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# INSTITUTIONAL HABITUS AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY IN GERMANY AND TURKEY

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# CONTENTS


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 5

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 7
- Key Findings 7
- Recommendations 8

1. INTRODUCTION 9

2. WHY WORKING-CLASS IMMIGRANT CHILDREN FAIL IN EDUCATION: CONCERTED CULTIVATION AND NATURAL GROWTH 11

3. RESEARCH PROJECT AND CASE SELECTION 13

4. RESEARCH METHOD 15

5. INSTITUTIONAL HABITUS OF NOG AND KO 16
- 5.1. Institutional Habitus Confronts the Local Habitus of Students: Seeing Students at NOG as "Fish in Water" 17
- 5.2. NOG's Institutional Habitus Cultivates a "Sense of Entitlement" 19
- 5.3. Institutional Habitus Conflicts with the Cultural Habitus of Students: Seeing Students at KO as "Fish out of Water" 20
- 5.4. KO's Institutional Habitus Strengthens the "Sense of Constraint" 22

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM COORDINATORS AND POLICYMAKERS 24

BIBLIOGRAPHY 26

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The educational achievement of students from working-class ethnic minority or immigrant backgrounds is vitally important for their integration into the labor market and society. We know from research that their disadvantaged family background, such as low parental education and income, significantly influences these students' academic achievement. However, as students increasingly spend most of their time in school contexts, school has also become one of the key factors for understanding educational performance. In this context, interactions of specific school regulations, practices, and structures with the skills, values, and cultures of students can greatly contribute to the development of educational policies for reforming schools in a way that would increase the educational achievement of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This study conceptualizes school-related factors as institutional habitus and seeks to understand how schools' institutional habitus accommodate students from different ethnic and minority backgrounds for making empirical contributions to the development of inclusive and intercultural school structures.

This report is based on a comparative study that investigates the components of the institutional habitus of two different schools, one in Turkey and one in Germany, and how they influence the educational performance of children from working-class Kurdish ethnic minority backgrounds in Turkey and working-class Turkish immigrant backgrounds in Germany. This exploratory, qualitative study included interviews with teachers, students, school principals, and experts in the field of education, as well as participatory observations in the classroom and beyond. The key findings, which will be further discussed within the report, are summarized below.

**KEY FINDINGS:**

- The institutional habitus of schools in this study greatly differ from each other in terms of educational status, organizational practices, and expressive order.
- Schools' institutional habitus powerfully influence students' identity and, thus, skills and abilities.
- Inclusive institutional habitus systematically gives students the feeling that schools value their skills, abilities, language, and culture and in this way allows them to develop a sense of entitlement, which is not available to them either at home or in the neighborhood due to their class background.
- Exclusive institutional habitus systematically gives students the feeling that school devalues students' skills, abilities, language, and culture and strengthens the sense of constraint in students, which they have already internalized through their socialization.
- The comparative study of these two contrasting cases clearly shows that intervention programs should target reorganization of schools rather than family factors, which are, as previous intervention programs have demonstrated, resistant to change.
- Inclusive institutional habitus significantly encourages and increases parental involvement with school, whereas exclusive institutional habitus discourages parental involvement with school.
- As well as students, the institutional habitus of schools influence and constrain individual

views and ideas of teachers as the organizational regulations and practices mediate their relations with students and parents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The institutional habitus of schools, including organizational practices and expressive order, should be reorganized in a way that positively recognizes and values both the class and ethnic identities of students.
- More teachers from migration backgrounds should be employed as role models for students as a sign of positive recognition of students' class and ethnic backgrounds in school. This would also prevent relations from being ethnicized.
- New pedagogical methods for teaching such as a curriculum that recognizes cultural and linguistic differences and new performance evaluation methods such as delaying grades to later years should be appropriated in order to boost self-confidence and a sense of belonging among students.
- More work and a new mindset at the policy level should be developed to initiate inclusive and multicultural institutional habitus that consider diversity and multilingualism as resources rather than deficits.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

> If academic success in school were mainly contingent upon individual ability and effort, then there would be no need to entertain theories that focus our attention on the complexities that underline social relations in organizational life and society.[1]

Since the post-war period, the expansion of education, increasing one's average level of schooling, has become a Europe-wide phenomenon.[2] Today, higher education is seen as a prerequisite for accessing high status jobs and what constitutes a "better" life.[3] However, despite their increasing participation in education, students from minority and immigrant backgrounds cannot benefit from the expansion of education as much as their majority and native counterparts in many European countries.[4] The descendants of Turkish immigrants are considerably disadvantaged in education in Germany.[5] Along similar lines, students from Kurdish and Romani background fare low and drop out of schools more often than their Turkish counterparts in Turkey.[6]

Much of the literature has documented the role of socioeconomic background in minority and immigrant students' educational underachievement both in Germany and Turkey. Low parental education, income, and the language spoken at home have been found to strongly influence second-generation Turkish students' adaptation to school and educational performance in Germany.[7] Along the same line, a large body of literature has pointed to lower parental education and income[8] and low social and cultural capital[9] as the main reasons underlying Kurdish and Romani children's academic failure in the Turkish educational system.

Recently, some studies have advanced discussions about the potential reasons for the failure of working-class immigrant students by drawing attention to the role of schools in various countries.[10] The stratified German education system tracks students

1 R. D. Stanton-Salazar, "Social Capital among Working-Class Minority Students," in *School Connections, U.S. Mexican Youth, Peers, and School Achievement*, eds. M. A. G. Gibson, P. Gandara, and J. P. Koyama (New York, London: Teachers College Press, 2004), 18-38.

2 Yossi Shavit and Hans-Peter Blossfeld, *Inequality: Changing Educational Attaintment in Thirteen Countries* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1993).

3 Adél Pásztor, "Divergent Pathways: The Road to Higher Education for Second-Generation Turks in Austria," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 19, no. 4 (2016): 880-900.

4 Sylke Viola Schnepf, "Immigrants' Educational Disadvantage: An Examination across Ten Countries and Three Surveys," *British Educational Research Journal* 36, no. 3 (2010): 107-124.

5 Anthony F. Heath, Catherine Rothon, and Elina Kilpi, "The Second Generation in Western Europe: Education, Unemployment, and Occupational Attaintment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 34, no. 1 (2008): 211-235, doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.04.272.

6 Çetin Çelik, "Parental Networks, Ethnicity, and Social and Cultural Capital: The Societal Dynamics of Educational Resilience in Turkey," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* (2016): 1-12.

7 B. Nauck, A. Kohlmann, and H. Diefenbach, "Family Networks, Intergenerative Transmission and Assimilation Process in Turkish Migrant Families," *Kolner Zeitschrift Für Soziologie Und Sozialpsychologie* 49, no. 3 (1997): 477-499; Wolf R. Leenen, Harald Grosch, and Ulrich Kreidt, "Bildungsverständnis, Plazierungsverhalten und Generationenkonflikt in türkischen Migrantenfamilien: Ergebnisse qualitativer Interviews mit „bildungserfolgreichen" Migranten der Zweiten Generation," *Zeitschrift Für Pädagogik* 36 (1990): 753-771.

8 Aysit Tansel, "Determinants of School Attainment of Boys and Girls in Turkey: Individual, Household and Community Factors," *Economics of Education Review* 21, no. 5 (2002): 455-470; B. H. Rankin and I. A. Aytac, "Gender Inequality in Schooling: The Case of Turkey," *Sociology of Education* 79 (2006): 25-43; J. Smits and A. Hosgor, "Effects of Family Background Characteristics on Educational Participation in Turkey," *International Journal of Educational Development* 26, no. 5 (2006): 545-560.

9 Çelik, "Parental Networks, Ethnicity, and Social."

10 T. L. Parcel and M. J. Dufur, "Capital at Home and at School: Effects on Student Achievement," *Social Forces* 79, no. 3 (2001): 881-911; M. Paz Sandín Esteban and Angelina Sánchez Martí, "Beyond Compulsory Schooling: Resilience and Academic Success of Immigrant Youth," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 132 (2014): 19-24.

aged eleven or twelve into differently organized and hierarchically ordered secondary school types: the *Hauptschule* (Practical Vocational Training), the *Realschule* (Intermediate Education), or the *Gymnasium* (University-Track Grammar School).[11] Baumert and Maaz have shown that the different secondary school types have different school cultures, and they considerably affect students' educational performance in Germany.[12] Additionally, Dirim and Mecheril argue that the German educational system sees diversity and multilingualism as deficits rather than resources, and it does not value language and the culture of immigrant children.[13]

Similar to early tracking in the German educational system, the Turkish educational system sorts students into differently organized, hierarchically ordered secondary school types such as *Anadolu Lisesi* (Anatolian High School), *Anadolu Meslek Lisesi* (Anatolian Vocational High School), or *İmam Hatip Lisesi* (Imam Hatip High School) through the Exam for Transition from Basic to Secondary Education (*Temel Eğitimden Ortaöğretime Geçiş Sınavı*, TEOG). The type and quality of schools considerably shape children's educational performance.[14] The statistical variance analysis of student performance between and within schools clearly shows that 53 percent of low achievement is due to differences in quality between school types in Turkey.[15] Like the German educational system, the Turkish educational system does not recognize, even actively devalues, the cultural and linguistic capitals of disadvantaged minorities.[16] Due to its monoethnic focus, it holds quite an insufficient level of knowledge and experience concerning intercultural education.[17]

This literature successfully shows the links between school type and educational performance. However, it is inadequate as it has not sufficiently advanced the knowledge of the process whereby schools influence students' educational achievement based on daily interactions.[18] This study fills this gap in the literature for the first time through a qualitative comparative case study between Germany and Turkey. It investigates the mechanisms through which two schools, located in Bremen and Istanbul, generate positive and negative effects on the students' learner identity and, thus, educational performance. Drawing upon the concept of institutional habitus, this study postulates that schools as institutions follow a certain set of organizational patterns and workings that considerably affect students' educational achievement.

The report begins with a brief discussion of the concepts and theoretical framework that have informed this study. Then, the research design and the results of the case study are presented. The paper concludes with recommendations for policymakers in the field of education.

**11** In some German states, beside these three main tracks, there are also *Gesamtschulen* (Comprehensive Schools), which integrate these three tracks and facilitate movement between them. These are integrated comprehensive schools (joint classes for all students) as well as additive and cooperative comprehensive schools (where the various types of secondary schools exist side by side on the same premises).

**12** Jürgen Baumert and Kai Maaz, "Bildungsungleichheit und Bildungsarmut – Der Beitrag von Large-Scale-Assessments," in *Bildungsverlierer*: Neue Ungleichheiten, ed. Gudrun Quenzel and Klaus Hurrelmann, (Wiesbaden: VS, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010), 159-179.

**13** İnci Dirim and Paul Mecheril, "Die Schlechterstellung Migrationsanderer. Schule in der Migrationsgesellschaft," in *Migrationspädagogik*, ed. Paul Mecheril, et al. (Weinheim: Beltz, 2010), 121-138.

**14** Çetin Çelik, "The Walls Built by Education are Hard to Climb," *Saha: Citizens' Assembly,* 2016, http://www.hyd.org.tr/tr/yayinlar/197-saha-english-issue-1-turkey-in-the-2000s-a-human-security-approach.

**15** Serdar Polat and T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, *Türkiye'de Eğitim Politikalarının Fırsat Eşitsizliği Üzerindeki Etkileri* (Ankara: Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 2009).

**16** Hasan Aydın and Burhan Özfidan, "Perceptions on Mother Tongue (Kurdish) Based Multicultural and Bilingual Education in Turkey," *Multicultural Education Review* 6, no. 1 (2014): 21-48.

**17** Fatma Gök, "The History and Development of Turkish Education," in *Education in "Multicultural" Societies*: *Turkish and Swedish Perspectives* vol. 18, eds. Marie Carlson, Annika Rabo, and Fatma Gök (Stockholm: İstanbul Svenska Forskningsinstitutet, 2007), 247-255.

**18** Kitty te Riele, "Youth 'at Risk': Further Marginalizing the Marginalized?" *Journal of Education Policy* 21, no. 2 (2006): 129-145.

## 2. WHY WORKING-CLASS IMMIGRANT CHILDREN FAIL IN EDUCATION: CONCERTED CULTIVATION, NATURAL GROWTH AND INSTITUTIONAL HABITUS

The role of social class in relation to educational inequalities is one of the most widely studied topics in the fields of sociology, psychology, and stratification. The literature reveals that students from working-class backgrounds often fail in education and leave schools earlier in various contexts. Lareau argues that this is mainly because of classed child-rearing practices.[19] She has compared working-class students with middle-class students in the United States in terms of parenting practices and argued that these parents have classed child-rearing practices that result in the cultivation of a different set of habitus in their children. Middle-class parents promote "concerted cultivation"; they foster children's talents, opinions, and skills by enrolling children in organized activities, reasoning with children, such as answering questions with questions, and closely monitoring children's activities in institutions such as school. Through this pattern of concerted cultivation, middle-class children acquire better verbal skills and feel comfortable with speaking to adults such as teachers, and they also gain an emerging sense of entitlement. They are intervening, questioning, and exhibiting assertive attitudes in their relations with professionals and institutions.

Working-class and low-income parents promote "the accomplishment of natural growth." They care for their children and love them; however, children grow spontaneously in absence of economic resources. They do not have organized activities but play outside with their cousins and other kin and watch television. Parents use directives rather than reasoning in their communications. These children have limited verbal skills and feel uncomfortable in speaking with adults as they cannot probe, argue, and question them. This way, they develop an emerging sense of constraint. They often feel powerless and frustrated while interacting with non-kin actors and institutions.[20]

As dominant institutions such as schools privilege assertive, informed, and active clients, children from the middle class enjoy the similarity between home and school and feel like "fish in water" in school, whereas children from the working class suffer from differences in home and school and feel like "fish out of water" in school.[21] Working-class students are often exposed to "symbolic violence" in school[22] and withdraw from education in different forms such as truancy, low educational performance, and dropping out over time.

Against this background, I argue that students from working-class ethnic minority backgrounds feel like "fish out of water" doubly in school when the school misrecognizes/disapproves of both their class and ethnic identity simultaneously. These students are often exposed to considerable symbolic violence in school as academic success for them often means repression of both their class and ethnic identities, which are usually associated with

19 Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhood: Class, Race, and Family Life,* 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

20 Ibid.

21 Loic J. D. Wacquant, "Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (1989): 26.

22 Diane Reay, Gill Crozier, and John Clayton, "'Fitting In' or 'Standing Out': Working-class Students in UK Higher Education," *British Educational Research Journal* 36, no. 1 (2010): 107-124.

working-class roughness and religious masculinity, gravely differing from the middle-class values of the school. [23]

The literature presented above reveals that schools play an important role in the achievement and drop out rate of students from working-class minority and immigrant backgrounds. To investigate how schools shape students' withdrawal from education over time, I suggest examining this through the concept of institutional habitus. Institutional habitus is a set of predispositions, taken-for-granted expectations, and schemes of perceptions in which institutions, in this case schools, are organized.[24] It refers to the impact of a cultural group or social class on individual behavior as it is mediated through an organization.[25] More concretely, institutional habitus refers to educational status, organizational practices and expressive order, expectations, conduct, character, and manners.[26] Building on this theoretical framework, this study investigates, first, in what ways institutional habitus differs between the two schools in Germany and Turkey and, second, how these differences cultivate or suppress pro-school identity and educational achievement among students from working-class minority and immigrant backgrounds in two countries.

**23** For a detailed account of the experiences of students from Turkish migration background in German universities, please see, Yasemin Karakaşoğlu-Aydın, "Studentinnen türkischer Herkunft an deutschen Univer- sitäten unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Studierenden pädagogischer Fächer," in Iman Attia & Helga Marburg- er, eds. Alltag und Lebenswelten von Migrantenjugendlichen, 101-106 (Frankfurt A. M.: Iko-Verlag für interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2000).

**24** D. Reay, M. David, and S. Ball, "Making a Difference? Institutional Habituses and Higher Education Choice," *Sociological Research Online* 5, no. 4 (2001).

**25** Patricia M. McDonough, *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

**26** Ibid.

## 3. RESEARCH PROJECT AND CASE SELECTION

This research project compares one best-practice school in Bremen with a standard public school in Istanbul in terms of institutional habitus and its effects on the educational performance of students from working-class minority and immigrant backgrounds. Both schools are located in disadvantaged inner-city areas of their respective cities and are heavily populated by disadvantaged minorities and immigrants.

The best-practice school is located in the Gröpelingen neighborhood in Bremen. It harbors mostly disadvantaged Turkish immigrants. The attendance rate to academic school track, *Gymnasium*, was traditionally not higher than 15 percent in the neighborhood. Many parents found the schools in Gröpelingen risky for the educational careers of their children and began sending their children to the schools in the neighboring areas. Therefore, the Bremen Ministry of Education initiated a school reform process and founded a model school with a new concept, Neue Oberschule Gröpelingen (NOG), in 2009/10. It is a best-practice model school with new regulations and practices ranging from the grading system and parent-school interactions to its multilingual school culture in Turkish, English, and German. As an *Oberschule*,[27] NOG, with its differentiated curriculum in the form of *Grund* (Basic) and *Erweiterung* (Advanced) courses, serves students from various performance levels and grants various school certificates.

NOG, while being very young, has produced remarkable results among descendants of disadvantaged, mostly Turkish immigrants in its first five years. Among the school's first cohort, which graduated this year, the rate of students following the academic school track is almost 45 percent, 48 students out of 108, three times higher than traditional rates in Gröpelingen. The first cohort of NOG students took *Zentrale Abschlussprüfung* (Central Final Examination) at the end of tenth grade in 2016—an exam organized centrally by *Senatorin für Kinder und Bildung, Landesinstitut für Schule* (Senator for Children and Education, Land Institute for Schools). The students performed in German and English slightly worse and in math better than average scores for Bremen. This great difference with the past confirms the capacity of schools, when having the right policies in place, to make changes in the educational ability of their students.

The project investigates, on the one hand, how NOG works and in what ways its practices affected change over time. On the other, it investigates in what ways the institutional habitus of NOG can be applied to the working and practices of a regular public school in Istanbul, Karahan Ortaokulu (KO).[28] KO, a middle school, is in the Karahan neighborhood of Istanbul, in which mostly Kurdish internal migrants have cumulated due to forced migration from the southeast of Turkey in the 1990s. The two schools share some similar settings. Both are in inner-city areas heavily populated by minority groups, Turkish students in the case of NOG and Kurdish in the case

**27** In Bremen, *Oberschule* (Unified Comprehensive School) is a school type that takes students from primary schools and educates them from fifth grade to tenth grade. In contrast to rigidly separated school tracks in the form of *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gymnasium*, it is possible to move among these tracks in *Oberschule* and receive certificates from each of these schools. Inclusive students, who were thought to be mentally handicapped and separated for *Förderzentrum* (Special School), are also being educated together with other students in *Oberschule*. For the minor differences between *Gesamtschule* and *Oberschule*, see: http://www.uwe-schuenemann.de/image/inhalte/file/Vergleich%20OBS%20IGS.pdf.

**28** School, neighborhood, and interviewee names in Turkey are used in this study as pseudonyms.

of KO; both accommodate a similar age group of students, fifth to tenth grades in NOG and fifth to eighth grades in KO. However, other factors render them very different in the context of this research. Unlike NOG, which is a best-practice model school, KO is a typical inner-city public school. This makes the comparison particularly credible to see how the two schools, which have different institutional habitus but accommodate the same age of disadvantaged minority students, generate different learner identities and academic achievements.

The comparison between best-practice and regular schools in this study will reveal the inclusive elements of a suitable institutional habitus that can be adopted as a model for the inclusion of descendants of minority groups such as Romani and Kurdish, and Syrians in the close future, in Turkey.

## 4. RESEARCH METHOD

This study draws on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with students, teachers, and school principals in NOG and KO in Bremen and Istanbul, respectively. In NOG, students are second-generation Turkish immigrants who were born and grew up in Germany. In KO, students are descendants of Kurdish minorities; most of them were born and grew up in Istanbul or came to the city before their schooling age. Interviews were conducted in 2015, and the student interviewees ranged in age from 13 to 18 years old. The student and teacher interviewees were sampled using the snowball technique, which served to gain access to participants and build trust.[29] For contacting interviewees, I received much help from teachers and guidance counselors in both schools. Once they had established my legitimacy, I successfully attained trust and rapport with my informants. I included both male and female student interviewees in my sample.

I conducted 36 interviews mainly with school principals, teachers, social workers, and students, as well as held multiple casual conversations with school staff and teachers in both schools. I also conducted focus group interviews with teachers and social workers at NOG and teachers at KO. The interviews were conducted in Turkish, German, and English and lasted between 40 minutes to two hours. The transcribed semi-structured interviews were analyzed using the Atlas.ti program following the principles of qualitative content analysis. That is, the data was systematically subjected to procedures of summary—i.e., reducing the data to smaller parts, or explication; formation of categories and coding rules, as well as structuring; extracting a consistent structure.[30]

I also made participant observations for specific times in both schools. I occasionally attended classes and workshops designed for teachers and spent time in the hallways and teachers' lounges of the schools. I participated in events such as festivities organized by the schools and had the chance to regularly talk to teachers during lunch times. Participant observation was extremely helpful for understanding how the institutional habitus of schools are carried into effect and how it affects students' attitudes and behaviors. The research also draws empirical data from documents such as course books, curriculum, brochures, and websites.

In the following, based on my findings from in-depth interviews, secondary documents, and participant observations, the report introduces in what ways the institutional habitus of these schools differ from each other and how these differences cultivate or suppress pro-school identity and educational achievement among Turkish students in NOG and Kurdish students in KO.

**29** Chaim Noy, "Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11, no. 4 (2008): 327-344.

**30** Philipp Mayring, *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Grundlagen und Techniken* (Weinheim [u.a.]: Beltz, 2007).

## 5. INSTITUTIONAL HABITUS OF NOG AND KO

NOG is a public best-practice model school having advantaged infrastructure and an optimum number of students in each classroom, around 20 to 23. It is in Gröpelingen, which has been hit badly by the restructuring of the economy. The area is mostly composed of socioeconomically poor and disadvantaged immigrants, mostly Turkish. Students enter NOG after primary school, and NOG educates them from fifth to tenth grades. The students in NOG are predominantly from immigrant backgrounds, and they often come to NOG with a lack of elementary knowledge in math and German. Students can receive four different types of certificates based on the number of basic and advanced courses they successfully complete until the end of tenth grade. They can either receive *Einfache Berufsbildungsreife* (Basic Vocational Education and Training Certificate), *Erweiterte Berufsbildungsreife* (Advanced Vocational Education and Training Certificate), *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* (Middle School Graduation Certificate; this is equal to the *Realschule* certificate), or *Versetzung in die gymnasiale Oberstufe* (a certificate to attend Academic High School, *Gymnasium*). Students can try and increase the number of advanced courses at any time. Hence, in sharp contrast to the rigid tracking of the German educational system, students are not strictly attached to one single program in NOG.

NOG has a multicultural academic curriculum with, as explained, differentiated courses such as basic and advanced. The curriculum includes references to diverse religious events such as Christian, Jewish, Yazidi, and Islamic holidays, and the school gives extra days off to the students who want to celebrate their own religious festivals.[31] Furthermore, three languages, German, English, and Turkish, are visible everywhere in the school. Many signs such as administration or the teachers' lounge are in the three languages. Important documents for parents and regular school bulletins, which are prepared four times a year, are also published in the three languages. While other schools usually provide Spanish and French as second foreign language courses,[32] NOG officially accepts also Turkish as a second foreign language course. In NOG, teachers do not grade students in the courses at fifth, sixth, and seventh grades but generate detailed reports for the performance of the students in each course, to which students are expected to give feedback. Students are graded from eighth grade on to ensure integration of their records into the general education system. In the school, there are working classroom and school parliaments, and students are encouraged to take part in them. That is, the organization of teacher-student relations is not hierarchical but more democratic. The student body in NOG is one-third German, one-third Turkish, and one-third from various other countries. The percentage of teachers with migrant backgrounds is around 25 percent. The teachers' lounge is truly cosmopolitan; more than ten different languages are spoken among teachers. The multicultural structure of the student and teacher profiles is felt and observed in the hallways of the school as part of its expressive order. Teachers with migrant backgrounds play tremendous roles in facilitating parent-school interactions; they take active roles in individualized counseling services and in translations during parent-teacher meetings (PTMs). NOG also initiated, for the first time in Bremen, a

**31** Many schools apply this policy in Bremen.

**32** Which secondary school types students will attend is predominately determined by students' average grades in five fundamental courses: German, English, math, natural sciences, and a second foreign language course, which is usually either French or Spanish. Unlike other schools, NOG accepts Turkish as a second foreign language course.

position of *Beauftragte/r für interkulturelle Angelegenheiten* (Consultant for Intercultural Affairs). The person in this position is, among other things, expected to establish rapport with students and parents with migration background, translate some information for the parents, engage these parents in school, and work in cooperation with the district. Additionally, while PTMs are usually organized twice a year in other schools, NOG has four PTMs a year, and students' attendance is obligatory.

KO is in the disadvantaged Karahan region of Istanbul. It dominantly houses Kurdish internal migrants who were displaced by armed conflicts between the Turkish military and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan*, PKK) in the 1990s. Many Kurds moved to the periphery of metropolitan cities such as Diyarbakır, Ankara, Izmir, and Istanbul. These Kurdish internal migrants were socioeconomically disadvantaged and sought work in insecure marginal sectors of the labor markets, with men working in construction and women as housekeepers in gated communities.[33] KO is a regular public school that takes students from poor and working-class Kurdish backgrounds with low grades, and it educates them for various high school types. It should be noted, however, that while students can attend various high school types, almost all the students attend the least prestigious vocational schools. That is, the educational status of the schools is low. KO has a monocultural academic curriculum with standard course loads designed for public schools. Like the curriculum, the expressive order of the school is also hierarchical and undemocratic. The decisions are made from top to bottom; the counseling service is overwhelmingly collectivized and ritualized; there are not regular and well-organized translation services in PTMs; and teachers' expectations from students are extremely low. KO has no extra regulations or programs for its extremely high rate of Kurdish students. While 95 percent of students are of Kurdish background, according to the school principal, only two out of 40 teachers are of Kurdish ethnic background. In addition, 30 percent of the teachers are extremely young, inexperienced teachers with annual contracts. Teachers do not want to work in KO for a long time and leave the school as early as possible.

The following part of the report seeks to reveal how these different institutional habitus affect the identity formation and educational achievement of students from working-class minority and immigrant backgrounds in the two school types.

### 5.1. INSTITUTIONAL HABITUS CONFRONTS THE LOCAL HABITUS OF STUDENTS: SEEING STUDENTS AT NOG AS "FISH IN WATER"

In-depth interviews with students and teachers and regular observations in NOG reveal that, except in a few cases, the great majority of the students think that their culture and religion are valued in school. Many students I talked to remarked that they had a specific image of German schools in their minds, and this image is challenged when they entered NOG. Explaining how NOG differs from other local schools, a female student commented:

> I normally do not like schools (laughs)! But, how to say, I like this school. I know teachers from my neighborhood. I talk to them in Turkish in the hallway... You cannot see such Turkish signs on the walls in other schools. I do not feel myself here in a German school. It feels like home.

A number of studies have highlighted that students' sense of belonging in school is positively correlated with their educational success. The above quote displays that this student has a positive sense of belonging in school, and this is strongly associated

33 E. Yörük, "Welfare Provision as Political Containment: The Politics of Social Assistance and the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey," *Politics & Society* 40, no. 4 (2012): 517-547.

with the multicultural organization of the school. Another important point in the quote concerns the link between neighborhood and school. The great corpus of German migration research has stressed the sociocultural gap between students, home, and school. Accordingly, students live between two incompatible worlds.[34] Students at NOG, with its multicultural organization, practices, and expressive order, do not experience a rupture or disconnection between their homes and school. The fact that the students know some teachers from their own neighborhoods, that they speak to them in their mother tongue, and that their language is officially recognized in school has clear positive effects on students' pro-school identity and sense of belonging to NOG. The lines of symmetry between locality and school as such contribute to students' experience of school as a continuation of their local culture. This positive recognition by NOG becomes even more discernible when students compared their experiences of different schools.

> I came to this school from (another school). It was a good school, too. But, I felt myself often strange there. I was the only Turk there. In PTMs, I was helping my mom to make her understand what teachers were talking about. Here, it is different; it is much different. My mom comes here regularly and talks to Herr Erdoğan (a teacher) about my courses.

I observed in PTMs that these meetings were held in parents' native language, often with the help of other teachers with the same language background. PTMs are scheduled in advance in order to ensure that a teacher from the same language background will be in the meeting. My interviews with teachers who have working experience in different schools reveal that PTMs in parents' native language sharply affect parents' involvement with school positively. As one of the student interviewees stated above, the absence of translation is traumatic—"I felt myself often strange there"—and interpreted by students as misrecognition of ethnic and cultural resources.

The literature on oppositional culture among students has documented that systematic poverty and educational underachievement of minority or immigrant students ethnicizes relations in society.[35] A current study on socioeconomically disadvantaged students from Turkish immigrant backgrounds in Bremen shows that students think and explain academic achievement through ethnic lines and take oppositional stances to native teachers in school.[36] My interviews with the school director and teachers in NOG revealed that school staff visit churches and mosques in the neighborhood regularly and develop bonds with them. The close interactions with mosques, together with the existence of teachers from immigrant backgrounds and a multicultural curriculum, contribute greatly to the de-ethnicization of relations in society in the eyes of students. In the interviews, for example, students never related academic achievement or underachievement to a certain ethnicity or religion. One of the teachers commented that NOG respects students' culture and religion; therefore, they do not develop cynical relationships with native teachers:

> Our task is to show our students that this school accepts you. You have potential to succeed. Many failed because classical German schools do not recognize cultural values and language as resources. But we do the opposite. We try to

**34** Susanne Worbs, "The Second Generation in Germany: Between School and Labor Market," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 4 (2006): 1011-1038.

**35** Karen Phalet, Fenella Fleischmann, and Snežana Stojčić, "Ways of 'being Muslim': Religious Identities of Second Generation Turks," in *European Second Generation Compared: Does the Integration Context Matter?*, eds. Maurice Crul, Jens Schneider, and Frans Lelie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 341-376.

**36** Çetin Çelik, "'Having a German Passport Will Not Make Me German': Reactive Ethnicity and Oppositional Identity among Disadvantaged Male Turkish Second-Generation Youth in Germany," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 9 (2015): 1-17.

> show that the problem is not your language or religion.

It is important to emphasize that multicultural understanding in school is not about teachers' individual views and dispositions. Contrarily, the multicultural institutional habitus of regulations and practices in school influence, mediate, and even constrain their views and dispositions. That is, while teachers do not equally share multicultural views, the organization of schools drives them to behave this way. The NOG website clearly states the elements of its multicultural habitus: "Diversity needs diversity. A student with a wide range of learning needs has a wide range of challenges and opportunities to develop their performance and personality potential. Neue Oberschule Gröpelingen offers this variety of learning possibilities." I also observed in regular workshops that teachers are encouraged to discuss possible practical ways for materializing multicultural understanding, and decisions are made through bottom-up processes. Therefore, it is safe to say that NOG's multicultural understanding is forged institutionally. The school's vice principal remarked on the language policy during the interview:

> I am aware that the colleagues in other schools sometimes may find us strange because of our language policy in PTMs. But my task is not to teach German to the parents. My task is to increase the academic achievement of my students for their better integration and future.

NOG, with its specific regulations and expressive order, strongly delivers the message to its students that it does not work against local culture and values. Within such a context, students do not feel themselves torn between home and school, nor do they feel as "fish out of water" in school.

### 5.2. NOG'S INSTITUTIONAL HABITUS CULTIVATES A "SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT"

NOG provides a school environment that does not fundamentally conflict with the local culture. However, its institutional habitus is far from a replication of local values. NOG cultivates a sense of entitlement, which is common, as Lareau argues, for middle-class students, through its specific regulations and expressive order in this locality. One Turkish teacher explained this as follows:

> We try to establish students' self-confidence through some regulations. For example, they must give feedback about their evaluations. They have a say in school and classroom councils. They must speak up for their rights! Okay, they are not used to this. But once they are given the chance, they learn quickly how to raise their voice and defend their rights.

The institutional habitus of NOG teaches students how to express themselves in acceptable ways and encourages them to ask for individualized treatment, which is necessary for finding your way in a complicated educational system. One student explained this in the following manner:

> I have gone through my course evaluations carefully and objected and asked for corrections when I see mistakes. It is my right because it would affect my future. If I see anything wrong, I would inform the responsible person; there is no need to be shy. Many times my friends and I went to Ms... and Mr.... when we saw wrong things. When you do not raise your voice, things will not be solved.

Hailing from working-class backgrounds, most students in NOG have developed a sense of constraints in their socialization process. However, I constantly observed that the regulations that encourage students to take active roles prepare the ground to develop a sense of entitlement that

is often intrinsic to students from the middle class. As the quote above suggests, many of the students I talked to consider their future important, think they can change if they work enough, and act courageously when it comes to vindicating their rights against adults and institutions. As the literature suggests, this is rather a rare case for immigrants from working-class backgrounds. Throughout my field research, I constantly observed that students were comfortable in interacting with teachers, social workers, and school directors in classrooms, hallways, and the schoolyard. When I mentioned this observation to a social worker, he said it was true, and it is because of NOG's hiring policy that prioritizes staff who have lived and/or currently live and grown up in close contact with immigrants. That is, NOG counts on resources available in the locality to forge attitudes and the senses among students needed for academic achievement.

### 5.3. INSTITUTIONAL HABITUS CONFLICTS WITH THE CULTURAL HABITUS OF STUDENTS: SEEING STUDENTS AT KO AS "FISH OUT OF WATER"

While KO shares similarities with NOG as they are both located in a disadvantaged area populated by impoverished minorities, it differs from NOG regarding infrastructure and institutional habitus. KO is housed in a scanty and dilapidated building with a narrow yard, unhinged doors, and dimly lit hallways. The average number of students per classroom is high, around 40. The school is understaffed; almost 30 percent of teachers are contracted annually. They earn less than the mean salary for teachers, are looked down upon by colleagues in the school, and are unsure whether they will be offered new contracts the following year. This altogether undermines their motivation to work. While the school administration was seeking to hire teachers, there were not teachers in some courses during the field research. Teachers are extremely young and inexperienced; for many, it was their first year in the profession. When I asked why this is the case, the great majority of the teachers described KO as a sort of "deportation place" where no one wants to work for long. My conversations confirmed that teachers often plan to leave KO as early as possible. One female teacher who started her profession in KO described her shock in her first days in the school:

> I preferred not to go to the Southeastern part (predominantly Kurdish provinces) of Turkey. So, I did not select schools there. I selected schools in Istanbul. But I did not know the profile here. To my surprise, this is just like there (in the Kurdish provinces), too. But, nevertheless, if I were there all the population would be the same. Here at least when I get on the bus I am getting away from here in ten minutes, and I am in Istanbul.

In their accounts, teachers often portray Karahan and KO through terms such as chaotic, crime-ridden, rotten, dangerous, and politically separatist. They see the area, as the quote above reveals, as a place difficult to stand. They are not satisfied with the working conditions or the level and profile of the students and hold extremely low expectations for them. Teachers often remarked that they had to lower the level and the pace of learning due to the low level of the students:

> Teacher: I did not know that this is such a place. I came here, how to say, with some idealist thoughts. However, after some time, while you dream more for the students, you come to a point where you say this is enough for their standards. There are students with heavy accents and that cannot read properly. So, one cannot read properly, then you say it is enough. You do not push anymore as he cannot do it. All of us, all teachers here, do not expect much from students.
>
> Researcher: Could you please explain a bit what do you mean by "not expect much?"

> Teacher: For example, we (teachers) know that they cannot get 100 from the exam. Almost all of us think that if they can get 60 this is good already. Or, we design the exam so easy that some can get 80 or 90, but so easy, you know what I mean?

Obviously, teachers feel desperate and fulfill only the obligatory service. They often complain about and explain the underachievement of the students through the deficits of the students and their families. A fatalistic view regarding the impossibility of changing the conditions is extremely common among the teachers I interviewed. For example, in talking about the difficulties of working in Karahan, one teacher commented, "Kurds have a lot of kids but do not care about them. They send the children to school, so we have to deal with them here." In addition to cultural deficit rationalizations as such, I also came across discourses that pathologize students' inadaptation to school and educational performance. One male teacher told me in an interview, "As you see many of them have disruptive behavior problems. They speak loudly, do not know how to behave toward elders. We need many psychological therapists. This is the only way to put these students on the right track." Many of the teachers feel tired and worn out. They think that what they do is often pointless and does not change anything. Except for a few teachers, they are not critical of the incompatibility between the school's expectations, values, and regulations and the local conditions. In NOG, institutional habitus works as a context that mediates and influences teachers' views of students. The absence of well-functioning multicultural institutional habitus in KO seems to leave teachers alone in their struggle with difficult cases. Indeed, the school does not support or provide any sort of help to teachers in their daily work. One of the teachers remarked during the interview, "Once I saw a student drew a flag of 'them' (PKK). I took and ripped the flag out." Then, she reacted, "This is a terrorist activity, and I cannot tolerate it in my classroom." Obviously, a response as such to a middle school student is not pedagogically well-informed and most likely triggers oppositional attitudes by students. While many of the students speak Kurdish as their mother tongue, teachers mostly tend to perceive it as a symbol of separatism. Some teachers I talked to did not even want to mention ethnicity, and when I mentioned it they related it to ethnic separatism:

> Teacher: How to say, most of the students speak Kurdish here.
>
> Researcher: So, they are Kurdish.
>
> Teacher: But I do not want to divide it this way. I see them as Turkish citizens.

In sharp contrast to NOG, KO's monocultural habitus is not sensitive to variety and the sorts of resources the students bring to school from their homes such as language and cultural values. As the quote above reveals, this leaves teachers without any institutional support and trips them up in challenging circumstances.

The monocultural institutional habitus causes a disjuncture between what is valued in school, home, and neighborhood, and this puts students in a difficult situation and makes them experience school as a "fish out of water." While students in NOG experience school as a continuation of their local culture, students in KO are aware that their language and ethnic background are not respected and are associated with negative stereotypes in the eyes of most of the school staff. On the one hand, this results in deep-seated disengagement among students that becomes visible in the form of class repetition, truancy, and extremely high dropout rates. It causes anger and opposition from students toward school and school staff on the other. During field research, I witnessed many polemics between students and female teachers, crying teachers in the teachers' lounge because of their student's trenchant words,

polemics between parents and teachers, and a burglary of two computers and a TV from the school principal's room. The only counseling teacher in school, who was assigned there only temporarily, related the tensions between students and teachers to the misrecognition of students' values in school. He stated, "This school is blind and deaf to the reality. There are parents who do not speak Turkish. This is a reality. You have to accept it."

Overall, the institutional habitus of KO is monocultural and often misrecognizes the cultural and linguistic background of its students. With its long walls and fences that isolate the school from the neighborhood, KO and its institutional habitus stand as an anomaly. This causes students to view school as a discontinuation from their family and neighborhood lives.

### 5.4. KO'S INSTITUTIONAL HABITUS STRENGTHENS THE "SENSE OF CONSTRAINT"

KO's institutional habitus differs from that of NOG in terms of recognition of the culture of students and locality. NOG recognizes the local culture and uses local resources to boost a sense of entitlement among its students that is necessary for academic achievement. The data suggests that, in addition to misrecognizing the ethnic and cultural resources of the students, KO, with its insufficient infrastructure, understaffed teachers, limited counseling services, and monocultural habitus, strengthens the existing sense of constraints in students' own habitus.

As I have said, it is regularly the case that there are no teachers in classes at KO. However, the students I talked to took it as normal. My observations confirm that while some students, particularly male ones, can be characterized as restless, they are shy when it comes to expressing complaints and grievances about the incompetency of teachers and incapability of the school. With its hierarchical organization that does not leave any room for the participation of students or their parents in decision-making processes, KO reinforces the already existing sense of constraints among students that they bring from their class and minority background. Comparatively, there is indeed no properly working single channel in KO, such as classroom or school councils in NOG, for students or parents to give voice or make themselves heard.

For students from underprivileged families, school is of critical importance to compensate for their disadvantaged backgrounds. However, while being deprived and unfortunate, students in KO believe that school cannot help them with their problems. A female student I talked to remarked that while their guidance counselor is a really good person, "I would not talk to him about my own problems because I do not think he can help me. He probably does not have time." I raised this issue during my interview with the guidance counselor, and his remarks confirmed that the student's sense of constraint regarding asking for individual treatment or help from the school is not groundless:

> There are 2,000 students in this school. I am the only guidance counselor. How can I help them? It is not realistic. We are actually playing a game here; that's it. But the students are not fooled. They are aware of all these limitations.

I regularly observed in the school that there is a lack of rapport in parent-teacher interactions. Both parties approach each other with great suspicion and distrust; the small issues are interpreted from politicized perspectives on both sides. While KO's institutional habitus does not recognize the culture and language common in the neighborhood positively, local people in return do not recognize KO's monoethnic institutional habitus, and this corrodes daily interactions. KO's school principal stated that he tends to hire contracted teachers from Kurdish background so that these teachers can play active roles in establishing relations with students and

parents. However, this is a personal initiative from the school director; it does not reflect a part of the school's institutional habitus. While very few Kurdish teachers partially facilitate relations with students and parents, they, like other contracted teachers, are anxious about their insecure working conditions, low payment, and less prestigious status compared to other teachers, and they do not fully invest their efforts into their jobs.

Overall, KO's institutional habitus does not provide students from working-class minority backgrounds with fruitful grounds to cultivate the sense of entitlement needed for academic achievement but rather conversely reinforces the preexisting sense of constraints among its students.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM COORDINATORS AND POLICYMAKERS

Educational achievement is about recognition and misrecognition of certain types of class habitus in school context. Policy interventions can target either family or school factors to provide an equal education and educational opportunities. It is well known from previous intervention programs that family factors are resistant to change. However, students are increasingly spending most of their days in schools, and schools, as institutions, can be reformed and changed in accordance with the needs of students. Schools can compensate for the weak resources of working-class immigrant and minority students through the gradual introduction of proper institutional habitus. Politicians can introduce incentives toward this end. The recommendations based on the above-presented research results are summarized here:

One of the most important factors that can improve the development of a pro-school identity for students from working-class immigrant and minority backgrounds is *recognizing both their class and ethnic identity through teachers*. Given that students attend schools that accommodate socio-economically and often ethnically homogenous students, teachers are potential actors who could convey different resources to students. Teachers who work in schools that have a high proportion of immigrant and minority students should be prepared to acquire intercultural competences. In this preparation, teachers should be encouraged to question their own cultural positions and prejudices, recognize other class and ethnic cultures, and learn about how the normal working of schools as institutions causes discrimination.

*More teachers from migrant backgrounds should be employed.* As my findings above suggest, students are constant observers, and when schools do not include any element of students' cultures, they are aware of this misrecognition. This situation ethnicizes interactions between schools and students. Just like school misrecognizes their culture and identity, students often tend to generalize school culture in negative terms and misrecognize it. Teachers with migrant backgrounds are perceived as a particularly positive sign of recognition and play significant roles in the de-ethnicization of students' interactions with schools. Students cannot easily judge school regulations and teachers' attitudes based on ethnicity.

*New pedagogical methods for teaching and evaluating students' performance should be developed.* Students from working-class immigrant and minority backgrounds need time to compensate for their disadvantaged situation. This is only possible with a pedagogy that recognizes their cultural and linguistic differences and gives them enough time to counterbalance their disadvantages. Grades are an important part of students' identity formation. They shape how students see and are seen by each other and teacher expectations from students. Therefore, grades can be delayed until the last year of school for these students as grades often function as negative signs of student performance and potentially undermine students' sense of belonging in school. Grades can be replaced by written evaluations, as it is the case in NOG, which can be converted into standard grades in the last year. This would provide students time to absorb school-based resources with pro-school identity and build their self-confidence.

*More work and a new mindset are needed at the policy level in order to change the institutional habitus of schools.* In 2014, the Turkish Ministry of Education set a fundamental goal to improve inclusive education through intervention programs and in this way reduce the rate of dropouts and absenteeism

by students at risk.[37] Schools, ranging from their curricula to teachers, are the key institutions for the general betterment of the integration of students from various backgrounds into society. Schools teach students social rights and citizenship responsibilities, influence their identity and emotional belonging in the host society, and sharply shape their labor market integration. The ministry's driving force has become more important with the entrance of nearly 2.5 million Syrian refugees into Turkish society. Policymakers should be aware that the present monoethnic curricula and pedagogy that misrecognize the culture and identity of students from different backgrounds need to be reformed with a new set of institutional habitus. This institutional habitus, the elements of which I sketched above based on empirical data, can bring forward diversity and multilingualism not as a deficit but a resource, and this could contribute to making educational opportunities equally accessible for students from diverse ethnic and class backgrounds. Therefore, policymakers should initiate more support and reward mechanisms for the development of inclusive and multicultural institutional habitus.

**37** Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, *2015 Mali Yılı Performans Programı* (Ankara: T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı, 2014).

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