

Opportunities and Hope Through Education:

How German Schools Include Refugees

Dita Vogel and Elina Stock

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1. Introduction

Refugee inflows in recent history

The Federal Republic of Germany has always been heavily influenced by migration, both of a permanent and temporary nature.¹ Besides labour and family migration, population inflows requiring large-scale emergency housing and shelter occurred in three periods of history:

- After World War II, around 12 million Germans fled from former German territories.
- After the breakdown of communist states, around 1.6 million ethnic Germans and 1.4 million asylum seekers sought protection in the peak years 1988 to 1993² alone, mainly from Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans.
- In 2015, more than 890,000 persons sought protection in Germany, mainly from Syria and Western Balkan states – up from around 20,000 in 2008. In the first half of 2017, around 90,000 new asylum seekers were registered.³

Despite high levels of immigration, government policies did not consider Germany a country of immigration until the new residence law that came into force in 2005.⁴ Since then, immigration is no longer treated legally as exception. Immigration of (highly) skilled people is officially encouraged, and the need to assist integration is accepted. However, the public response to immigration has been divided. A welcoming culture with strong voluntary engagement can be observed on the one hand, alongside new movements with strong anti-immigrant sentiments (Rietig and Müller, 2016). These sentiments are particularly directed at and felt by Muslims (SVR, 2016). An analysis of media representation of immigrants in 2015 showed that dominant patterns changed in waves, beginning with stereotypical presentations of masses of people en route to Germany, a growing empathy with many stories emphasising the situation of children and, finally, an emphasis on criminality by refugees (Hemmelmann and Wegner, 2016).

1 For a more detailed country profile see Hanewinkel and Oltmer (2015).

2 Own calculation based on: Bundesverwaltungsamt (2017), BAMF (2016).

3 All numbers for 2015 and 2016 must be interpreted with care, as the asylum system did not cope with the influx (SVR 2017b).

4 Gesetz über den Aufenthalt, die Erwerbstätigkeit und die Integration von Ausländern im Bundesgebiet (Aufenthaltsgesetz): http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/aufenthg_2004/ Accessed 20 October 2017.

Population impact of migration

Both regulated and unregulated in- and out-flows have changed the population of Germany. In 2016, 22.5 per cent of the population had an immigrant background – being either foreign born (15.4 per cent) or ‘second generation’, i.e. born in Germany (7.1 per cent) (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017a). Turkey, Poland, and the Russian Federation are the most significant countries of origin. Among the recent refugee immigrants, Syrians are the most significant group, accounting for more than 40 per cent, and considerable numbers originate from Afghanistan, Iraq, Western Balkan states, Eritrea, and Somalia (Brücker et al., 2016, p.19).

A considerable number of the immigrant population is young. This is also true for asylum seekers: 36 per cent of all asylum applications are submitted on behalf of minors (Münch, 2017, p.5). About eight per cent of the more than eight million students in schools for general education are not German citizens and between two and four per cent have asylum applications submitted on their behalf.⁵ About a quarter of all asylum applications are submitted by people aged 18 to 25 years of age (BAMF, 2016, p.18). The latter age group is also highly relevant for the education system, as a part of this group did not attend general education in their youth. They have poor labour market chances if they do not catch up with missed schooling contents for example in maths.

Immigration is unevenly spread across the country. In larger cities, more than half of all students - and nearly all in some neighbourhoods - have an immigrant background. Meanwhile, some rural communities were faced with migrant children in schools for the first time when the significant influx of refugees in 2015 has been redistributed to different parts of the country. In 2016 and 2017, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees cleared much of the backlog of first asylum applications. Therefore positive *and* negative decisions on asylum applications increased in 2017 – this resulted in (i) more people receiving a residence status for two or three years with the chance of prolongation *and* (ii) more people being required to leave the country.

Methods

For the purposes of this paper, laws, regulations, and secondary literature have been screened for general trends in Germany. Germany consists of 16 states of differing sizes and history. Three states are city-states (Berlin, Hamburg, and Bremen), others also include large rural areas. Five Eastern states were established in the territory of the former German Democratic Republic after reunification in 1990. The Western city state of Bremen was chosen as an

⁵ Relation of first asylum applications for specific age groups to the population of the age group as in Kober and Münch (2017, p.1).

example to investigate implementation and practices. Bremen, with 700,000 inhabitants, consists of the cities of Bremen and Bremerhaven in the North-West of Germany and comprises a small share of Germany's population of 82 million. Therefore, additional examples from other states are also included to complement the picture. Bremen itself has experienced high levels of immigration throughout its history: 30 per cent of the population has an immigrant background, being foreign-born (21 per cent) or 'second generation', i.e. born in Germany (nine per cent) (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017b, Table 5I).

Education expenditures per student vary in the German states - ranging from €6,000 in Northrhine-Westfalia to €8,500 in Thuringia and Hamburg (in 2012). The city-state of Bremen has spent slightly above the national average of €6,800 per student in 2012 (Malecki, 2016, p.48). Cities usually spend more on education than rural areas. As the state of Bremen only consists of cities, this amount can be considered as relatively low compared, for example, to Hamburg which is also an entirely urban state.

Many studies on different issues of refugee integration and education were published in late 2016 and 2017 and were accessed by the authors.⁶ In addition, one of the authors (Dita Vogel) gained valuable insights from her work teaching teacher trainees at the University of Bremen. She supervised several Master's degree theses for which students had interviewed head masters, teachers, students and parents, highlighting different issues of refugee integration in schools. These interviews were used for secondary analysis.⁷ She also profited from student observations discussed in the course of support seminars for teaching students in practical training over the past five years. In August 2017, she visited three schools in Bremen, attended two preparatory German courses and sourced first-hand information on recent implementation queries from various actors. Colleagues from the German Education Union (GEW) Bremen and the Unit for Intercultural Education at the University of Bremen provided feedback on an earlier version of this text and shared insights and knowledge from their fields of experience.⁸

The co-author (Elina Stock) has been involved in the design and implementation of union initiatives as part of her work as a policy advisor in the GEW headquarters. She outlined and highlighted GEW positions and activities in the field. Vogel complemented the study by personal and phone interviews to seek answers to open questions. The conclusions and suggestions are the result of joined discussions and solely display the considerations of the authors.

6 The number of published studies and articles increases since the end of 2016. For updates: <http://fluechtlingsforschung.net/>

7 The authors are grateful in particular to the Masters' Degree students, Svea Kiesewetter, Esther Nora Peters, Irem Koc and Asya Wolff, and to teaching students in their first practice phase in August 2017.

8 The authors are grateful to Nick Strauss and Katharina Lenuck from GEW Bremen and to Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, Katja Baginski and Lydia Heidrich from the Unit of Intercultural Education at the University of Bremen.

2. Legal framework and policies to promote education rights of refugee children and youth

This chapter introduces Germany's legal and administrative framework around the education of refugee children and youth. It introduces refugee administration and the school system (2.1), explores whether and when children and youth are provided with regular schooling (2.2.1), how the introductory phase in regular schools is organised (2.2.2), and how schools deal with refugee students once they are fully integrated in regular classes (2.2.3). These questions correspond to the three dimensions relevant for the process of integration – access, organisation of the introductory phase, and interactions in relations (Vogel and Karakaşoğlu, 2017).

Germany is highly federalised, with federal administration being the exception rather than the rule. The implementation of laws is generally the responsibility of local councils under the guidance of state regulations. Asylum laws and decisions are a federal responsibility. In contrast, school laws are a state responsibility with a wide range of discretion at local level. Thus, practices vary between states and even between cities in relation to refugee integration⁹ and school education. The federal level has a coordinating function only.

2.1. General Legal and organisational framework

2.1.1. Refugee administration

Before discussing school integration, it is crucial to have a general understanding of the living conditions of refugees. We use the term 'refugee' here in a broad sense, referring to people who have sought protection for humanitarian reasons – those who seek or have received asylum or another protected status as well as persons who are temporarily not deportable¹⁰ (Vogel and Karakaşoğlu, 2017).

⁹ The term 'integration' is critically discussed in Germany, as it is often used in contexts suggesting that integration means adjustment of migrants to given circumstances (Mecheril, 2011). It is used here as a descriptive term, indicating a process in which new members become part of a system. It can involve adjustments of the system and of newcomers (Penninx et al., 2004, p.142).

¹⁰ These persons receive a so-called 'toleration' in Germany. It is no residence status, but gives access to social rights similar to those of asylum seekers.

The general responsibility for decisions on applications that must take the conditions in countries of origin into account is at the federal level (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees). All other residence law decisions are taken by the local foreigners' authorities, not by federal immigration authorities like in some other countries. In 2015, administrative capacities were overburdened, so it is not possible to extrapolate a general procedure in this year.

However, the procedure was reorganised in 2016 (SVR, 2017a, p.104). Now, newly arrived persons seeking protection are first distributed among state centres (preliminary reception centres) where they can apply for asylum. States must accommodate asylum seekers according to a quota that takes tax revenue and population into account (for example, Bremen must take in one per cent of all asylum seekers (BAMF, 2016, p.13). Cases that are complex (e.g. in cases from Iraq) or involving a quick decision on temporary protection or asylum (e.g. in cases from Syria) are further distributed within the states to local communities according to state-defined criteria. During the asylum procedure, applicants are supposed to be provided with accommodation in local shelters or flats, depending on local conditions and the housing market.

The procedure is different for asylum seekers from countries classified as *safe countries of origin* (e.g. from the Western Balkan states). These individuals are supposed to be returned to their country of origin directly from the state centre, with a maximum waiting time of six months.

Access to community and private housing varies. For instance, in the East German state of Saxonia, 25 per cent of people receiving special refugee support lived in flats, compared to 47 per cent in Bremen in 2015 (SVR, 2017a, p.109).

Before acceptance, refugees receive a special type of welfare that is lower than income support for Germans and foreign nationals with a regular status, thus leaving no scope for private educational expenditures.

Unaccompanied minors may or may not have lodged an asylum application, given that being a minor without a responsible adult leads to protection from deportation as well as an asylum application. They should be directly integrated into the general child and youth reception system; in practice, this means that they are transferred to youth shelters for unaccompanied minors. Since November 2015, unaccompanied minors – like asylum seekers – can be redistributed to other communities instead of the community in which they first appear. This policy changed in reaction to a concentration of unaccompanied minors in some cities, including Bremen.

2.1.2. School system(s)

There is no such thing as a German school system per se as the country's 16 states decide independently on school forms and school policies.¹¹ Thus, the 16 school systems are coordinated by the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK). Some common features exist in all or most federal states.

Before school, parents have a right to *part-time early education and childcare* for their children from the age of one, according to federal regulations. School education is compulsory from the age of six for 12 school years.¹² *Primary school* encompasses four years (six in Berlin and Brandenburg), and pupils can leave *secondary school* with a school leaving certificate after year 9 or 10. Different levels are available – elementary, foundation, and intermediate – each with a different name in different states.¹³ Secondary school is usually *followed by vocational education* in companies that are combined with part-time vocational education in public vocational schools (dual system), or by full-time vocational education in schools leading to recognised vocational qualification, or by courses for developing general vocational skills without a recognised qualification. For vocational education in the dual system, interested persons must apply to a company for an apprenticeship. A school leaving certificate is no legal precondition but often required by companies.

A tertiary entrance certificate (*Abitur*) – qualifying for university studies – requires additional upper secondary schooling and can be achieved after 12 or 13 years in schools.

Traditionally, German schools offered only part-time education for four to six hours in the morning – potentially followed by paid childcare in the afternoon. Now, the number of schools offering afternoon education has increased. Models differ from an integrated teaching programme for all during the entire school day or subject-oriented schooling according to curricula in the morning, complemented by optional courses in the afternoon. In Hamburg, 91.5 per cent of students learn in full-day schools, while this is the case only for 16.5 per cent in Bavaria. With 37.6 per cent, the share of full-day schooling in Bremen is close to the national average of 39.3 per cent (Klemm and Zorn, 2017, table 2, p. 31).

11 Descriptions of "the" German education system often result from international comparisons (Lohmar and Eckardt, 2015; Döbert, 2017) that rest on the assumption of one education system per country. Particularly short interpretations can be confusing or even misleading, as it could be read that a wide variety of secondary school forms is available in all German states which is not the case. This is also true for official presentations - see for example KMK (2016a).

12 Details such as the rules regarding composition of general education and vocational education and cut-off ages (19 to 21 years) differ between the states.

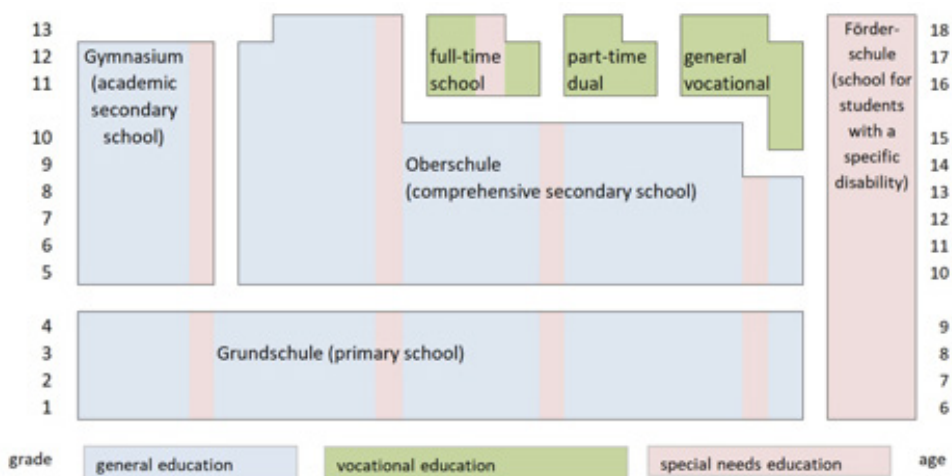
13 In Bremen, the elementary level is mainly for a small minority of students with special needs who have no capacity to achieve a higher level (einfache Berufsbildungsreife). It is sometimes also offered to immigrant students who arrive in their youth with significant gaps in their school history. The foundation level is *formally* sufficient for many crafts (in Bremen, "Erweiterte Berufsbildungsreife"; in other states, for example, "Hauptschulabschluss"). The intermediate school leaving certificate is required for further schooling and some white-collar apprenticeships (in Bremen, "Mittlerer Schulabschluss"; in some other states, "Realschulabschluss").

Full-day schooling is considered to be especially important for newly arrived children – it is free of charge and offers additional guided learning opportunities.

School forms have undergone considerable change, including repeated renaming of school types in the past decade with a trend towards the reduction of school forms at the lower secondary level. The *Gymnasium* is an academically oriented secondary school offering a fast track towards the tertiary entrance certificate after year 12.¹⁴ The *Gymnasium* exists in all states; however, other school forms differ widely with two or more other school types.¹⁵ Bremen has developed a system with the *Gymnasium* and *Oberschule* as the main school types at the lower secondary level.

The *Oberschule* leads to the general school leaving certificate, and some *Oberschule* include upper secondary education and a fast track to the tertiary entrance certificate. Students with good grades from other *Oberschule* can change to these schools and achieve the tertiary entrance certificate after 13 years. Students with an occupational education can achieve a tertiary entrance certificate for specific study courses and universities of applied sciences with additional schooling. Figure 1 summarises the main features of the Bremen school system.¹⁶

Figure 1. School system of Bremen (2017)



Source: Own compilation based on information by Senatorin für Kinder und Bildung (Bremen): <https://www.bildung.bremen.de/bildung-1464> Accessed 6 October 2017.

14 Some states are dropping the fast track system and have started to re-introduce *Gymnasiums* with a tertiary entrance certificate after 13 years of schooling. *Key words for the debate are G8 or G9.*

15 Traditional school types were *Gymnasium*, *Realschule*, and *Hauptschule*. They can still be found in some states and in many texts about the German school system, but they are not the norm anymore.

16 On the Internet, there is a considerable number of graphs on school systems, many of them being outdated or differentiating vocational pathways either not at all or in considerable detail.

Children who are classified as having special needs due to physical, mental or psychological conditions either attend separate schools or receive additional support in regular schools or classes, according to the concept of inclusive education. The share of school students in special needs schools in Bremen was 1.5 per cent in the 2014/15 academic year (Malecki, 2016, p.22) – the lowest quota of all states, as most special needs schools have been dissolved in Bremen. Indeed, the right of inclusion is implemented differently across states: in Bremen, 77 per cent of all students eligible for special-needs education are in regular schools, compared to 27 per cent in Bavaria (KMK, 2016c, p.6).

2.1.3. Teachers and other staff in schools

The German model of teacher education requires the achievement of a Bachelor and a Master's degree, plus a state-regulated preparatory service (*Referendariat*) with a final practical exam. The content of this training varies from state to state, as states educate teachers for their specific school system. In recent years, teacher education usually includes preparation for a diverse student population as part of the curriculum, including preparation for teaching in classes with students who are not proficient in German as the main language of tuition.¹⁷ However, a recent study found that, in most states, teachers may enter schools unprepared with regards to language education in all subjects (SVR, 2017a, p.130).

On employment in a public school, most fully trained teachers are integrated into state systems either as lifetime civil servants with specific favourable regulations around health and old age security, or as salaried employees. Headteachers are teachers with, at most, only limited additional training (teacher union representative).

In the past, learning was almost exclusively organised according to the 'one teacher, one class, one room' principle. This learning setting still dominates, but is increasingly being substituted by team-teaching – rarely with two teachers in class, and more often with one teacher who organises differentiated learning with the support of a range of approaches including assistants for disabled students, with students, trainees or volunteers. In addition, large schools usually have one or more social workers who address social learning and disciplinary problems outside regular classes. Data on the presence of different types of professionals in the school system are not available.

Indeed, staff shortages are prevalent across the country. Between 2000 and 2015, almost 1,800 primary schools closed in response to decreasing student numbers; teacher training programmes have also reduced in number.

¹⁷ The abbreviation 'ELL' for English language learners is used in English-speaking countries. The phrase 'second language learners' is also used. As a general term for comparative analysis, tuition language learners (TLL) is suggested.

Since 2014, immigration and birth rates have increased, the latter due in part to refugee immigration (Klemm and Zorn, 2017, p.8, p.10). Administrative planning is often based on outdated data, due to delays in official statistics. A recent study estimates that the population aged six to 18 will increase by more than half a million, compared to official statistics which predicts a fall of half a million (Klemm and Zorn, 2017, p.8). At the beginning of the 2017/18 academic year, staff shortages have already impacted on teacher allocation and recruitment. Legal recruitment procedures have been changed to accept career changers, also called lateral entrants, with a Master's degree but without pedagogic qualifications, i.e. biologists becoming biology teachers.

In many states, the shortage of teachers leads to re-allocation, overtime work or cancellation of classes. In Lower Saxonia, for example, teachers with qualifications for upper secondary education in Gymnasium are re-allocated to primary and lower secondary schools. (Relocated teacher)

The City of Bremerhaven was not successful in finding any teachers – qualified or not – for 35 posts (about four per cent of open posts) for over a year by summer 2017. Less than 50 per cent of new appointments are qualified teachers. In a newly established school, out of seven newly hired teachers, only the head teacher has a full teacher qualification. (GEW union staff from Bremerhaven)

2.2. Legal and organisational framework concerning refugees in schools

2.2.1. School access for refugee children and youth

International and European law obliges Germany to grant school access to all children and youth without exception and independent of their residence status.¹⁸ Article 10 of the European Reception Directive obliges member states to grant access to the education system “under similar conditions as nationals” with a maximum waiting period of three months after lodging an asylum application, but also indicates that education may be granted in accommodation centres. As education is a state responsibility, the legal right to education and the legal obligation to send minors to school are regulated in state constitutions, state education laws and administrative regulations.

In many texts, the beginning of *compulsory* schooling is treated as the only relevant aspect for school access (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung,

¹⁸ International Convention for the Rights of Children, European Convention on Human Rights; Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers.

2016, p.195). Only in three states schooling is compulsory from the very beginning of their stay in Germany (see Figure 2). Some states make it compulsory after three to six months from arrival and, in others, it depends on when an asylum application is lodged or when a refugee is sent from a preliminary reception centre to a municipality. In Bremen, schooling becomes compulsory after people are moved to municipal shelters or flats.¹⁹

It is possible that the time period where education is not compulsory may be extended, if the German states oblige people from countries classified as *safe country of origin* to stay in preliminary reception centres until return or deportation. This option from the state is part of a range of legal changes in 2017 aimed at increasing the return of rejected asylum seekers to their countries of origin (Deutscher Bundestag, 2017).

Figure 2. Compulsory schooling for asylum seekers in the German states (Länder) July 2016



Source: SVR (2017a, p.127) based on Massumi and Dewitz (2015) and information from the KMK; translation and indication of Bremen by authors.

¹⁹ According to a survey of states by the German Institute for Human Rights, compulsory schooling begins already from the day of moving into Bremen, see: <http://landkarte-kinderrechte.de/> Accessed 19 Oct 2017

Legal access to education for young adults without a recognised school leaving certificate differs widely between the states. In Bremen and some other states, young adults have legal access to preparatory courses in vocational schools until the age of 18. Other states generally grant access until the age of 21, and exceptional access rights may be granted until the age of 27 (SVR, 2017a, p.132). After access is granted, students can finish their education in the respective schools – provided they are not forced to leave the country.

2.2.2. The organisation of school integration

Once children and youth access regular public schools, integration models vary widely between states. The organisation of the introductory phase is mostly regulated by administrative regulations and not by legislation.

It is a widely accepted assumption that new immigrants must learn the German language first.²⁰ Therefore, children and youth usually have to attend *preparatory German classes* before being integrated into regular classes. These classes have different names (among them *Vorkurs* [pre-course] in Bremen, international preparatory class in Hamburg, welcome class²¹ in Berlin). Curricula are often undefined (SVR, 2017a, p.131) and may include only German language tuition or, in some cases, additional subject-oriented content.

Five models of integration in Germany have been identified (Table 1):

- *Immersion*²² without any specific extra support
- *Integrative* with regular classes and supplementary German classes
- *Partly integrative* with a mix of German classes and regular class attendance
- *Parallel classes* can be given *temporarily* as a step towards integration into regular classes after three months to two years *until school leaving certificate* without integration in a regular class with students socialised in Germany.

20 While acknowledging that schools have broad tasks with respect to knowledge in subjects, skills and democratic values, the renowned Expert Council of German Foundations on Migration and Integration states in its report for 2017: "Most new migrants first and foremost have to learn the German language". [translation by authors] (SVR, 2017a, p.126).

21 In the city of Bremerhaven, the term 'welcome class' refers to preparatory German classes that are given outside regular school premises in refugee accommodation.

22 The German term 'submersives Modell' would directly translate into immersion model.

Table 1. Models of school integration in Germany

Model *	Regular classes with children socialised in the receiving country	Separate tuition for German language learners
Immersion	Full-time	No specific courses, access to general support options
Integrative	Full-time	Additional German lessons
Partly integrative	In some subjects or some time slots	Preparatory class for most of the school day
Parallel (temporarily)	No joint classes for three months to two years	Full-time preparatory class, mainly German as a second language
Parallel until school leaving certificate	No joint classes	Full-time, German as a second language plus subjects

Source: Own presentation based on Massumi and Dewitz (2015, p. 44).

Immersion models are mostly practised in the initial primary school years where all students learn reading, writing, elementary maths and other basic competences together with the accompanying vocabulary. Integrative, partly integrative, and temporarily parallel models are mostly practised in the later years of primary schools and lower secondary education. Parallel classes leading to a school leaving certificate are – if at all – offered for students who arrive aged 15 and older.

Besides the different legal and administrative regulations in the states, the implementation of a certain model is also left to the discretion of schools and can be based on elements such as specific educational or subject-oriented features of the school, available staff, financial and spatial resources (Terhart et al., 2017, p.240). Examples of this are discussed in Chapter 3.

2.2.3. Policies concerning interaction in schools

The KMK's recommendations on intercultural education emphasise, among others aspects, the potential value of diversity in schools, the appreciation of multilingualism, the need for self-reflection, and for schools to reach out to parents (KMK, 2013). In 2016, the KMK published a short report and declaration on the integration of young refugees through education (KMK, 2016b, 2016d). The declaration starts off with the assumption that the speed and quality of German language learning is the essential factor for successful integration and a precondition for access to regular education (KMK, 2016d, p.1). It confirms that no child or youth with a refugee background may be left behind.

Only on the last page, the KMK addresses the fact that not all children and youth will be allowed to stay in Germany. It recommends that specific measures should be developed for persons 'with an uncertain staying perspective' so that they receive education that serves their livelihood in their home country (KMK, 2016d, p.4). However, an uncertain staying perspective is not specific for a certain share of refugee children and youth, but generally affects all of them during their asylum application procedure. It seems that 'uncertain staying perspective' actually means 'expected return', referring to those categorised as persons from *safe countries of origin*. The topic needs further reflection, as unpredictability or a really 'uncertain' staying perspective may be the key challenge for the formulation of adequate curricula and for learning processes.

Mechanisms to disseminate and implement the KMK's agreements differ across states so that it is unclear how much of the recommendations trickle down to the local level and individual schools. In Bremen, for instance, the 2014-18 state plan for migration and education reflects the KMK recommendations of 2013 (Senatorin für Kinder und Bildung, 2014, p.32-40). The concept for language education of 2013 mainly concerns students socialised in Germany who are disadvantaged in school because they speak another language at home or because families have limited linguistic capacities (Senatorin für Bildung und Wissenschaft, 2013). Preparatory German courses are only briefly described in the plan. In addition, in teacher education at the University of Bremen, training in German as a second language used to focus on the specific learning needs of children who were brought up in Germany speaking a different language in the family. It is only recently that the needs of German language learners are addressed and handled more intensively.

3. Local implementation in Bremen and other states

Recommendations by the KMK and by Bremen's 2014-18 state plan for migration and education encourage schools to be aware of opportunities involved with teaching students from different countries and backgrounds (KMK, 2013; Senatorin für Kinder und Bildung, 2014).

For instance, the presence of these students could increase interest in global issues, could offer foreign language learning opportunities for local students, and could motivate schools to address international migration not as something exceptional but as a normal feature of schooling. However, *opportunities* involved with these developments are rarely mentioned in the context of current migration movements.

Exceptions can be found in pilot programmes. For example, a programme at the University of Potsdam in the state of Brandenburg seeks to qualify refugees with a teacher qualification from another country to allow them to work in German schools. Besides qualifying teachers, the programme also aims to enrich the German education system through the use of pedagogic staff with migration experiences and a non-German cultural and language background and by providing opportunities for joint intercultural learning in teacher education at the university.²³

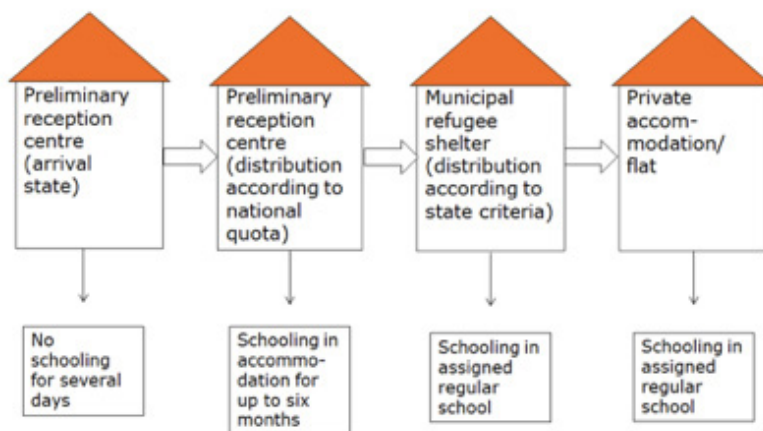
The public debate about immigration emphasises integration challenges, as does the main part of this section, which focuses on access to education, the organisation of the introductory phase, and interactions once newly arrived students are in regular classes.

3.1. Access to education

3.1.1. Multiple changes in learning arrangements

Access to education is not an issue confined to the very beginning of a refugee's stay. The nature of the asylum procedure, which involves several changes of residence, has consequences for education. Figure 3 summarises key features of a reception procedure and what they mean for school access and change.

²³ <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/unterrichtsinterventionsforsch/refugee/kursbeschreibung.html> Accessed 19 October 2017.

Figure 3. Refugee accommodation and consequences for schooling

Source: Own compilation based on Lewek and Naber (2017).

The procedure can be shorter if the asylum seeker is immediately allocated to a flat in a municipality from the first preliminary reception centre; it may also be longer, as an extension of the maximum duration for preliminary reception centres is not unusual (Lewek and Naber, 2017, p.20). Even in the best-case scenario, this means that students have to change learning groups several times. For teachers, it means having to include and lose students during term time.

3.1.2. Education in preliminary reception centres

According to surveys of staff in refugee accommodation facilities (Klaus and Millies, 2017, p.15–19), children and youth housed in preliminary reception centres usually do not receive regular education similar to regular residents. They may receive no school-based education at all for several months, or they may receive part-time education in the centre which is not equivalent to general education. Lessons are not always provided by fully paid qualified teachers, but may be delivered by students and volunteers with or without educational qualifications.

Schooling in preliminary reception centres was introduced in Bremen in 2016. It is voluntary, runs for 20 hours per week, and involves learning of German and general competences. In Bremen, 4.7 per cent of young German language learners are refugee children who are educated in preliminary courses outside schools (own calculation based on Bremische Bürgerschaft, 2017).

A different type of on-site education in some preliminary reception centres in Bavaria is reserved for asylum seekers with a poor prospect of staying in

Germany. Fifteen to 20 hours of questionable-quality education are provided without German-language lessons – mostly “arts and crafts”, according to staff (Klaus and Millies, 2017, p.16). Since March 2017, such “special reception and return centres” have been instituted for persons whose prospect of staying in Germany are low. These centres may have a high turnover of people, including children and youth who had already attended a regular school.

The siblings, Naime (20), Lejhana (18) and Jeton (16), came in Autumn 2014 from Albania to Germany. For a year, they lived with their parents in one room in a municipal shelter in a small Bavarian city. The parents engaged in work for persons on welfare (1-Euro-jobs), the brother went to school, the sisters took part in an advanced course of German as a second language. After internships, the siblings were offered vocational education in the dual system by a dental technician and technician for hearing devices, the brother as an apprentice in construction. Nineteen months after entry, the family had to move to the special reception and return centre. (Lewek and Naber, 2017, p.28)

3.1.3. Waiting times until regular school entry in municipal shelters and flats

Access to education for those living in municipal shelters may also involve delay – due to staff shortages in schools or to bottlenecks in administrative procedures around areas such as residence registration, health checks, or age determination of unaccompanied youth. In fact, no school attendance is recorded for five per cent of a sample six-12-year-old age group of refugee children (Gambaro et al., 2017, P.384–385).²⁴ In addition, new arrivals who have not yet lodged a formal asylum application are not covered, leading to an underestimation of the number of children without access to education. In Bremen, 3.5 per cent of German language learners of school age are awaiting school placement (own calculation based on Bremische Bürgerschaft, 2017). Waiting times for school places were particularly long in the peak of immigration in 2015, as the education administration was not able to start new classes due to a lack of staff.

A family came from Kosovo with four children in 2015. At the time of the interview with a Master's student in 2017, all the children were in school. While the three younger children were quickly assigned to schools, the daughter who was 17 in the year of arrival was told to wait due to lack of school places. The mother felt guilty for not securing a school place for her daughter, and the daughter who had attended a Gymnasium in Kosovo was frustrated. After six months of waiting, a retired teacher who gave voluntary lessons in the shelter intervened on her behalf and helped to get her into an Oberschule. “It was the happiest day for our daughter, and for us as well!” (Masters student, University of Bremen, interview, 2017)

²⁴ The sample is taken from a representative survey of adult asylum seekers who give information about the school situation of their children (Gambaro et al., 2017, p.379).

As one of several emergency education projects, a school preparatory course for 34 male unaccompanied minors was offered by staff and students in a Bremen university based tuition project in early 2016, seeking to integrate German and subject learning (Baginski, 2016). For some of the participants, it took nearly a year before they were placed in regular schooling.

Meanwhile, most students get a school place soon after moving into a shelter or flat.

Sometimes we get them into school right after they move into the shelter. But there is also one boy who will go to school only after the summer holidays, even though he has been in our house for more than three months now. The school would not accept him without the obligatory health check, and the health check appointment was only two months after they moved in. (Bremen municipal shelter staff member, June 2017)

*Seventy-six refugee students were registered at a Bremen university based tuition programme between January 2015 and March 2017. In the programme, supervised teacher trainees provide complementary lessons for students with non-German family language. According to programme data, they have faced an average waiting time of 4.5 months before regular school access. (Coordinator of Lehr-Lern-Werkstatt Fach*Sprache*Migration)*

3.1.4. Access to education for pre-school children and young adults

In many places, access to early childhood education is difficult for refugee children for a number of reasons – lack of places, complicated application procedures, lack of information, lack of interest due to cultural expectations, or unsecure residence (SVR, 2017a, p.122). Nonetheless, 80 per cent of three-to-six-year-old children amongst recently immigrated refugees attend a childcare facility, compared to 95 per cent in the total population (Gambaro et al., 2017, p.384). This care can include childcare offered by volunteers in reception centres for just several hours a week.

After the age of compulsory schooling ends, young refugees still often need regular schooling because they do not have a school leaving certificate. For unaccompanied youth, age determination can delay schooling. For the 18-25 age group, there is often no possibility of attending a school - either there are no options or no capacity (Klaus and Millies, 2017, p.19). The state of Bavaria was the first state to react to this need. It introduced refugee classes in vocational schools across the state. These classes can be accessed until the age of 21, in exceptional cases until the age of 25, and offer the opportunity to attain the basic school leaving certificate in two or three years (Klaus and Millies, 2017, p.20).

Vocational education in the dual system can be started without a school leaving certificate, but companies usually require it as trainees without school leaving certificate often find it difficult to pass the exams at the end of their occupational education. People undertaking an apprenticeship are protected from deportation even if their asylum application is rejected. Successfully finishing the apprenticeship leads to the right to a longer-term work visa and then a long-term residence status. Refugee youth can get advice on issues in their shelters or by state-funded consulting services for migrant youth.²⁵ In many places, companies can also receive advice by the employment agency or by business associations such as the 'welcome guides' from the Bremen Chamber of Commerce.²⁶

3.2. The organisation of school integration

This section deals with the organisation of the introductory phase in schools, giving examples of practical implementation in Bremen and highlighting specific challenges.

3.2.1. Competence assessment and allocation of students to school

In Bremen, the central administration aims to distribute children to a wide range of different schools. The idea is to increase interaction opportunities with students socialised in Germany and to involve all schools in refugee integration.

High immigration numbers are a big challenge and our strategy to cope with this is to distribute to as many schools as possible ... ideally to all schools. (Education ministry staff member in interview with Master's degree student, 2017)

Other states concentrate students in specific schools, ensuring that teacher competences, particularly in German as a second language, are available in the school.²⁷

However, before a school is assigned to a student, there is no systematic competence assessment, neither of German language competences nor of the student's level of subject knowledge. In Bremen, primary school children are assigned to the closest primary school with an available place in a preparatory German course. Secondary school children are assigned to a secondary school according to geographic considerations, available places, and a short conversational assessment of prior education by administrative staff.

25 <https://www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen/InformationBeratung/JugendlicheBeratung/jugendlicheberatung-node.html> Accessed 19 October 2017.

26 https://www.handelskammer-bremen.de/Ausbildung_und_Weiterbildung/Ausbildung_Fluechtlinge/Willkommenslotse---Beratung-zur-Integration-von-Fluechtligen/3342532 Accessed 19 October 2017

27 For detailed information on local education strategies, different allocation procedures and the multilevel-structured mechanisms of inclusion or exclusion in the state of Northrhine-Westphalia, see Emmerich et al. (2017).

Ideally, illiterate students are assigned to specific separate courses, and students with a high level of competences acquired in schools in their countries of origin are allocated to preparatory courses in the academically oriented *Gymnasium*.

In principle, competency in the family language can be assessed and accepted as a replacement for a second foreign language that is necessary for acquiring a tertiary education certificate. However, not all schools are making use of this option, and teachers in schools still report cases of students who would be better placed in a different type of course or school (teachers in interviews with Master's degree student 2017).

3.2.2. Preparatory German classes and interlocking of German-learning and subjects

In Bremen, most children – for exceptions see below – must participate in a preparatory German class and have an assigned regular class in which they are supposed to follow some subjects. This partly integrative model is practised in primary schools for up to six months, and for up to one year in lower secondary schools. The idea is to provide early opportunities for initial contact with children and youth socialised in Germany and thus opportunities for improving their German in informal conversations. Decisions on assigning a student to a specific grade, class and course are organised within schools, with students often assigned to a lower grade than their age would indicate. The preparatory German class takes 20 hours per week, while the regular class is allocated 30 hours, so that up to 10 hours can be spent in the regular class. Schools decide when and in what lessons children should attend regular classes. This partly integrative model does not always match well with regular timetables in Bremen schools. While some schools seek individual solutions, others have schematic solutions that do not match well with individual needs.

“They have the preparatory German class from the second to the fifth hour. That means that they go to the regular class in the first and the sixth lesson. That is sometimes very very difficult. In the first and the sixth hour, they do not get real contact with the class, and that is not only because of their German. One day, they experience one of the German lessons and then one in English or in arts, and they often feel very lost and then they cut classes and sit in front of the door of the preparatory German class and wait for the teacher to come. (Headteacher in interview with Master's degree student, 2017)

A member of the school management in an Oberschule explains that 20 hours per week for preparatory German classes for one year is not enough. The school seeks to gain flexibility by integrating some of them earlier and others later in regular classes. (Member of school management in interview with Master's degree student, 2017)

Previously, students who arrived in Bremen aged 15 or 16 were educated according to this model. From August 2017, these newly arrived students without German proficiency will be taught in parallel courses with the aim of directing them towards achieving a general school leaving certificate (school administrator, from interview of colleagues at the Unit for intercultural education). This has already been the practice in some other states, for example Hamburg (Neumann and Schwaiger, 2014, p.72).

If migrants arrive in Bremen at the relevant age for upper secondary education, they are either placed in further general education leading to a tertiary entrance certificate, or further vocational education leading to a formal vocational qualification, or vocational education leading to improvement of employability in unqualified jobs. In the city of Bremen, 101 German language learners attend schools in upper secondary education, with an additional 1,298 in vocational education.

In *Gymnasium* or *Oberschule* the preparatory German course has been extended from one to two years. Students are supposed to enter grade eleven afterwards and strive for a tertiary entrance certificate after three years, learning with German-socialised students who are considerably younger.

Most refugees who arrive in their late youth are assigned to preparatory German courses in vocational schools. For two years, they receive simultaneous teaching in German and some subjects with occupational orientation.

My German class takes place at a vocational school, but we have nothing to do with them, we just use the same building. The class receives 20 hours per week – 14 hours of German as a second language and six hours in maths, politics and internet proficiency. (Teacher of a preparatory German class in a vocational school, from interview with a Master's degree students)

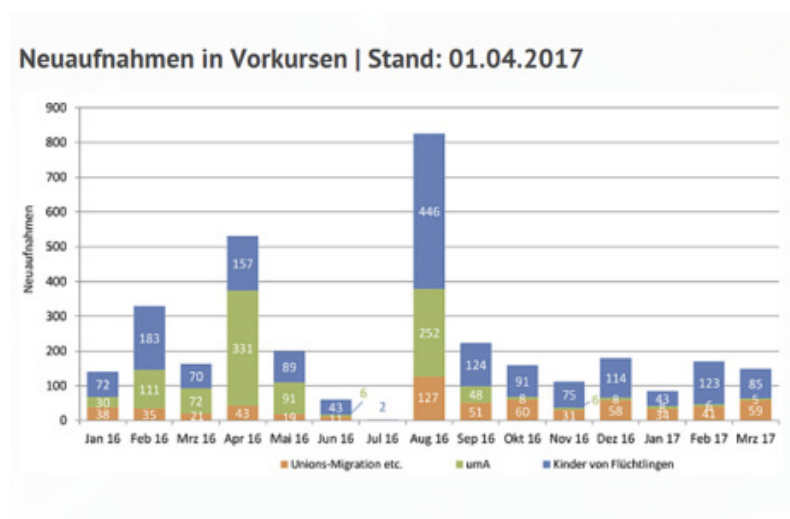
Longer phases of only learning the German language are problematic, as students miss other subject content being studied by German-socialised students; this broadens gaps in their education that may already exist because of their experiences of war and forced migration. However, there is no easy solution: if students move into regular classes with German as the only language of tuition, their limited German knowledge will mean they cannot follow lessons. In addition, some regular teachers are not trained to help them – for example, by scaffolding techniques and visualisations – issues that are only recently and not fully addressed in teacher education.

3.2.3. Fluctuation and heterogeneity

It must be acknowledged that the education administration has to cope with high numbers and fluctuation with regards to migrant children. At the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year, 2,145 students were attending specific courses for German language learners in general public schools and 1,477 in vocational education (Bremische Bürgerschaft, 2017), constituting around four per cent of all students with variations by school type and subregion.

Figure 4 shows that more than 800 students started a preparatory course at the beginning of the new school year in August 2016, being joined monthly by 100 to 200 extra students.

Figure 3. Monthly numbers of new students in preparatory German courses in Bremen



Explanation: orange – migrants from European Union and other states; green – unaccompanied minors; blue – children of refugees

Source: Senatorin für Kinder und Bildung <https://www.bildung.bremen.de/sixcms/detail.php?id=117153>
 Accessed 25 August 2017.

Teachers in preparatory courses must deal with high levels of fluctuation as students can enter and leave the course at any time of the year.

I noticed a birthday calendar in the back of the classroom of a preparatory German course and counted 59 names. The teacher told me that she hung up the calendar about two-and-a-half-years ago. This means that she greeted on average two new students per month, and that the entire class changed about twice a year. (Author D. Vogel)

Being faced with the needs of learning groups with a high diversity of age and educational backgrounds, teachers in preparatory German courses are often highly engaged with 'their' children and gain significant practical experience in internal differentiation in class.

The preparatory course in an Oberschule in the city of Bremen includes 12 students aged between 10 and 16. Two Syrian boys aged 12 years have been in the class for two weeks in which they have been introduced to a couple of letters. The teacher starts the school day with a run-and-write-exercise in which all students take part. Pages with words or short phrases on three different levels are placed on tables in the back of the room. Students read, go back to their table and write down the words in their notebooks. The students with only two weeks of literacy training write words like mama, while the more advanced students write more difficult words and expressions. When they are ready, they show it to the teacher who advises them to check a word again if necessary. (Author D. Vogel, observation)

Lack of literacy is considered a challenge that cannot be adequately coped with in preparatory German courses. In response to this problem, the education administration started introducing separate courses for students without literacy in any language in 2016, but the system is not yet fully developed. At the beginning of the 2017/18 academic year, five literacy courses were being conducted at schools offering general education and eight at vocational schools (Bremische Bürgerschaft, 2017).

3.2.4. Coping with increasing numbers in times of teacher shortages

Teachers are allocated to schools according to the number of their preparatory German classes. This differs according to the particular school level.

It is foreseen that newly arrived students without proficiency in German can attain 20 lessons per week for six months in primary schools, for one year in secondary schools and for two years in occupational education. (Bremische Bürgerschaft, 2016, p.9)

However, a lack of qualified teachers means that not all vacancies can be filled. In Bremen, shortages of teachers and rooms had already been criticised before the number of school students increased rapidly from 2014 to 2016.²⁸ The increasing need for teachers could not be accommodated from the existing supply of qualified and recognised teachers. Pensioners were re-activated and lateral entrants encouraged.

Contractual arrangements vary, but a considerable number of contracts is arranged via a non-government organisation (NGO) that was originally engaged primarily in tutoring for disadvantaged children and youth (Stadtteil-Schule).²⁹ Today, this NGO functions as a temporary employment agency which is subcontracted by the school administration. For example, students with a Bachelor degree are employed as teachers for regular subjects and for German as a second language. This way, the education administration avoids highly regulated staff-hiring procedures and qualification standards for public service at a time when qualified staff cannot be hired in sufficient numbers. Temporary teachers are allocated to the schools to teach in the preparatory German classes, but they have a different employer and are often not considered as part of the regular school staff.

In late 2016, the staff council for the public schools in Bremen (Personalrat Schulen) organised a large meeting of almost all teachers of German preparatory classes to learn about their concerns. The main concerns were lack of job security, lack of equal pay for demanding work, lack of recognition within schools, lack of adequate teaching materials. The teachers were also concerned about the quality of education they were providing and raised the issue of the absence of set class sizes, special needs input, and psychological advice both for students and teachers. The chair of the staff council summarised: "The teachers in preparatory German courses feel left alone with these problems". (GEW 2016, p.11)

In the 2017/18 academic year, 55 teachers for German as a second language have been employed by the city of Bremen and 78 are still employed by other organisations (Bremische Bürgerschaft 2017, p.10).

Refugee teachers are rarely accepted as regular teachers. However, a significant number of refugee teachers, who have been trained in other countries and have not been able to achieve recognition of their qualification, also work for the *Stadtteil-Schule*. As the regular German teacher education requires a Bachelor and Master's degree in two subjects plus state training on completion of the Master's degree, foreign teachers study additional courses at university to achieve a comparable level to German teachers in terms of level and content.

²⁸ See for example union demands on the occasion of state elections: <https://www.gew-hb.de/aktuelles/detailseite/neuigkeiten/buergerschaftswahl-2011/> Accessed 20 October 2017.

²⁹ <http://www.stadteilschule-bremen.de/index.php/bildung/deutsch-als-zweitsprache> Accessed 20 October 2017.

In addition, they have to achieve the highest level (C2) according to the Common European Reference Framework for Languages (CEFR), which means near-native proficiency in German.

“The teaching profession is among the most difficult to access for people educated in other countries.” (Coordinator in qualification network for immigrants)

Refugee teachers can take part in projects that help them to acquire these additional qualifications, however this can take years. University timetables are compiled to suit full-time students, and they rarely fit in with employment and family obligations.

First, I want to learn German and then I want to work. I do not want to go back to university. (English teacher from Syria with a Bachelor degree, in conversation with author D. Vogel)

In spite of staff shortages, there are few systematic efforts to integrate refugee teachers. Some projects have commenced to help teachers to complement their education so that they are accepted as regular teachers for their subjects (i.e. a project cooperating with University of Bremen). Other projects, in Potsdam and Bielefeld for instance, qualify more generally on a level below a recognised teacher qualification.

The University of Potsdam in the state of Brandenburg offers a ‘refugee teachers’ programme’ as a pilot project. It aims at preparing refugee teachers to enter the German school system without acquiring a full teacher qualification. The programme consists of intensive courses in German, introduction to the German school and education system, and other educational seminars and school internships conducted over 1.5 years.³⁰

3.3. Interaction in regular school classes

Ideally, primary school students should have reached the *level A2* (CEFR) after the preparatory German course, and in secondary school they should have reached *level B1 (passive)* so that they can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in school, leisure and so on, but this is not always possible. Many teachers in regular classes do not feel sufficiently prepared to integrate students without this level of German proficiency. While student interviews show that they appreciate the welcoming atmosphere and individualised attention in preparatory German classes, they also indicate that they miss ‘real’ school where they can learn subjects.

³⁰ <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/unterrichtsinventionsforsch/refugee.html> Accessed 20 October 2017.

I like the regular class better than the preparatory course because we only learned German and did not do maths and English and such subjects. (Interview with a student for a Master's thesis)

However, it is often difficult for students to follow the lessons if they have missed years of school during their forced migration and during the preparatory German classes. Particularly in the upper secondary level, schools frequently do not cope well with the challenge of preparing students to achieve an appropriate leaving certificate.

"There are four students in the class who understand nothing if they read Kafka. I mean Kafka is difficult enough for German students. Sometimes I get really sad when I get feedback from teachers in regular classes that a really bright kid will not be able to make it, to reach the tertiary entrance certificate. I know that if someone is really intelligent and hard-working, it is not his or her fault that they came here only at the age of 15". (Teacher of a preparatory German class in a Gymnasium, in interview with Master's degree student)

"There is no point in putting a child in a class that matches her age group, but then she can't really follow what is happening." (Oberschule teachers, interviewed by Master's degree student³¹)

Going to a regular class does not always mean full participation in the lessons.

We have to move them to the regular class after one year, but for many of them this is too soon so that they cannot really participate. In sixth grade, this is still possible, but in grade 8 or 9, if the class does history or chemistry, the new students continue working on their German. (Oberschule teacher, interviewed by Master's degree student)

After moving to a regular class, students may receive extra lessons to support their proficiency in German or to help them with their homework. However, in this scenario – where a student has moved from the preparatory German to the regular class – there are no significant additional resources to continue complementary German lessons.

"Last year, we had two hours of German per week for former preparatory German class students who changed into the regular class. That is nothing! But this year, we do not even have that." (Oberschule teacher, interviewed by Master's degree student)

31 Report of a visit by a union delegation in Bremerhaven from 5 September 2017 <https://www.nasuwf.org.uk/news/international/international-news/german-teachers-help-rebuild-refugees-lives.html> Accessed 20 October 2017.

A project at the University of Bremen, partly funded by the education administration, also offers additional support. Two hundred school students – 60 per cent of whom are new immigrants - attend extra lessons in small groups, being instructed by supervised university students (coordinator August 2017 in e-mail to D. Vogel)

Once students are full-time in regular classes, gaps in their school biography become a barrier to understanding.

“The main problem is that they are lacking knowledge from the primary school stage. They have not finished primary school in Syria. For one of them, it took three years to arrive here – three years without school. I am doing my best so that they can follow the lessons, but it is not possible to fill in the gaps in their education. I give them additional material to catch up, but adequate material is also a challenge. They are youth, and they have to learn issues for which we have only study material aimed at primary school kids. It is not motivating for them to work with nice little animal pictures”. (Teacher of two grade 8 youth from Syria, interviewed by author D. Vogel)

Schools do not have to assess German language learners with numerical grades in the two years after the student moves from the preparatory class to a regular class. However, not all schools use progress reports instead of numerical grades (preparatory course coordinator in interview with author D. Vogel).

However, the development of teaching materials to serve the needs of newly arriving children and youth has increased in the last few years, both from public organisations³² and private publishers. Whilst these new materials cover, in particular, subject teaching for different age groups and different degrees of language proficiency, there are still substantial gaps.

Apart from dealing with German language learners, teachers in regular school classes are often worried about educating traumatised refugee children, leading to an increased demand for further adult education about trauma. It is often difficult to learn whether students are shy because they are new in the class, because they do not understand, or because of a social-emotional or mental learning difficulty.³³ The diagnosis of special needs, not only for newly arriving students, is an issue. Indeed, the allocation of sufficient specialised teachers to support students with special needs had not been achieved before the numbers of German language learners increased.

32 <http://www.lis.bremen.de/fortbildung/detail.php?gsid=bremen56.c.90260.de> Accessed 20 October 2017.

33 See for example <https://www.education4refugees.org/updates/341-german-union-support-teachers-facing-traumatised-refugee-children-and-young-people> Accessed 20 October 2017.

4. Union initiatives to increase education opportunities for all

Most teachers in Germany belong to one of two union groups, the GEW under the umbrella of the DGB (German Trade Union Confederation), or one of several unions under the umbrella of the DBB (German Federation of Civil Servants). The GEW is the biggest union in the education sector with about 280,000 members, among them educators and teachers in schools, early childhood education, vocational training, adult and higher education.

This chapter outlines GEW's general policies regarding the educational participation of refugees and migrants. It then highlights recent initiatives and selected projects as well as their impact on meeting challenges and increasing education opportunities for all.

4.1. General policies and advocacy

4.1.1. Guiding principles

According to the stipulated policies for human rights, social justice and non-discrimination as well as professional ethics, GEW advocates for the right to quality education for all and is committed to valuing and respecting diversity. On this basis, GEW has been promoting the rights and entitlements of refugees and migrants in the different areas of education for many years. Initiatives in this field are coordinated by the federal committee on migration, diversity, and anti-discrimination (BAMA), with corresponding committee structures in the federal states. Its central positions have been published in a pamphlet titled "Appreciate diversity – realise the right to education".³⁴

Thus, the political and professional involvement of GEW and its members to ensure equity in and through education systems and programmes is not limited to demanding better working conditions. It encompasses advocacy for inclusive policies and strategies for capacity building on different levels, the promotion of bi- or multilingual and intercultural education, teacher training and professional development regarding diversity issues, cooperation with organisations to raise awareness about racism, fostering activities and networks against all forms of discrimination, and the publication and dissemination of expertise and teaching materials.

³⁴ <http://www.gew.de/bama/> Accessed 20 October 2017.

Several resolutions by GEW's national congress in May 2017 strengthen its existing positions and actions, calling for a review of national education policies by more consistently taking the realities of migration in the context of globalisation into account.³⁵

4.1.2. "Education cannot wait" – calling for action

During the summer of 2015, it became apparent that the arrival of several hundred thousand refugees in Germany would challenge the educational system. Even though this was not the first time Germany experienced an increased influx of new migrants, the different sectors, especially the schools, were not well prepared to absorb such a high number of new pupils. Already existing deficits became even more visible: from the critical shortage of teachers and educators, the cutbacks and withdrawals in the vocational education sector, to the lack of skills in teaching diverse learners in heterogeneous groups/classrooms.

In October 2015, GEW published recommendations titled "*Education cannot wait*"³⁶ and informed the public about the union's proposals and demands to ensure unrestricted access to education and participation for refugees and asylum seekers. At the core of these recommendations lies a commitment to welcome and support people seeking asylum and to guarantee them their fundamental right to education, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, regardless of their residence status. For this purpose, necessary adjustments of the existing legal framework and administrative practices, such as the removal of discriminatory rules in the asylum legislation or statutory changes in school regulations (see Chapter 2), would be required.

Also, need-oriented short and medium-term measures to support the work of the educational institutions and their employees were proposed. These related to concrete programmes and activities in all education sectors – from the broadening of the federal language learning programme in early childhood education (so-called *Sprach-Kitas*), more social work, and training to teach German as a second language in schools and vocational schools to capacity building in higher and adult education, as well as additional counselling, care and welfare services.

More particularly, the demand for more qualified educators and teachers called for appropriate investment by federal states and local government. As there was a lack of reliable data due to the overburdened administration of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, GEW made their own extrapolations and calculated the necessary additional resources. On the basis of the expected number of refugees and former ratios of the age cohorts, GEW anticipated

35 <https://www.gew.de/aktuelles/detailseite/neuigkeiten/migration-als-normalitaet-anerkennen-und-gestalten/>. Accessed 20 October 2017.

36 <https://www.gew.de/flucht-und-asyl/>. Accessed 20 October 2017.

how many children and young people would be among them: 100,000 refugee children from birth to age six, 300,000 aged six-21, and 150,000 aged 21-25. The GEW estimated that these numbers would require additional 18,000 educators and 24,000 teachers at an estimated cost of €3 billion extra per year.³⁷

In order to urge the federal government to take action, GEW used the media to publicise these claims and enhance the pressure. At the same time, the union made clear - to the public and stakeholders - that the whole education system had been under-financed and in need of qualitative and quantitative development for a long time.³⁸ Thus, general reforms to ensure full-time quality education were addressed to meet the challenges of education in a multicultural society and the development of an inclusive education system. This concerns for example the need for sustainable funding in all states, and the need for legal reform, particularly reviewing the constitutional ban on federal funding³⁹ for tasks in the sole responsibility of states, such as education.

The response to the press conference and public relations was remarkable. The following day, the KMK endorsed the requests for quick access to education for refugees⁴⁰ and confirmed, in essence, the GEW estimation for the necessary financial and personnel resources.⁴¹ Furthermore, GEW representatives discussed the issue with several members of parliament and ministers of education, indicating that the initiative strengthened the reputation of the union as a constructive stakeholder with clear and multifaceted expertise.

Since then, GEW has, at national level, continued to lobby for better funding of education⁴², joined a campaign called 'School for everyone – the right to education contains no exception'⁴³, issued further news releases and publications as well as statements on draft bills concerning asylum and integration law and its impact on access to education and employment.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, the GEW state branches continuously assess and discuss the specific needs on the ground, advocate for inclusive policies with local refugee councils and other partners, and negotiate with the local authorities to implement adequate measures.

37 <https://www.gew.de/aktuelles/detailseite/neuigkeiten/rund-38000-zusaetzliche-paedagoginnen-und-paedagogen-noetig/> Accessed 20 October 2017.

38 By demanding quality education for everybody, the union sought to avoid the impression that additional resources were only claimed for refugees.

39 So called 'Kooperationsverbot'.

40 Mit Bildung gelingt Integration!": <https://www.kmk.org/aktuelles/artikelansicht/kultusministerkonferenz-mit-bildung-gelingt-integration.html> Accessed 20 October 2017.

41 The forecast was also taken into account in the last National Education Report (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2016).

42 See for example the initiative called: Education. Thinking ahead! <https://www.gew.de/weiter-denken/> Accessed 20 October 2017.

43 Campaign with refugee councils and other migrant and refugee non-profit organizations (BumF, Pro Asyl, JoG): <http://kampagne-schule-fuer-alle.de/> Accessed 20 October 2017.

44 Usually in cooperation and under the umbrella of the DGB.

4.2. Selected projects

Advocacy does not only require access to decision-makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences. It also presupposes expertise in order to deliver evidence-based recommendations and to raise awareness for the needs of action through communications and media work. This expertise can be promoted through research – therefore, GEW has engaged in research funding and publishing study results, such as a survey on educational funding (Jaich, 2016), on teacher diversity and teaching learners with diverse backgrounds (Klomfaß, 2017), or on the education of undocumented immigrants (Funck et al., 2015). The latter, for example, attracted significant media attention and resulted in a practical guide for educators and teachers.⁴⁵

Above all, successful advocacy for quality education for all depends on the experience, engagement and commitment of the people involved, in particular teachers and other educational staff. Thus, GEW organises meetings, workshops and conferences at national and local level to bring members together, to facilitate and encourage the exchange of experiences and good practices, to discuss strategies and concepts with a variety of stakeholders, to present and disseminate research findings, information and teaching material. In terms of organising, networking, social mobilisation, and public relations, these events are crucial – with follow-up that includes concrete and immediate actions, for example alliance-building, demonstrations or other collective actions to highlight causes to the interested public and decision-makers.

As it is not possible to outline all activities at local level, the selected projects presented below are only sample initiatives that focus on refugee education issues and raise awareness about the need to take action.

4.2.1. “Teachers Organising for Quality Education Provision for Refugees”

This local capacity building project is led by the GEW state branch in Bremen and supported by Education International (EI). It started in autumn 2016 and aims to improve the quality of education for refugees in Bremen and to assist teachers organising as union members. For this purpose, teachers in preparatory (German as a second language) classes and other education personnel were invited to not only define their needs and the needs of their students, but also to develop ideas about the best measures to address these needs adequately and formulate demands towards political actors in Bremen.

⁴⁵ Recht auf Bildung – auch ohne Papiere. Was sollten Beschäftigte in Bildungs- und Erziehungseinrichtungen beachten? <https://www.gew.de/aktuelles/detailseite/neuigkeiten/neuer-flyer-recht-auf-bildung-auch-ohne-papiere/> Accessed 20 October 2017.

In order to campaign effectively, the project coordinator and team members of GEW began to take stock of school integration of refugee children and the main challenges in the preparatory classes. They informed colleagues about the situation in schools and the most recent figures in Bremen – together with the local refugee council which provided information about the situation in the refugee reception centres – and presented their common advocacy work (GEW Bremen, 2016).

To give colleagues more space to articulate their needs and to identify the critical issues for different sectors of the education system (primary, secondary and vocational), 12 interviews were carried out including teachers of preparatory courses and union representatives in schools. Also, a workshop was organised for teachers employed by the *Stadtteil-Schule* during the pay round strike in February 2017 to put their specific claims forward and plan respective actions.

In September 2017, teachers and other educational staff in the preparatory courses in each sector were supported in producing a list of demands addressing critical issues at a day-long conference (*Fachtag*) with sector-specific working groups.⁴⁶ About 100 participants, among them refugee teachers, discussed educators' intercultural competences, dealing with prejudices, and best practice examples of teachers' work in schools. Parallel workshops with the local refugee council were held, concerning their projects in schools and discussions with the vocational trade council about how refugees can access apprenticeships and vocational training. The conference recommendations have been discussed with relevant stakeholders and are due to be published as part of a programme of action to improve the provision of education for refugee children and young people. This programme involves a combination of negotiations with the state government and public pressure from union activities from autumn 2017.

The project has been marked by the willingness of teachers in the preparatory courses to articulate their concerns and demands. At the same time, these teachers are generally the most precariously employed staff within Bremen's education system, so organising on a longer-term basis has been challenging.

4.2.2. Support programmes for refugee teachers

As mentioned in Section 3.2.3, there are qualified teachers among the refugees who are eager to share their experience and use their skills in German schools and who could help to ease pressure in the system, but are rarely accepted for work in their profession. Recognition of their qualifications is impeded by bureaucratic procedures and their lack of proficiency in German language. Usually, further studies for the equivalent of a degree and postgraduate teaching

⁴⁶ <https://www.gew-hb.de/projekt-gute-bildung-fuer-gefluechtete/> Accessed 20 October 2017.

qualification are required. At national level, GEW tries to push boundaries and advocates for support and improved access of refugees to higher and further education teacher training programmes (including the provision of free German language courses and consulting services). At state level, GEW branches in Hamburg and Berlin have established support programmes for the professional integration of refugee teachers.

The refugee-buddy-programme in Hamburg is named *'Here to participate!'*⁴⁷ and aims to bring union members and refugee teachers together to facilitate professional exchange and cooperation. It addresses refugees in different languages and provides information and contact references regarding the recognition of foreign degrees and work permits in Germany.⁴⁸ It has organised information events about teaching observation. In Berlin, the GEW state branch established a similar project named *'Peer-Up'*.⁴⁹ It also invites their members regularly to establish a peer-to-peer network with qualified refugees who want to work in the educational sector.

Since teachers and educators who qualified abroad can become GEW members without being employed in Germany, they are also introduced to other union activities by their buddy partners or peers. It is conceivable that a working group structure for the self-organisation of refugee union members will be established. A practical guide concerning the possible range of support and legal protection services offered by the union (excluding counselling services concerning asylum law) is being worked on.

In addition, solidarity networks at international, national and local level with refugee teachers are manifold – ranging from the individual, practical support for colleagues who seek refuge in Germany to fostering school-partnerships in conflict regions and fundraising actions to support the work of other unions.

47 <https://www.gew-hamburg.de/themen/gew/here-to-participate> Accessed 20 October 2017.

48 <https://www.gew-hamburg.de/themen/gew/infos-zum-thema-anerkennung-und-arbeitserlaubnis>
Accessed 20 October 2017.

49 <https://www.gew-berlin.de/18029.php> Accessed 20 October 2017.

5. Conclusions

German school systems differ in the country's 16 states, with additional discretion at city or school level. Therefore, it is not possible to give a comprehensive overview of a 'German' approach towards the integration of refugee children and youth. Education authorities in the different states have devoted considerable efforts to defining and supplying good education to refugees. However, on the basis of the above identified challenges, several central areas of actions can be identified.

This report's key findings are summarised below. The authors have also added what they consider the most important demands of stakeholders to be discussed by governments, schools and unions.

Access to education

The right of refugee minors to school education – as in accepted national and international law – is uncontested in Germany, although it is not always interpreted as a right to attend a general public school. In general, the right to education is often only granted when education becomes compulsory, which may involve a waiting time of several months. There is no regular education in preliminary reception centres. Waiting times for regular school places differ – they have reduced with declining numbers of newcomers, but they still exist. Moreover, access to education before and after the age of compulsory schooling is characterised by multiple barriers.

Access to education must be granted by state governments and realised by local schools. In order to improve access to education for all, the authors consider the following points as vital:

- *The right to education – whether schooling is compulsory or not and regardless of a minor's residential status – has to be realised in all states at all levels.*
- *Classes in preliminary reception centres need to be strictly limited (to a maximum three months according to international law) and improved in quality with regards to curricula and staff if they serve as substitutes for access to regular schools.*

- *Comprehensive information on access to education in different languages* should be developed, regularly updated and disseminated to parents, community activists and counsellors in services for migrants and youth.
- *Access to education for young adults* must be improved through targeted programmes for young adults – preferably until the age of 27 – so that they are enabled to catch up on missed subject contents.

The organisation of school integration

There is no systematic assessment of the competences and learning needs of students before they are allocated to schools. Illiteracy is considered as a limit to internal differentiation in preparatory German classes so that special classes are gradually introduced.

As a rule, preparatory German classes of varying length precede school integration in regular classes (except for early primary school entrants). As an exception, older teenagers are increasingly taught in special classes that combine subject teaching with German language learning. Refugee students often have substantial gaps in their education backgrounds. These gaps are aggravated by periods in which they only learn German. The issue of subject teaching in parallel with learning German in German schools has not been systematically addressed. There are numerous, but mostly small-scale, projects seeking to improve this situation with regards to, for example, alternative course schedules, curricula, and materials.

The following measures are considered as helpful for the initial phase of school integration:

- *More systematic assessment of initial competences in subjects* such as maths, languages and sciences can help to avoid the allocation of students to programmes that do not help them to achieve their full potential.
- *Subjects should be taught soon after arrival* – either in subject courses designed for German language learners or through courses in family languages, for example when large numbers of students with the same family language are in a particular location. This helps to avoid a widening of qualification gaps.
- *Evaluation and discussion of evaluation results* is needed to learn from the wide range of projects and ‘models’ which seek to improve the initial school integration of young people.

Interactions in regular classes

Interactions in regular classes vary widely, depending on state policies, teacher education and school cultures. Regular class teachers often make great efforts to help all students to participate in their lessons. However, they are often not well prepared to teach their subject in a group that includes German language learners, and not all schools and teachers consider it as their task to address the learning needs of students with different levels of German proficiency. The authors did not find any documented cases in which mother-tongue teachers are employed to help alleviate the impact of education gaps.

We consider that the following measures are urgently required to improve the situation in regular classes that include newly arrived refugee students:

- *Team-teaching* with two teachers, or one teacher with additional specialised staff, can help to address learning needs in heterogeneous classes with different learning preconditions - including different levels of German proficiency.
- *Deferred grading* is a means to gradually lead German language learners towards accomplishing education standards without being assessed as failures.
- *Increased teacher education* for integrated subject teaching and second language learner pedagogy, for example through scaffolding techniques, can help regular class teachers to meet the challenges of including German language learners in their lessons.
- *Targeted additional support*, for example by professional staff with knowledge of mother tongues, can assist students in coping with regular class curricula.
- *Updated multilingual information* can help families and students to make informed choices in the transfer stages between schools in Germany – for example for the best suitable school type after primary school and for assessment of uniquely German choices of vocational training.

Staff needs and shortages

Germany has a relatively comprehensive teacher education with a Bachelor degree, a Master's degree in two subjects, and a state-regulated preparatory service after which many teachers gain permanent employment in life-time civil service. This makes it difficult for politicians to react quickly to changes in numbers and needs, and also for refugee teachers to get their qualifications recognised. Refugee numbers rapidly increased at a time when staff shortages

were already emerging in many German states, particularly at the primary school level. Increasingly, more than one adult is organising learning processes in a class.

This led to a range of ad-hoc emergency measures. The reactivation of pensioners, job offers for lateral entrants without pedagogic qualifications, and temporary jobs for students and volunteers were strategies to cope with the gap between needed and available teachers. In particular, German lessons for new arrivals are often delivered by temporarily employed staff without full teacher qualification, and often with very limited training in teaching German as a foreign/second language. At the same time, a range of lateral entrants gained teaching experience and often sought to improve their performance *autodidactly*. Wage levels and working conditions differ considerably.

While staff shortages in general can only be addressed by more training and employment, we consider that the following points are important, specifically with regards to refugee integration.

- In times of decreasing refugee arrivals, *emergency measures should be replaced by long-term solutions*. Persons who started teaching without adequate qualifications and who wish to stay in education should be offered opportunities to adjust their qualification – for example by targeted further training which can be undertaken while on the job. Even if a full teacher qualification may not be accessible for all affected parties, developments towards team-teaching and multiprofessional teamwork could offer new job opportunities in schools. A reconsideration of qualification patterns and career paths are worthy of discussion, in order to avoid the development of ‘paraprofessionals’ without a specified role, pay or education.
- High refugee immigration numbers can create an impulse to consider *new ways of adjusting teacher qualifications from abroad* which currently involve lengthy periods of learning without pay. This is not attractive for foreign teachers from a different educational system with years of independent teaching experiences. As regular teachers have to fulfil a state-regulated preparatory service after their Master’s degree (called *Referendariat*), one idea is to develop a new type of state-regulated preparatory service for foreign teachers. It could be a paid alternative for complicated adjustment of qualification measures. Such a paid qualification phase could, for example, be for three years and include German as a second language, familiarisation with the German system, and additional training in subject content and teaching methods in a regular timetable.

Conclusions for union activities

As a union, GEW is highly engaged in negotiations about the salaries and working conditions of its members. But it also considers its members' interest in state-funded high-quality education for all and professional training and development as a starting point.

Therefore, union activities include advocacy to ensure equal opportunities and access to all levels of public education as well as participatory projects to identify the challenges in schools with teachers and other professionals on the ground. Refugees with a professional education background are considered potential colleagues and future members. The union engages with them in pilot projects and fosters solidarity and mutual cooperation.

A key challenge, due to staff shortages and resource constraints, is to tackle the growing responsibilities and increasing workload in the different education sectors. At the same time, it is a challenge to balance the needs of new education staff who came to teaching as career changers or as professionals who often have received shorter (teacher) training in their countries of origin, and the need to maintain established professional standards.

As a consequence of refugee immigration, we consider that the following issues are particularly worthy of union attention:

- With their commitment to solidarity and joint action, unions are in a unique position for advocacy in favour of quality education for all and against all forms of discrimination, both within the membership and towards stakeholders in politics and civil society. They are also in a good position to warn about consequences of migration policy choices for the education sector.
- Unions are continuously negotiating professional standards, career and wage structures with – in the German case mostly public – employers. Recent refugee immigration has added new challenges to these negotiations – namely through the rapid increase of temporarily employed staff without usually required training and through immigration of experienced refugee teachers with foreign qualifications. If unions manage to organise such groups and find targeted training and career pathways for them, their traditional membership can be relieved of the pressure of staff shortages while maintaining professional standards.
- Unions can channel information in two directions – they can transfer their memberships' concerns about school integration of refugees to policy makers and the research community, and they can initiate



targeted knowledge creation and disseminate early experiences as well as scientifically secured knowledge to their members. This contributes to informed choices and appropriate actions with regards to refugee integration in the German education system.

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How German Schools Include Refugees

Dita Vogel and Elina Stock
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