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Hurdle Race to the Kindergarten

Understanding the Daycare Enrollment Gap of Children under Three with Respect to their Migration Background

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Abstract

Existing studies on the underlying drivers of the enrollment gap in formal childcare between children with and children without an immigrant background under three years of age is rather descriptive and thin. Thus, investigating the supply side of the childcare market, this article conducts an analysis of 10 semi-structured interviews of directors of childcare centers in the German city-state Berlin. The main finding is that the moral dilemma experienced by childcare directors due to their definition of their profession and their working conditions as well as formal and informal enrollment criteria work as barriers for migrant parents. This conclusion is enriched by the theory of organizational commitment and school choice theory.

ECEC, inequality, school choice theory, organizational commitment, migration

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HURDLE RACE TO THE KINDERGARTEN

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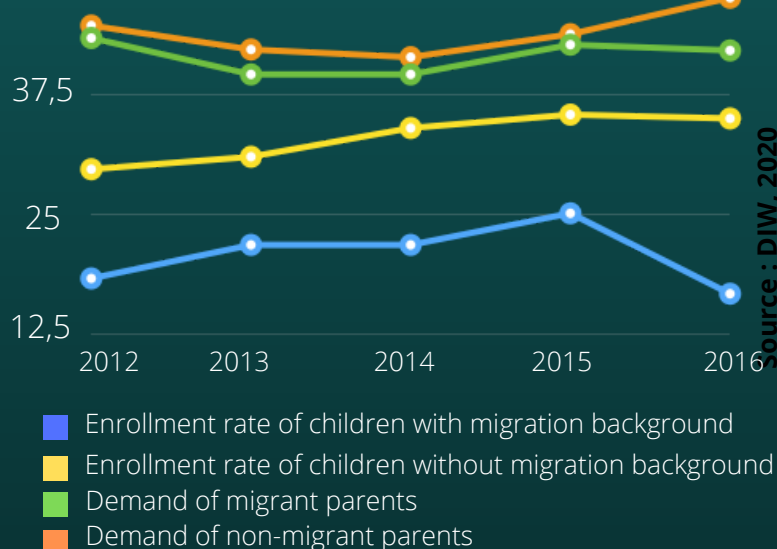
Introduction

Over the last decades, investment in childcare has been at the heart of German Family policy. Despite a massive quantitative expansion, children who have a migrant background have significantly lower enrollment rate than those who do not. Research on the underlying drivers of this difference exists, albeit scarce, mostly descriptive and inconclusive.

Research question

The aims of this research were to address the supply side of the childcare market in order to understand which factors might influence the low enrollment rate of children with a migrant background. How do the enrollment policies established by childcare centers affect the low enrollment rates among children of this particular demographic?

Enrollment rate and demand by migration background

Source : DIW, 2020

- ■ Enrollment rate of children with migration background
- ■ Enrollment rate of children without migration background
- ■ Demand of migrant parents
- ■ Demand of non-migrant parents

Case, Methodology and Data

IIn relation to the implementation of childcare policies being regulated at the municipality level, ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with directors of childcare centers in the city-state of Berlin. The sample was composed of childcare centers in two different districts, in the interest of ensuring a diverse group and therefore the validity and reliability of the study. The data was coded using the Straussian approach to grounded theory.

Results

- The childcare market in Berlin is characterized by a severe skills shortage and a supply-side model of choice.
- Children with a migrant background are perceived to be more demanding, especially when they have no German background.
- Organizational commitment: Kindergarten teachers have a high level of organizational and professional commitment, leading to excellent standards of care. However, due to the skills shortage, they take in fewer children with a migrant background in order to adhere to these standards.
- Childcare choice: The childcare directors select parents on the basis of their definition of an 'ideal parent' namely one who appears to be motivated and knowledgeable. Thus, social and cultural capital regarding the dominant norms are essential to comply with the 'shadow enrollment scheme' and act as 'choosers'.
- Formal criteria like the design of the childcare voucher or the preference for siblings work in the disfavor of migrant parents.
- Daycares are clearly discriminating against migrant parnts. This discrimination is statistically demonstrable and rooted in existing distributive patterns and allegedly neutral practices.

Policy Recommendations

- The most pressing issue is to resolve the skills shortage. Due to the low social prestige of the profession of kindergarten teacher, fewer and fewer school graduates are deciding to become trainees. In order to increase the status of the profession, two steps must be taken:
  1. Promotion of childcare as an academic profession
  2. Salary adjustment for childcare employees

- Reform of the childcare choice design: As choice creates undesirable outcomes in terms of educational equity, it must be controlled. A controlled childcare choice model would ensure equal opportunities for parents to obtain a spot in their daycare of choice. The Youth Welfare Office would be in charge of allocating the reported childcare spot according to the following criteria:
  1. Sibling attendance
  2. Proximity
  3. German language learner status
  4. Socioeconomic status

INTRODUCTION

Esping-Andersen dedicates his book *Why We Need a New Welfare State* (2002) to "today's children who will provide for our welfare when we are old. It's for you - and hence for ourselves - that we desire the best possible welfare state." In this seminal work, this academic known as the 'dean of welfare state scholars' advocates for a child-centred investment strategy and asserts that a "concerted child-care focus is sine qua non for a sustainable, efficient and competitive knowledge-based production system." The discourse on the benefits of high-quality childcare in terms of cognitive and socio-emotional development dominates academic literature and mainstream media, with numerous proponents coming from various fields such as economics, neuroscience or sociology.

This focus on childcare is echoed in the goal of having 33% of children under three years of age in formal childcare, which was formulated in the presidency conclusion of the Barcelona European Council of 2002. Germany managed to reach this goal in 2017. That same year, the European Pillar of Social Rights instated the right to affordable early-childhood education and the championed for specific measures to enhance equal opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, in Germany, the childcare attendance rate of children from this demographic has failed to reach the political target of 33%. The recent academic literature and the public debate on this topic focus mostly on the subgroup of children with a migrant background, since they demonstrably gain the greatest developmental benefit from attending childcare. According to the microcensus definition of 2005, every child with at least one parent born abroad is considered as having a 'migrant background', irrespective of their parents' nationality. While the nationwide rate of childcare attendance for non-migrant children was about 41% in 2018, this figure was only 20% for children with a migrant background. In order to simplify, children who have an immigration background will be called 'IB-children' compared to those who do not : 'Non-IB children' in the following study.

Despite widespread reporting on this enrollment gap, the literature on the underlying drivers is rather descriptive and thin. It addresses mostly the demand side of the issue by looking at cultural barriers or preferences of migrant parents, with few papers addressing the supply side. Given how crucial it is for educational equality that a greater number of IB children be enrolled in childcare, the aim of this study is to understand which factors on the supply side influence the difference in the enrollment rate between children who have a migrant background and those who do not. What influence, if any, do the Early Care and Childhood Education (ECEC) Centers have on the varying enrollment rates?

The Fourteenth Youth Report of the German Government suggests that "explicit or implicit discrimination might take place in the selection of children" (BMFSFJ, 2013). However, to date, representative studies that investigate these selection mechanisms are lacking. In a context of

limited formal daycare slots, certain mechanisms could hinder migrant parents from making use of childcare services. Thus, to explain the phenomenon under study, two hypotheses are established:

1. Implicit selection mechanisms and procedures require specific social and cultural capital that may be lacking in migrant parents
2. Childcare centers may have preferences for certain types of children and thus discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, on the basis of ethnicity or class.

This grounded theory investigates the supply-side mechanics using semi-structured interviews of daycare center directors, since they play a central role in the decision-making process involved in accepting or refusing applications. With Germany being a federal state, policies regarding kindergartens and daycare are governed by federal and state law and implemented at the municipal level. Each municipality has the capacity to make decisions on the design of its daycare system. This particular study is located in the city-state of Berlin. With a view to building a heterogeneous and theoretical sample, the interviews were conducted at ten different ECEC Centers between December 2019 and January 2020.

The main conclusion from this study are that the lower enrollment rate from IB children stems from indirect, statistical discrimination. Drawing on school choice theory, both hypotheses are confirmed, as daycare centers in Berlin are able to choose the parents and adopt a 'shadow enrollment scheme' that indirectly discriminates against parents who do not possess the social and cultural capital to comply with the subtleties of the system. However, the skills shortage was also identified as one reason for indirect discrimination. Supported by the literature on the subject of organizational commitment, the data analysis shows that the affective commitment that characterizes teachers in general and educators in daycare centers in particular, coupled with a situation of severe skills shortage, leads center directors to decline applications from children of non-German origin. They express their ineptitude to care appropriately for all children due to the lack of skilled pedagogical staff.

The policy recommendations individually address both issues, namely the design of the education market and the skills shortage. Policy-makers in Germany are aware of the need to address the skills shortage and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs has acted upon this through a 'skilled workers offensive' aimed at attracting more trainees. However, in order to ensure that these trainees pursue a career in this capacity, a more ambitious proposal is needed. Daycare centers must be understood as a complete part of the education system, maintaining the ethos that they lay the foundations for a successful school career. Two steps are required to achieve this: promotion of childcare as an academically oriented profession and salary adjustment for childcare employees. This policy recommendation aims to raise the attractiveness of the profession in order to resolve the skills shortage and will, in turn, encourage daycares to accept more applications from children of non-German origin.

The second policy recommendation is to act to improve the education market design. Quasi-markets in education tend to produce segregation and the Berlin daycare market is no exception. A controlled school choice model seeks to maximize personal choice with ethnic equitable public schooling. Children are therefore obtaining slots in one of the preferred schools indicated by parents, on the condition that their inclusion does not negatively affect the diversity of the school in question.

These two policies need to be implemented together in order not to disadvantage daycares, but rather to enable them to deliver high-quality care for all children.

This paper is closely related to the field of educational inequalities, with the first part of the study being situated within its context and in accordance with current and relevant literature. The next part exposes the rationale behind using Grounded Theory and the constitution of the sample from which the data was drawn. Following this, the third section of the paper combines the method used with the collected data, to illustrate both the coding process and the results. Finally, the last section discusses the concepts encountered throughout the paper, expanding upon them by drawing from the literature on organizational commitment and school choice theory.

I. <u>INTERDISCIPLINARY STATE OF KNOWLEDGE</u>

1. *The German welfare state*

Childcare is a central aspect of family policy and thus of the welfare state. Hence, it is relevant to consider the context in which family policy takes place in order to gain an understanding of the central challenges childcare faces today. In this part an analysis on how Germany's social policy has become a 'path shifter', moving away from the conservative male breadwinner model in the last two decades, will be presented.

a. A conservative male-breadwinner welfare state

Throughout the 1990's, Germany has been identified as the ideal type of the Conservative welfare regime in Esping-Andersens typology of welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The central feature of the conservative or bismarckian welfare state is that its social policies are centred around the wage-earner, whose aim it is to maintain their social status. Thus, the principle of social legislation is that the income should be considered as a wage-replacement benefit (Seeleib-Kaiser et al, 2004). This policy is supported by the main German parties: the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Social democrats (SPD). Both parties understand social policy as a dialectical process within the frame of the 'Social Market economy' (*Soziale Marktwirtschaft)* to keep workers, mostly men, in

the market (Seeleib-Kaiser & Bleses, 2004). Thus, during its 'golden era' (1948-1973) the German welfare state was based on the principle of social integration and cohesion, instead of redistribution between classes.

Esping-Andersen's work has been criticized most notably for neglecting the gender dimension. Scholars taking a feminist perspective compare welfare regimes based on their level of de-familialisation, meaning the degree of independence of women from the state and family (Lewis, 1992). Jane Lewis has identified Germany as a 'strong male breadwinner' country (Lewis, 1992).This typology takes in indicators such as female labour market participation rates, expansion of childcare services, maternity rights and gender equality regarding social security. The feminist perspective has stressed the "welfare dependency" of women and the fact that care work is not taken into account.

In this vein, scholars established, that different welfare states exhibit different family models. Anttonnen, Siplä (1996) classified Germany as a 'subsidiarity model', characterized by its scarce social services for children and the elderly. Further, in Gauthier's typology focusing on four policy fields (cash benefits for families with children, parental leave, childcare and birth control) former West Germany belongs to the 'pro-traditional Model'. This model is characterized by a strong support for the traditional family and paternalist structures (Gauthier, 2002). Furthermore, Germany was identified as a 'General Family support model' with high-traditional family support and low dual-earner support (Korpi, 2000). Misra, Budig and Moddel have identified Germany as a Primary Caregiver Model with low compensation for women who provide care rather than pursuing employment, large motherhood penalty and gender inequality (Misra et al., 2006).

Author	Typology	Indicators / Concept	Outcomes	Other countries belonging to that model
Esping-Andersen (1990)	Conservative Welfare State	Decommodification, stratification	Medium levels of decommodification, stratification	France, The Netherlands
Lewis (1992	Strong Male-breadwinner welfare state	Defamilialisation	Low-levels of defamilialisation	United Kingdom
Anttonen, Sinplä (1996)	Subsidiarity Model	Social Services and Care dependency	Responsibility of care lies within the family	Portugal, Greece, Irleand
Gauthier (1996)	Traditional Family Policy Regime	Support for Families	Medium-level of support	Austria, Belgium, France, the Netherlands
Korpi (2000)	General Family Support Model	State support: cash transfers, income tax structure and public services	High traditional family support, low dual-earner support	Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands

Misra, Budig, Morel (2006)	Primary Caregiver/ Secondary Earner Regime	Leave generosity, childcare benefits, Labour force participation, fertility rate	Large motherhood penalty, gender inequality, female poverty	Austria, The Netherlands, Italy

Thus, in all these different models it becomes clear that childcare is not seen as a service provided by the state but is being relegated to the women.

b. Path shifting: the implementation of « a sustainable family policy »

After the oil crisis in 1973, a slow process of change began within most conservative welfare states, leading to a retrenchment of social policies. However, family policy was not affected by this tendency and did not experience major cuts (Fleckenstein, 2010). In a study explaining the intensity of family policy change over the past three decades, Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser (2014) point out that Germany has undergone a third-order change. As public provision of childcare and the duration and generosity of parental leave has significantly increased in the 2000's, the German family policy model shifted from the Christian-Democratic to the Social-democratic Space.

These changes led to the decline of the "male breadwinner model" and the move towards a variety of "adult worker models" (Daly, 2011). There has been an effort towards greater de-familialisation through the incentives for female employment and a massive investment in childcare (Guo & Gilbert, 2007).

The shift of family policy happened around the time of the German reunification, when two types of family models merged : the dual-earner family model in eastern Germany and the single-earner family model in West Germany. However, the welfare policies of the newly united Germany were still mostly based on West German tradition of the support of women employment in the context of the male breadwinner model. From the 1990s onwards, there has been a gradual modernization of this model, highly criticized for its inefficiency (Seeleib-Kaiser & Bleses, 2004). A new emphasis was put on work-family reconciliation policies encouraging labour market participation for women. Looking at macroeconomic spending data, public family spending rose from 1,5% of GDP in 1990 to 2,0% in 1996 (OECDa).

After the turn of the millennium, the shift was given a name by the introduction of the concept of « *Nachhaltige Familienpolitik* » (« sustainable family policy »). This new concept has been aligned with the « social investment strategy » advocated at the European level. The «Social Investment» perspective was intended to sustain an economy where knowledge is considered as the driver of productivity and economic growth, needing a flexible and high-skilled labour force (Emmenegger et al, 2012). It aims at raising the human capital in two ways: women's capital by enabling them to participate in the labour market and child capital by providing them with high quality care beginning at a very young age (Morel et al, 2013). These two main goals of Social investment are met by the introduction of high-quality childcare, which also aimed to minimize the

intergenerational transfer of poverty. However, it is important to point out that this shift cannot be understood as an ideational shift but a fundamental change in the workings of electoral politics that « unleashed new political dynamics » (Morel et al, 2013).

To conclude, this shift was the departing point of profound reforms in childcare services, which will be analysed in the next section.

2. The Childcare system

The concept of sustainable family policy was introduced at the beginning of the century. It contained two key policy measures: the introduction of a parental leave scheme in 2006 and most importantly, the extension of childcare services through two major laws: the Childcare expansion act in 2005 (TAG, Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz), and the Childcare funding act (KiföG, Kinderförderungsgesetz).

This part retraces the main characteristics of the German Childcare system to get a better understanding of the political and social context in which this study takes place.

a. Quantitative Expansion since the year 2000

During the last two decades, several important reforms have shaped the current ECEC system. Due to its federal nature, the legal authority concerning childcare systems belongs to the Federal government, while the implementation is a matter of the *Länder* and the planning of provision is delegated to the municipalities (Schober & Spieß, 2014). However, since 2010 the federal government has become more and more involved in the childcare system. Before 2008, the municipalities oversaw the funding of the childcare system in their respective communities. However, the municipalities were struggling to offer enough childcare slots and were heavily indebted: in 2002, just over one in ten children under the age of three was cared for in a childcare facility. The gap between East and West was large, as only 2,7% of children were cared for in ECEC centres in the Western part of the country, versus 37% in former East Germany (Collombet et al, 2017).

Hence, the objective of 20% of children under the age of three in childcare in 2010 formulated in the coalition contract between the Social Democrat Party (SPD) and the Green Party in 2002 could not be obtained without increased involvement of the federal government. The coalition between CDU and SPD led by chancellor Angela Merkel in 2005 strengthened the commitment to create more slots in childcare and enacted two laws providing more funding to increase the quantity. Supported by different arguments of demographic decline, the fear of a lack of qualified workers and electoral considerations, childcare moved « from being a 'soft issue' to a 'hard' one» (Morgan, 2013).

The first law, the Childcare Expansion act *(Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz)* in 2005, not only granted each child under three a place in childcare on the condition that both parents are in employment (Stahl & Schober, 2018), but more importantly promised 1,5 billion Euro each year to the *Länder* and municipalities to double the supply of childcare by 2010 (Morgan, 2013). Three years later, an even more ambitious law passed: the Childcare Funding Act *(Kinderförderungsgesetz)*, which came into force in December 2008 (Meilland, 2015). Alongside other major changes in family policies like the new parental leave *(Elterngeld)*, the *Länder* were required to implement regional laws granting every child under three a place in childcare by 2013 - regardless of the employment situation of the parents. In return, the federal government provides the lion share's for the funding of childcare. While the first three federal investment programs contributed 3,28 billion Euro to the expansion of slots in childcare, resulting in the creation of approximately 400 000 place for children under the age of three. The current and fourth investment program amounts to 1,126 billion Euro until 2019 to create 100 000 childcare slots. Since the begin of the investment programs, the childcare rate doubled, from 17,6% in 2008 to 33,6% in 2008 (BMFSFJ). However, this average hides large differences between the *Länder,* notably between East and West as shown in Table 1. Nonetheless, the demand remains greater than the number of slots: 45% of parents with children under the age of three would like a childcare place for their children. In 2018, 12% of parents requiring a place are not able to find a slot (Destatis).

Table 1 : Children under three years of age in daycare facilities and in publicly funded daycare on 1 March 2019 by federal states (Source: Destatis)

Federal State	Children under three in daycare facilities	Care rate in %
Baden-Württemberg	93 412	29,1
Bavaria	103 194	27,5
Berlin	51 809	43,9
Brandenburg	36 063	56,4
Bremen	5 783	28,4
Hamburg	26 785	44,0
Hesse	55 523	30,6
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	22 955	56,4
Lower Saxony	68 176	30,9
North Rhine-Westphalia	139 784	27,2
Rhineland-Palatinate	34 877	30,9

Saarland	7 003	28,6
Saxony	57 382	50,9
Saxony-Anhalt	31 222	57,1
Schwleswig-Holstein	25 648	33,7
Thuringia	29 903	54,0
Germany	789 559	33,6
Former West germany	587 703	30,3
Former East Germany (including Berlin)	230 780	52,1

The OECD acknowledges the tremendous effort undertaken by the German government concerning the expansion of childcare and recommends increasing the investment until the supply of subsidized services meets parental demands (OECD, 2016). The OECD also stresses that Germany should invest in high-quality childcare. The goal of ensuring quality is central to understand the changing nature of the German childcare system, which is not only aiming at providing childcare slots to ensure women's employment, but also more and more to 'level out the playing field' - providing every child with equal opportunities from a very early age on.

b. Qualitative Expansion: from 'Care' to 'Education'
The expansion in quantity since the year 2000 has been supported by a constant focus on quality and education. Traditionally, the ECEC centers were focused on the concept of 'care'. This concept dates back to the 19th century when daycare facilities were conceived to prevent the 'moral depravity of the working class' (Frindte & Mierendorff, 2017). Today, while daycare facilities follow the German triad of 'Bildung, Erziehung und Betreuung' (Care and Education) (Frindte & Mierendorff, 2017), the focus is more and more placed on Education and a strong link is established between education and quality. Hence quality needs to be measurable, quantifiable and reproducible (Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2016). While the concept of quality is not clearly defined, institutions like the OECD use several indicators to measure it : « Service quality is usually defined by a set of structural (e.g. staff-child ratios) and process indicators (e.g. the quality of staff-child interactions) that contribute to practices that are markers of setting and staff performance. » (OECD, 2016). In Germany, the concept of quality in ECEC has been developed at every level of childcare: federal law, a common framework between the states and state-level curricula (Stahl & Schober 2018).

This new focus on quality in childcare can be linked both to the PISA (Programme for international Student assessment, an international study of educational performance) results in 2000 and the new social investment perspective developed in the late 1990s, which gave social policy provision a new

economic rationale (Morel et al, 2013). The low score of German pupils in the PISA test acted like a wakeup call. Compared to 31 other OECD countries, Germany only placed 21st in reading proficiency, 20th in mathematics and 20th in natural sciences (Ochhel, 2002). What particularly caught the attention of policy makers was the close relationship between the social background and the acquired competencies. According to the Max Planck Institute for educational research: « Adolescents with low reading proficiency come primarily from the lower social strata (…) This is presumably related to the early differentiation of school types, since the decision of what secondary school to attend is made in the 5th grade, the period for relevant intervention is relatively short » (Ochel, 2002). These results sparked a new discourse of the relationship between Education and social inequality and the need to intervene very early in the life of children to prevent intergenerational transfer of poverty (Frindte & Mierendorff, 2017). Birgit Becker, a scientist specialized in Education discourse and ethnic differences in childcare, considers that this « new logic in the ECEC discourse » represents « a radical break » as the concept of education is more and more detached from the concept of care and placed at the core of the role of childcare centres (Frindte & Mierendorff, 2017). The federal ministry for family summarized this new position in 2003 in its annual family report: « Modern Education and teaching in day-care facilities should be promoted by the development of educational standards and delivered through education programmes for day-care centres »(Frindte & Mierendorff, 2017).

To summarize, since PISA new pre-school requirements have emerged. The new focus of the government and the social partners are the precarious populations that experience more difficulties from an early age (Meilland, 2015). Programs like « *Sprachkitas* » (ECEC center with a focus on language) and seals for quality have been developed and are used as means of promotion by ECEC centres. In addition, since 1999, the progress in this domain is monitored by the National Quality Initiative in ECEC (*Nationale Qualitätsinitiative im System des Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder*). As part of this initiative, a set of 21 quality criteria was developed for evaluation of Childcare Centres (OECD, 2016).

Despite these efforts, the quality level varies greatly between states and municipalities (Schober & Spieß, 2014). While every *Land* has its own curriculum, the 'Common Framework of the Federal States for Early Education in ECEC centres » (*Gemeinsamer Rahmen der Länder für die frühe Bildung in Kindertageseinrichtungen*) constitutes an agreement on the most important principles guiding curriculum development (OECD, 2016). Nonetheless, the formulation concerning quality ranges from precise to very general to none at all (Becker & Schober, 2017). While the quality does not vary depending on the parental ability to pay, it does vary greatly depending on the state and often fall short of evidence-based recommendations (Stahl et al, 2017).

Last but not least it is important to note that while monitoring quality is a process that takes place at a local level, statistics are being generated by the Child and Youth Welfare system which permits policy makers to have a good overview over « the quantitative growth, staff and employment

conditions and other structural features of the ECEC sector, such as opening hours, age and the ethnic background of children » - the last point being important for this analysis (OECD, 2016).

The 'Good Childcare Act' (*Gute Kita Gesetz*) enacted in January 2019 is the latest law put in place to focus on more quality in daycare. The federal Government will invest 5,5 billion Euro until 2022 and pass contracts with every *Land* to ensure higher standards within childcare. It is an important step to level out the differences in quality at the national level (BMFSFJ).

To sum up, this new focus in education goes through the monitoring of quality in ECEC and is especially directed at precarious populations such as migrants and families with a low socioeconomic background to prevent the intergenerational transfer of poverty in a knowledge-driven economy.

B. The childcare system as game-changer in education

1. Ethnic educational inequality

The concept of cultural and social capital most prominently developed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is key to the understanding of the mechanism of social reproduction and inequality. Cultural capital is the result of the accumulation of knowledge of culture. Bourdieu defines it as a proficiency in and familiarity with dominant cultural codes and practices (Bourdieu, 1979). Social capital on the other hand is the relationships to which an individual has access (Raveaud et al, 2007).

Since his seminal work, many studies demonstrated that the intergenerational transfer of social and cultural capital shapes educational paths, leading to social inequality as those more familiar with the dominant culture tend to pursue higher degrees. Through this accumulation tendency, these social differences deepen over the educational career. Hence, the cultural and social capital of parents influences the educational trajectory of their children. Families with a migration background are less likely to be familiar with the codes of the dominant culture of the receiving country as the cultural capital of their country of origin often loses their value (Becker, 2006). The proficiency in language for instance is part of the cultural capital. Migrants who arrive in a new country must first learn the new language before they are able to gain social and economic capital.

One product of this mechanism is Ethnic Educational Inequality, a reality most western countries experience. In Europe, young people with an immigration background generally perform worse than young people without an immigration background: on average, 3 in 4 non-IB students compared to 6 in 10 IB students reached the baseline level of proficiency in science, reading and mathematics in

2015 (OECD, 2015). One fifth of this gap can be explained through differences in socio-economic status between the non-IB students and the IB students across OECD countries (OECD, 2015).

In Germany, while 80% of non-IB students attain the baseline level of proficiency in Science, reading and mathematics, only 62% of IB students do so. This gap widens when it comes to first-generation students as less than 50% of them reached this level and thus show the lowest level of academic achievement (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2016). While the percentage of second-generation immigrants achieving baseline levels of proficiency increased significantly between 2006 and 2015, reading comprehension in Germany has become even more dependent on origin since 2009 (OECD, 2018). There are marked differences between immigrants of different origins in attaining a proficiency level. Students with a Turkish, or Serbian background tent to attain lower levels than those with a Polish, Russian or Croatian background (Becker, 2006). Giving each student equal opportunities and ensuring educational equality hence remain a challenge and a growing concern for policy makers in Germany as IB children have the most disadvantageous positions in the German educational system (Biedinger, 2008).

Studies have found that the educational inequality among immigrant children in Germany is « mainly explained though language proficiency » (Biedinger, 2008). Thus, speaking German from an early age on is a crucial component for ensuring equal opportunities.

Childcare has taken a special role in German public policy since the beginning of the 21st century as one of the pillars to reduce ethnic educational inequality and enhance economic activity (Fritschi & Oesch, 2008). Thus, it is crucial for policy makers to be able to assess the effects of Early Childhood Education and Care on the population and more specifically on disadvantaged groups.

1. The effects of ECEC on child-development

a. Overall effects

Assessing the effect of attendance of ECEC on child development and skill gaining is crucial for policy makers to design policies improving equality in the education system. However, establishing the effect of ECEC on a child's development is a process as complex as child development is. The cognitive and socio-emotional development of children and toddlers is not only influenced by a variety of factors, childcare being just one of them, but also differs from one child to another. As research in psychology has demonstrated the importance of the early stage of life on future achievements, more and more research has surfaced to assess the impact early childcare has on infants (Lefevbre & Merrigan 2002; Milagros & Barnett, 2010). While there seems to be a consensus on the beneficial effect of early childhood interventions in the international political arena (Milagros & Barnett, 2010), the scientific literature is not as unanimous.

As it is complex to quantify the exact outcomes of ECEC, since the 1990s studies looking at the overall effect of ECEC centers, , are quite inconclusive. While some find the impact to be rather negative (Hill & O'Neill, 1994; Ruhm, 2000), Lefebvre and Merrigan found a neutral and insignificant impact on cognitive and socio-emotional development in a study conducted on Canadian toddlers (Lefebvre & Merrigan, 2002). Other empirical analysis concluded that parental social background and the education resource of the family has greater influence on the cognitive skills of a child than the out of home childcare environment (Becker, 2011, Baumeister et al, 2014). However, they were more nuanced as they also acknowledged that there could be a link between the cognitive development of a child and its attendance in a ECEC center (Baumeister et al, 2014). In a systematic review of studies concerned with the impact of early childhood care and education, Kaspar Burger showed that out of 32 studies, 22 showed a positive association between the cognitive achievement of a child and his attendance in a childcare center. However, most studies did not find that a longer preschool attendance enhanced significantly those outcomes (Burger, 2010). In his review, Burger asserts that, while there seems to be a significant short-term effect, the effect on the long term are moderate and are overshadowed by the new environment of the children (Burger, 2010). Baumeister, Rindermann and Barnett conducting a study in Austria and Germany also concluded that the effects on cognitive development of ECEC attendance decrease over time (Baumeister et al, 2014). Controlling for Germany, Spieß, Büchel and Wagner indicated no significant relationship between attending Kindergarten and secondary school tracking, a finding confirmed by Schlotter a decade later (Spieß et al, 2003; Schlotter, 2011). However, they also argued that it would be incorrect to assume that the effect was neutral as they were not able to control for the quality of care (Spieß et al, 2003). This is a short-coming in most studies, as often they had no possibility to distinguish between high-quality care and lower-quality care (Spieß et al, 2003; Baumeister et al, 2014; Becker, 2006). Recent research has shown that the impact on ECEC center on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development rely mostly on specific characteristics, like their structural quality (Becker & Schober, 2017).

b. Effects on children with an immigration background

In recent years, more and more studies have flourished making a distinction between the effect on children from high-income families and children from low-income families or IB children. Considering this aspect, they all stated a strong positive association between the attendance of disadvantaged children in ECEC center, especially high-quality centers, and their readiness for school at age 6 (Cornelissen et al, 2018; Cascio & Whitmore Schanzenbach, 2013; Haynes & Migstad, 2015; Schlotter, 2011). Using marginal Treatment effect Felfe and Lalive conducted a study to find out for whom preschool attendance was particularly beneficial. They concluded that the groups with the greatest benefits were boys, whose development tend to be more 'stingily' than girls. Furthermore, they identified positive effects for children from families with a low socio-economic status, who benefitted from the social interaction and IB children, who could catch up language skills (Felfe & Lalive, 2018). Thus, they confirmed the result from Spieß that, while there

was no correlation between childcare placement and secondary school track for German children, it has a positive effect for IB children (Spieß et al, 2003).

The Kindergarden was more and more seen as a mean to compensate for social inequalities as soon as possible (Burger, 2010). Social scientists demonstrated that the positive effect for IB children was the early acquaintance with the German language. Indeed, in 2006 half of Turkish and one quarter of former Yugoslavian children needed special language support programs when entering school and thus had a difficult start (Becker, 2006). Furthermore, Becker emphasized that not only it was crucial that IB children attended ECEC centers, but that these centers had a good social mix to promote cultural contents next to the language skills (Becker, 2009). Becker emphasized the importance that IB children attended an ECEC center before the age of three. However, that is not the case for most children with an immigration background.

While the literature on the overall impact of preschool programs is somewhat inconclusive but finds an overall positive association. It is quite clear that IB children have the greatest gain from attending an ECEC center in terms of cognitive development. Esping-Andersen, one of the most prominent figure in the welfare state literature, stated that « The main finding is that high quality interventions on behalf of at-risk pre-school age children has substantial and lasting effects in terms of improved social integration » (Abrassart et al, 2015).

3. The attendance of ECEC Centers by children who have a migration background

Inequality in the use of preschool arrangements is the norm rather than the exception in the OECD (Van Lancker et al, 2016). In Germany, politicians have made various efforts to close the gap between the care rates of IB and non-IB children more closely in the hope that it might compensate for different skill levels (Becker, 2017). The Daycare Expansion Act of 2005, the introduction of a legal entitlement to a childcare place in 2013 or the creation of special integration programs such as «Sprachkitas» or «Willkommenkitas» enacted this will from the German government to create inclusive care centers (Park et al, 2018). However, a study in 2010 showed that until then, those who profited the most from the expansion of daycare slots were part of the educated elite (Alt et al, 2016).

Nevertheless, the difference in take-up between children with and without an immigration background has decreased slightly recently. For non-IB children aged three to six years, the nationwide childcare rate has remained constant at between 96% and 99% percent since 2013. For Ib children of the sam age, the childcare rate rose to 90 percent in 2015 but decreased again and was only about 82% in 2018 ,(Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration, 2019). This drop can partly be attributed to the fact that from the 682,025 Asylum seekers that arrived in Germany between the summer of 2015 and April 2016, 49,678 were children under the age of three and 37,524 were aged 3 to 6. Hence, 12,7% of newcomers were eligible for ECEC

services (Maki, 2018), but due to the logistics of the refugee system (papers, being dispatched among German states) did not find a daycare spot immediately after their arrival.

However, while the differences of the childcare rate for three-year-ild children is small, the case is quite different for children under the age of three. For non-IB children under the age of three, the childcare rate of 30% set both by the European commission and the German government was achieved in 2017. The take-up rate of IB children also rose significantly from 11% in 2009 to 22% in 2015, but the gap in the rate of participation in preschool arrangement between IB and non-IB children widened at the same time (Alt et al, 2018). According to the German Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt)* in 2014, 20% of IB children under three took part in institutional care possibilities, against 38% of children under three with both parents born in Germany (2012: 16% and 33%) (Alt et al, 2016).

The most recent statistics show that this gap is persistent for children under three. The nationwide rate of childcare for non-IB children was at 41% in 2018, against 20% for their peers, slightly below the previous year's figures (in 2015 it was 22%) and well below the political target of one third (Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration, 2019).

These differences are also present across federal states. While the care rate of IB children might appear higher in former east German states than West german states, the gap to the care rate of peers without a migration background is very high. The largest differences are recorded in Lower Saxony (former eastern state) and North-Rine-Westphalia (former western state). These differences were slightly smaller in the south of Germany, notably Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate (Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration, 2019).

As the definition of IB children is rather large, differences exist depending on which generation the children belong to. While the difference in rates of participation in an ECEC center is significant for first and second generation immigration, children in the third generation were closer to the take-up rate of non-IB children, as above 25% of them attended an ECEC Center (Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration, 2013). In addition, the likelihood to participate in a preschool arrangement of a child with only one parent born abroad is about 33% while it is only roughly 22% when both parents are born abroad (Alt et al, 2016). A similar study from Pia Schober and Katharina Spieß conducted in 2012 found that, while it is true that IB children have a lesser likelihood to attend an ECEC center, this is primarily true for children where both parents have a non-german background or where both parents do not speak German at home.

While this is of particular importance in the context of ethnic educational inequality, it is also important to note the lower participation rates of disadvantaged children overall, especially those at risk of poverty. In particular children growing up in families living with unemployment benefit (*ALG II)* have a lower take up rate (Schober et al, 2012).

Since 2013, every child has a legal right to a place in childcare, thus the percentage of children from a disadvantaged background should not be lower than that of any other group of children. Two

strands of literature are investigating the reasons behind this different attendance rate, especially concerning children with a migration background. The first one is focusing on the role of quality and the second one on the interaction between supply and demand.

Taking a welfare state perspective, Win Van Lancker and Joris Ghysels start by arguing that there are three welfare state characteristics relating to inequality in the use of childcare centers (Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2016). The first one is the universality of the childcare system, thus if it is available to everyone. While this is guaranteed by law, and childcare fees are either income-dependent or non-existing in German states, the shortage in childcare slots is a common denominator. The second criteria is the level of state-market-mix as the « level of government intervention is expected to determine childcare inequality outcomes ». In Germany, the government intervention is high regarding its financial support of the childcare system. The last criteria is defamiliziation, the « degree to which women are able to uphold an acceptable standard of living independently of their families ». Here the most important social policy tools next to childcare services are parental leave schemes, that should be relatively short and well-paid in order to be beneficial rather than detrimental to maternal employment, as is the « *Elterngeld »* in Germany. Thus, the characteristics of the German welfare state are not a sufficient explanation for the inequality in childcare use.

Other studies, including the one of Van Lancker and Ghysels, included a fourth criteria to explain the levels of inequality in childcare use: quality. They find that the « levels of inequality are higher in countries with poor ratings of childcare quality », so the perception of the quality offered by the childcare centers seems to correlate to a great extent with childcare inequality (Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2016). Nevertheless, the studies investigating the importance of this quality aspect are scarce. Previous studies explained the differences in uptake mainly by the prism of the socioeconomic factors thus neglecting parents as actors with preferences and attitudes but also subject to certain restrictions on action (Geier & Riedel, 2009). Schober and Spieß demonstrated that quality is an essential factor for postnatal labour market decisions of mothers (Schober & Spieß, 2014). While they stated that the mothers with children under three may be more sensitive to ECEC quality and base their labour market choice on their perception of it, Schober and Spieß did not differentiate explicitly between different socioeconomic groups. However, they noted that quality might be more important to migrant mothers as they tend to be less attached to the labour market overall (Schober & Spieß, 2014). Besides, other studies noted that IB children experience lower quality in their local childcare facilities mainly regarding easily observable factors (Stahl et al, 2017; Becker & Schober, 2017). Becker and Schober added that this difference in quality did not concern structural quality but the composition of the childcare facilities, as there was a larger share of other IB children (Becker & Schober, 2017).

Another strand of literature is investigating the role of demand and supply concerning the inequality in childcare. Despite the massive expansion of childcare since 2005, only 71% of demand was met

in 2019 (Jessen et al, 2019). The unmet demand of migrant parents was always higher than those of parents without an immigration background. As of 2009 they had a 30% lower chance to get a childcare slot when they needed one due to employment (Böttcher et al, 2010). The new situation in 2013 detaching the right to childcare from unemployment did not change this situation. While the research on this topic is thin and rather descriptive, some researchers investigated the demand gap. Pavolini and Van Lancker noted that the Matthew effect on childcare most likely has to come from « structural constraints in childcare provision » and thus that the inequality has its origin on the supply side and not on the demand side (Pavolini & Van Lancker, 2018). This hypotheses was confirmed by Alt, Berngruber and Pötter who found that the application rate of migrant parents and those without a migration background cannot explain the differences in attendance as 45% of the latter apply compared to 41% when one parents is born abroad and 38% when both parents are born abroad (Alt et al, 2016). Moreover, they find that after controlling for attitudes and socio-demographic characteristics, no distinction can be made in regard to the efforts undertaken to find a day-care place between parents born abroad and parents born in Germany (Alt et al, 2016).

The most detailed and recent research was conducted by Jessen, Schmitz and Waights in their paper « Understanding Daycare Enrollment gaps ». They used a large representative survey data set of more than 62 000 children younger than three and controlled for the effect of shortages on the enrolment gaps and the role of parental fees. They find that, while children with both parents born abroad have a significant participation gap of 12%, they have a demand gap of 2%. Thus, the difference in attendance cannot be explained by the demand side. Besides, 95% of parents indicating a will to find a childcare spot also reported having applied for at least one spot in day-care centers (Jonas et al, 2019).

To conclude the literature on the « underlying drivers of such gaps » is thin (Jessen et al, 2019) but points to the fact that it is not correlated to a lack of demand and thus exploring the supply side might provide additional explanations to understand it.

II. METHODOLOGY

The hypotheses emitted in the introduction (Implicit selection mechanisms and preferences) are not grounded in theory, as in Grounded Theory Method, a vital part of the researcher's job is to relate concepts that stem from the data to the literature. When concepts are emerging, the direction of that emergence will point to literature that can be used to enrich the concepts and *in fine* might enrich the existing literature.

In order to collect relevant data that can answer the research question and confirm or deny the hypotheses, semi-strucured interviews will be conducted in 10 Berliner Kitas in Mitte and Pankow, two northern district of the German capital. They will be analyzed following the principle of Grounded Theory as developed by Strauss. As « Thinking is the engine that drives the process and brings the researchers into the analytical process », this part will entangle the process by explaining

the rationale behind the method used for analysis (A), to then explain how the theoretical sample was composed (B). Finally, the interview design will be shown to enable the reader to better understand both the data and the concepts which derived from it (C).

A. Grounded Theory approach

1. Theoretical Considerations

The most common critique raised concerning qualitative methods is the dilemma of the intersubjectivity which lies at the heart of phenomenological methodology. While, as Anderson puts it « The task of the social scientist is to explicate how meanings in everyday life are constituted and maintained », analysis in qualitative method is always interpretative (Anderson, 2013). However, this « meaning making » is driven by the assertion that humans are skilled actors who, while being embedded in structures, make conscious choices and are able to some extent to reflect on it. This view, that rejects both strict determinism and strict non-determinism, is the theoretical foundation for Grounded Theory as it seeks to determine how the actors respond to changing conditions and to the consequences of their actions (Corbin et al, 1990). Introduced in 1967 by Strauss and Glaser in their seminal work « The discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research », Grounded theory is described by the two sociologists as the « discovery of theory from data systemically obtained from social research » (Glaser et al, 1967). As the research on the causes of low enrollment rate of IB children is still in its infancy, Grounded Theory is a sensible method to use as it is inductive and often leads to new discoveries. As the name suggests, it is deeply grounded in the data and thus « rooted in real work concerns » (Urqhart, 2017). According to Urqhart, this « being grounded in the data can be persuasive and help to change things in a given setting » (Urqhart, 2017), which is of essential value to any practitioner and policy-maker.

2. The Straussian Approach

According to Howard-Payne, the Straussian approach is «applied within an epistemology of contextualism (…), findings are contracted by inter-subjective understandings of the phenomenon being investigated » (Howard-Payne, 2016). This stance acknowledges the major role of the researcher, who while striving to be neutral, should recognize his/her history, experiences and existing theoretical knowledge as his/her background inevitably colors the interpretation. However, the concept of Grounded theory, through its principle of constant comparison, permits to produce findings that do not simply confirm the preconceived notions, but rather generate new concepts and explanation of the phenomenon under study (Howard-Payne, 2016). Thus, the author of this study is aware of her particular sensitivity to discrimination issues through previous experiences in working with children under three years of age. Furthermore, the background of the author in welfare state theory and issues of childcare has been laid out in the first part of this study. This partial review of

the literature before beginning the analysis is in line with the concept advocated by Strauss (Uquhart, 2017).

In their 1967 work, Strauss and his colleague developed the notion of theoretical sensitivity. However, Strauss along with Corbin developed this notion in establishing the principle that the broader conditions affecting the phenomenon (economic conditions, cultural values, political trends) must be integrated into the study (Corbin et al, 1990). It appears crucial as concepts and theories are embedded in history, eras, political settings who should be taken into account (Howard-Payne, 2016). This conditional batrix was partly done in part 1 though the scope will be further narrowed in the subsequent section (B) when delimiting the sample universe.

3. Procedures of Grounded Theory Method

The key tenet of Grounded Theory Method is the theoretical sampling: the decision where to sample from next is entirely based on analytical grounds (Robinson, 2014). According to the founders of Grounded Theory: « Theoretical sampling is done in order to discover categories and their properties and to suggest interrelationships into a theory » (Glaser et al, 1967). Hence, each interview done will be directly analyzed and the new questions emerging from the analysis will direct to the next childcare center to be taken into account to ensure the comprehensive nature of the concept developed.

Once the data is collected, the coding process begins. To ensure that concepts derive from the data and not from the literature, it is coded « bottom-up ». The first step is to code line by line and move from very descriptive codes to more analytical ones. The second step is axial coding, as only the codes are retained that are relevant for the research problem. The third phase is selective coding, when the different codes are related to each other in order to create concepts and establish new connection to make ideas relevant (Urquhart, 2017). This process is led by constant comparison that work as checks and balances to help control for bias (Corbin, 2017). The data gathering stops when one concept is « saturated ». Saturation « occurs only when each category is fully developed in terms of its specific properties and dimensions in as much as possible within the limits of this study » (Corbin, 2017).

B. Selecting cases

1. Conditional Matrix: the Berliner Context

Berlin being a city-state with a population of 4 million, the condition to enroll a child is rather similar between all the parents, and does not depend on living either in a city or in the countryside. The Berliner childcare system is characterized by no fees, the obligation for parents to get a childcare voucher, a considerable shortage of slots and last but not least, a significant attendance

gap between IB and non-IB children. Those different characteristics will be investigated to ensure a thorough understanding of the background.

a. Child-care voucher

The general framework for childcare is set by the Federal law in the Social Code (*Sozialgesetzbuch VIII*). This framework is supplemented at the level of each Land by the Child Day Support Regulation (*VoKitaFöG, Kindertagesförderungsverordnung*). The *VoKitaFöG* regulates the procedure for ensuring that availabilities in daycare facilities are available in line with the demand and lays out the day-care voucher system of Berlin (Berliner Senat). In Berlin, children are automatically eligible for a voucher up to 7 hours a day when they turn one year old. It can be extended to 9 hours and be granted before they reach their first birthday if both parents are in need because of employment or training. The parents have to apply for a childcare voucher at the Youth Welfare Office of their neighborhood at the earliest 9 months and at the latest 2 months before the start of the desired funding. While they automatically get the 5-7 hours a day voucher, they have to provide a proof of full-time employment to have a 7-9 hours a day voucher. While the Youth Welfare Office can provide advice to parents concerning public day-care facilities, parents are encouraged to apply at other facilities that also accept daycare voucher, as there is an important shortage of daycare slots in Berlin. In that case, they are not limited to their district but can look beyond.

b. Independent daycare and public daycare

There are different types of daycare in Berlin: *Kita*, which is the general term for any type of preschool or daycare facility and *Kindertagespflege*. The latter is either conducted in the family or at the facility of a day-mother (*Tagesmutter*) or day-father (*Tagesvater*), who can only care for up to 5 children. However, this is a marginal form of daycare, as in Berlin less than 3% of children attend a *Kindertagespflege*. Thus, we are going to focus on the former: the *Kita*.

There are 3 types of *Kitas* in Berlin: independent *Kitas*, public *Kitas* or private *Kitas*. The day-care voucher can be used for all three forms but private *Kitas* will mostly charge parents a fee up to a few hundred euro and are also very scarce in Berlin (less than 2%) (Destatis, 2019). Independent *Kitas* are privately run and publicly founded through the vouchers. In Independent Kitas or Public Kitas, currently only children born between 1st October 2016 and 1st August 2018 still pay a fee. Parents of children born after 1st August 2018 do not pay any fee except for the *Verpflegungspauschale* or food allowance of €23 per month, a contribution that is provided by the Youth Welfare Office when the parents are welfare beneficiaries. In line with the German average, the independent *Kitas* surpass the public *Kitas* with 11,9% of *Kitas* being public (33% in Germany) and 88,1% of *Kitas* independent (67% in Germany) (Destatis, 2019). Thus, the sample will have to integrate at least one public *Kita* to respect the proportions of public and independent *Kitas* in Berlin.

c. Shortage of spots

Another important feature is the important shortage of slots. While 44% of children under three years attended a day-care center in 2018, 59% of parents declared the need of a spot. This means that approximately 2 500 children whose parents hold a day-care voucher did not attend *Kita* that year (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2019). The situation is serious as of the 174 279 available *Kita* spots with an operating license, only 163 717 could be filled due mostly to staffing gaps. Indeed, in 2018 every fourth apprentice dropped out. According to calculations by the Bertelsmann Foundation, an additional 11 900 full time employees would be needed to both fill the gap and provide adequate caring (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2019).

d. Composition of the childcare centers

The participation gap of children in Berlin with a migration background corresponds to the rate at Federal level. In 2017, 34,7% of IB children under three were enrolled in a daycare, compared to 49,1% of non-IB children. While statistics for 2018 and 2019 are not yet available, it is reasonable to assume that no drastic changes have taken place as the skill-shortage is still strong. Looking at the composition within *Kitas*, almost 29% of the children under three in day-care centers have a migration background. 5% of them speak mainly German in their family, 24% speak primarily another language at home.

84% of the children under four years of age who were cared for in a daycare centre in 2018 were admitted before their second birthday in the currently visited daycare centre. This share is 65% for IB children. A higher proportion of these children are two (28%) or three years old (7%) at the start of the care. For non-IB children, those numbers are 12% and 3% respectively. Hence, in Berlin, IB children are slightly older than non-IB children when they are admitted to a daycare centre. In slightly more than half of all day-care centers in Berlin (51%) the proportion of children with a non-German family language is less than 25% (nationwide: 71%). In these daycare centers, the majority of children speak predominantly German at home. In contrast, there are more day-care centers in Berlin compared to the Federal level, where the proportion of children with a non-German family language is between 50% and less than 75% (17% in Berlin compared to 8% nationwide).

2. The Sample Universe: two districts in the north of Berlin

Defining a sample universe drawn not in a probabilistic or statistic manner is of significance for the validity and is paramount to the generalizability of a study (Curtis et al, 2000). Thus, it is important that in the frame of this study in Berlin, the *Kita*s invested are not chosen randomly. The sample should be heterogeneous as a commonality found across a diverse group of cases is more likely to be a widely generalizable phenomenon than a commonality found in a homogeneous group of cases (Robinson, 2014). Analyzing the Microsensus from 2018 (Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, 2019), each district was considered along several criteria: Percentage of people with a migration background and foreign nationals, percentage of people in

good, middle and simple residential area and last but not least medium age (the average of mothers at the birth of a child being 31,6 in Berlin, too 'old districts' that might have less kids under three should be excluded). The goal is to have one district with a high proportion of people with a migration background, one district with a high percentage of people living in a simple residential area, one with a high percentage of people living in medium to good residential areas. Due to time constraints, only two districts will be chosen. Thus, we are looking for two districts that might match these criteria.

The districts considered are the 12 official districts of Berlin: Mitte, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, Pankow, Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, Spandau, Steglitz-Zehlendorf, Tempelhof-Schöneberg, Neukölln, Treptow-Köpenick, Marzahn-Hellersdorf, Lichtenberg and Reinickendorf.

-> <u>Different categories in Berlin</u>

Category	Highest percentage of people with a migration background	Lowest percentage of people with a migration background	Berlin average
District	**Mitte** (50,8%) Neukölln (49,3%	Treptow-Köpenick (12,3%) **Pankow** (18,5%)	31,4 %
Category	Highest percentage of foreign nationals	Lowest percentage of foreign nationals	Berlin average
District	**Mitte** (32,06%) Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg (25,6%)	Neukölln (7,7%) **Pankow** (12,9%)	18,4 %
Category	Lowest percentage of Germans without a migration background	Highest Percentage without a migration background	Berlin average
District	**Mitte** (49,2%) compared to all other districts by far	Marzahn-Hellersdorf (87,7%) **Pankow** (81,5%)	68,6 %
Category	Lowest medium age	Oldest Medium age	Berlin average
District	Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg (37,8) **Mitte** (38,9) **Pankow** (39,7)	Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf (45,5) Treptow Köpenick (45,0)	42,7 %
Category	Highest percentage of the population in Simple Residential Areas (*einfache Wohnlage)*	Lowest percentage of the population in Simple Residential Areas (*einfache Wohnlage)*	Berlin average

District	Neukölln (86,6%) **Mitte (68,8%)** Spandau (63%)	Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf (4,4%) Steglitz-Zehlendorf (6,6%) **Pankow** (22%)	40,60 %
Category	**Highest Percentage of the Population in medium Residential Areas (*Mittlere Wohnlage*)**	**Lowest Percentage of the Population in medium Residential Areas (*Mittlere Wohnlage*)**	**Berlin average**
District	Treptow-Köpenick (61,2%) **Pankow** (59,3%)	Neukölln (13,8%) **Mitte** (24,3%)	43,09 %
Category	**Highest Percentage of the Population in good Residential Areas (*Gute Wohnlage*)**	**Lowest Percentage of the Population in good Residential Areas (*Gute Wohnlage*)**	
District	Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf (67,1%) Treptow-Köpenick (49,2%)	Marzahn-Hellersdorf (4%) Lichtenberg (4,2%) **Mitte** (6,8%)	28,6 %

Simple Residential Area / Medium Residential Area/ Good Residential Area[1]

Pankow and Mitte, while not being always at the lowest or the highest of the different categories, are the two districts that appear in every category and thus are the districts where different *Kitas* will be chosen to conduct the interviews. As both Pankow and Mitte are quite large districts, two neighborhoods within the district with a similar population density will be chosen. The two neighborhoods corresponding to these criteria are Gesundbrunnen (Mitte) and Weißensee (Pankow).

The two districts are marked in red in the following maps[2]:

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[1] **Simple residential area**: Areas of the inner city with predominantly closed, highly dense development with very few green and open spaces, mostly unkempt streets and poor building condition.
Medium residential area: Areas of the inner city area with predominantly closed, highly dense development with normal streetscape, good building condition with few green and open spaces. Average shopping possibilities, good traffic connections.
Good residential area: Areas of the inner city with open and green spaces, well-kept streetscape, very good traffic connections, good to very good shopping possibilities, quiet living situation and good image.

[2] Both cards and graphics are screenshots from the following website : https://www.citypopulation.de/de/germany/berlin/admin/ (Visited on the 6th of April 2020)

GESUNDBRUNNEN

WEIßENSEE
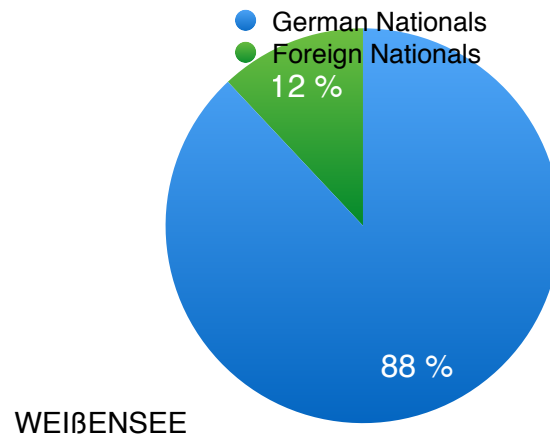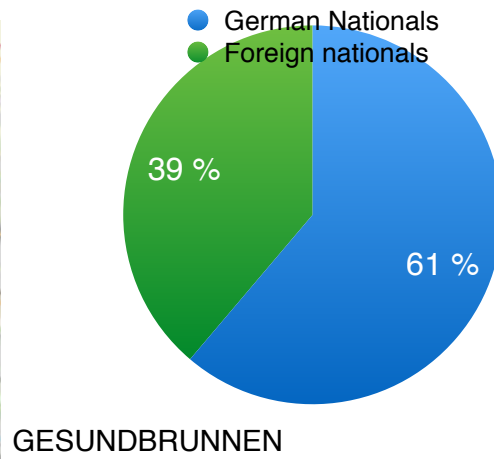
The Sample Size is not defined yet as it will depend on the theoretical saturation.

One *Kita* will be picked in each district and starting from the analysis of the data gathered in these institutions and new questions emerging, other *Kitas* will be picked that might provide answers due to their characteristic. Besides, while choosing where to draw data next from, at the end at least two *Kitas* should be public, one in the « Weißensee Sample » and one in the « Gesundbrunnen Sample ».

C. Semi-Structured Interviews

The interviews are semi-structured interviews and follow a general interview guide. A general interview guide with open-ended questions permits the interviewee to fully disclose his or her point of view and at the same time ensures that the same areas of information are covered in each interview (Turner, 2010). The strength of this type of interviews is that it allows both consistency and flexibility.

Two pilot test were conducted beforehand to determine flaws, limitations and weaknesses within the interview design. One of the pilot test was conducted with a young kindergarten teacher who just founded his own kindergarden and one with a director of kindergarden with a longer experience. The test permitted to adjust the questions and to comprehend the important issues by observing how they responded to the subjects raised and to discuss with them about how the interview went. The main issue being to avoid imposing migration as the only possible source of challenges, as

kindergarten teachers might feel than either lower-class or upper-class children and parents are also difficult to relate to for various reasons. The general interview guide can be found in Annex A. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 60 minutes each and were transcribed *verbatim* the same day or the day after they were recorded.

III. Results

In this part the results of the coding will be showed. Firstly, a very brief overview of the main characteristics of the childcare centers is given in order to give the reader a grasp of where the interviews took place. Secondly, the different steps of the coding procedure (open-coding, axial-coding and selective coding) will be displayed.

A. The childcare centers

District	Number of children under three	Number of children in total	Number of staff	Type of Childcare center
Gesundbrunnen 1	24	66	15 (13 kindergarten teacher, 2 trainees)	Public
Gesundbrunnen 2	10	37	12 (4 kindergarten teacher, 5 social assistant, 2 trainees, 1 intern)	Independent
Gesundbrunnen 3	10	25	5 kindergarten teacher	Independent
Gesundbrunnen 4	20	125	21 (9 being only part time)	Independent
Gesundbrunnen 5	26	140	24 (19 kindergarten teacher, 1 social assistant, 2 trainees, 2 interns)	Independent
Gesundbrunnen 6	10	30	10 (9 kindergarten teacher, 1 trainee)	Independent
Weißensee 1	70	140	28 (22 kindergarten teacher, 4 trainees, 2 interns)	Independent
Weißensee 2	30	110	24 (20 kindergarten teacher, 4 trainees)	Independent
Pankow (District next to Weißensee) 3	55	148	24 (could not say how many fully-trained teachers)	Public

Weißensee 4	15	35	10 (7 kindergarten teacher, 2 trainees, 1 intern)	Independent

B. The Coding process

1. Open-Coding

The first step of the iteration was to divide each interview in chunk to make line-by-line coding more manageable given the extent of the interviews recorded. Only the chunks that made sense to the analyzes regarding the research question were coded. In total 82 codes were identified throughout the interview with an occurrence of 600 codes. These 82 codes were regrouped in 4 code families. A code family is an overarching theme under which several analytical code can be regrouped and is broader than the first code. These 4 families were the following:

- Vocation
- Skill shortage
- Parental dedication
- Formal admission criteria

2. Axial coding

Axial coding can be used to assemble the data from the open coding in another way and thus add more depth to the developing concepts and theories (Prichard et al, 2016). Essentially, the axial coding as understood by Strauss and Corbin is looking at causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies and consequences (Urquhart, 2017). Thus the coding families are investigated in the light of the research question to understand the process and structure that surrounds the different categories. The codes with the highest number of occurrences were determined to be major contributors to potentially explain the low enrollment rate of IB children. Validity was ensured through constant comparison as the code families were constantly related back to the interview transcript.

a. Vocation

The vocation theme is one of the central elements of this study. Major areas that participants disclosed were related to their passion of teaching children under three years old: (a) Social components of the profession, (b) Making children fit for school, (c) Individual care at eye level, (d) Strengthen personality of the children, (e) Communicating fundamental values, (f) Love for children, (g) Provide them affection, (h) Social vein, (i) Equal opportunity for every child. The total number of mentions of these codes in all interviews was 255.

When asked about their biography, the directors of the childcare centers all described themselves as very 'social' persons, who like to be around people and enjoy caring for them. They described it as a 'natural' quality they did not have to learn, but rather something inherent to their character.

They emphasized that they chose their job out of love for children, that this was their central motivation. According to these childcare directors, children are easily influenced and from that stems a great responsibility toward them and their parents. They emphasized the 'care' aspect of their work rather than the educational one. Many of them said that the most crucial goal was to make the children feel safe, so that they have a good start in life and become ready for school. Making them 'ready for school' was a recurring theme, but they did not mean readiness in terms of cognitive skills but of socio-emotional ones. They see their role as helping the children develop their character, become self-confident and self-reliant, as well as able to navigate the school environment when they are six. They also declared teaching children values they feel are essential: empathy and compassion. Most of them insisted on the term 'values'. They also expressed a high standard in caring for each child individually, in meeting each child in a proper way to respect his or her pace, his or her development, the different feelings and needs he or she might have.

To conclude, they expressed a strong sense of identification with their profession and set a high standard for themselves concerning meeting children's needs individually and supporting their socio-emotional development.

b. Skill shortage

Skill shortage was one major theme that director of kindergarten teachers expressed to be in contradiction with their high standards. Major areas that were discussed in relation to skill shortage included : (a) conflict between education and care, (b) Higher effort demanded when working with children of non-German origin, (c) Society's expectation, (d) Adaptation to non-skilled teachers, (e) Frustration, (f) Unrealistic task given by political level, (g) Social justice, etc. The total number of mention of these codes was 226.

The statement of high standards was intermingled with expressions of frustration because they felt they could not live up to those standards. According to the directors, they lack support from political authorities (from the Berliner Senat) to resolve the skills shortage. They are increasingly obliged to rely on part-time workers or apprentices to fill in the gaps. Besides, by law, apprentices do not have the right to perform specific tasks, like accompanying the children when they play outside. In some childcare facilities, half the staff consisted of part-time workers and apprentices. One interviewee stated that due to the lack of experts, she saw candidates taking the exam to become kindergarden teachers who were in her opinion clearly unfit to work with toddlers and would not have been considered without the skill shortage.

When asked about why they think fewer people aspire to work in childcare centers, the directors of childcare centers referred to the inadequate and low salary and the hard work. They also expressed the view that, as a profession, childcare was not 'valued' in the education system and society in general. One said that it was tough to retain young apprentices and that some of her colleagues already experienced burnouts. They feel that, because of this shortage, they do not have the time to interact with children individually as they first have to perform basic tasks: feeding, washing, ensuring that no one gets hurt.

What is particularly interesting is that this frustration also derives from a strong sense of social justice. All persons interviewed agreed with the idea that a childcare center could be a place of social integration, especially for IB children. However, most of them said that while they would love to be able to care for more children who do not speak German at home they cannot do so due to the skill shortage. The standard argument was that if they took more of these children, the overall quality would suffer, and they would not be able to care appropriately both for the children they already cater for and for the IB children. Moreover, some of them said that during the arrival of migrants in 2015, they were confronted with traumatized children. Most of them did not know how to care appropriately for them. They did apply for programs in order to get the help of education workers trained in integration issues, but no one came due to the skill shortages. According to them they had to resort to 'learning by doing.'

Seven of them described admitting immigrants in their centers as a moral dilemma. In one childcare facility, the interviewee said that out of experience, she did not accept more than two children who did not speak German at home in a group of ten children. Three out of the ten interviewed expressed that this was also true in the case of disadvantaged children with social problems, but that in this case, at least, there was no language barrier. One half said that working with parents with an immigrant background was very challenging, as they have lots of different demands and conditions that the staff cannot fulfill.

To conclude, they state that the skill shortage prevents them from accepting more IB children, especially if they do not speak German at home. Last but not least, one of the directors interviewed said that behind closed doors, kindergarden teachers admit that they prefer to take 'German' kids from middle-class families as they are easier to care for.

c. Parental dedication

One minor theme was parental dedication. Major areas discussed in relation to parental dedication included : (a) Socio-economic background of parents, (b) Relationship of trust, (c) Attitude of the parents, (d) dichotomy good migrant/ bad migrant, (c) Language, (d) Interest in the Concept of the *Kita*, (e) Willingness to participate. The total number of mention of these codes was 103.

The contact with the parents of children aged one to three was described as being central by all the directors of childcare centers. Most of them expected parents to be engaged in, or help with, the preparation of festivities. One interesting point is that the example given in Weißensee was that parents were expected to help during the Christmas preparations (baking a cake, reading a Christmas story to children, decorating the Christmas tree). This could be a barrier for parents with a migrant origin due not only to linguistic problems but, for those with a non-Christian background because they might not wish to participate. However, in the *Kitas* in Wedding, different festivities happened to include all the different cultures. Parents could come and bake, sing a song, or tell a story from their country of origin at different religious festivities (Christmas, but also the end of Ramadan or Hanukkah). Thus the childcare centers in Wedding were much more inclusive.

As every childcare center has a specific program and curriculuum, many expected that parents would be proactive and inform themselves beforehand and adhere to it. Thus, not only do they have to demonstrate that they are interested in having a childcare spot for their child but they also have to justify why they have chosen a specific childcare center over another. Some childcare centers invited parents beforehand to discuss their motivation with them and to get to know them before deciding. Other centers preferred parents to call to apply for their child while others preferred an email or even had an online application system. Five of the childcare centers expected parents to call several times to demonstrate their willingness. Others preferred that the parents wait for their call.

Most directors of childcare centers mentioned that the parents who do not speak German always brought a translator with them. Although this reveals the importance of the linguistic barriers, the presence of the translator was considered a good indicator of parents' involvement. In the interviews, directors several times made a difference between 'good migrants' that bring a translator and try to learn German quickly and 'bad migrants' who do not bring a translator and do not try to be in close contact with the kindergarten teacher.

To conclude, parental dedication is an informal criteria that appears to be central in the decision-making process of directors of childcare centers.

d. Formal admission criteria

When asked about the decision-making process to integrate children in the *Kita*, 4 criteria were always put forward : (a) Siblings, (b) Gender, (c) Age, (d) Hours on the childcare-voucher. The total number of mention of these codes were 16. To simplify we will examine then one by one:

• Childcare vouchers *(Kita-Gutschein)*

In Berlin, the first condition that parents must meet to apply for a childcare spot for one of their children is possession of a childcare voucher, whose functioning was expiated in section II.B.1.a.

Because in Berlin, people with a migration background more often hold part-time jobs or are unemployed, IB children are more likely than German children to get a 5 to 7 hours voucher (Seifert et al, 2019). This type of voucher can be a barrier to get a spot, especially in a small *Kitas*. Indeed, the directors interviewed in smaller centers (20 to 60 children) confirmed that they prefer to take children with 7 to 9 hours vouchers as they get more money from the Senat this way. Besides, when a child leaves for school and he or she had a 7 to 9 hours voucher, then they said that they need a new child with a 7 to 9 hours voucher to prevent cutting hours for one kindergarten teacher. This is also the case in the bigger childcare centers, although because of their size these centers manage to keep a balanced mix between 5-7 hours vouchers and 7-9 ones.

• Siblings *(Geschwisterkinder)*

Another criterion, which seems quite sensible, is that all the childcare centers studied give siblings priority over other children. This rule is not imposed by political authorities but applied to avoid

parents the practical problems involved in taking to, and picking of, their children from two different centers. Again however, this sensible rule is also a barrier for families with a migration background. Migrants who arrive in Berlin might have difficulties to find a childcare spot, as their children are not in the priority line. In two of the childcare center studied, all the spots for the following year were already reserved for siblings (in one case, 20 spots and in the other 15 spots). In one childcare center, the director said that sometimes they have families who stay for over ten years, as they have two to three children. Thus, it is hard for 'new Berliner' to find a spot. While this concerns all new parents, not just those with a migrant background, it adds up to other barriers for the latter.

Other criteria are the age and gender of the children. This generally does not represent a barrier for IB children to get a spot except maybe in the case of Turkish boys who were described in three childcare centers as being especially « difficult to handle.» Interestingly enough, this assertion was only made in childcare centers, which did not have any Turkish boys.

3. Selective coding

Selective coding consists in scaling up into the categories that are relevant for the research problem (Urqhhart, 2017). Put differently, it is the process of choosing one code family or category as the core category and then relating all other categories to the core (Prichard & Swezey, 2016). According, to Urquhart, there should only be one category chosen at the end, a category that is an overarching theme (Urquhart, 2017). However, after having carefully considered the data two core categories were developed. Both are substantial to answer the research question. Thus the first category is: 'Directors' definition of their profession, working conditions and moral dilemmas' and includes both the code family 'Vocation and skill-shortage'. Skill-shortage is strongly connected the vocation of the kindergarden teachers as it creates a moral dilemma. As we will develop in the next section, this core category can be related to the theory of organizational commitment.

The second category concerns the 'Formal and informal admission criteria as barriers for migrant parents'. Indeed 'formal admission criteria' and 'parental dedication' are two sides of one coin, the latter being an indirect admission criteria. As we are about to see, this second core category can be linked to the literature about the supply side of school choice theory.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Directors definition of their profession, working conditions, moral dilemmas and the theory of organizational commitment

As we have seen in the part about axial coding, Kindergarten directors experience a strong bond with the core values of their profession and identify with it to a great extent. They highlight three characteristics. First, the sense of responsibility towards the children put under their care. Second, their love for children and their ease to be around them. And last but not least the awareness of the social relevance of their profession, as they participate in shaping the child's future life both in terms of learning capacities and emotional stability.

> *« To prepare them for life. I believe that our main task is to strengthen the children in their own personality so that they are strong enough to enter school, to say 'I am able, I can sit down, I can unpack my things, I can prepare myself, I can block out my neighbour when he does something stupid, I can still hear the teacher. And I can take care of myself, because I know that I can do that, I am strong, so in principle I am not a little lamb but a lion and I can do all that'. So being self-confident and secure is the point. » (Pankow)*

1. The different dimensions of organizational commitment

The description of their profession as vocation seems to resonate with the theme of commitment raised in literature. Researchers in education point out that emotional connection to their job and their students is essential for teachers, as compared with other professions, considering the fact that educators tend to perceive above average stress and thus need a strong commitment to their job to stay in it (Schreyer et al, 2015). This perception of stress was confirmed during this field study.

> *« It is rather the case that you can hardly catch your breath in the daytime and of course the paperwork has become much more in the last few years, the requirements simply become more and more.» (Pankow)*

> *« (…) because the lack of personnel is always so great and the children have to be looked after, so that the colleagues also have to do a lot in between, and often they have to sit down at home to do paperwork and that should not really be the case. » (Pankow)*

The theme of organizational commitment became central for sociology since the seminal work of Howard Becker « Notes on the concept of commitment » (Becker, 1960). His aim was to understand the origin of consistency of behavior. In his theory of the genesis of commitment he stated that commitment « arises through a series of acts no one of which is crucial but that taken together constitute for the actor a series of side bets of such magnitude that he finds himself unwilling to lose them » (Becker, 1960). His side bet theory, however, is hotly debated due to lack

of empirical support as it refers to « basically anything of importance that an employee has invested such as time and effort or money that would be at lost or devalued at some cost to the employee if he or she left the organization » (Wallace, 1997). However, the theme of commitment as explanation for consistent behavior was further developed most prominently by Meyer and Allen. They identified different mind-sets presumed to characterize what binds an employee to its organization: Affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Allen, Meyer, 1996). Below, the different ways in which these forms of commitment mirror the commitment the directors of kindergarten expressed during the interviews are investigated.

a. The affective dimension of commitment

The affective dimension of commitment is characterized by an emotional bond between the employee and the organization/profession because he/she identifies strongly with it (Storey, 1995; Allen, Meyer, 1997, Powell, Meyer, 2004). The employee stays in the organization because he/she 'wants to' (Meyer, Allen, 1997). The strength of this commitment is influenced by the extent to which the needs and expectations of the individual are met. As an antecedent to develop such a commitment, Meyer and Allen pointed to experience where the employee feels psychologically comfortable which enhances his/her sense of competence (Meyer, Allen, 1997). As kindergarten directors mentioned repeatedly, working with children is an innate skill and something they get personal satisfaction from. Their affective commitment is particularly strong.

> *« I have always enjoyed working with people. My mother tells me that I always played with the children in the sandbox and in the digging box, and that I was always the one who said 'oh, let's go like this, let's go like this', I enjoyed that and so did the others. So not only me, they liked to be guided by me and were happy to accept my ideas. You can tell if you have a social streak, so all the people who work with me here also have a touch of the social rather than the mathematical or creative or whatever. » (Gesundbrunnen)*

They identify strongly with the goals mentioned in the Berlin educational program: « To take every child along as a goal of education, upbringing and care, children are given the perception 'I am welcome, I belong, I am seen, I am important here and contribute to what is here'. (…) Give the child emotional security by allowing adults to perceive the child's feelings and expressions (…) Education needs bonding and relationship: educators must show a tangible interest. » (Berliner Senat, 2014).

> *« Simply that the children notice that I like to be with them, do something with them, that they are in good hands here, that it is a place where they can have fun, that I am also there when they are sad, when they have worries, where they can try out many interesting things and where they also learn a lot in everyday life » (Weißensee)*

b. The Continuance dimension of commitment

The continuance dimension refers to investment made in terms of time and money that makes it difficult for an individual to leave an organization. In this type of commitment the employee stays because he/she 'needs to' (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Powell & Meyer, 2004; Wallace 1997). This type of commitment develops in response to conditions that increase the cost of leaving, such as the lack of comparable employment alternatives. While this was not spelled out in most interviews, assuming that this type of commitment has a role is reasonable. A classic full-time training at a vocational school for pedagogy lasts three years. While the trainees are eligible for funding under the Federal Training assistance act (Bafög), like every student, they do not receive a salary during their internships.Moreover, half of the assistance received must be refunded after completion of the training. In addition, some of the directors mentioned that they followed an extra training in accountability or management prior to becoming a director.

> *« From 1997 I was the head of the Kita and in addition to my training as a nursery school teacher, I did an additional qualification of 10 months as a social business administrator. (…) there is always this administrative part, all that is connected to budgeting, that you have to do. That's what they teach you in these 10 months. » (Weißensee)*

Last but not least the employment alternatives are indeed quite slim, as confirmed by Schreyer and Krause (Schreyer & Krause, 2015) working on pedagogical staff in children's daycare centre in Germany.

c. The normative dimension of commitment

The normative dimension is maybe the least obvious of the three dimensions. It refers to a sense of duty felt by the individual, an obligation and loyalty toward their organization (Wiener, Wardi, 1980; Meyer, Allen, 1991; Powell, Meyer, 2004). The employee stays with his/her employer because he/she 'feels they ought to stay' (Allen, Meyer, 1996). This type of commitment develops in early stages of life by socialization experiences that value sustained commitment and disapprove of changing employer quickly and regularly (Allen, Meyer, 1996). This normative commitment also played a role for the directors as they mentioned their responsibility toward the toddlers in their care and towards the parents.

> *«I mean we have the most valuable thing they have here» (Gesundbrunnen)*
> *« We look after the children of the parents for 5 years (…).We have the responsibility for the child and for the parents who get a spot here, to be able to take care of it» (Weißensee)*

Directors are primarily concerned with this responsibility as they know that retaining educators is difficult. The high attrition and burn-out rate is a phenomenon experienced in most western countries (Seog, 2014; Chang-Kreidl & Kingsley, 2014).

2. Teacher's (affective) commitment

Hence, those three forms of commitment are expressed in different ways by the directors of the childcare centers both in Mitte and Pankow. One hypothesis is that educators have stronger commitment to their profession than their individual organization. While this might be true for educators who work directly with children, , the commitment of the directors is more directed towards the organization as they are in constant contact with providers (either the Senate for public childcare centers or independent providers) which are sources of funding but also of values. A study done by Schreier and Krause (Schreyer & Krause, 2015) comes to the same conclusion. During the interview some of them mentioned the specificity of their provider and what makes them special, especially in Weißensee :

> *« We are a XXXX Kita, named after XXXXXX. His philosophy, his work has 5 pillars for the pedagogical support. So for the health prevention, he always says that the best thing you can do against the disease is to do something for your health. So we do something for health, we steel our body, with different pillars, with water applications, with a lot of movement, medicinal herbs and plants that we also grow here » (Weißensee)*

Another central conceptual issue in the three-component model of Meyer and Allen is the level of the organizational commitment. A high level of organizational commitment is associated with a willingness to exert effort and is associated withthe affective dimension. In contrast, a moderate level is associated with the normative dimension as the employees are staying because they should. And a low level of commitment is associated with the continuance dimension, as employees will leave if they get a better offer, although this dimension of commitment has been explored the least in the existing literature (Seog, 2014; Day & Kington, 2005; Pohan et al, 2009; Santoro, 2013; Christophersen et al, 2016).

The affective commitment is much more present in the data than the continuance and normative commitment. The affective dimension is also the most commonly referenced dimension in the literature, as it is key to ensure educational quality (Christophersen et al, 2016). Many researchers are concerned with the high attrition rates of educators in their early years and are trying to figure out how this 'emotional' commitment can be sustained (Seog, 2014; Day, Kington, 2005; Pohan et al, 2009; Santoro, 2013; Christophersen et al, 2016). Considering that educators are rather poorly paid, get little social recognition and that directors suffer the most from work-related stress because of their extra bureaucratic tasks (Schreyer, Krause, 2015), the affective commitment is central to sustain their energy:

« When you introduce yourself and say 'Yes, I am an educator', it is often smiled at, with the motto 'well, that also needs to be done'; on the other hand, you say you are a civil servant and are praised in heaven, so to speak. And I think that is also the point why many people do not do that. So little recognition, little money, an incredible amount of stress, because there are so few educators. You really have to love the job. » (Gesundbrunnen)

According to Chang-Kredl and Kingsley in developed countries the intrinsic (belief that one is meant to be a teacher) and the altruistic (making a social contribution) motivation are higher than extrinsic ones (financial and job security) (Chang-Kreidl, 2014). Olsen also demonstrated that one of the main motivations for entering the teaching field was « sharing a desire to work with and make a difference for youth » (Olsen, 2008).

In a study about teacher identity, Day, Elliot and Kington point out that the « commitment of a teacher involves a cluster of values which, throughout their professional career, regardless of the circumstances, are drivers for commitment and is a stable element of their identity». They state that teachers « care about their students » and that this is the expression of an « emotional commitment » (Day et al, 2005). They highlight that this commitment leads to high standards and high principles. The same standards were repeatedly expressed in the interviews.

« Well, in the old days, you would put all the children around a table and all the children would draw butterflies, so I think that's terrible. The children should find their own way, what they want to do, their preferences and their, yes, just develop at their pace» (Gesundbrunnen).
« But that you just have to look that the children eat, go out a little bit and do not hurt themselves, that can't be it. It really can't be. As a teacher you have to be able to do more, to help them develop, not just the basic things, but develop a relationship, a loving relationship to each child».(Gesundbrunnen)
« We try to ensure that every child has its place with us, that each one is recognized and that we respond individually to their needs. » (Weißensee)

This research focuses on the link between educators' commitment to their profession or organization with their hesitancy to accept students from certain backgrounds. Studies show that teachers prefer teaching students from a middle-class background as they « feel that the form and degree of their work problems vary considerably with the social class background of the students » (Becker, 1952). Howard Becker depicted this clearly in his early work about the career of the Chicago Public school teacher (1952). He describes the horizontal movement of the teacher from one 'slum school' to a school where students have a 'better' social background. This pattern is repeated in the German kindergarten context, when kindergarten teachers decide to take fewer students with non-German backgrounds. They assume due to stereotypes or personal experience

that IB children represent more work and believe teachers do not have capacity to take immigrant students in while maintaining high standards in the classroom. Their far reaching emotional connection and affective commitment to their profession and to their institution would, according to them, be compromised by taking in more 'problematic children'.

> *« So such decisions are of course made here in the leadership team, according to the motto 'who do we take in', so what can we achieve. But we also assume that every child should have the opportunity, but we can't afford it. I know, for example, that I will take in a non-german speaking child if the percentage of 20% of non-german speaking kids is not exceeded. This means that if I take in 10 children in a group, I can take in a maximum of two children who, for example, speak only one language, speak no German at home. That is all we can do. I can take in two families who are in a very difficult position, who have it very hard. You can't integrate more than that. »* (Weißensee)

By refusing certain applications from toddlers with a non-German background, they make a similar individual adjustment than the one done by the Chicago teacher, a strategy that could be considered as a side bet and is adjusted to the context they are in. While the Chicago teachers were constrained by the rotation system, directors of kindergarten feel that they are constrained by the skill shortage.

> *« What we are clearly missing is a supplement for children who are not of German origin, but this supplement is only paid if 40% of the children in the daycare centre are not of German origin. Everything that is below that, there is no supplement and these children require a higher effort, whether it is language, or interpreter or because we have to read, have to go to further education, and I would like to see that we get this support and help from the Senate.*
> *Interviewer: If you would get this help, would it also enable you to take in more of these children?*
> *Interviewee: Definitely. The problem we have in general in the area is that we demand more staff and that there are far too few educators »* (Weißensee).

> *« I think that is actually the biggest challenge, that we are often understaffed, that we have few personnel, that we often don't have qualified personnel, when we have big personnel problems (...) So it is a challenge. Especially when children with no knowledge of German come. We have children who don't speak a word of German, not a single word, and then you have to look at how they are received, but how can we catch them with no capacities ? »* (Gesundbrunnen)

As Seog points out, the « mechanism of teacher commitment is entangled within both the rational (calculative) and human (emotional) dimensions of teachers » (Seog, 2014). The directors, who are in charge of accepting or declining an application, take the perceived capacity of their colleagues

into account. They try to find a way to reconcile their commitment and the reality of what they think they can achieve.

Thus, the high level of commitment of kindergarten teacher in Berlin compromises the number of children with a non-German origin they are willing to accept in the present context, influenced by skill-shortage.

« The biggest challenge... To have sufficient personnel, well-trained staff. Yes, for the colleagues in any case, who want to work with the children very individually, it is a huge challenge every day to manage this, if not all positions can be filled or if colleagues are ill. and the colleagues who are there and want to do a lot and cannot implement their plans or not as individually as they would like and as the children need it, to work with the children. And then to keep the joy of the job and to stay healthy in the job for a long time, that is the biggest balancing act at the moment I see. »

This finding confirms and enriches a recent field-study experiment conducted by Andersen and Guul (2019). Based on the theory that bureaucrats workload is related to discrimination, they demonstrated that when more resources follow the potentially demanding student, teachers are more willing to include these students. In the present stdy, the high workload influences the decision-making of directors of daycare centers and produces statistical discrimination due to their high level of commitment, a concept that will be further developed in the last section.

B. Formal and informal criteria as barriers for migrant parents and school choice theory

During the past decades, an important part of the research about education systems has been devoted to school choice theory. Milton Friedman, the founding father of the 'school choice' concept, advocated the introduction of market mechanism in the school market in his seminal work on Capitalism and Freedom (Friedman, 1962). Since then, public choice theory, as an integral part of the neoliberal approach of public policy, has been a popular prescription in policy making, especially in education reform (Lubienski, 2006). The basic assumption is that quasi-markets are the best system to improve low levels of educational performance (Van Zanten, 2009). Quasi markets are based on three characteristics: parental choice of school, school's financial and pedagogical autonomy and indirect control by the state through the allocation of a per capita budget (Van Zanten, 2009a). Thus, Berlin's childcare system is a quasi-market, as parents can choose the *Kita* freely and are not limited to their district. *Kitas* are financed through the childcare vouchers and the independent schools are free in their pedagogic program, as the Berlin education program is quite flexible. Furthermore, due to the shortage in childcare slots, Berlin is a form of supply-choice model, where schools can choose students (Thomson, 2010).

In this context, one 'logic of action' for *Kitas* is to have an enrollment scheme to attract the 'right' students as « better schools attract brighter students » (Butler et al, 2007). According to Waslander,

an enrollment scheme refers to « school selection policies laying out which students can and cannot enroll » using a set of criteria (Waslander et al, 2010). Schools have a high interest in engaging in some sort of recruitment activities, as pupils are their raw material (to use market-based language) and central as an organizational resource (Van Zanten, 2009). Furthermore, in a competitive enrollment system, schools are likely to put up an enrollment schemes to take advantage of the deregulated environment and attract the best students (Lubienski, 2006).

In the axial coding part of this study, we have seen how formal criteria like « Sibling » or the design of the « child-care voucher » model in Berlin are not neutral and might be detrimental to IB children. While these criteria are part of the enrollment scheme, I argue that some of the informal criteria are also part of the enrollment schemes as a 'shadow enrollment scheme'. This 'shadow enrollment schemes' refers to the different preferences of application expressed by the directors of the centers in the interviews. While these preferences were nowhere to be found on their webpage, they were quite clearly laid out during the interviews. They are part of the shadow enrollment scheme as parents who are able to comply and play by the 'rules of the game', as Lareau and her colleagues call it in their study (Lareau et al, 2016), are more likely to get a spot in a childcare center of their choice. The rules of the game differed for most of the Kitas :

> *« We have about 10 requests a day by phone, by mail or personally. But we really have a preference when the parents come directly to us and not just send a mail. » (Gesundbrunnen)*

> *« So we already have a waiting list, and then we always tell the parents to get in touch with us at regular intervals, so that we simply have an overview and don't have to inform every parent, even those we cancel, that's just too much effort, and then we just look at who has signed up regularly » (Gesundbrunnen)*

> *« When we consider requests, we look if people have registered, that is, who have already gone through a certain procedure, who have registered, if they report back at the end of the year that they are still interested. » (Pankow).*

Another 'rule of the game' concerns the timing of application. While there are no official application deadlines, timing is a crucial component of a successful application:

> *« Now the list is always full, so now at the moment you should sign up for a spot when you are pregnant, when you are like 5 months or 6 months. Before the baby is even there. We also joke when the parents come, we say 'please come the moment you plan of maybe having a child'. But sometimes I feel like it's not a joke. » (Gesundbrunnen)*

« I make the selection in March. Because the parents are all standing there and want a place, and 'when will you decide', and I always say March, and then the parents can call me and ask if it works or not, and then I always say yes, they get a place or no. But if you sign up after well February or January, then you get in the waiting list but not for this August, the August after that, a year after. You should sign up earlier, really.» (Weißensee).

« I have the list of people who applied online and parents can apply until June, maybe July. Then I have to make the decision, I cannot wait longer, really. I know how many kids are going to leave for school and so how many little ones I can take, how many slots I have » (Gesundbrunnen).

These multiple rules concerning the preferred mode of contact foreach *Kita* and informal application deadlines play a crucial role in the likeliness or not to get a spot, depending on the ability of the parents to know and apply those rules. At the end of this section, we will analyze how that might be creating inequality for IB children.

The second 'logic of action' pointed at by literature concerns the diversification of programs. According to Waslander and her colleagues, schools are likely to «offer programs middle-class parents find more desirable». While the position of the school in the local hierarchy can lead to different curricular offers, that was not the case for the Childcare centers in Weißensee (High end of the local hierarchy) and Gesundbrunnen (Middle to low on the local hierarchy). The only noticeable and probably influential difference was that Childcare centers in Weißensee tend to have an outside playing field attached to the Kindergarten (5 out of 5), which wasn't the case in Gesundbrunnen, where the kindergarten teacher had to take the children to a public playground (3 out of 5).
The childcare centers in Gesundbrunnen and Weißensee each organize their pedagogical offer around a specific program:

« Every daycare centre in Berlin has its own concept, and there are very different ideas about how daycare centers are structured. For us, it's all about the situation-oriented approach. That is, that we don't plan projects half a year in advance and plan certain topics, but that we look at what the children are currently interested in, which topics they find exciting and then plan their daily routine or plan the week accordingly. But always depending on what interests the children at the moment. If the children need exercise, we don't stay indoors but go outdoors. » (Gesundbrunnen).

Some centers organized their groups in mixed-age groups, while some had nest groups for the under three:

« We do not mix the ages. That means that when the children are very small they come into the nest group and then into mixed-age groups when they are over three » (Weißensee).

« That's why we work in our daycare center in mixed-age groups. So we don't have groups only for small, only for medium, only for large, but our groups are always from one year to school. And then the groups are between 13, 14 children and then there are two one-year-olds, two-year-olds, three-year-olds, four and five, so that they can learn from each other by doing it. And the big ones learn again from the little ones because they teach them. » (Weißensee).

« Interviewer: Are your groups mixed-age?
Interviewee: one group from 1 to 3 years and one group from 3 to school entry, depending on the age. It's just, it is better for the smaller ones to have their little group and for the older ones to be able to be by themselves and interact» (Gesundbrunnen).

Other centers introduced flexibility around nap-time:

« Right now we have a conceptual change, we decided to change our sleeping mode. Before all the 3-years had to take a nap after lunch. No we leave that up to discussion, because children should be able to participate in their everyday life. So they can decide what they consider is best for them. They take responsibility for their day and their experiences. It's an important issue. » (Gesundbrunnen)

Or changed the organization of the rooms:

« So our concept is to have a free flow. We have no group rooms in the sense that in everything is in a room : i.e. puzzle, painting, equipment. Instead, we have functional rooms, which means we have a construction room, a creative room, and a room for rule games and role-playing. The children move freely between them, it is important for them, as to have rules and be able to choose ». (Gesundbrunnen).

However, while they displayed several different concepts, one constant belief across all *Kitas* is that parents should engage with the preschool'sconcept. As found in the axial coding, they expected parents to be able to show interest for their specific concept :

« I'm also checking to see how interested parents are in our program. We are a XXXXXXX daycare centre and the parents have to be interested in this concept, that they say 'I want that for my child' » (Weißensee)

« But we want to see the parents in advance to see if it fits from the feeling and they want to be here because how we do things is right for them. » (Gesundbrunnen)

Thus, it appears that childcare centers respond similarly to schools when they face competition in that they develop external strategies like marketing or covert selection of students. These strategies do create inequality in terms of participation. Indeed, another line of literature in school choice has investigated the effect of school choice in different localities depending on the social class the parents and provides a potential explanation for the participation gap of disadvantaged children and thus also IB children. The common denominator of these studies is that middle-class parents are better equipped with social and cultural capital, two of the driving forces of social reproduction.

Research on classed patterns of childcare has repeatedly shown that middle-class parents devote lots of energy to decide where to educate their kids and what setting is more appropriate (Stefanson et al, 2010; Butler et al, 2007, Ball et al, 2001). It is a way of insuring themselves and their kids against the fear of failing as educational success ensures social reproduction (Vincent et al, 2004). In a study about childcare and British middle class women, Ball and Vincent observed that «as choosers, these women {mothers} are clearly doing all the right things - numerous and repeated visits, collecting information, checking references and using social networks to elicit 'hot knowledge'. All these are fairly classic tactics for operating successfully within a market » (Ball et al, 2001). In this market, they are 'skilled consumers' (Vincent et al, 2010). In addition, they note that while middle class women visit 4 to 5 centers, working class women would often visit 1 to 2 centers, most of the time only until they got a spot (Vincent et al, 2010). All these different steps undertaken by middle class women could be attributed to « investment » and thus be interpreted as a positive sign by childcare directors. More importantly, it demonstrates that these women have the necessary cultural and social capital for navigating the childcare market.

Social capital is the « set of networks to which an individual parent has access in his or her family and community and as the collective capital of relationships of a group or community » (Raveaud et al, 2007). In a study about « The rules of the game and the uncertain transmission of advantage : Middle-class parent's search for an Urban Kindergarten » published in 2016, Lareau, Evans and Yee show that social capital is essential to secure a spot in a childcare center. The bulk of the research has focused on the importance of social capital and how it takes different forms in working and middle-class communities. It has been shown numerous times that middle-class mothers have large networks, composed of weak ties but based on common needs and concerns, where they gain precious information about how and where to secure a spot for their child. Working class mothers, on the other hand, have fewer networks, composed mostly of family members (Vincent et al, 2010; Ball et al, 2001).

Furthermore, Lareau and her colleagues point out the « key role of institutions that create standards where some practices have more value than others » (Lareau et al, 2016). Hence, they suggest that the cultural capital of the middle class is key to be able to comply with the institutional standards and thus to secure a spot. Bourdieu stated that cultural capital plays a central role in the field of education. In this context of school choice, it is also very influential as cultural capital is

« knowledge about the rule of the game because of the familiarity with dominant high-status cultural signals » (Jaeger, 2009).

In this perspective, the expectation of childcare directors that parents should be interested in the program of the childcare center could be detrimental to working class parents. Indeed, middle-class women have the capacity to adapt their behavior to the expectations of the director of childcare centers. For people with an immigrant background these assumptions could be twice as detrimental. First, a large part of the immigrant community belongs to the working class in Germany (Böhmer et al, 2017), so immigrants likely behave more similarly to working class parents than middle class parents in the preschool context. In addition, if both parents are from abroad and do not understand German, they are unlikely to have access to such information. Most websites where childcare centers disclose some of the necessary information are only in German. The website of the public kindergarten from the Senate of Berlin is available in several languages, but the translation is an automatic translation over Google. The French translation was difficult to understand and to navigate. Thus, the external response of the kindergarten to promote their different concepts and the expectation attached to it that parents show their enthusiasm and gather knowledge beforehand is detrimental both to working class parents and migrant parents.

Last but not least, the directors differentiated the willingness of migrant parents based on their ability to bring a translator and to learn German. By doing this, they identified 'good immigrants' and 'bad immigrants'. Parents who showed a willingness to learn the language would be seen as more invested as parents who did not.

> "So we have a Syrian family, so the children learn German quickly anyway, that is unproblematic, and the parents also learned German after one year and then found a job promptly. They were doctors back in Syria. But we also have parents from Tschetschenia for example, they have been in Germany for 7 years, they can hardly speak a word of German. It is difficult to build up a relationship with them if they don't want to be in society » (Weißensee)

> "But I must say, the families we have, most were also very quickly interested in speaking German. They had several children quite often, and the older ones went to school and of course they were quick, they got in very quickly. And of course they translated between us and the parents, so that's what happens. If everyone wants to participate and wants to do so, then it is actually a good thing that works well. It's worse when the parents block and say they don't want something specific. So she {a 2 year old girl from Syria} didn't want certain things, didn't want to eat a lot of things, and she didn't want us to comb her hair at all, she didn't want anyone to touch her hair, and well but certain things are just the way they are. If you come here you have to adapt your way of living » (Gesundbrunnen)

To conclude, school choice literature teaches us that choice is not unfettered (Vincent et al, 2010). Instead, choice among schools can produce specific and pervasive forms of inequity as middle class families have a larger freedom due to their cultural and social capital (Vincent et al, 2010). A thorough analysis of the inequity within the childcare system needs to include both the specificity of the choice offered to parents on the market and social class. We conclude this section with Lubienski, who describes education as a « second-best-market », meaning a sector that exhibit peculiar attributes that resist the application of market mechanism. According to him, the second best aspect of markets in mass education confound and corrupt the competitive incentives promoted through public choice policies (Lubienski, 2006). This analysis thus confirms the theories of school choice literature and its extension to childcare.

C. Indirect Discrimination

1. Statistical discrimination of IB children

The commitment theory and the research on school choice enrich the explanation of the enrollment gap of IB children. The directors of childcare centers are likely to refuse some application of such children due to their commitment to specific definitions of their profession and organization. In addition, the research on inequalities in school choice also enriched the findings by showing that *Kitas* are cherry-picking applicants based on their definition of an 'ideal parent', thus not considering some applications of parents who do not possess the social and cultural capital to understand their 'shadow enrollment scheme'.

In both cases, the application of IB children are more likely to be denied than the application of 'German' parents (more specifically white middle-class parents). Thus, what ties those two explanations together is that IB children are discriminated against. Discrimination is an unfair treatment based on the group, class or category to which that person is perceived to belong. However, in the present case study the discrimination operated is 'indirect'. Indirect discrimination, also referred to as 'statistical discrimination', is a concept that was developed mostly in economics in the 1970's (Bonoli & Hinrichs, 2012). Arrow and Phelps have demonstrated that even if employers have no distaste for some workers, discrimination may arise if some groups are perceived to be more 'risky' than others (Arrow, 1973 ; Phelps, 1972). Since their seminal works on the topic, statistical discrimination has been shown to exist in other areas than the labor, the housing, credit or the online consumer market (Fang &Moro, 2010; Bohren et al, 2019; Bonoli & Hinrichs, 2012; Auspurg et al, 2019). It is not based on racist intentionality, but it might produce the same effect: unequal treatment that adversely affects one or more individuals belonging to a minority group. Thus, indirect discrimination is a treatment, a rule, a practice or policy which appears to be neutral, but has a disproportionate impact on different groups. According to Smith (2014): « discrimination is about more than deliberate or overt action by individual actors and inequality has endemic and institutional dimensions that derive from structural practices within

important societal institutions. Such practices, which may appear neutral, on their face, can create patterns of disadvantageous and discriminatoric effects on members of disfavored groups » (Smith, 2014). The commitment of educators and the childcare choice design of the childcare market lead to indirect discrimination of migrant parents.

2. Inaccurate and accurate statistical discrimination

However, both concepts rely on different assumptions: accurate statistical discrimination and inaccurate statistical discrimination (Bohren et al, 2019). In the case of the discrimination based on commitment, the discrimination seems to stem from rational expectations or correct beliefs rooted in experience. It can be referred as « efficient discrimination » (Bohren et al, 2019) in that it appears to be the optimal response to the conundrum of balancing high caring standards and their social justice values. They make a rational decision based on their experience of caring for a diverse group of children within the constraint of skill-shortage.

In the case of the discrimination in the choosing capacity from *Kitas* however, the discriminations stems from inaccurate beliefs. The directors of *Kitas* assume that parents who cannot comply to their 'shadow enrollment scheme' or understand the 'rules of the game' are not interested and eager to get a childcare spot for their child. That assumption might be wrong as research on the participation gap has demonstrated that migrant parents are as eager as 'german parents' to get a childcare spot (Jessen et al, 2019). That inaccurate belief may be due to the own cultural capital of the director or to a lack of information. As theorized by Bohren, Haggag, Imren and Pope (2019), the directors might misinterpret the motivation of migrant parents. The directors assume that their beliefs of what motivation looks like are accurate.

Differentiating between accurate and inaccurate statistical discrimination is crucial for any policy maker, as designing an effective policy recommendation to reduce discrimination depends on the source of discrimination. While the source is skill-shortage in the commitment issue, the second source is structural inequality. Thus, those two concepts call for two different policy implications, that will be discussed in the conclusion.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This study argues that the enrollment gap between IB and non-IB children under the age of three is the outcome of indirect discrimination stemming from two different variables : 1. The moral dilemma between the organizational commitment of the directors of daycares and the skill-shortage and 2. The formal and informal enrollment criteria that work as barriers for migrant parents. While

most studies only describe the enrollment gap, this study adds to the literature in providing a supply-side explanation of the gap.

This study analyzed the supply-side childcare market of the city-state Berlin in Germany, that is characterized by a shortage of slots and high inequality concerning the enrollment of IB and non-IB children. Based on the proceedings of Grounded Theory, a theoretical and heterogeneous sample of 10 Kitas in two different districts (Mitte and Pankow, more specifically Gesundbrunnen and Weißensee) was chosen and 10 interviews were conducted with the directors of the childcare centers, who are in charge of managing the application of parents for a childcare spot. 2 major categories emerged during the coding of the interviews : 1. Directors definition of their profession, working conditions and moral dilemmas and 2. Formal and informal enrollment criteria. While the discriminating character of the formal criteria were quite forward, the informal enrollment criteria as well as the first category were enriched by two theories.

The theory of organizational commitment and school choice theory informed the findings and showed that migrant parents are discriminated against when applying for a daycare spot. This discrimination has far-reaching consequences for IB children concerning their educational path. Children whose main language at home is not German will most certainly lack language skills. In addition, childcare fosters children's socio-emotional and cognitive development. Thus, to uphold the principle of educational equity and equal opportunities, two policy recommendations are drafted below : a leveling-up offensive (b) and the implementation of a controlled choice model (a). While these two recommendations are based on the results of a local study, many OECD countries experience similar situations (skill-shortage and a school choice model leading to ethnic inequality).

a. The leveling-up offensive

The central challenge in the ECEC system is the shortage of skilled workers. This shortage is creating a considerable amount of stress for the persons already employed in this sector as the child to staff ratio is higher than the recommended target. Policy makers are aware of this issue and in 2019 the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs has announced that it will support the *Länder* and municipalities in recruiting and retaining pedagogical staff through a financial aid (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2019b).

However, this financial aid has a time limit of two years. According to Jörg Dräger and Diakonie Deutschland « the planned funding is too low to attract a substantial number of skilled pedagogical staff to the profession and create incentives to remain in this field of work. » (Pröll, 2019)

To retain and attract more skilled pedagogical staff, daycare centers should be integrated as a central part of the education system. The crucial importance of a high-quality care during the first six years of a child life is widely recognized in social science. This awareness needs to be translated into concrete actions to upgrade the profession. Based on the insights of this study, next to the 'skilled workers offensive', a 'leveling-up offensive' is necessary.

The Leveling-up Offensive

i) Academisation of the profession

University graduates with a degree in social work, educational science or childhood education,

currently make up only 6% of the day-care centre employees. This represents a slight increase of 3 percentage points since 2006. At least one academically qualified specialist with relevant academic qualifications was working in the core pedagogical team in 36% of the day-care facilities in 2018. In 2007, the proportion was 18% (Niedersächsisches Institut für frühkindliche Bildung und Entwicklung, 2019). According to the WiFF (Further education-initiative early childhood education specialists - *Weiterbildungsiniative Frühpädagogische Fachkräfte)* the daycare centre operators have a fundamentally positive attitude towards the new courses of study and consider an increase in the proportion of academics to be desirable and sensible from a professional point of view. In addition, the WiFF's director Dr. Kirsten asserts that « the fact that academics find their place in the facilities is a necessary development in view of the increasing demands on daycare » (WiFF, 2019).

The process of professionalization needs to be deepened. The numbers of university graduates working in daycare centers needs to be doubled by 2030. To reach this goal, the cooperation between professional schools and university needs to be deepened, with the creation of bridges between them. This process of professionalization in early childhood education will help early education professions to gain greater recognition in society.

ii) Adjustment of the salary

As integral part of the education system, the salary of the pedagogical staff of childhood education should be increased. The average starting salary of a childhood educator of € 2.580 compares to € 3.487,17 for a primary teacher, thus a difference of almost € 1 000 €on average (Öffentlicher Dienst, 2019). While these salaries are those for educators in public institutions, most of the independent organizations take it as an orientation. This difference stems from the fact that educators are classified into pay category 6 of the civil service collective agreement (*Tarifvertrag öffentlicher Dienst*) - and primary teachers into 8 or 9. The Pay category 8 or 9 corresponds to a bachelor degree. Thus, through augmenting the university graduates, more educators will move up to the pay category 8 or 9.

This is common in Sweden, France or Finland, where daycare centers are considered educational institutions and educators generally have a university degree. Their salary is based on that of teachers.

It could be easily argued, that the financial cost of this 'leveling-up offensive' represents a too high burden for the public budget. However, it increases the social prestige of the profession and thus will attract more students and trainees. It will ease the skill-shortage, which, according to this study, is a central obstacle for the admission of more IB children. Furthermore, in a long-term perspective, these additional costs should be considered a valuable investment as childcare facilities lay the foundation for a successful school career for IB children by improving their social skills and language abilities. Considering the current underinvestment in early childhood education, this adjustment both in terms of salary and academisation is a step towards more equity.

Education is regulated by the *Länder*. Hence, the federal state has little competencies for implementing more university tracks. However, the 'skilled-workers offensive' studied before shows that the federal state can set the right incentives by funding the *Länder* during the implementation phase.

This recommendation is not likely to be implemented during the current legislative period, ending in September 2021. However, the current minister for Family Affairs, Franziska Giffey (SPD), has called for such a step. In addition, these ideas are advocated by several influential initiatives and organizations. Considering the current situation during the corona crisis, it is likely that a discussion about childcare will play a role during the next legislative period. Indeed, the *Kitas* are closed until August, putting parents in a stressful and complex situation.

b. Controlled choice model

The source of inaccurate statistical discrimination is structural inequality.This inequalityis embedded in « institutional and structural relations, policies and practices » (Smith, 2014). It questions the effects of neutral practices and dominant norms on minority groups (Smith, 2014). Thus, to ensure more equity in the education system, institutional and structural relations have to be reconsidered. In line with the findings in literature, the school choice model implemented within the *Kita* System of Berlin increases educational inequity (Waslander et al, 2010: Lubienski, 2006, Van Zanten, 2009). Therefore, a central policy recommendation should be to change the rules of the game. According to an OECD report on equity in education, the basis structure of the education system affects equity (OECD, 2008).

Therefore one policy recommendation is to implement a design that, while keeping the choice option, prioritizes children with high needs. Parents remain choosers to avoid the flight of middle-class parents to private institutions, which would accentuate segregation within the centers. However, childcare centers do not get to select anymore to avoid « cream-skimming » and further inequity due to informal selection criteria.

Therefore, the central question for implementation is : What kind of policies are needed to ensure ethnic equity in a demand-side-choice setting ?

A choice design that incorporates both of these criteria is the controlled choice model (Musset, 2012; Rossel & Glenn, 1988; Alves & Willie, 1987; Willie et al, 2002; Ehlers et al, 2014; Fiske, 2002). This model seeks to maximize personal choice with a racially, unitary, equitable and educationally enhanced system of public schooling (Alves & Willie, 1987). It has proven its effectiveness most notably in Cambridge (USA), were greater racial exposure was noticed after the introduction. New families visit a central registration area, choose four schools and rank them in order of preference. The districts then assign families to their choices while ensuring that schools reflect the district's ethnic composition (Musset, 2012). The allocation mechanisms and the effectiveness varies depending on the ability of matching parents' preferences for quality schools with a consistent application of priority criteria for disadvantaged students (Musset, 2012).

To support the process, parents should be supported in their choice-making process if needed. Considering the research questions and findings, following criteria have to be included in the allocation mechanism :

1. Siblings, proximity and gender : Those criteria are already included in the enrollment scheme of *Kitas* today. However in the new design, the allocation will be made by the Youth Welfare Office where parents get their childcare-voucher. The children will be assigned according to these criteria to the extent that space is available and that it does not negatively affect the diversity of the school being requested.

2. English language learner status: This status will be attributed by the Youth welfare Office if the main language at home is not German, non regarding the nationality of the parents or the child.

3. SES status : The SES status will be determined by the reduced price on the food allowance of children.

Like in Cambridge, The children will be assigned through an appropriate computer algorithm within the constraints of the existing socioeconomic diversity goals in place. Assignment order is based in each applicant's randomly computer generated number plus applicable preference points. In addition, the Youth and Welfare office will support the parents in making well-informed choices in order to take into account the limitation that certain parents may encounter in making choices and minimize the cost of information acquisition (Musset, 2012).

In the current situation, with an important shortage of slots, there is no guarantee for a child older than one year to get a childcare spot. However, with this policy design prioritizing equity, the chance to of a child to be accepted in a childcare center is not depending upon the social and cultural capital of his/her parents. Policies implementing equity need trade-offs. In the context of Berlin, this policy design will need to be implemented with the first policy recommendation aiming at increasing the pedagogical staff to ensure high quality care. While there is no one-size-fits-all policy, a controlled choice model seems suitable for most school markets where choice is already in place. The ranking system is not a new system, it is already implemented in cities like Soest in North Rhine-Westphalia through a *Kita-Card* where parents can rank up to 3 facilities (Herzog & Klein, 2018). However, the key is to allocate the children according to ethnic and social characteristics to ensure equity. Choice in itself is not inherently beneficial but it can be if it ensures equal access to high-quality education and care for groups that have been historically disadvantaged.

A promising avenue for future research would be to investigate in more detail the enrollment gap by also taking into account the perception of migrant parents. By testing both the supply and the demand side a thorough explanation for the enrollment gap could be made. This would be highly relevant to practitioners, as a better understanding of these processes might improve educational equality in childcare. It would also be profitable for this field of research to distinguish between different types of migrant parents (culture, religion, country of origin-, as it might influence their attendance in day care centers.

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ANNEX A - Interview

The General Guide approach after the two pilot test

1. Presentation of the Research project in following terms : Challenges in daycares in Germany concerning children under 3 years of age.

2. Signature of the consent form concerning the frame of the interview and the anonymity.

3. Factual questions about the work environment: How many children in total ? How many under the age of three ? How many staff members (part-time and half-time)? Does the interviewee also supervise groups him- or herself ?

4. Biography of the interviewee : What motivated him/her to become a kindergarden teacher ?

5. Relation to children : what does the interviewee feels important to transmit to the children ? Is it more difficult with some children, are there any differences ?

6. Relation to parents : is the contact with the parents important ? How does this contact take place ? Are there any differences in the contact between different parents ?

7. Application and selection procedure : criteria used to determine who gets to enroll or not and who doesn't.

8. Integration of people/children with a migration background : would the interviewee consider this an important topic in daycare centers in general ? Can the *Kita* figure as a place of integration ?

9. Advise : What would be one advice, if any, that the interviewee would like to give to politicians concerning daycare structures ?

10. Questions / Recommendations

This design evolved during the collection and subsequent analysis of the data to answer emerging questions, but still covered all those different topics.