
CHRISTINE STEINER *

**Bridge or Hurdle? Social Relationships in Preparatory Classes
and Beyond within German schools**

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* [steiner@dji.de] (Deutsches Jugendinstitut)

Abstract

The massive influx of refugees in 2015 and 2016, among them many school-aged children and youth, sped up the debate about Germany as a country of immigration, in particular about the fairness and social inclusiveness in the German school system. As in many other European countries, in Germany newly immigrated students without knowledge of German initially attend preparatory classes. The strong focus on learning German and the separation of the students from native-born peers are seen to hinder both their educational progress and social belonging within school. Based on data from a survey of newly arrived students conducted in 2018 and with regard to the students' well-being, this paper examines the question as to whether or not attending a preparatory class is an obstacle to integration within the school community. The findings show that immigrant students generally have a good relationship with their new classmates and teachers and feel well at school. Attending a preparatory class does lead to some restrictions, i.e., it limits the chance to establish friendships with native-born schoolmates. At the same time, there are also advantages connected with learning in separate learning environments.

Keywords: Immigrant Students, Schools, Preparatory Class, Peer Relations, Friendships.

1. Introduction

Today, many children and youth living in Europe have an immigration background, either because they have migrated themselves, or because they were born into an immigrant family. In Germany alone, in 2016 more than every third person aged six to fifteen had an immigrant background (Authoring Group Educational Reporting, 2018: 26). The majority belong to the second-generation immigrants, meaning they were born in Germany to parents who were born outside the country. However, in recent years the number of children and youth arriving in Germany has been increasing (von Dewitz et al., 2016: 10). To date the apex of this development was reached in 2015 and 2016 when immigrants fleeing from the civil wars zones in the Near and the Middle East, as well as in African countries, brought several hundreds of thousands of children and youth, many of them in a school age, seeking sanctuary in Germany. According to the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, alone in the school year beginning in 2015 around 300,000 immigrant children and youth were enrolled in general and vocational schools; the majority, with up to 250,000 children and youth, were refugees (Standing Conference, 2016).

In most countries, these first-generation immigrant students perform worse than native students and second-generation immigrant students, the latter performing somewhere between the two (Rumbaut, 2004; OECD, 2015). Regarded to be among the main causes for this achievement gap are the families' limited or devalued resources due to the migration process; not only in an economic sense, but also, and in particular, culturally and socially (Heckmann, 2008: 23).

A common assumption is that, over time, their familiarity with the social and cultural conventions of the host country, and in particular the ability to use the national language, increases; and so, too, their sense of belonging to the majority culture. Such better cultural adaptation should affect the way in which parents care about their children's educational success and, in the end, lead to a better school performance, especially among second-generation immigrant students (Schüler, 2012: 3). Although there is some empirical evidence that these assimilation benefits are indeed helpful for the educational success, the results also indicate that the intergenerational differences do not follow the pattern of a straight-line assimilation (ibid.; Kao and Tienda, 1995). In particular, the studies on the so-called 'immigration paradox' made it clear that the developmental outcomes decrease the longer the immigrant children and youth have gotten acculturated in their host country (Marks et al., 2012). This is especially true if development outcomes like motivation and attitudes toward school are taken into account (Stanat and Christensen, 2006: 2). Based on their findings, Özek and Figlio suggest supporting newly arrived students intensively in their acclimatization in school, because this gives them the best chance to catch up with their peers (Özek and Figlio, 2016). However, with regard to the recent discussion, there are doubts that the widespread form of enrollment and schooling of newly immigrated children and youth in Germany delivers this kind of support. As in many other European countries, in Germany newly immigrated students without knowledge of German initially attend preparatory classes, lessons, or courses. They provide more time for

the teaching and learning of the language of instruction. However, both the strong focus on learning German and the separation of the students from native-born peers are seen to hinder their educational progress (European Commission, 2019).

This paper focuses on the social effects of learning in preparatory classes or lessons and is based on a survey of newly arrived students in lower secondary schools in Germany. The focus here is peer relations and peer acceptance, especially friendships with native-born classmates, as one of the most important factors for adapting to a new learning environment and for school-related well-being. Well-being is seen to be an important educational goal, as well as being a prerequisite for the students' further academic achievement. Therefore, the findings are a contribution to the social and educational policy debate about the potential positive and negative effects of preparatory classes and lessons.

2. Theoretical Foundations and Empirical Findings

Empirical results such as the 'Immigrant Paradox' have forcefully challenged the assumptions of traditional assimilation theories. Meanwhile, a range of new theoretical approaches are available, which are searching for adequate explanations for the persistent inequitable distribution of social opportunities and resources, even after long-term residency and intensive learning processes, and which suppose various courses of social integration. Berry's concept of an acculturation strategy (Berry, 1997), for example, is based on the assumption that according to the degree in which the culture of origin is maintained and relationships with other groups are taken up—in particular relationships with majority groups within the receiving communities—four different acculturation strategies will be probable: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. The more successful integration strategies are regarded to be those in which the cultural identity is maintained, but for which at the same time contact and participation with other cultural groups, including the receiving community itself, is typical. Such an interaction- and participation-oriented integration rests upon the idea of striving for equal opportunity, so that all members and social groups of a community might participate (Pries, 2015: 24). Accordingly, one can speak of social integration when social participation within community life and the formation of social, interethnic relationships has been made possible. Motti-Stefanidi et al. (2012) have formulated this in a very similar way. In their study of the adaptation processes of youth both with and without a migration background within Greek schools, they center developmental tasks that apply for all youth in modern western societies. How good the youth are at school, whether or not they display behavior that is prosocial and conforms to the rules, if their peers like them and if they have friends—these are important indicators for a successful adaptation and for future processes of adaptation. From a theoretical perspective, the indicators can be accounted for either by the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (2008), which has its origins in psychology; or by theories of social capital, which have arisen primarily within sociology. Both additionally shed light on the relationships among the indicators.

2.1 Self-Determination Theory and Well-Being

The self-determination theory is based on the assumption that human activity is motivated by an instinctive wish to understand the environment. This motivation is dependent on the degree to which the three psychological basic needs of competence, social relatedness and autonomy are thereby satisfied. It is assumed that such modes of behavior will be followed, and social relationships entered, that make possible the satisfaction of needs, and this leads both to an integration appropriate to the situation as well as to well-being. It is further assumed that the satisfaction of needs leads to an internalization of the actions' goals; the actors experience themselves as self-determining. When students experience learning as self-determined, this has positive effects for their experience of competence, their feeling of self-worth, and finally for their well-being and for their school performance as well (Vasteenkiste et al., 2004). Additionally, the well-being of the students supports their academic achievement at school (Roffey, 2012: 9). It is known that both the well-being of the students as well as their academic achievement (Fredricks and Eccles, 2002) depends on their ages, with a decline in both as their schooling continues. Some authors see the reason for this in the discrepancy between the developmental tasks in adolescence and the school's performance demands (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012). Others trace the decline back to the change in learning context, for example owing to the transition from the elementary to the secondary school or because of having to repeat a year (Urdu and Midgley 2003, Vocker et al., 2019). Knoppick et al. (2015) have shown that for the transition to the secondary school, a decline in both the well-being at school and of the academic self-concept does exist, but mainly for the students transitioning to the *Gymnasium* (high school). In comparison, the students who moved to schools that were less focused on performance did not show any such decline, and to some extent even an improvement. All of the students exhibited greater contentment with their new schools. The authors explain this as resulting from the students' perception of the change in schools as being a new start, which they connected with hopeful expectations. This novelty-effect brings to mind the initial advantage of the first-generation immigrant students, which was described above. In comparison with their native-born peers, they demonstrate a more positive attitude concerning school, have higher aspirations and are more optimistic about the future. Max Weber already noted the positive effects of a simple change in context with respect to labor migration (Weber, 2005 (1930): 136–137).

2.2 Social Capital Approaches and School-Based Social Relationships

According to the self-determination theory, social relationships – especially close relationships such as romantic attachment or friendships – are not only essential for satisfying our need for relatedness; they also support our need for autonomy and competence. Thus, they are vital for self-determined action, and all the positive effects that are connected with it. The importance of social relationships has been noted in particular within sociology, through theories of social capital. For example, Coleman (1988) assumes that a high level of trust in the community

encourages an open exchange of information and mutual assistance, thereby improving the living conditions of the members of the community. In this way, trusting social relationships within the school, as well as among the students and their parents and the neighborhood contribute to the academic success of the students. Putnam (1993), too, emphasizes the advantages of close, trusting social relationships within a community. But he also notes the usefulness of relationships that transcend the group, which make possible access to social circles and resources that would not otherwise be available. Trusting and supporting social relationships are a core element of the school climate (Thapa et al., 2013: 363). A trusting, responsive school climate oriented toward participation supports not only the identification with the school; it also supports the students in their learning and well-being in the school. Such a school climate is considered to be especially important for ethnic minority students and students from poor families (ibid.). The factors listed above are also regarded as essential characteristics for fostering student-teacher relations, as well as parent-child relations (Agirdag et al., 2012: 1139). With respect to success at school, what is most beneficial is the parents' interest in school attendance, with attentive supervision and active support, for example through assistance with the completion of homework (Plunkett et al., 2008). The same thing applies for the parents' active involvement in the school; whereby, precisely for the immigrant parents there are enormous hurdles to overcome (Turney and Tao, 2009). Primarily seen as important for the exchange of information and ideas, classmates also provide help and support. Such respectful interactions strengthen the cohesion of the group of learners, of the class and the school community; and thereby support academic achievement (Furrer et al., 2014: 106). As explained above, it is also important that the children are appreciated and liked, and most important that they find friends. For children and youth, friendships play an extraordinary role in their lives. They are seen as the most important social relationship of their self-socialization, but also as the source of help and support. An outstanding role in this is played by the school. Between the ages of six and sixteen, friendships are primarily formed with classmates, with whom time is spent outside of school as well. These friendships are not just occupied with school matters, then, but also with issues connected with growing up, such as problems with the parents or romantic relationships. However, friendship is defined by its exclusivity. It is impossible to be friends with everyone. Additionally, friendships do not happen by chance. Rather, they are taken up between interaction partners who are similar in various ways – for example, with respect to sex, social position, level of education or even ethnic heritage. This structuring principle is called 'homophily' (McPherson, 2001). For young people with an immigration background, close friendships are often intra-ethnic relationships (Titzmann and Silbereisen, 2009; Leszczensky and Pink, 2015). Winkler et al. (2011) have pointed out that not all relationships within a network of friends share the same intensity, some of them being more on the vague side. Drawing on Mark Granovetter's (1973) differentiation between strong and weak ties, findings show that the weaker relationships, which are nevertheless called friendships, are inter-ethnic relationships. According to Putnam's concept of social capital, inter-ethnic relationships, even if less intense, could be useful for both native and non-native students. Moreover, in terms of the strategies of

acculturation, they can be seen as an indicator of integration. Jugert et al. (2017) examined the effects of ethnic minority adolescents' ethnic self-identification on friendship choices, and show that a host country and dual identification is beneficial to friendships with both ethnic majority and minority peers. In contrast, heritage country identification was detrimental to relations with both of them.

2.3 School Attendance of Newly Immigrated Students in Germany

Children and youth who arrive in Germany with their families or on their own are generally required to attend school, independent of their residential status. Until what age they are required to attend school differs among the Länder, each Land being responsible for itself in deciding on the laws for this. In general, school attendance begins at the age of six, and the requirement for full-time attendance ends as a rule when the child turns 16. School attendance should follow quickly, usually no later than three months after arriving. This also applies for children of those seeking asylum, or children and youth who apply for asylum themselves. However, the waiting period to attend school is often longer, among other reasons because school attendance in some Länder only begins after leaving the reception centers and having been assigned to a particular locality (Lewerk and Naber, 2017: 39). Enrollment of the children and youth is through the local school authorities or the local integration centers. Again, the residential status is not relevant, but rather the ability to work in the language of instruction, as well as additional criteria such as the previous schooling. Within the schools themselves, there are various possibilities for taking in the newly immigrated students who have not yet learned German. In addition to the direct placement in a regular classroom and additional support with German, there might be preparatory classes that permit a gradual participation in the regular classroom or a transition to the regular class at a particular time (Terhart et al., 2017: 239). Preparatory classes are thus a central element in the education of newly immigrated students who do not know German. There has been a large increase in their numbers over the course of the past few years, owing to the large number of newly immigrated minors in all of the German Länder (Authoring Group Educational Reporting, 2018: 93). Preparatory classes have been available in Germany since the 1960s. They were set up as a result of educational policy debates concerning what forms of education the children of the so-called guest workers should receive. Their parents had been recruited to work in Germany and came from countries in Southern Europe, but in particular from Turkey. The question became pressing once the families were permitted to move to Germany. Their establishment is to be judged as advantageous with respect to opportunities for integration. Even if they owe their existence to the intervention of the EU, they make access to the regular school system possible for children with a migration background (Radtke, 2004: 635). Controversial at the time, however, was the organizational structure, the content of the lessons, as well as the educational goals in these classes (Boos-Nünning and Schwarz, 2004). Overall, it is the same today. In addition, very little is known about what the students are gaining by attending preparatory classes, and what is made possible for them in and beyond the school through their attendance (Brüggemann and Nicolai, 2016).

Only in the last few years have the preparatory classes (again) attracted greater attention. A few details about them were included in the national educational report. In addition, several research findings are available. There are now indications that preparatory classes are not evenly spread across all school forms. In school systems that differentiate performance, the classes appear to be primarily a part of less-demanding academic tracks (Kemper, 2016). Since these schools have a high percentage of youth with an immigration background, one can suppose that by taking in the newly immigrated children, the ethnic segregation between the schools has increased. Possibly contributing to this inequality are informal, pragmatic regulatory practices such as the assignment of refugee children and youth to schools near their place of residence (Baier and Siegert, 2018, for a general review Eule, 2016). Newly arrived families usually live in the neighborhoods that are open to them, under consideration of their limited financial means due to their uncertain residency rights (Helbig and Jähnen, 2019).

Although some findings show that the majority of schools have set up preparatory classes, the pedagogical practice is observed to be directed at integration (Otto et al., 2016). Thus, there are schools in which the models mentioned above are combined in order to have more options to support students. In particular, the extra-curricular activities are seen as both an opportunity to bond with native-born classmates and to offer additional support for learning. These activities are open to all students as a rule. In many schools additional offerings were put together specifically to support the newly arrived through group activities together with students already enrolled, such as peer-to-peer mentoring.

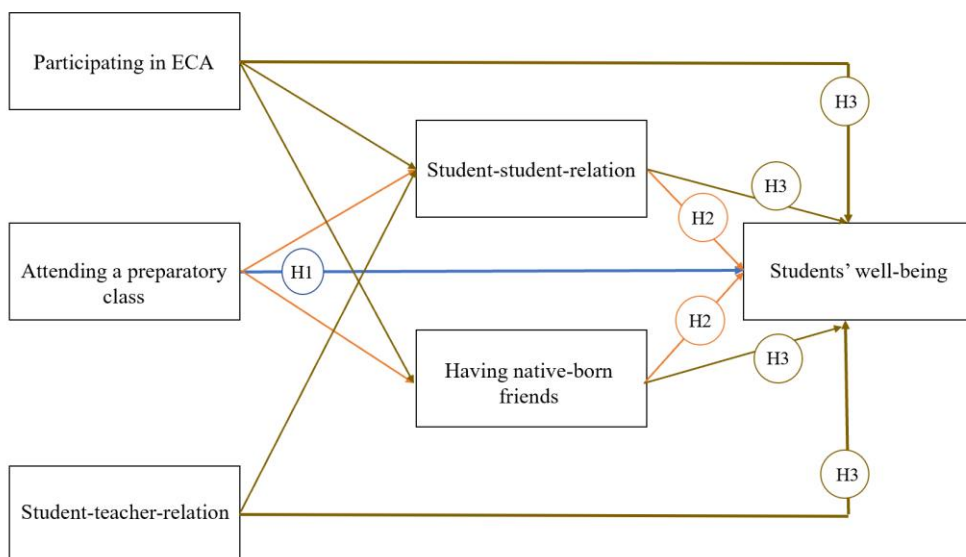
Finally, volunteers and refugee initiatives have also found their way into the schools in order to support the new immigrants, especially refugee youth, both in and outside of the school. The most recent immigration, with its many refugees, has led to an intense and often controversial public discussion in Germany, as it has in other European countries. However, the acceptance of the refugees (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran, 2017) and the commitment to helping them has remained comparatively high (Karakayali, 2016). Relatively few results are available detailing how the newly immigrated students assess their educational situation. The students in these classes were often unable to evaluate the meaning of attending these courses for themselves personally. The content of the lessons was perceived as not demanding enough (Barth and Guerrero Menesses, 2012: 7). Schmiedebach and Wegner (2019) report that learning in a regular class is perceived by the immigrant students as more frustrating and boring and there is a greater fear of speaking. With regard to social integration, the findings from Steinmann (2016) show that children and youth mostly structure their everyday interactions according to their gender, but also according to their ethnicity or social affiliation. In addition to this, tendencies to draw institutional and individual lines vis-à-vis the refugee students were observed. Refugees who attended preparatory classes also stayed together for everyday practices, such as eating lunch, because of the school's rules. Thus, an exchange with other classmates was no longer possible.

3. Methods

3.1 Research questions and hypotheses

Children and young people from abroad face a number of challenges with regard to schooling in the host country, for example, the new language, new teaching content and, last but not least, new classmates and teachers. There are different ways in which newly immigrated students can be integrated into the school community and participate in learning processes. However, there are doubts as to whether the preparatory class attendance, which is widespread in Germany, will succeed. The (temporary) separation of the students from their schoolmates is seen as a difficult hurdle for their social integration within the school community.

Figure 1: Hypothesized relations between Attending a preparatory class, Participation in extracurricular activities, Students' social relationships and perceived Well-being



Therefore, this paper asks the question if the attendance in a preparatory class indeed hinders the social integration of the newly immigrated students within their new school community. If so, the attendance in a preparatory class should have a direct negative effect on students' well-being in the school (hypothesis 1). However, since attending a preparatory class is linked to a limited social bonding, this effect on students' well-being should at least partly be mediated by the perceived quality of the student-student relation and the chances to develop friendships with native-born friends in school (hypothesis 2). Participation in extracurricular activities and a positive student-teacher relation should support and improve the students' relationships and also have an immediate positive effect on students' well-being (hypothesis 3).

Attending a preparatory class thus combines both a temporal and a performance-based differentiation, which could be linked to two different effects on well-being in school. Therefore, the time a student has spent in the current

school is included in the model, and there are indicators for gender and the families' social or educational background as well. Gender as well as the families' educational background are linked to both, finding friends and students' well-being.

3.2 Participants

The participants consisted of 694 students from 67 lower secondary public schools in four German Länder. With the exception of the grammar schools and the schools for special needs education, all the school types available in Germany are included in the sample. All participants had come since 2015, arriving with almost no knowledge of German, and had been attending school in Germany since then. The survey was conducted in the summer of 2018. It was a standardized multi-thematic survey and took place within the school. In addition to the migration and present personal circumstances, the students were asked to provide information about various aspects of their education to date and about their current school as well as their private situation. Among the questions were ones concerning their relationships with their classmates and the educational staff, as well as ones about existing friendships with their classmates. The students could use a questionnaire in German, English, French, Spanish, Arabic or Farsi. At 53.8 per cent, about half of those surveyed used the German version; around every third student (35.8 per cent) answered in Arabic or Farsi; everyone else in one of the remaining languages.

Of the participants, girls and boys participated in almost equal measure (47.8 vs. 52.2 per cent). Students between the ages of ten and nineteen took part; the average age was 15.2 years. With about two-thirds (65.0 per cent) the majority of the young people came from refugee regions in the Near and Mid-East or Africa, one in five (19.3 per cent) coming from an EU-28 country, 8.7 per cent from other European countries and 7.0 per cent from other countries. Almost 73.0 per cent of those surveyed who are not from one of the EU-28 member states, said that their parents, or they themselves, had officially asked for asylum. The vast majority (87.0 per cent) arrived in Germany with at least one parent; nevertheless, 9.0 per cent came without parents, but with relatives or an unrelated person. However, 4.0 per cent of the participants arrived alone.

The students' information was supplemented by data from the 67 schools' principals, who, together with principals from other schools, had been asked about the integration of the newly arrived students at their schools one year before. According to the information provided by the principals, 68.7 per cent of these schools offer different school tracks within the school. Students can achieve different types of diplomas, according to the tracks they are in and their school performance. The average proportion of students with an immigrant background within these schools is 19.2 per cent (SD=24.0 per cent).

3.3 Data Analyses

For analyses, a structural equation modelling (SEM) was conducted to analyze the impact of preparatory class attendance on social relationships within the school

and on the well-being of newly arrived students. The model allows the simultaneous examination of multiple mediational paths. The direct and indirect associations are all examined in one model. Therefore, all variables were z-transformed. The MLR with missing values-option was used to deal with missing values. A multi-level model was not implemented due to the small ICC (0.07). Due to the clustered data structure, the standard errors were corrected with robust standard errors clustered for 67 schools.

3.4 Variables

Students' Well-being (independent variable) (WB): Students' well-being was measured using a 3-item self-report scale. It includes statements like 'I feel comfortable in this school.' There were four possible answers ranging from 'does not apply at all' (4) to 'applies completely' (4). The scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha = .76. The mean score is 3.22 (SD=0.69) (see Table 1).

Attending a preparatory class (PC): It is difficult to ask students about organizational characteristics of their school. That is even more the case when newly arrived students are surveyed and different models of schooling are used. To make it clear but at the same time keep it simple, the participant was presented the question 'Are all of your classmates recently arrived to the school from another country, like you?' (yes/no). If the answer to this question is 'yes' the student count as attending a preparatory class (yes (1) = 60.3 per cent).

Time spent in the current school (DUR): When the survey was conducted, a part of the participants had already been enrolled for one year or longer in the school. Based on the students' information about the year of enrollment, this variable differs between students who enrolled before 2017 and during 2017 and 2018 (44.9 per cent).

Participation in extracurricular activities (ECA2): As mentioned above, the participation in school-based extracurricular activities is seen as an opportunity to bond with schoolmates and to find friend among them. Such activities usually take place in the afternoon. A student who stays in school at least one day per week in the afternoon and attends at least in one offering (i.e. sport clubs, additional courses) counts as a participant. Among the participants, more than half (55.8 per cent) are using additional offerings.

Having native-born friends (FRIENDS): For the purpose of this paper, it is not important how many friends a student has, how ethnically diverse their group of friends is or how close their relation is. According to social capital approaches, it is important to have at least one inter-ethnic relationship because of their potential to function as a 'social bridge'. Nearly every student reported to have friends in school. Not everybody had a native-born friend, but with 70.5 per cent the majority of the participants did. Included in this proportion are students who could not report the ethnic origin of their friend(s). This decision was made due to the similarities to clearly noticeable German friends regarding, for example, received support or the links with well-being.

Table: Descriptive Statistics for Variables, Frequencies, Means and Standard Deviation (SD)

	N	Mean or in %	SD
Students' well-being (WB)	682	3.22	0.69
Attending a preparatory class (PC)	662	43.7 %	—
Time spent in the current school (DUR) (1= since 2017)	644	44.9 %	
Participation in extracurricular activities (1= yes)	694	55.8 %	
Having native-born friends (FRIENDS) (1= yes)	662	70.5 %	
Student-Student-Relation (SSR)	680	2.71	0.59
Student-Teacher-Relation (STR)	675	3.56	0.51
Academic Background (AB) (1= at least one parent with a completed academic education)	694	24.2 %	
Gender (GIRLS) (1= girls)	691	47.8 %	

Student-Student Relation (SSR): The measurement of the quality of a student-student relation is based on five items. It includes statements like 'My classmates listen to me.', 'My classmates help me.', but also 'My classmates tease me.' There were four possible answers ranging from 'applies completely' (1) to 'does not apply at all' (4). For scaling, items like the latter one were inverted (Cronbach's alpha =.72). The mean score is 2.71 (SD=0.59).

Student-Teacher Relation (STR): A scale consisting of four items measures the student-teacher-relation. 'My teachers take me seriously.' is an example for the statements that were used. The scale has the same range as the scales described above. The mean score is 3.56 (SD=0.51) (Cronbach's alpha=.67).

Gender (GIRLS): According to Hascher (2004), gender plays a crucial role for students well-being. The proportion of girl within the sample was already reported above.

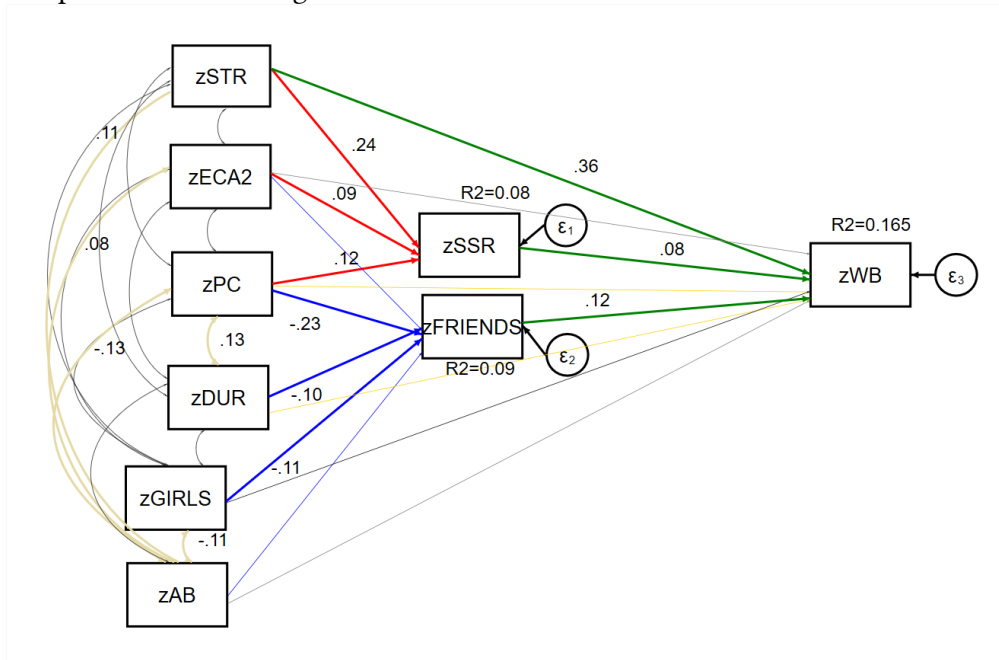
Academic background (AB): According to the students' reports, in nearly every fourth family (24.2 per cent) the mother or the father had completed an academic education.

4. Findings

As the mean score for the self-reported well-being indicates, the newly arrived students feel, overall, quite well in the new school environment. This seems to be in clear contrast to the expectation that the attendance in a preparatory class is linked to reduced well-being (hypothesis 1). According to the findings mentioned above concerning the decrease in well-being with as time spent at school increases on the other hand, it can be assumed that students who have only recently arrived

at the school feel more comfortable there than youth who have been at the current school over a longer period of time. As can be seen in figure 2, it makes no difference whether or not the student attended a preparatory class, or not or how long the student has already attended this school. Both variables—highlighted in yellow—have no direct impact on the well-being of the students. Other than expected, there is no immediate effect of the preparatory class on students' well-being.

Figure 2: Impact of preparatory class on school-based social relations and students self-perceived well-being



z=standardized variables; zSTR= Student-Teacher-Relation; zECA2= Participation in extracurricular activities; zPC=Attending a preparatory class; zDUR=Time spent in the current school; zGIRLS=Gender; zAB= Academic Background; zSSR= Student-Student-Relation; zFRIENDS= Having native-born friends; zWB= Well-being

CFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.046, N=694; Thin lines are non-significant paths.

In addition, neither participation in extracurricular activities nor gender or the parents' educational background affects students' well-being in school. What is highly relevant are social relationships within the school (highlighted in green). This is true for the relationships with other students and teachers as well as the friendships with native-born classmates. They all significantly contribute to the students' well-being. It is presumed that attending a preparatory class is linked to limited social bonding and this has an effect on students' well-being (hypothesis 2). There are indeed two effects of attending a preparatory class on students' relations. Firstly, attending a preparatory class has a positive impact on the student-student relation (β : .12) (highlighted in red). Furthermore, the student-

student relation is also shaped by participation in extracurricular activities (β : .09), but especially by the student-teacher relation (β : .24). Since there are no mediating effects due to the non-significant main effect for participation in extracurricular activities and attending a preparatory class, the student-teacher relation has not only an enormous immediate impact on students' well-being (β : .36), but a mediated positive effect on the student-student-relation (β : .02 (SE: 0.1), $p < 0.05$).

Secondly, attending a preparatory class has a negative effect on immigrant students' potential for friendships with native-born students (β : -.23) (highlighted in blue). This is not the result of the limited time the students in preparatory classes have usually spent in the current school. The time span is taken into account in the model. Unsurprisingly, the results show that new immigrant students have (more) friendships with native-born classmates the longer they have been attending the current school (β : -.10). In addition, there is an indirect effect of time spent at school on friendships with native-born schoolmates. This effect indicates that to be the new kid in school is a hurdle for friendships with native schoolmates and that as a result the student's individual well-being is reduced (β : -.01 (SE: 0.01), $p < 0.03$). More surprising is that it is less likely for girls to have native-born friends (β : -.11), also with a negative indirect effect on well-being (β : -.01 (SE: 0.01), $p < 0.03$). In contrast, the participation in extracurricular activities does not support the establishment of friendships. The same applies to family's educational background. In sum, there is only small evidence in favor for hypothesis 2 and 3. With regard to hypothesis 2, the results show that the preparatory classes limit the opportunities to develop friendships with native-born peers, but do not limit social bonding. The restrictions on making friends reduce the students' well-being, but this restriction itself is due to time and gender, not the class context. With regard to hypothesis 3, it should be noted that the positive effect of the student-teacher-relation on students well-being is partly mediated by the student-student relation.

There is a negative correlation between attending a preparatory class and the educational background of the parental home as well as a positive correlation with gender of the students. Students from families in which at least one parent has a university degree are less likely to attend a preparatory class. This also applies to the girls, whose mothers or fathers have an academic background. That could be seen as an indicator for a socially unequal practice in regard to attending a preparatory class or participation in (more) regular learning environments. The findings discussed above are based on a model with an acceptable quality (CFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.046, N=694). All discussed findings are significant at least at $p < 0.05$.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

In Germany, as well as in other European countries, students with an immigration background are facing severe educational disadvantages. This is especially true for first-generation students and in a country with a highly stratified school system like Germany, where immigrant students often learn in less demanding school tracks within schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods. This explains the concern about an even greater social segregation through the newest immigration—and

this could still happen. This paper does not examine the educational progress of the newly arrived students, but rather their social integration within the regular school system. That the new immigrant students generally feel well at school and have good relationships with their new classmates is, therefore, a finding that deserves to be appreciated. It is also in line with what teachers and pedagogical practitioners have been experiencing over the past few years. Nevertheless, there are some remarkable differences. First, learning in preparatory classes correlates positively with the quality of the student-student relation on the one hand, and negatively with friendships with German classmates on the other hand. This could indicate that not only the learning, but also the social relationships are strongly geared to the preparatory class. Although positive social relationships between students contribute to their well-being, the restrictions on being able to make friends with German classmates are limiting the well-being at the same time. It seems that social bonding among the classmates within a preparatory class is actively supported by the school. With a view to the positive effect of participating in extra-curricular activities on the student-student relation, it could be assumed that schools are actively trying to turn a rather random class into a social group and a positive learning environment. However, because preparatory class is designed as temporary, such social grouping could become problematic during the future transition to a (more) regular setting. Furthermore, the findings suggest that sorting the new immigrant students in preparatory classes seems to follow the well-known pattern of inequality. Whether a student attends a preparatory or regular class seems to depend on their parents' educational backgrounds. Given the data this paper is based on, it is unfortunately not possible to explore the consequences for the social composition of the student body in these classes. Above all, friendships with German students and good relationships with the teachers strengthen the well-being of the new immigrant students in the school. Considering that the well-being of students at school is a prerequisite for the learning success of the students, there are (possible) disadvantages as well as advantages connected with separate learning environments.

6. Limitations

In organizing and conducting the survey, both the school management and the newly immigrated students were given the best possible support. Due both to the very different distribution of newly arrived families (especially those with a refugee background) across the German Länder, as well as to the very different types of schooling and learning contexts, there are spacing and timing effects that appear. These not only limit the analysis options but also might have had an influence on the response behavior of the students. Furthermore, the well-being used in the study aims at individual satisfaction with the school. Students tend to rate school satisfaction quite well. In any case, with this concept, the multidimensionality of well-being is not taken into account.

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