



The Canton of Zürich as an Example for Switzerland Involving the uninvolved: Students at risk of underachieving in mainstreaming education

Groups of risk to fail: Socio-economically disadvantaged, German as second language, boys, gifted children

Analysis: Over years immigration was dominated by socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Only in the last few years a greater number of well qualified adults immigrated to Switzerland. That's why the two groups of risk, socio-economically disadvantaged and German as second language correspond very much. And within this group boys tend to be significantly more "uninvolved underachievers" than girls. It is the same problem with gifted children. In relation to the intelligence quotient gifted boys risk to fail more in the entry exam to the gymnasium than do students with German as second language.

Policy: In consequence of the national provision of the Equal Opportunities for the Disabled Act (SR 151.3), integration measures have to take precedence over separation measures.

Measures: Due to the principal of cantonal autonomy each canton draws its own consequences. The following paper refers to the Canton of Zurich.

The Canton of Zurich has one focus on the socio-economically disadvantaged and German as second language students and another on gifted children. It does not focus on gender.

Regardless of any groups of risk the Canton of Zürich is trying to promote the precedence of integration measures over separation measures by general controlling measures.

Measures concerning special groups of risk

Socio-economically disadvantaged and German as second language students:

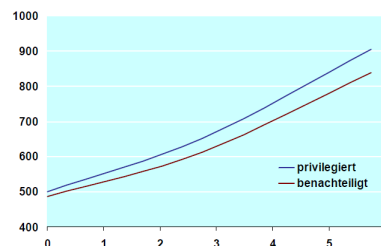
All schools with more than 40% of foreign students take part in the program of "Quality in Multicultural Schools" (QUIMS). It consists of the following three pillars:

1. **Language support:** Promoting literacy for all students e.g. by language competence assessments, preparation of good reading texts for different language competence levels, and creative work with speech and writing. Further support through integrated "native language and culture" lessons.
2. **Attainment support:** Integrative and differentiated learning support e.g. through holistic assessment and guidance, cooperative learning, problem solving assistance, support at school stage transitions by involving parents and mentors, etc.
3. **Integration support:** Building a culture of appreciation and equity by introducing rules and rituals, involvement of intercultural mediators, establishment of parent councils, etc.

Impact:

Evaluation could not prove an effect on school success. But they could show an effect in the domain of integration. The program has a positive effect on the climate at the schools, they have less problems of well behaving and teachers do cooperate in a better way (Moser, Urs et al. 2011, yet to be published). So this program might have an effect on involving the uninvolved but not necessarily on the risk of under-achieving.

School success from the first to the sixth form Privileged (blue) and disadvantaged (brown) students



Source: Moser, Urs: Nach sechs Jahren Primarschule, 2011

Impact:

A lot of communities do now offer such special trainings. They do not especially focus on underachiever. Measures have not been evaluated yet.

Gifted children:

As a reaction on different measures being taken in favor of socio-economically disadvantaged and students with German as second language as well as students with general learning difficulties, it was decided to encourage as well initiatives to stimulate gifted students. Communities do now have the possibility to offer special trainings for gifted children.

General controlling measures

Basic Assumption:

Students learn better in a mainstream class than they do in special needs classes or -schools. Separation has a negative effect on personal development and on learning on itself. Students depend on good examples in their peer group.

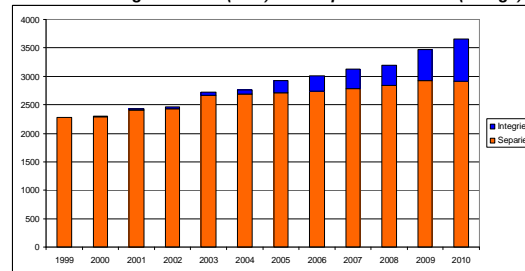
Measures:

The act of compulsory education of 2005 settles conditions within which it is difficult for communities to have special need classes. Special needs teachers should work in team-teaching situations within mainstream classes integrating special needs students. In addition they have to advise mainstreaming teachers how to deal with special needs students.

Impact:

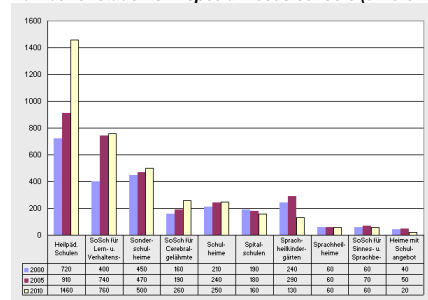
The statistics show, that special needs classes are diminishing distinctly. It is not yet evident if the system of integrating special needs students in mainstreaming classes is accepted by teachers. Since it becomes more difficult to have special needs classes we find a significant increase of students being sent to special needs schools. Especially the number of students with the diagnosis of a mentally handicap is increasing significantly. That possibly shows that the measurements taken in the compulsory education act have a negative effect on integration. The newest trend is to integrate "special needs schools" students into mainstream education. That means that the school integrating such a child gets much more resources than if it only has the label of "special needs" students.

Students in special needs schools in mainstreaming education (blue) or in separated schools (orange)



Source: Volksschulamt Kanton Zürich, 2011

Number of students in special needs schools (different types)



Source: Bildungsstatistik des Kantons Zürich, 2011