differences in those dynamics, and ultimately the very reason which stimulated this all research field, impact on children of immigrants school trajectories.

Other topics on a more individual level are yet unobserved: identity strategies of adults of immigrant descent (Verkuyten 2005, 2009) in their specific role of representative of the (school) authorities, negotiation strategies for recognition, dialectic of established and outsiders (Cesbron ; Charles and Legendre 2006). Upcoming research might close some of those gaps.

4 Conclusions

In spite of their established tradition in Swiss research (Allemann-Ghionda et al. 1999), intercultural approaches to education has reached so far a partial institutionalization in teacher training. Yet a new avenue for promoting teachers' intercultural competences appeared with the issue of TIO's. Universities of teacher education play a leading role in this field.

The use of the diversity management label in this field is particularly polysemic: it covers a large spectrum of dimensions from class level to organizational tool in educational institutions, from the way teaching in heterogeneous classes is best organized to the way Universities of teachers education might implement the recruiting of their students. The appeal of an established approach in organizational research and anti-discrimination action might be the cause of a much hoped-for cross-fertilization.

This field of study is evolving quickly at the moment in the country, at least in the German speaking part of it; this is a promising development for closing the numerous gaps in this area and for the promotion of a research-oriented policy in this field.

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