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**SOME POLICIES AND PRACTICES AIMED AT CHILDREN
WITH A BACKGROUND OF MIGRATION IN EARLY-YEARS SETTINGS
IN MUNICH**

This paper presents some policies and practices in the field of social, educational and language support for children with a background of migration in early-years settings in Munich, Germany. The paper describes the content and the application of the screening tool used for assessment of the migrant children's level of German language prior to school entry, as well as the important role of the Intercultural Education and Language Section of the City of Munich in supporting children from families with a background of migration.
Key words: migrant children in Munich; SISMIK.

Introduction: Migration is an inseparable part of the dynamically-changing world of the 21st century, a fact that explains the increasing interest of various scientific areas in the issues related to the temporary or permanent settlement of people in countries other than their own.

With 82.2 million inhabitants, the Federal Republic of Germany has the highest population level in Europe. Around 15 million people (20 % of the population) are either immigrants or have at least one parent with a non-German background. More than a quarter of young people of an age relevant to education (up to 25 years) and as many as one-third of children under school age (33 % of children up to the age of 6) have a migration background [9].

According to the migration facts about Munich, the capital of Bavaria, as of 31st July 2006 [1], out of 1 313 093 inhabitants, 302 479 have a background of migration which means a 23 % share of foreigners. Compared to the results from 1970, when non-German nationals accounted for 13.8 %, for a period of 46 years their number has increased significantly. Groups numbering over 10 000 inhabitants include nationalities such as Turkish 3,4 %; Croatian 1,9 %; Serbian (including Montenegro) 1,9 %; Greek 1,7 %; Italian 1,6 %; Bosnian 1,3 %; Polish 0,9 %. 9 917 children under 6 years are 14.4 % of the total number of foreigners in Munich. Therefore, the need for finding means for improving the process of integration of children with a migrant background in Germany is quite evident, especially bearing in mind that the numbers have increased during the last six years.

The current paper aims to present the main policies and practices in the field of social, educational and language support for children with a background of migration in early-years settings in the city of Munich. In this regard, the following primary objectives must be achieved:

- 1) To give an idea of the number of children with a background of migration and their situation in the early-years settings in Munich and in Bavaria;
- 2) To describe the application of the screening tools used in Munich for assessment of the level of German language prior to school entry;
- 3) To underline the important role of the Intercultural Education and Language Section (part of the Department of Education and Sport of the City of Munich) in support of children from families with a background of migration.

Children with a Background of Migration in Early-Years Settings in Bavaria.

More than a quarter of children in centre-based settings in the western part of Germany come from families where at least one parent was born outside Germany; over half of those children do not speak German at home [2, p. 11]. The OECD Background Report for Germany indicates that «children with a migration background enter kindergarten later than German children. Roughly 25 % of foreign children aged between 3 and 6 years do not attend kindergarten at all; for German children (with a migration background), this figure is almost 19 % » [5, p. 71].

A large number of day care centres in Munich have a large number of families from other countries: some of them are attended by children from up to 30 different nations. These institutions need special conditions and educational approaches, as well as close contact with children and their parents in order to cope with this situation. It requires a special approach that describes the theory of intercultural education for all Munich day care centres, based on academic understanding. The day care centres in Munich make great efforts to improve the chances for education and to support children in a suitable way.

The large number of children with a background of migration, in combination with the PISA findings which illustrated how disadvantaged many immigrant children are within the school system, has led to a flurry of policy initiatives in this area. In a number of *Länder* it is now a requirement for children to participate in a language screening assessment prior to school entry. However, there are considerable regional variations in the types of assessment used, as well as in the kinds of focused language support measures implemented; some of them start when the children are two years old, whereas others do not begin until the last year in kindergarten.

In the area of language and literacy, many initiatives are underway. As referenced by Oberhuemer [4], a recent monitoring report by the Bertelsmann Foundation (Bock-Famulla & Große-Wührmann, 2010) contains figures that show considerable difference in the enrolment rates of children from German-speaking and non-German-speaking families. The difference is most marked in Schleswig-Holstein, with 91 % of non-migrant children and only 60 % of migrant children enrolled. Similar discrepancies can be found in Bavaria (95/75 %), Bremen (96/75 %) and the city-state of Berlin (100/80 %). If the transition to more focused approaches towards language and literacy is to take effect, there is an obvious need for a redistribution of resources and targeted

funding for work with these children and their families [2]. However, it is important to bear in mind another point of view, expressed by Pfaff [6], who maintains that the current focus on German is at the expense of children's ethnic mother tongues.

Beyond this, an extensive network of early childhood language co-ordinators across Bavaria was launched in 2008 with considerable government funding support. These language advisers, who undergo a targeted and evaluated course of training, work closely with early childhood centres on a regional basis. The impact of this network on the language and literacy related work of the centres is being assessed over time by a research team at the State Institute of Early Childhood Research — Munich [4].

Rauschenbach [2] presented the first national report on education, titled «Education in Germany», commissioned by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* (KMK) and the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) and generated with the support of the German Youth Institute (DJI) in Munich. This document includes, among others, a detailed analysis of *education and migration*. It poses the question whether making kindergarten mandatory would help for better results of children with migrant background, but the conclusion is that such a change would be neither justified nor appropriate, considering the relatively large number of 4- to 6-year old children with a migrant background who already attend. With more than 80 % of migrant children having been to a kindergarten before school enrolment during the last two years, the call for mandatory kindergarten is not the answer and the danger of unintended side effects is far too great. But as Rauschenbach [9] surmises, educational and care provision should be made available for the large majority of children with a migrant background who were born in Germany and a stronger point should be made to support goal-oriented language acquisition by children aged 2 to 4 in particular, since this is the age when children learn language, therefore a second language can be learned quite naturally during this time. There is a need for achieving more than the currently-planned language tests and subsequent support during the last year of kindergarten.

According to The Munich Approach Booklet [11, p. 24], intercultural education in Munich has a tradition that goes back many decades. It is directed at all children in the childcare facilities, whether German or non-German. The main objectives are to create a basis for getting on with one another regardless of nationality, mother tongue and religion, and to teach the children tolerance and respect for other cultures and lifestyles. Children like having different kind of foods on the menu, learning about other countries and participating in different religious celebrations; in this way, they discover that life in a multicultural community is an enriching experience.

Intercultural instruction and language development are inseparable from one another. On the other hand, the development of language skills is seen as an integral part of the child's development as a whole [11, p. 24].

Screening assessment of the level of German language prior to school entry

The early education debate has led to increased interest in issues of pedagogical documentation and, during recent years, a number of observation schedules and documentation approaches have been piloted [3, p. 177].

According to Oberhuemer [4], in a number of *Länder* it is now a requirement for children to participate in a language screening assessment prior to school entry. There are considerable regional variations in the types of assessment used, as well as in the kinds of focused language support measures implemented. In Bavaria, since the autumn of 2005, the German language competence of 4S year olds children whose parents are both born outside Germany is assessed by kindergarten educators with the help of a specially-developed observation instrument called «SISMIK». Also, since 2008, the language competence of *all* children is assessed towards the end of the year before the final year in kindergarten, again through a prescribed assessment procedure (Ulich & Mayr, 2006, as referenced by Oberhuemer [4]). The observation instrument used for children whose first language is German is called «SELDAK». In both cases, the assessment is based on individual observation of the child during the daily activities. The results show the level of development of the child's vocabulary, manner of speaking, sentence construction and grammar, as well as their ability to understand requests to do something and requests in general. This assessment is performed in order to give teachers and parents an idea of children's German language development and, if required, to plan further educational work with them. For the children with migrant background, the results are often low because more of these children do not speak or understand German so well, since they are learning German as a second language or they grow up bilingual, as their parents do not speak the German language well, or at all. After this assessment, one and a half years before school, there is an optional 240-hour preliminary German course, free of charge for parents, aimed at developing German linguistic skills and linguistic interest in children with a background of migration. On the basis of the SISMIK assessment results [12], such cases can be recommended for participation in the 240-hour preliminary German language course; 120 hours take place during the first half of the year in the kindergarten, during the other everyday activities of the child, in his/her own group of children. The other 120 hours are spread throughout one year (the last year before school) in kindergarten and at primary school. In kindergarten, promotion developing language skills occurs during the whole day with all children, but also during special assessments based on topics which are interesting to the children. In school, children have 1S hours (two classes of 45 minutes each) weekly. Besides an intensive language instruction, the children have the chance to get to know primary school in a playful way. Parents are responsible for bringing their child to these courses, which take place in the primary school, and accompanying him/her back to the kindergarten, but it is often the teachers who make the necessary organization to assist parents with this.

A detailed look at the SISMIK questionnaire

The Ulich & Mayr 2003 SISMIK questionnaire [12] was developed by the State Institute of Early Childhood Research (IFP) in Munich as part of the project titled «Speech development of immigrant children — targeted observation and encouragement». It concerns the verbal behaviour and interests towards speech of immigrant children in early-years settings within the Bavarian capital. The questionnaire is specially adapted for observation of immigrant children from 3S years old to primary school age, who grow up in domestic environments using other languages besides German.

The questionnaire's introduction specifies that «immigrant children» refers to children whose families have come to Germany from a different cultural and speech environment. They can be holders of foreign passports, migrants (often immigrants of German origin, coming from Eastern European countries), multinational families (for example, the mother is German while the father is English, etc.), or settlers who have acquired German citizenship.

The first few paragraphs of the introduction specifically state that the questionnaire is to be used by German-speaking educators, i.e. the main focus is on communication in the German language. Although the family language (mother tongue) is equally important for the speech development of immigrant children, in most cases it cannot be adequately evaluated by German-speaking educators. However, the SISMIK questionnaire does include several questions (mostly aimed at parents) regarding the level of speech development in the family language as a stimulus for observation of this area as well.

In order to gather the necessary information, the educator should conduct lengthy observation of the child in natural, everyday situations; in some cases, evaluation requires that specific situations be created (e.g. repeating a made-up word, retelling a story, etc.).

Supplementary data includes birth date, family language, nationality, sex of the child; starting date and schedule of kindergarten classes; frequency of missed classes and reasons for them (illness, travels abroad to parents' countries, etc.).

Most questions feature answers given as statements, where the educator must fill in the relevant information regarding frequency, level, and/or specific variants of occurrence.

The questionnaire consists of 4 parts:

- Part 1: Verbal behaviour in speech-relevant situations (group discussions, role-playing games, browsing picture books, etc.)
- Part 2: Speech competence (specifics).
- Part 3: Language(s) spoken by the child's family.
- Part 4: The child's family.

Part 1 includes observation of verbal behaviour of the child in various situations, e.g. at the breakfast table, in role-playing games, as partner for play during free time, in separate conversations in German with the educators, in group «circle» discussions; also, description of the child's behaviour in cases when he/she has trouble understanding and/or expressing something, when browsing picture books (individually or in a small group), when listening to

and retelling short stories. Additionally, the questionnaire notes the child's interest in reading and writing, his/her attitude to making rhymes, making up words, as well as foreign languages.

Part 2 presents the child's German language competence in detail, expressed in the following observation areas: understanding of tasks and prompts, dictionary and specific way of speech, grammatical and sentence structure.

Part 3 describes the child's handling of the family language(s) while attending the kindergarten, as well as evaluation of the child's communication skills in his/her mother tongue(s) by the parents and other adults speaking them.

Part 4 presents the living habits and language practices in the child's family, the professions and work schedule of the parents, as well as the family's relationship with the kindergarten institution, i.e. the level of information the child's mother and father receive regarding the kindergarten's daily activities, their visits, as well as any questions they may have in relation to their child's education.

The questionnaire ends with a section outlining subsequent actions the educator will take regarding the child, if required; it holds the conclusions of his/her observation and eventual steps to be taken in the future.

The SISMIK results are used in two ways, firstly to draw up teaching plans for the children and secondly to register the children in need of particular support for the preliminary German course.

Support of children from families with a background of migration: Intercultural Education and Language Section in the Department of Education and Sport of the City of Munich

During the 2011/2012 school year in Munich, 429 German-language courses were held, attended by 3860 children with a background of migration; in comparison, the same source states that the courses started in 2002/2003 with only 10 children; five years later, in 2007/2008, they were attended by 339 children [8]. Additionally, since October 2010, there has been a programme promoting the 240-lesson German course and training kindergarten educators and primary teachers on working with children during this course. So far, 26 courses have been held and 520 people have been trained; it is expected that many more will be trained since the programme will continue until July 2013.

The Intercultural Education and Language Section in the Department of Education and Sport of the City of Munich is responsible for providing support to the early childhood practitioners in the field of intercultural pedagogy and language. This unit has existed for 30 years. It started with one person, but currently 21 people collaborate with the staff in kindergartens, nursery groups and places where the children from 6 to 10 can stay after school.

The concept of the Intercultural Education and Language Section has historically grown over the past 30 years. The central interest of the Intercultural Education and Language Section is to bring about tolerance, respect for other religions, life and cultural forms to all children and to create a basis for collaboration and coexistence despite differences in ancestry, language or

religion. Cross-cultural day care centres, which educate, raise and take care of children, see a main point in the «pedagogy of diversity»; children from all over the world learn tolerance and acquaintance with diversity and different languages, which they see as their greatest resource and all parents as partners in order to achieve best educational results for their child.

The aforementioned Section provides the facilities with numerous projects covering as wide a range of intercultural aspects as possible — nutrition, art, music, cooperation with parents and, in particular, language development [11, p.2]. It is especially interesting that the idea of a multicultural environment in early years settings is also contained in the little book named «Welcome to the kindergarten» [13], given to each child attending kindergarten in Munich during his/her first day. The book introduces children to the kindergarten environment by presenting one typical day in the kindergarten in coloured illustrations featuring two dolls (a boy and a girl), along with simple phrases translated in 10 languages.

The Intercultural Education and Language Section is responsible for all 400 public day care centres and kindergartens; the private and church-run ones can also use their expertise. Since 2002, there have been 50 educators who work in preschool settings and are trained to give support to their colleagues in these kindergartens and day care centres in the field of intercultural education and language. Currently there is a project aiming at increasing their number and now they are 146. The 21 collaborators from the Intercultural and Language Section support their work in kindergartens, making sure that all the staff in the different kindergartens work according to the same principles concerning intercultural education and language, and achieve the quality in this regard according to the curriculum. For the last four years these 21 specialists have been busy with the implementation of large projects helping children develop their language.

The first project was initiated by the Bavarian Ministry of Social Affairs. It ran from October 2008 to December 2011. In this project, colleagues from the Intercultural Education and Language Section went to the day care centres and worked with the entire team in order to improve the pedagogy concerning language and intercultural education.

In March 2011 another project was started by the German Federal Government and it is expected to continue until December 2014. In this project, staff works directly with the children in the day care centres, helping them to improve their language skills. The specialists from the Intercultural and Language Section are working closely with the staff in early years settings, who get all the help they need from them.

Conclusion

Based on the data from the English-language sources of information cited herein, as well as on the author's first-hand observation, we can conclude that since one of each three children has a migrant background, provision of support must be arranged earlier to compensate for inequalities in family and social starting conditions at the source. The active language learning support

should begin much earlier than the current one and a half years before school, so that it can be applied at an age when children learn languages and speech in a natural way.

The challenges of migration in Germany will continue to increase, especially among younger children. However, in spite of all the difficulties related to migration, it is good to see many examples of active steps to improve integration which are taken in kindergarten and at school.

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НЕКОТОРЫЕ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ И ПРАКТИЧЕСКИЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ В РАБОТЕ С ДЕТЬМИ, МИГРИРОВАВШИМИ В МЮНХЕН В РАННЕМ ВОЗРАСТЕ

Резюме

В работе представлены некоторые политические и практические направления в области социальной, образовательной и языковой поддержки детей, мигрировавших в ранние годы в Мюнхен, Германия. В статье описываются содержание и направления применения диагностических инструментов скрининга, использующихся для оценки знания немецкого языка детей, мигрировавших до поступления в школу, а также важной роли межкультурного образования и языковой секции города Мюнхена в поддержку детей из семей мигрантов.

Ключевые слова: дети мигрантов в Мюнхене, скрининг, SISMIK.

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ДЕЯКІ ПОЛІТИЧНІ ТА ПРАКТИЧНІ НАПРЯМКИ В РОБОТІ З ДІТЬМИ, ЯКІ МІГРУВАЛИ В МЮНХЕН В РАНЬОМУ ВІЦІ

Резюме

У роботі представлені деякі практичні та політичні напрями і лінії в сфері соціальної, освітньої та мовної підтримки дітей, які мігрували в ранні роки в Мюнхен, Німеччина. У статті описуються зміст та напрями застосування інструментів скринінгу, що використовуються для оцінки знання німецької мови дітьми, які мігрували до вступу до школи, а також важливої ролі міжкультурної освіти та мовної частини (не німецькомовної частини) міста Мюнхена на підтримку дітей з сімей мігрантів.

Ключові слова: діти мігрантів в Мюнхені, скринінг, SISMIK.

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