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“Children in Migration – Access to Education”

European Migration Network Luxembourg, National Conference, 23.11.2023

Panel 2: Academic research on the role of education

Background of the Project (Study)

- Not only in 2015, but then with greater urgency, **schools had to face the fact that more and more children and young people with refugee biographies** were being integrated into Austrian school classes.
- Since it is the task of **Universities of Teacher Education** to create further training based on research results, a project was created in cooperation with the **LIU University NY** in order to use the relevant experiences of the two countries.
- **Partners:** researchers from the ICMPD-team, Education Directorate of Lower Austria

The Aim of the Project (Study)

... was to gain insights into how school and non-school educational institutions could promote the personal growth and educational success of young people with a refugee and migration history.

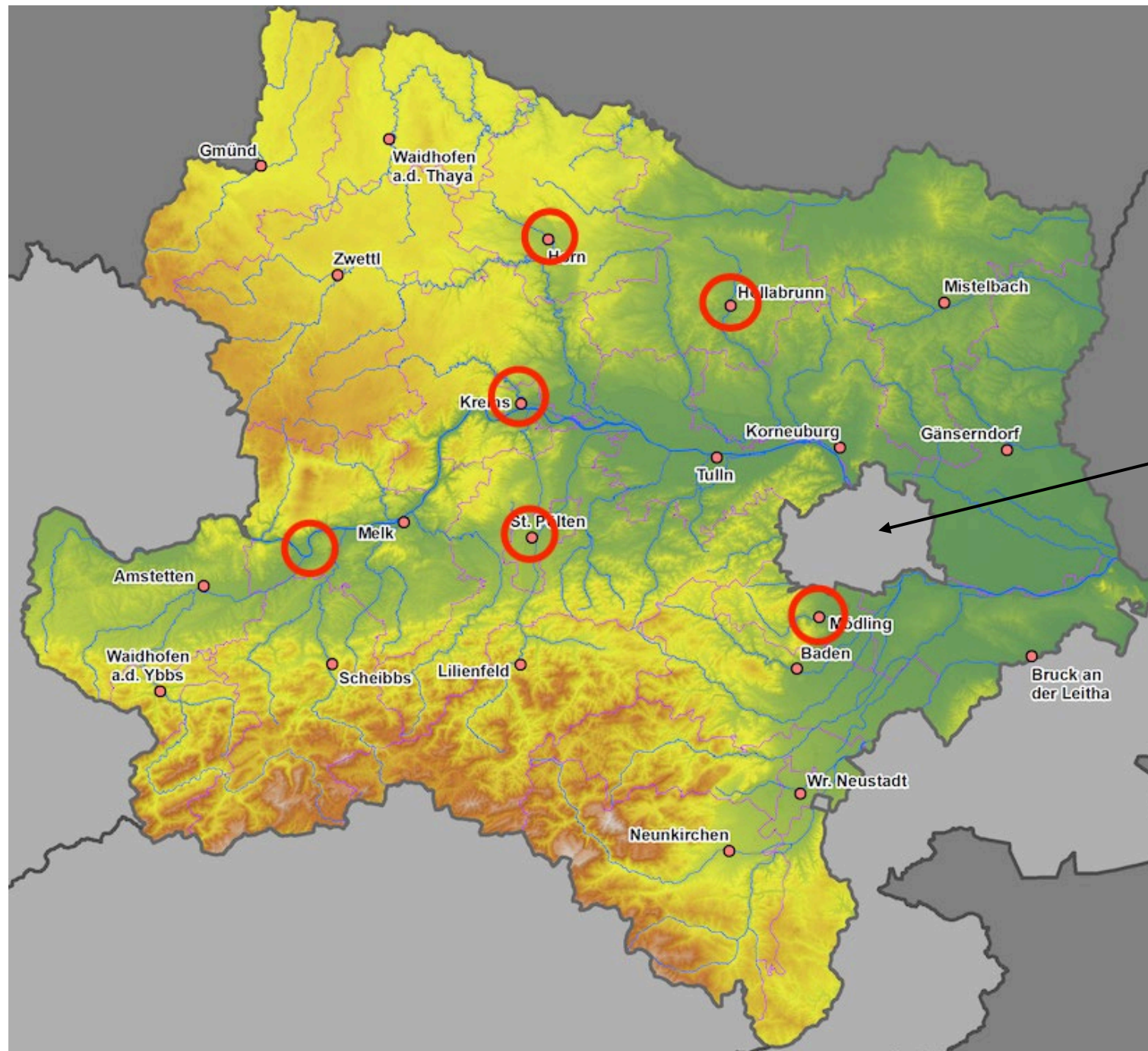
Qualitative Research Design

Research Questions:

- What factors contribute to academic performance and social integration in migrant and refugee youth?
- What contribution can the educational system make to promote students with a migrant or refugee background in schools and classrooms?

Lower
Austria

the largest
province of
Austria



Vienna

Qualitative Research Design

Data collection: nine group discussions with migrant and non-migrant students with diverse educational backgrounds, alumni, parents, and pedagogical experts in Lower Austria

- 6 groups with students mixed migrants/non-migrants
- 1 group discussion with alumni Secondary School
- 1 group discussion with school officials
- 1 group discussion with parents

Data analysis: thematically

Core Findings of the Study

Most **salient factors for integration and successful school careers** in migrant and refugee youth:

- **important role of school as educational institution and social live world in general**
- **attitude of teachers** in facilitating migrant youth's cultural integration
- **social capital** acquisition through friendship between and within cultural groups of youth
- **biculturalism** and retaining own cultural identity

Cor

Most
migrant

Quote male parent – (FG2, T2): School plays a very important and big role for integration. Because those who actually go to school have contact with the others and are those that develop fast.

- important role of **school as educational in world in general**

- **attitude of** ... facilitating migrant y
int

Quote parents (FG2, T unk.) the school [is] very important because countries can only develop if there are young people in these countries who are willing to learn; and they will then move the country forward and that will be possible at school.

- **bicult** ... cultural identity

and successful in

Quote student (FG3, T unk.): I feel good when I'm in school because I have a completely different situation and that would be good when I go to school since I feel completely comfortable and this way, I also learn something.

ship between and within

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Quote student (GD 3, T4): They [teachers] always encourage us, when we say we don't want to (incomprehensible)/ They give us hope. They always say that we can do it. Yeah, they always give us hope.

Quote alumnus Middle School (GD 7, M1): In the beginning it is not so easy to get in contact with other people. But with us it was that our teachers have insisted that you meet other people, that we integrate, and we have had great projects, excursions, where / so you get to know each other better and that helped

- **attitude of teachers in facilitating integration**
- **social capital** acquisition through friend cultural groups of youth
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Core Findings of the Study

Quote student (GD 4, T14): we, as a class in the school, are one big family. At school, I think it's good to have every class act as a team. And the optional subjects we can take I really like as well, because everyone can choose for themselves, what they like

Quote student (GD 4, T1): We are a school with a lot of diversity in our mixed classes. There are also schools, where only Austrian pupils are allowed to be. We are a colorful variety of people, and the teachers look out for everyone. It is a very social environment. Every now and then there are fights, but yeah.

- **attitudinal** and **facilitating migration**
- **social capital** acquisition through friendship, cultural groups of youth
- **biculturalism** and retaining own cultural identity

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Core Findings Study

Quote student (GD 4, T3): I find that at every school, the kids who have immigrant background, should have the option to learn their mother or father tongue. Or that the refugees who have recently arrived should get social workers' support, because they have just come from war-shattered places. Normal students should also get that support if they have problems of their own. I think that makes good schools.

Quote student (GD 3, T6): On Friday, I go to the mosque because in Hadersdorf am Kamp, there is a mosque and I pray there because/ We pray there at 1 pm. But normally, I pray at home every day. But that's mandatory on Friday. One has to pray in the mosque.

- **biculturalism** and retaining own cultural identity

Core Findings of the Study

- **important role of school as educational institution and social live world in general**
- **School is not just a place for learning but a platform for building connections, fostering understanding, and nurturing potential.**
- **Creating a sense of community** within the classroom is essential. This fosters an environment where everyone feels included and valued.
- **Examples:** utilizing social media, festivals and excursions, involving families, conflict resolution practices and the use of school counselling, advisory Services

Core Findings of the Study

- **Important role of teachers in facilitating migrant youth's cultural integration**
- Teachers are more than educators; they are cultural guides and mentors. Their role in supporting the cultural integration of migrants is paramount.
- **Required teachers' competencies (versus incompetencies)**
 - Attitude
 - Commitment
 - integrative practices of teachers

Core Findings of the Study

- **social capital acquisition** through friendship between and within cultural groups of youth: Building and maintaining friendships among culturally diverse groups is crucial. These relationships help individuals connect with one another while preserving their unique identities.
 - Friendship and support across cultural groups
 - Friendship and support within cultural groups
 - Peer activities as stress-relief process

Core Findings of the Study

- **Biculturalism** and retaining own cultural identity
 - Family is seen as key support in learning and integration
 - Being proud of own culture and language – retaining own cultural identity
 - Caring about people in own cultural community
- Promoting biculturalism is primarily seen in the **context of language skills and learning** in terms of support of **first language** courses, but also getting family (mothers) involved.
- **Migrant teachers** play an important role as translators and act as cultural mediators

Conclusions

- **School is a microcosm of society** and a critical success factor for integration and inclusion and much more.
- Children and young people need the opportunity to maintain their **own cultural identity, a sense of community and belonging, competent teachers** with a welcoming **attitude** who focus on **biculturalism** and see **cultural diversity as a norm, reality and enrichment**.
- The school system needs **first- and native-language teachers** who are confidence-builders in the school community, especially with parents.

Project Team & Cooperation

Composition of the project team: initiated by Alfred Posamentier and Rector Erwin Rauscher 4 colleagues from LIU-Team and 5 colleagues from Team Lower Austria:

- Almut Bachinger (ICMPD research team)
- Maria-Luise Braunsteiner (PH NÖ)
- Karl Johannes Zarhuber (PH NÖ)
- Eva Hiegesberger, Brigitta Schnaubelt (Education Directorate).

[Read more in “The Pathways of Young Migrants in the Educational System of Lower Austria: Identifying what Works” | R&E-SOURCE \(ph-noe.ac.at\)](#)



Thank You For Your Attention!

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