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by

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**Title**

The selection of trainees in small and medium-sized enterprises: Integration and exclusion of migrant youth at the transitional stage between school and vocational training in Switzerland

**Abstract**

Successful admission into small and medium-sized enterprises as part of the Swiss vocational training system is essential for integration of migrant youth into work. It is assumed that taking over the companies' perspective allows for better understanding why specific migrant groups are excluded from vocational training, taking into account the operational logic behind selection criteria and procedures in the trainee selection process. Referring to 70 semi-structured interviews with organizational gatekeepers selection processes in small and medium-sized enterprises are analysed using interpretative methods based on an explorative research design. The results show the complexity of logics structuring trainee selection processes: Both operational and personal characteristics of the enterprise and its gatekeepers respectively are used to justify the exclusion of migrant youth from vocational training, showing the sociological challenge to appropriately conceptualize the topic under study. As the study aims to increase companies' awareness for measures to promote integration, the potential success of inclusive policies depends on adequate theoretical insights. Not to prematurely accuse enterprises and its gatekeepers of being racist but rather to discuss their operational and personal anxieties seems to be a promising strategy to increase vocational chances of migrant youth.

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