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**Workplace integration of migrant workers and refugees in Germany: similarities and differences**

Germany can look back on a post-war history of migration. The process of integration was more or less successful, however, contrary to recent fears among the public, Western civilization or the German state never have been endangered. Although the number of recently arriving refugees is large, the crucial challenge lies not in the mere figures but in the particular difficulties that arise with the task of integrating refugees into today's labour market.

A successful integration into the world of work depends at first glance on two parties, the refugees and the companies. While the refugees are required to learn German and to gain vocational skills, the companies have to offer appropriate jobs or training opportunities. Concerning workplace integration, a comparison between migrant workers and refugees shows some similarities as well as relevant differences.

Lockwood's (1964) distinction between system integration and social integration can help to differentiate two dimensions of workplace integration: the matching of person and job and the development of social relations between the members of an organization. Internal social integration is always necessary whether there are refugees or migrants involved or not, though diverse backgrounds imply special requirements. Social integration can fail not merely because migrants refrain from assimilation but also because of resentments and hostility by other workers.

Regarding migrant workers, so called 'guest-workers' in particular, the mentioned matching problem was not very pronounced. Migrant workers were either already recruited in their home country by employers shorthanded of workers, or they were using a network of relatives or other compatriots to find a job, sometimes before starting to travel. Labour migration is more or less voluntary and usually planned. This applies even if the home country conditions are markedly below those in the host country. Against such a background the problem of matching is comparably small, because the demand for labour and specific occupations already was a crucial criterion for the decision to migrate. Nevertheless, system integration of migrant workers was not without problems. Due to the shared perception that the migrant workers will stay only few years, it was not seen as a problem that integration happened mostly into the segment of low-skilled labour. While this 'segmented integration' was the internal result, marginalization took place outside the factories by separate accommodation

and clubs, a lack of political rights, and few contacts to native citizens. Many workers stayed and in consequence of the social reproduction of inequality in general and ethnic discriminatory recruitment in particular (Scherr 2015), segmented integration is reproduced mostly also in subsequent generations.

Internal social integration of migrant workers developed positively over the years. Although one can find the same resentments and prejudices among employees as in the society as a whole, internal day-to-day interaction is mostly without both conflicts and pronounced discriminatory behaviour. Social relations are in many companies collegial and friendly, as case study evidence (interviews and surveys with employees) from manufacturing companies has suggested (Schmidt 2006: 84, pp 152). Everyday interactions at work are friendlier than the opinions above one another. While opinions are fed by media discourses and ethnic peers, interactions are led by practical requirements and shaped by experience.

Cooperation is not only required by the work process itself, but has also consequences for the involved persons and their relations. Though cooperation starts as an extrinsic requirement, and friendliness is more pretended than real, encounters do not happen without emotions, as Hochschild's (1983) approach of 'deep acting' has displayed. In order to avoid long-standing dissonance between action and feelings, feigned collegiality turns to felt collegiality. Inevitable cooperation is a good precondition for developing friendly habits. The process of 'deep acting' happens partially 'behind the back' of the workers. Nevertheless, some discrepancies between opinions, action, and feelings remain and cause residual reservations about each other. Therefore, we prefer the term 'pragmatic cooperation' (Schmidt/Müller 2013).

'Pragmatic cooperation' is limited by the socio-spatial boundaries of the workplace. Such boundaries limit collegiality and externalize cultural and political differences. The externalization of difference is not only a shared practice but can be seen also as a general rule supported by both management and works' councils. Externalization relieves the companies from managing diversity but also relieves all employees from legitimizing distinct cultural backgrounds and deviating political opinions.

Allport (1954: 281) states that prejudices may be reduced by equal status, the pursuit of common goals, and 'institutional support (i.e., by law, custom or local atmosphere)' which will lead to common interests and mutual recognition. Pettigrew (1998) completes that positive effects increase with the passage of time. Collective agreements and co-determination support internal rules treating all employees equal, independent of their origin or ethnicity. They also offer an institutionalized form of common interest representation for all employees. We speak of these rules as 'internal universalism' (Schmidt/Müller 2013: 275). 'Pragmatic cooperation' and 'internal universalism' reinforce each other.

However, in large areas of the economy, this type of industrial relations does not exist anymore, because trade unions are too weak to enforce collective agreements and works councils are not installed. Even in the core of manufacturing subcontracted work often undermines the relevance of 'internal universalism', which can fade or collapse if external support weakens and counteracting societal discourses penetrate the social boundaries of the workplace.

Moreover, classical labour migration and today's forced migration differ in relevant aspects. Refugees are (more or less) forced to migrate and hardly prepared for labour market entry in the host country. Although the difference between both groups is empirically not always strict, the ability to plan before making the decision to migrate is a basic distinction between labour migration and forced migration.

Germany has a demand for skilled labour which, as a consequence of demographic development, is likely to increase further, however, supply and demand do not fit in respect to refugees. In consequence, the matching of job and person is not only a question of placement but also one of adaptation, i.e. of learning German and obtaining vocational skills. This situation is further complicated by legally restricted work permissions and the threat of deportation which is a burden for refugees and an obstacle for companies to offer apprenticeships or employment. While the legal framework is rather discouraging and the possibility of segmented integration is restricted today, even the system integration becomes a challenge, because extensive language learning and vocational training are distinctly more needed than in the case of former migrant workers.

Many companies are, fortunately, willing to help refugees by offering internships or introductory vocational trainings (*Einstiegsqualifizierung = EQ*), the latter often take six or twelve months. EQ-measures pursue the objective of preparing for a regular apprenticeship. Because many refugees have little usable work experience for the German labour market, and the language level taught in integration courses is usually insufficient for vocational school (level B1, whereas level B2 is usually needed), EQ-trainings often combine vocational and language learning, sometimes also with cultural learning (Müller/Schmidt 2016). Several companies offer internships and trainings despite having no immediate shortage of applicants. In such cases social responsibility is mentioned as the major motive. This is respectable, however, against a background of market competition, relying on social responsibility limits the volume of integration measures. Though in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) are hit by skill shortages, vocational preparation of this style sets high requirements and is hardly to manage by SME. Smaller companies need support by public institutions. In many cases the agency for employment (BA) is already involved by funding EQ-measures and by searching for applicants. Sometimes measures are otherwise supported (e.g. by a common fund of employers and trade union in the chemical industry).

One should not ignore that not only a number of companies have organized commendable measures of vocational integration, but also that refugees are acting subjects too, and in the long run many of them will find their own way into work and income. Nevertheless, from a societal perspective the matching process is not sufficiently solved. There is still a need to invest in human resources but also for an integrated concept of organizing the matching process. Innovative tracks of apprenticeship are necessary (e.g. new combinations of work and training), i.e. raising the language level to B2, a better coordination among all actors, and a reduction of insecurities concerning the right to stay. The integration of refugees requires both a readiness to be innovative and a considerable amount of patience (Degler/Liebig 2017).

Not only system integration, but also internal social integration will take some time. Because refugees are not allowed to work immediately after arrival and, in due to internships and EQ-measures, are often situated in special roles within workplaces, probably more time is needed

compared to the internal social integration of migrant workers. The integration of refugees can likely show positive results for Germany only in the mid-term.

Although the well-known 'welcome culture' has occurred in companies as well, and staff volunteered for refugees or supported civic initiatives here and there, the rules of 'internal universalism' suggest that affirmative action appears to be unequal treatment privileging refugees. Even if this is true only from a very narrow point of view and the bigger picture reveals that the refugees are in fact the underprivileged, the risk of growing xenophobia and resentments is real in both society and companies.

In several cases companies refrain from replacing EQ-measures for non-refugees by measures for refugees but instead create additional opportunities for refugees 'on top'. Sometimes they add the same number of opportunities for young refugees and children of staff members not provided with apprenticeships. Although such caution fosters acceptance, measures for refugees are becoming more expensive and therefore the overall volume for refugees is being reduced. While from a perspective of 'internal universalism' affirmative action appears to be privileging, this differs entirely from a wider perspective. Moreover, because economy and society are likely to require additional skilled labour in the years to come, a restricted type of universalism seems to be neither ethical nor functional sufficient.

Although due to 'internal universalism' and 'pragmatic cooperation' workplace integration in Germany has developed not so bad in the past, the rehearsed mode seems to reach its limits. On the one side affirmative action is needed, and on the other side right-wing populism is more difficult to externalize. An ideological standard argument of right-wing populists is that of a discrimination of natives, an argument which relies on incomplete universalism. Regarding the discursive pressure from right-wing populism it seems understandable when companies and trade unions try to defend the principles and the boundaries of 'internal universalism', for example by restrained affirmative action on the one side and disciplinary action and dismissal on the other. However, an extended system of more solidary values seems to be necessary to facilitate a successful integration of the refugees.

If against a background of a shrinking number of jobs for unskilled and semi-skilled workers, social integration is not to fail, a huge investment in human capital, a common project of the public, the state, employers, and trade unions is necessary. Moreover, all relevant societal and internal actors should cooperate in an active attempt to free universalism from its current restrictions. The latter is not simple because 'internal universalism' is not only a restrictive perspective on fairness but also a restrictive observance and control of difference, historically grown compromise and a *modus vivendi* of most involved actors and employees of different origin. Nevertheless, one should plead and work for a kind of 'solidary universalism' (Schmidt 2015: 278).

Although vocational integration is in the self-interest of both refugees and the German economy and society, it is a huge task and a lot of work is to be done during the years to come. However, the biggest challenge lies not in the organizing of language lessons and vocational training, because a rich society could be able to invest in its own future, but in organizing a societal and political alliance which is strong enough to resist right-wing populism and to enforce adequate measures. A kind of 'refugee corporatism' including not only state,

employers and trade unions but also NGOs and civic initiatives, seems necessary to organize sufficient political assertiveness.

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