

Between Headscarf and Ramadan – (Religious)Values in Inter-Cultural Adult-Education

In all our courses and offers we have participants of different cultural and religious backgrounds. The reason: Germany is a country of immigration.

15.3 million people with a migration background live in Germany – these are 18.6 % of the total population in Germany.

Most of the immigrants are from Turkey, Russia and Poland.

Studies say that the immigrants are often less qualified than others: 10% of the immigrants don't have a graduation, a school leaving certificate (in comparison: 1.5% of the German population) and 51% don't have a professional education. (27% of the German)

13% of the immigrants are unemployed (7.5% of the German); and 48.5% are industrial workers (German 24%). Most of the immigrants work in industry, trade or in gastronomy. It's very rare that immigrants work as a public officer or as a clerk.

Because most of the courses we have are for unemployed people, we have a lot of participants with a migration background.

But we have also special courses for people with migration background: For example Integration courses and 'Sprungbrett für den Job' (springboard into the working world)

Integration courses:

New immigrants are obliged to attend an integration course. These courses are obliged since 2005. They consist of a language course with 600 hours and an orientation course organized over 45 hours. Every new immigrant has to take part in such a course. The courses are offered all over Germany in schools like ours. We arranged 20 courses since 2005, working together with the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, three of them for persons who can't read and write. These alphabetization courses are more hours – 900hours. In the courses are new immigrants as well as foreigners with long-term residency in Germany, who are obliged to attend the integration course by the Aliens office or by the office responsible for unemployed benefit. Some foreigners with long-term residency in Germany want to take part of this course and attend voluntarily. But we see that there are great differences between the students. The 6 months are okay for people who have an academic background or who are used to learn in their home country. People who went to school for four or five years, maybe, can't learn the German language in six months. And we diagnosed that people who lived for a long time in Germany make only little progress. Because they speak already German what they need and they talked so many years with their grammar mistakes, so it's very hard to learn and use the right grammar. In our courses are about 10-15 students (in courses for the alphabetization less) and maybe only half of them passes the final examination.

It's a great step in the immigration politic that new immigrants have to learn the language because a condition to take part in a society is knowing the language.

Sprungbrett für den Job

This is a three-months-course for unemployed women with a migration background and who not so highly qualified. The women are disadvantaged relative to the men, because of their lower education and the child education. So this course wants to help women to get a back to a job. Contents are: computer training, writing applications for a job, social competences, woman and job, showing different professions und the conditions to work there, German. After the three months the students make a practical training in a company they choose.

How do we handle cultural differences?

Cultural diversity is an enrichment for our courses. We learn from each other – about culture, religion, traditions. We set value on being tolerant.

The headscarf is for us no problem – everyone is allowed to wear what she wants. But the women themselves find out, that the headscarf is a handicap in getting a new job. This week a Muslim women told me, one reason why she doesn't get a job is her headscarf – even as a cleaner. But to abandon it is no discussion for her – she is too religious and affected by her traditions.

For religious holidays the students get two free days – maybe for Ramadan. But we can't consider if the Muslim students fast during Ramadan – they have to perform the same services like the other students. One woman told me, in Morocco during Ramadan the business life begins at 12 a.m. but we can't consider.... In the most courses the Muslim students bring after their holidays some of the delicious food to share it with the rest of the course.

What we noticed is that students with the same cultural background are often together in the breaks for example. Like people from Russia (or former soviet states) are together, like Turkish people , or Arabian or African.... Maybe because of the language, or they feel together because of the cultural background. But in courses where are many different cultures the people go up to each other rather.