

The Integration of Young Muslims in Germany – Education and training as key areas for social integration*

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Introduction

Grave unrest in French cities has triggered in Germany, too, broad-based public debate on integration policies and practices. It is felt almost universally that neither “a ghetto-like situation” nor a “fundamental feeling of hopelessness” prevails among young immigrants in Germany. Many voices do point out at the same time, however, that the group of those who “have nothing to lose” is growing. The national chairman of the *Turkish Community in Germany* has in this context appealed to the Federal Government to intensify measures aimed at promoting integration and equality of opportunity. The educational situation and the circumstances on the apprenticeship and labour markets are so precarious that they could very well provide fuel for protest. If this development continues in coming years, then the danger of social unrest looms in Germany, too, warns *Kenan Kolat*: “Many young people not of German background feel themselves excluded and could vent their anger and hate in a similar fashion.”¹

Unsatisfactory achievement in schooling and vocational training, a high unemployment rate among the young and a lack of perspectives for the future, along with concentration in problem-ridden city quarters with high ethnic clustering, all present a hazard. This hazard is that Islamist organisations will exploit prevailing feelings of exclusion and marginalisation in order to provide new hope and an identity to disoriented youths without any perspectives for the future.² Following the murder of Dutch filmmaker *Theo van Gogh* in October of 2004, the Federal Govern-

* This paper is an updated version of a study which was initially presented at the roundtable conference “The Role of Education in Promoting Integration: Comparing British and German Experience with Muslim Communities”, organized by the London office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the institute for public policy research (ippr) on the 12th of December 2005 in London (Gesemann 2006a). A completely revised and enlarged version of the study was published in German language by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in December 2006 (Gesemann 2006b).

1 Press release by the Turkish Community in Germany. Berlin, November 5, 2005.

2 According to Tahar Ben Jelloun, this is “the reason why some youths have broken with France and its model for society and have committed to the Islamist movement”. *Die Zeit*, No. 46, November 10, 2005, p. 45.

ment's Commissioner for Integration proposed a "three-step political program". It included (1) concerted opposition to Islamist efforts, (2) active confrontation with concepts of inequality and constraints rooted in religious or cultural heritages, and (3) a policy of recognition, including accepting Islam as a co-equal religion and integrating Muslims both legally and politically.³

Muslims in Germany

Statistics on the number of Muslims

There are no exact figures on the number of persons of the Muslim faith currently living in Germany. This is due to the fact that German authorities do not record Muslims as a separate group within the population and the religious preferences of immigrants are not systematically recorded. Religious affiliations within the population were last determined in the public census conducted in May of 1987. At that time 1.651 million persons indicated that they were of the Muslim faith, including 1.325 million Turkish citizens and 48,000 German citizens. Of the Turkish nationals living in Germany at that time, about 93 per cent were listed as being members of the Islamic religious community.⁴ Only estimates have been available since that census. In the Government's response to a Parliamentary question on the subject of Islam in Germany, the number of Muslims living in what had been West Germany was estimated to be between 2.8 and 3.2 million persons on January 1, 2000; of these, about 2.5 to 2.7 million were resident aliens and 370,000 to 440,000 were German citizens.⁵

According to information provided by the Federal Bureau of Statistics about 1.8 million Turkish nationals and more than 675,000 naturalised citizens of Turkish origin resided in Germany at the end of 2005. Immigrants of the Muslim faith are also found in large numbers among those arriving from Arabic nations (about 520,000),⁶ from Bosnia-Herzegovina (188,000), and from Iran (130,000), Afghanistan (96,000) and Pakistan (49,000) (both resident aliens and naturalised German citizens). In total, the number of resident aliens originating from primarily Muslim countries

3 Cf. Federal Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration (2004).

4 According to information by the Centre for Turkish Studies (2004: 26) 88 per cent of the Muslims of Turkish origin adhere to the Sunnite school and 11 per cent to the Alevi school of Islam.

5 Cf. German Bundestag (2000).

6 The exact number of immigrants from Arabic countries is not known since an unknown number of Palestinians and Kurds (particularly those from Lebanon) are listed in official statistics as "stateless" or with "unclear" citizenship.

came to 2.4 million as of December 31, 2005. To these may be added one million individuals from the same countries who had been naturalised in the period from 1988 to 2005 (cf. Table 1).

Table 1: Resident aliens in Germany and naturalised German citizens from predominantly Muslim countries of origin			
Country of origin	Foreigners As of Dec. 31, 2005	Naturalisations 1988 to 2005	Total
Turkey	1.764.041	675.166	2.439.207
Bosnia-Herzegovina	156.872	31.436	188.308
Iran	61.792	68.037	129.829
Morocco	71.639	52.881	124.520
Afghanistan	55.111	40.565	95.676
Unknown*	47.204	16.820	64.024
Libanon	40.060	34.068	74.128
Iraq	75.927	18.490	94.417
Pakistan	30.034	19.309	49.343
Tunisia	22.859	20.791	43.650
Syria	28.154	14.181	42.335
Algeria	13.948	5.289	19.237
Egypt	10.258	5.385	15.643
Jordan	8.042	7.201	15.243
Indonesia	11.054	1.668	12.722
Eritrea	5.930	8.662	14.592
Bangladesh	4.354	2.373	6.727
Sudan	3.254	1.175	4.429
Libya	3.138	273	3.411
Yemen	2.239	312	2.551
Saudi Arabia	1.423	32	1.455
Others**	1.678	60	1.738
Total	2.419.011	1.024.174	3.443.185
* Largely Palestinians			
** Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, U.A. Emirates			
Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics (author's own calculations)			

The number of Muslim children and young people is estimated by the Central Institute Islam Archive (2005) to exceed 850,000. According to information provided by the Federal Bureau of Statistics, about a quarter of the Turkish citizens living in Germany are under 18 years of age (456,200 individuals, of whom 236,800 are male). 88.2 per cent of the children and young people with Turkish citizenship were born in Germany. To these must be added not only children and young people who are naturalised citizens, but also, subsequent to the reform of German citizenship laws effective January 1, 2000, those who can claim German citizenship based on their place

of birth (children born on German soil to foreign citizens). The share of Muslims among all live births in Germany is made clear in a press release issued by the Federal Bureau of Statistics on August 12, 2005. There it was stated that in 2004 the number of children with Muslim parents came to 9.1 per cent of all new-borns (64,000 of 706,000 infants).

Religious attitudes and systems of values among young people of Turkish descent

Empirical research on youth-related issues has in the past largely disregarded the subject of religion. Moreover, studies on religion and religious fervour among youths in Germany were referenced almost exclusively to German young people. In many studies on the situation of immigrant youths, too, the subject of religion was assigned a subordinate position for many years. It has only been since the mid-1990s that the religious orientation of young immigrants, and above all those with Turkish-Muslim backgrounds, has moved further to the foreground in surveys conducted by the social sciences.⁷ In the 13th *Shell Study on Youth*, for instance, it was emphasised that, “the Islamic religious community [forms] a milieu in the sense that it not only places its stamp on religious attitudes and practices, but also radiates into other dimensions.”⁸ Vigorous controversies were triggered by the 1997 study prepared by *Wilhelm Heitmeyer* and his associates at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence at the University of Bielefeld.⁹ With their analysis on the extent of and reasons for fundamentalist Islamic orientation the authors wanted to “contribute to both avoiding the creation of taboos and relegating the subject to the area of the scandalous while at the same time fostering democratic public discussion”. Quite in contrast to the enlightenment intended by the study, its results were taken above all by the media as evidence for the existence of “ticking bombs in the suburbs” or the “failure of the multicultural society” in Germany. Critics from the social sciences sector accused the authors of “ethnising problems” or in fact even employing “culturally racist procedures”. The authors named

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- 7 See in this context the detailed depiction in Boos-Nünning / Karaka_o_lu (2004, pp. 462 ff.).
- 8 Fuchs-Heinritz (2000: p. 161). Adherence to religious denominations: 27% of German youth, but only 6% of Turkish youth are not affiliated with any religion. Religious practices and attitudes: 14% of German youth and 35% of Turkish youth attend religious services at least once a month. The share of Turkish youth who pray sometimes or regularly, read religious books or intend to incorporate religion when raising their children is about twice as large among Turkish youths as among their German peers (in each case with female youths having a lead).
- 9 The study analysed the results of a standardised, written query of 1,221 youths of Turkish origin, aged 15 to 21, conducted in 1995 at 63 schools and vocational schools in North Rhine-Westphalia.

several complexes of causes which might explain the considerable extent of an Islam-centred claim to superiority and an explicit readiness to do violence, based upon religion, among Turkish youths. Among the most important causes were:

- the injustices against resident aliens which they had themselves experienced,
- the refusal by the majority society to recognise any collective identity,
- concrete discrimination in the private sphere,
- the negative impact of modernisation processes in society,
- withdrawing into one's own ethnic group,
- emphasis of an identity, based upon nationality and religion, aimed at delineation and self-segregation,
- the rejection of “modern” educational values, and
- a high potential for conflict within the family.

The preparedness to resort to violence which is based on religious attitudes is, in the authors' opinion, due to “a highly emotionally charged bundle of causes stemming from individual biographical aspects and social and political factors”. The situation will presumably become even more critical in coming years. This development does indeed not inevitably culminate in violent action, but does require the appropriate public attention.

Karin Brettfeld and *Peter Wetzels* (2003) carried out a criminalistic analysis of the day-to-day relevance of religion and the association with violence. They evaluated a set of data based on representative polls of pupils aged 14 to 17. This survey had been carried out by the Criminalistic Research Institute of Lower Saxony in four major cities and one rural administrative district.¹⁰ The study come to the conclusion that Muslim youths are the group, among the young immigrants, who experience the most severe social disadvantages and are the least integrated in terms of both linguistic skills and social status. They are far more often affected by domestic violence than youths in other religious settings. They internalise to an above-average extent traditional gender roles and exhibit a greater acceptance of standards of masculinity which legitimise violence. Strong religious ties are accompanied in young Muslims, as well, with less linguistic and social integration, a far greater acceptance of violence as factor in rearing children and a stronger

10 Those queried were pupils in their ninth year of school and the pre-vocational year in the cities of Hamburg, Hannover, Munich and Leipzig as well as youths in the Friesland District. The overall query sample included 11,819 youths, of whom 7.4 per cent indicated that they adhered to Islam.

divergence of traditional gender roles and masculinity concepts, all of “which makes violent response in conflict situations more likely”.¹¹

A current study by the *Centre for Turkish Studies* (2005) shows among Muslims of Turkish descent in the 18 to 30 age group, those who characterised themselves as devout or more likely devout, rose from 63 per cent in 2000 to almost 80 per cent in 2005. The increasing significance of religion is also reflected in the attitudes toward the separation of church and state and on controversial religious topics. Overall, a “stronger polarisation between the very devout and those who are not at all devout” was determined. The concept of the separation of church and state was rejected by 27 per cent of those queried in the 18 to 30 age group. 59 per cent of those polled¹² agreed with the statement, “Muslim women should in general wear the *hijab* in public”, and 30 per cent agreed, either in principle or completely, with the statement, “I think that boys and girls should not take physical education classes together or go on class trips together”. Almost 60 per cent of respondents indicated that they would have difficulty with their son or daughter marrying a non-Muslim.¹³

The poll shows in addition that the degree of religious devotion among Muslims of Turkish descent is also influenced by the educational level and the socio-economic situation. “Where there is more schooling, the understanding of religion is more liberal than where there is less education; attitudes toward the *hijab* and physical education classes are influenced in particular by the educational level. The social position also makes itself apparent. Unemployed immigrants are conservative to an above-average extent, as are housewives. White-collar workers and the self-employed are considerably more liberal.”¹⁴ One quarter of the Turkish Muslims between 18 and 30 years of age saw living in a Christian country as very difficult or more likely difficult. It is indeed true that 70 per cent wanted to remain in Germany, but 30 per cent intended to relocate to Turkey. For 30 per cent of those queried Turkey is their only homeland, 29 per cent feel equally at home in Germany and Turkey, and 36 per cent see Germany as their homeland.

11 Brettfeld / Wetzels (2003: p. 305).

12 Disregarding those who no response to these questions.

13 A comparison with the results of the 2000 poll shows that immigrants of Turkish origin have become considerably more conservative and that this also applies to the 18 to 30 age group (cf. *Centre for Turkish Studies*, 2004, p. 30).

14 *Centre for Turkish Studies* (2005: p. 65 f.).

The results of the polls indicate that second- and third-generation Muslims exhibit an inconsistent coincidence of increasing secularisation and growing religious devotion. Here religious devotion satisfies important functions for young Muslims. It imprints itself on their own images of themselves in a “modern” and “secular” majority culture which, seen against the background of their heritage, is sensed as being “foreign”. It stabilises the ethnic communities in their social interactions with the majority society and becomes a spiritual, social and political refuge particularly in confrontational encounters, e.g. in light of experiences with exclusion and discrimination. Islam becomes a source for interpreting life in the diaspora and a guideline for practical action.¹⁵

It may be said in summary that Muslim youths more often live in socially underprivileged conditions and, in regard to culture, are less well integrated than other immigrants. Youths of Turkish background are, in addition, significantly more religious than German youths. It seems that in recent years the divides not only between Germans and Turks, but also between very religious and non-religious Turks, have become wider. Moreover, strong religious ties among young Muslims are associated with lesser linguistic and social integration, greater acceptance of traditional gender roles and masculinity concepts, and a significantly more conservative system of values. Youths of Turkish heritage thus live, to a much greater extent than their German peer group, in a “conservative value environment”, wherein better education appears to liberate the greatest potentials for openings in the direction of the modern world or more modernist value standards.¹⁶

On the educational situation among young immigrants in Germany

In the past, data on participation in education and on scholastic achievement among children from immigrant families in Germany were keyed only to citizenship. Consequently, any differentiated estimate of successes in integration and of problems found among children with an immigration background is hardly possible at present. Since, in addition, there are no official data on the social background or religious affiliation of school students, only general comparisons of limited validity can be made, again based on citizenship status. In-depth information on the academic achievement of children and young people from immigrant families is offered by the PISA and IGLU international comparison studies. These, however, contain no information on religious affiliation. Additional information on educational achievement among Muslim youths can be drawn above all from several studies of juvenile delinquency.

15 Kandel (2004: p. 2 f.).

16 Cf. Uslucan (2004b: p. 83).

Participation in education

The ratio of foreign pupils in schools in Germany, at 9.8 per cent in the 2005/2006 school year, was slightly higher than the overall share of foreigners in the population as a whole. The share of foreigners attending any given school varied widely among various types of schools; it ranges from 18.9 per cent in the *Hauptschule* to 4.2 per cent at the *Gymnasium*.¹⁷ The largest contingent among the foreign pupils (or pupils with foreign-born parents or grandparents), with a share of 43.1 per cent, comes from Turkey. Smaller groups come from countries which are (more or less) Muslim, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina (2.5%), Afghanistan (1.5%), Lebanon (1.3%), Morocco (1.3%) and Iran (1.1%).

Regarding the extent of participation in the educational system, differences can be found not only between the children of immigrants from Muslim countries and German pupils, but also among the various home countries. This can be seen in particular in their distribution according to types of school. As is made clear in *Table 2*, foreign pupils are underrepresented at the *Realschule* and the *Gymnasium* while they are over-represented in the comprehensive *Gesamtschule* as well as in the *Hauptschule* and the *Sonderschule*. While 60.8 of German pupils attend the *Realschule* or the *Gymnasium*, only 33.9 per cent of foreign pupils do so. Distribution by gender shows, moreover, that the share of female pupils attending the *Realschule* or the *Gymnasium* is significantly greater than that for the male pupils (+7.8 per cent among German and +6.3 per cent among foreign female pupils).

17 Most German states operate five separate school systems in parallel. At the end of four years of primary schooling pupils are assigned to one of the following types of school:

- The *Hauptschule* prepares pupils primarily for the trades and skilled vocations; they leave school after a total of 9 or 10 years of education, usually to seek an apprenticeship position.
- The *Realschule* prepares pupils in the main for clerical and administrative occupations; they leave school after 10 years, normally to attend an advanced vocational school or undertake an apprenticeship.
- The *Gymnasium* prepares pupils for higher education; the leaving certificate, known as the *Abitur* and awarded after 12 or 13 years of education, entitles them to enrol at a college or university.
- The *Gesamtschule* is a comprehensive school which can award leaving certificates equivalent to those granted by all three of the above school forms as pupils qualify for them during the course of their schooling.
- The *Sonderschule* provides special education programs for pupils who have cognitive, emotional or physical handicaps.

For the sake of simplicity the German terms are used in this paper.

Differentiation by selected nationalities shows, however, that educational participation by various immigrant groups is marked by considerable differences. The share of male pupils who do not hold German citizenship and who attend a type of school (*Realschule, Gymnasium*) which entitles them to pursue further education range from 50.2% (Iranians) through 26.0% (Turks) and 24.6% (Moroccans) down to 12.7% (Lebanese). While the participation in education among Germans and Iranians differs only slightly, the differences to Turks, Moroccans and, in particular, Lebanese are considerable. More than the half of the male Turkish pupils and almost two-thirds of the male Lebanese pupils attend only a *Hauptschule* or a *Sonderschule* and thus have hardly any chance of acquiring a school leaving certificate which entitles them to pursue any kind of further education (at either an advanced vocational school or a college or university).

Table 2: Pupils by nationality, gender and type of school, 2004/05 (secondary education only)						
	Haupt- schule	Real- schule	Gym- nasium	Gesamt- schule	Sonder- schule	Others*
German	15,1	21,4	39,4	8,0	6,1	10,0
Male	16,9	21,1	35,9	8,1	7,7	10,4
Female	13,2	21,8	43,0	7,9	4,5	9,6
Foreigners	35,1	16,9	17,0	12,2	11,7	7,2
Male	36,7	15,8	15,1	11,6	13,7	7,1
Female	33,4	18,1	19,1	12,8	9,5	7,2
Foreign pupils (male and female) by selected nationalities						
Turkey	39,7	18,0	10,4	14,3	11,3	6,3
Male	41,2	16,8	9,2	13,4	13,2	6,2
Female	38,1	19,4	11,7	15,3	9,2	6,3
Bosnia-Herzegovina	29,4	19,9	20,1	12,1	10,7	7,7
Male	31,9	18,9	16,8	12,0	12,1	8,2
Female	26,9	21,0	23,6	12,1	9,3	7,1
Morocco	35,5	16,3	8,3	20,8	13,7	5,5
Male	36,9	14,7	7,3	19,3	15,9	6,0
Female	33,9	18,0	9,4	22,4	11,2	5,0
Afghanistan	22,8	16,4	22,1	22,7	8,1	8,0
Male	23,6	15,7	20,3	22,9	9,2	8,2
Female	21,9	17,2	24,0	22,5	6,8	7,7
Iran	16,4	14,8	38,4	14,8	4,9	10,7
Male	18,3	14,5	35,5	14,7	6,0	10,9
Female	14,3	15,1	41,5	14,8	3,8	10,4
Libanon	38,8	9,3	4,1	15,5	21,0	11,2
Male	38,2	8,9	3,8	14,9	23,1	11,1
Female	39,4	9,7	4,6	16,2	18,8	11,3
* "Others" includes the so-called orientation step (5th and 6th years) provided in some states, types of schools with several curricula, the "Independent Waldorf [or Steiner] Schools" and evening Realschule and Gymnasium facilities along with the daytime academies provided to allow adult pupils to earn a higher leaving certificate.						
Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics (the author's own calculations).						

The level of the school leaving certificates

The data on the school leaving certificates earned by German and non-German pupils still reveal – in spite of slight improvements in recent years – considerable differences in educational achievement. In the 2004/2005 school year 85,295 pupils of non-German citizenship graduated from school; this represents a share of 8.9 per cent of all school leavers. While one in six non-German youths left school without any certificate at all, this number is only one in 14 for German pupils. Almost 70 per cent of the German pupils – but only 40 per cent of non-German youths – earned a Realschule or Gymnasium leaving certificate. Particularly great is the difference be-

tween German and non-German school leavers in regard to certificates entitling them to enrol at an institution of higher education. One quarter of the German pupils leave school with the Abitur, the certificate qualifying them to continue their education at a college or university; among non-German youths it is only one in ten (cf. Table 3).

The data on school leavers show in addition that in the meantime girls on average earn better leaving certificates than boys. The differences between the genders are particularly noticeable among school leavers of non-German nationality. Markedly more girls than boys attain the Realschule school leaving certificate or earn their Abitur and far fewer leave school without a certificate (cf. Table 3). These data do indeed not dovetail with “widely held assumptions in regard to the special problems of girls and young women in school due to a – in comparison to boys with an immigration background – more restrictive rearing and less support for their educational efforts by the parents”.¹⁸ This has, however, to date not been the subject of comparative studies. At the same time it is remarkable that the lower academic achievement of boys from immigrant families has hardly been a subject in public discussion.

Table 3: German and foreign school leavers, by type of school and gender, in Germany in 2005 (in per cent)						
Type of certificate	German pupils			Foreign pupils		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
No certificate	7,2	9,1	5,3	17,5	21,0	13,7
Leaving certificate from the Hauptschule	23,2	26,5	19,7	41,7	43,0	40,2
Leaving certificate from the Realschule	42,6	41,3	43,9	31,2	28,0	34,8
Qualification for enrolment at a university or technical college	27,0	23,1	31,0	9,6	8,0	11,4

Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics (the author’s own calculations)

Vocational education

A qualified vocational education is, in addition to good scholastic achievement, of particular importance for entry into the labour market and for immigrants’ social integration. In 2004 the number of apprentices of non-German citizenship came to 72,051; of these, 71,527 lived in the area represented by the former West Germany (including Berlin). The number of foreign appren-

18 Boos-Nünning / Karaka_o_lu (2004: p. 216).

tices has fallen in the last decade by 43.0 per cent so that their proportion among all apprentices comes to only 4.6 per cent. Thus they are clearly underrepresented among the apprentices in both the western and the eastern German states. The situation is particularly precarious in the western states (including Berlin) where, in 2004, the share of foreign apprentices, at 5.6 per cent, was significantly below their share in the population, where they represented 12.0 per cent of those individuals from 18 to 21 years of age. Their apprenticeship quota – the number of foreign apprentices in comparison with all foreign youths residing in the territories in question here – was, at 25.2 per cent in 2004, less than half the quota for German youths (58.8%).¹⁹

Persons with Turkish citizenship form the largest group (37.5%) among the foreign apprentices. However, the number of Turkish apprentices has since 1995 fallen far faster (-52%) than the average rate. The apprenticeship quota for young Turks, at 35 per cent in 2004, was in fact higher than the average value for persons of non-German citizenship, but significantly below the corresponding value for young Germans. A survey of integration prepared by the Federal Institute for Ethnologic Research revealed, in reference to the completion of vocational training programmes, considerable differences between Germans and Turks. 50 per cent of the Turkish respondents to this poll (and 28.5 per cent of the Germans) did not complete apprenticeship training. Seen as “cause for concern” in particular are the “low vocational qualifications of Turkish women”. More than half have no vocational certificate at all and only slightly more than one quarter have completed vocational training with workplace experience.²⁰ Quite striking is the fact that the relatively good school certificates earned by the girls far more seldom culminate in vocational training.

Primary among the causes for the decline in apprenticeship training undertaken by foreign and Turkish youths is the drop in the number of apprenticeship positions available in Germany. “It leads to more rigorous selection criteria and thus to a tougher competitive situation on the overall market for apprenticeship positions.”²¹ The chances for entering apprenticeship training with on-the-job experience depend above all on the educational achievement which the youths bring with them and the types of training which they seek. Further factors are the range of positions offered companies and their selection procedures, together with the decision-making criteria they apply and the structure of prejudices held by those responsible for personnel decisions. “Foreign

19 Cf. Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2006: p. 111).

20 von Below (2003: p. 45).

21 Federal Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration (2004a: p. 59).

youths, and Turkish youths in particular, are often assumed to have disruptive behaviour patterns or insufficient familiarity with the language or with the German (business) culture. Specific cultural practices are felt to be a disturbance to operational routines. This is aggravated – particularly among small and medium-sized companies – by an assumed lack of customer acceptance.”²²

The results of a poll of applicants for apprenticeship positions indicate that the prospects for success among applicants with an immigrant background – with identical school leaving results – lie significantly below those of German youths. The chances of obtaining an apprenticeship position do, indeed, rise with better leaving certificates, but among youths with an immigration background this rise is less distinct than among German applicants.²³

Reasons for unsatisfactory academic achievement

The results of the PISA comparative study conducted by the OECD show that the differences in reading competence among youths from upper and lower social classes is greater in Germany than in any other country participating in the study. Affected here in particular are children of the working class and of immigrants.²⁴ Pupils 15 years of age, both of whose parents were born in Germany, have chances of attending Realschule or Gymnasium which are two to three times as good as pupils of the same age who come from pure immigrant families. The handicaps suffered by youths with an immigration background are reduced if one takes the social status of the families into account. When youths of equivalent reading competence are compared, no differences in educational opportunities are discernible. That is why “neither the social situation nor the distance to the prevailing culture...” can be made “primarily responsible for disparities in educational participation”; “rather, of decisive importance is the mastery of the German language”. “For children from immigrant families language competence is the decisive obstacle in their educational career.”²⁵

22 Ibid. p. 63.

23 Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2005: 102).

24 The share of 15-year-old pupils from families where at least one of the parents was not born in Germany was found in the PISA Study to be 21.7 per cent (27.1% in western Germany, 3.8% in eastern Germany). In the west almost one pupil in five, in North Rhine-Westphalia and Hessen one in three, comes from a family where both parents were born outside Germany. In some large cities this share can be even as high as 40 per cent.

25 Baumert et al. (2001: p. 37). The results of the International Primary School Reading Examination (IGLU) show that the difference in reading comprehension among pupils whose parents were both born inside or outside Germany is relatively great (in international compari-

A comparison among the states within the Federal Republic of Germany shows that students whose parents were both born in another country achieve significantly lower performance in all areas of competence than youths without an immigration background. The degree of difference will depend “upon the period of residence in Germany, the language spoken in the home and the family’s ethnic heritage. The achievement spreads between the groups, however, vary considerably from one [home] country to the next”.²⁶ Also determined was a correlation between the number of immigrant pupils and the average achievement level for the school; this is, however, not linear. A considerable decline in scholastic achievement may be observed as soon as the share of immigrant children in the classroom reaches 20 per cent; the difference increases hardly at all if there is a further rise in this share.²⁷

A comparison of the levels of competence among children and young people who speak selected foreign languages in OECD countries with comparable immigrant populations shows that attempts to promote these children’s schooling are particularly unsuccessful in Germany. The PISA data show, “that 15-year-olds who come from families in which Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian or Turkish or Kurdish is spoken and who attend a school in Germany exhibit lower reading competence than comparison groups in Norway, Austria, Sweden and Switzerland”²⁸ The results of the PISA 2003 study make it clear in addition that children of Turkish origin use German in day-to-day activities only “to a relatively small extent,” even though they were born and attended school in Germany. In almost all the states “their average competence in reading and in mathematics [is] at a level which makes successful continuation of learning during apprenticeship training and in the course of their careers appear to be doubtful”.²⁹

The results of the Study of Primary Schools in Hannover show, in addition, that the acquisition of reading competence by pupils is “decisively” influenced by the context of social class. Among the central influencing factors are individual characteristics such as the language(s) spoken in the home and during their free time, their basic cognitive capacities and the education orientation of the home, along with contextual factors such as the number of immigrant children (immigrant

son) even at the end of the fourth year of schooling, even though the primary schools are apparently more successful than secondary schools in levelling social differences among the pupils (cf. Bos et al., 2003: p. 37).

26 Baumert et al. (2002: p. 58).

27 Cf. Baumert et al. (2003: p. 56).

28 German PISA Consortium (2002: p. 396).

29 Prenzel (2005: p. 34).

ratio) in the schoolroom and the competence of the instructor in terms of methods.³⁰ From the viewpoint of the social scientists at Hannover it would thus be “shortsighted to trace the educational problems of immigrant children solely to their deficits in regard to the German language. Immigrant children are often affected by cumulative disadvantages which are based on the living conditions in the family”.³¹ These cumulative handicaps impact children from Turkish and Arabic immigrant families above all.

A brochure published by the Berlin State Institute for Schools and the Media put forth in addition “hypotheses on the above-average rates of school failure among foreign boys”:³²

- The gender bias applied when raising children in families from the Mediterranean region more strongly “protects” boys from household chores; this hinders their independence in mastering assignments and assuming responsibility.
- The lack of individual attention and remedial assistance in the school is dealt with less successfully, on a psychological level, than is the case with girls and can more easily culminate in learning blocks or refusal to strive for achievement.
- The self-image held by Muslim boys is imprinted by a concept of masculine dominance; the boys derive from this a sense of superiority which is not based on effort, achievement or success. Failures at school are dealt with less successfully and aggression is often employed as a compensatory measure.
- This understanding of the gender roles apparently triggers, especially at the high school level, massive conflicts with self-confident female teachers, and such conflicts are certainly not beneficial to academic success.
- Schools without an intercultural educational concept will not be successful in imparting the mindset (confidence, feeling of belonging / identity, respect) essential for learning, and this leads to learning blocks. This is true particularly for boys, whose adaptability, flexibility and frustration tolerance are less developed than among girls.

The Islamic heritage is seen as a negative factor in this context, since the increasing influence of nationalistic and Islam-oriented organisations tends to multiply conflict between the “positive circle of believing Muslims” and the “heathen setting of the German society”; “German women and women teachers in particular have a particularly low status in such a friendfoe constellation and have to tediously struggle for recognition as a person of authority”.³³

The integration survey conducted by the Federal Institute for Population Research offers more detailed information on educational processes and the career biographies of young Turkish men.

30 Cf. Kollenrott et al. (2005).

31 Tiedemann/Billmann-Mahecha (2004).

32 Cf. Weil (2003: p. 3 f.).

33 Ibid. p. 5.

The report shows that “there (is) a group of young Turkish immigrant men who identify relatively strongly with their country of origin, who do not earn a Realschule or Gymnasium leaving certificate, who embrace traditional values, whose parents have either no school leaving certificate at all, or only the one from the Hauptschule, and who do not appear to have ‘arrived’ in Germany”.³⁴ About one-third of those queried who were of Turkish heritage were found to be in this group. Seen in addition as an important factor for success within the educational system is “frequent and successful integration with members of the absorbing society”. Here the social integration of strongly religious Muslims is seen as “extremely difficult”, since they only rarely maintain any friendships with Germans. It remains, however, unclear whether this “has to do with the opportunities available and their own social resources or is a sign of ethnic (self-exclusion)”.³⁵

Reform approaches at the federal, state and local levels

Education and vocational training are the decisive key resources in a process of social integration for immigrants, a process which extends over several generations. The PISA results not only made it clear that the German educational system, in international comparison, achieves average results at best; they also show that no country is less successful in compensating for pupils’ disadvantages resulting from their social background. Linguistic competence has proven to be the decisive hurdle in the educational careers of children from immigrant families. Many children whose language in the home is not German and who grow up in areas of high ethnic concentration have almost no contact with German during the early years of their life; thus language competence testing has determined that intensive remedial effort is needed before such children enter school. Insufficient mastery of the German language is, in addition, the reason behind many obstacles which continue after schooling and on into vocational careers, as is demonstrated by low academic success, meagre participation in apprenticeship programs and the high degree of unemployment among the young.

Supplementary education for children and young people with an immigrant background

The analyses in international comparative studies have called for the development of national educational standards and agreements on joint educational reporting by the federal and state governments. The first educational report, with a focus on the “Integration into the Educational Sys-

34 von Below (2003: p. 100).

35 Haug (2003: p. 123).

tem for Children, Youth and the Gainfully Employed with an Immigration Background” is to be submitted in 2006. The reform approaches followed by the national, state and local governments in the field of day care centres and primary schools concentrate above all on the following items:

- Extending the educational and training mission for day care centres along with the nationwide installation of full-day schools;³⁶
- Anchoring early language promotion in educational curricula for the primary schools;
- The further development of language competence testing in the primary sector and the development of instructors’ competence in quality development and quality assurance;
- Linking and co-ordinating the educational curricula and training plans employed in the preschool and primary sectors, augmented by close networking with other educational opportunities offered by municipal authorities;
- Strengthening remedial instruction in the German language for pupils with an immigration background and developing concepts to promote multilinguality;
- Greater involvement of parents in institutional education processes and promoting success in raising children and educational competence within families by way of intercultural work with parents;
- Raising the educational standards for pre-school and day care teachers to a qualitative level corresponding to international averages, along with improvements in teacher training and continuing education.

Ultimately, the success of these approaches will be determined in large part by the extent to which we are able, over the long term, to improve educational success among immigrant children affected by cumulative disadvantages. Included here above all are the children of those Turkish and Arabic immigrant families with low socio-economic status, with greater susceptibility to unemployment and a lack of perspective, with lower educational status, and exhibiting insufficient encouragement of children within their families. It will probably be particularly difficult to devise plans for the social integration of children who live in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods dominated by ethnic minorities and in religiously isolated milieus. If we are to promote the social integration of immigrants in the interest of achieving a sustainable increase in educational opportunity for children of a Muslim heritage then it will be essential to build strong bridges between ethnic cultures, religious milieus and places where social interaction occurs. Academic success presumes not only the development of linguistic and cognitive abilities, but also the establishment of intercultural and religious competence.

36 Traditionally, the primary school day in Germany is only 4 to 5 hours in length; in the secondary schools it will comprise 6 to 8 instruction periods of 45 minutes each.

Dealing with the heritage of Islam in the school

The Conference of the Ministers for Culture in March of 2003 invited educational specialists from the states and representatives from public life to discuss the role of education in the integration of Muslims in Germany. The Weimar Appeal was adopted at the conclusion of the conference. It emphasises the significance of peaceful and equitable coexistence of people from varying cultures and religious, mutual recognition by non-Muslims and Muslims, and the ability to pursue dialogue between the cultures – on both sides. Educational facilities, and schools in particular, are identified as “outstanding places for learning dialogue between religions and cultures”. To be included in the school’s missions in regard to educating and rearing children are to “impart democratic values and ... be open to different cultural traditions and religious and ideological convictions ... [and] promote ... intercultural skills”.³⁷

But the school is not only a place for intercultural dialogue; it is also the site for intercultural conflicts. These conflicts arise in particular when religion-based dress codes and concepts of gender relations cannot be reconciled with the mission and the requirements of the school or with the faculty’s image of itself. Occasions for controversial and emotionally charged debates are offered above all by the wearing of the hijab by pupils and in particular by female teachers³⁸, along with the question of Muslim girls taking part in physical education, swimming classes and sex education and going on class trips.³⁹ Schools in town quarters with high ethnic density report on attempts by Islamist organisations to exert pressure on pupils, both male and female, and to position themselves as the “watchdogs of the faith”.⁴⁰ Additionally, dealing with the phenomenon of anti-Semitism among pupils of Turkish and Arabic heritage represents a special challenge to the schools. With the joint initiative of the “Practice Forum School and Islam” the Conference of the Ministers for Culture and the Körber Foundation have in this context pursued the goal of learning more about new and promising approaches in the didactic presentation of the subject of Islam in

37 Conference of the Ministers of Culture (2003: p. 135); Extracts from the Weimar Appeal will be found in the Appendix to the present study.

38 The report by the Federal Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration offers a detailed depiction of the conflict over teachers wearing the hijab (2005b: pp. 226-238). As regards the conflicts in the school, see also Senate Administration for Health and Social Affairs (2004).

39 Ibid: pp. 238 ff.

40 See, for example, the documentation prepared in Berlin: “Wie verändert der Islam die Schule im Kiez?” (Senate Administration for Health and Social Affairs, 2004).

German schools.⁴¹ Among the findings of this initiative are that the following are necessary for successfully dealing with cultural diversity:

- (1) Training and practising abilities to encourage constructive conflict among all those involved, in a spirit of solidarity.
- (2) Developing an intercultural atmosphere so that it becomes a major feature in the school's own profile whilst opening the school so that it can be integrated into the residential setting, as well as
- (3) Expanding the spectrum of methods employed in the form of project work and nonstructured forms of learning.⁴²

There is widespread consensus in Germany, in addition, that “that the religious education of pupils of Muslim faith is a part of the schools’ mission”.⁴³ This aim is, however, implemented in quite different ways in the various states. The bandwidth ranges from religious instruction included in elective courses in the “mother tongue”, this being under the purview of the Turkish Consulate General, or model projects for theoretical instruction in Islam theology for Muslim children, or developing confession-based instruction in religion in co-operation with Islamic congregations.⁴⁴ Among the prerequisites for establishing Islamic religion courses in German schools is, in particular, that Muslims in the various states form religious communities which satisfy the requirements set down in the Basic Law [German Constitution] and that chairs for Islamic theology be established at German universities, charged with responsibility for the training of imams and teachers of the Islam religion.⁴⁵

Islamic religious instruction will offer pupils an alternate to the Koran schools run by the mosque organisations and give them access to a contemporary understanding of Islam. Over and above that, it is to promote participation in school life, by parents and pupils alike. Reports on various model projects indicate, “including this subject in the curriculum contributes to parents and their children identifying with the school, often for the first time, since they – with their strong relig-

41 The results of this initiative are documented in the publication “Islam im Klassenzimmer” which, by introducing quite different and in part new and unconventional approaches in the didactic approach to the topic of Islam, aims to provide specific “impetus for educational work (see Kleff, 2005).

42 Ibid. pp. 16 ff.

43 Conference of the Ministers of Culture (2003: p. 136).

44 See Federal Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration for information on development in regard to Islamic religion as an academic subject in schools (2005b: pp. 243 ff.).

45 Cf. Federal Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration (2005a: p. 29).

ious identity – are accepted on equal footing. Instruction in the tenets of Islam can also act as a moderating influence when there are religion-driven conflicts in daily school life.”⁴⁶

Summary

Among all youths with an immigrant background in Germany, young male Muslims from Turkey, Morocco and Lebanon form the groups which is least socially integrated. They exhibit the lowest success in the educational system, are often affected by unemployment, and show considerably higher crime rates. Youths with a Muslim background are, in addition, more often affected by domestic violence than is the case for youths from other religious communities. Young Muslims of Turkish and Arabic heritage are, in addition, on average significantly more devout than German youth and the differences have become more marked in recent years. Strong religious ties among young Muslims go hand in hand with lower linguistic and social integration, a clearly more conservative set of values, greater acceptance of violence as a method employed in rearing children, as well as more traditional gender roles and masculinity concepts, which increases the risk of violent responses in conflict situations.

The sense of social uncertainty prevailing among Turkish and Arabic youths can be interpreted not only as stemming from less success in the educational system, a deficit of perspectives for the future and the increasing competition for ever scarcer jobs and apprenticeship positions. It is also to be seen as an expression of inter-generational and inter-cultural conflicts. These youths are particularly likely to be affected “by the ambivalence of the modern world which, on the one hand, means a general broadening of young people’s chances for self-realisation but at the same time also an intensification of economic inequalities for certain (marginal) groups in the society”. “Not only must they, like their German age group peers, master the harmful effects of individualisation, the acceleration of the pace of life, the uncertainty which they experience etc., but... when championing the positive aspects of this individualisation (opportunities for self-realisation) [they] also have to stand up against their parents, who favour a more collectivist orientation.”⁴⁷

Schooling and vocational training are the key factors in the process of social integration for immigrants and offer the greatest potentials for opening up value systems to be more accepting of

46 Federal Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration (2005b: p. 242).

47 Uslucan (2004a: p. 62).

the modern world. If there is to be any significant and ongoing improvement in educational opportunities for children with an immigration background, then this will require above all massive political efforts to battle poverty and to develop a sense of community and neighbourhood. It will be necessary to boost investments in education, to improve the quality of day care centres and schools in deprived city quarters, and to introduce early and intensive language training in day care centres of all kinds. Of significance in addition are developing concepts for general cognitive promotion of children from socially underprivileged families, greater co-operation and networking among educational institutions within the catchment quarter, an expansion of schools which offer full-day curricula, lowering the pupil-teacher ratio in the primary schools, school-based social work integrated into the school's didactic concept, greater involvement of parents in the programs offered by child care centres and primary schools, along with fundamental improvements in the education and ongoing training of teachers in day care centres, kindergartens and schools.

Educational facilities and schools in particular must, moreover, become to an ever greater extent "outstanding places for learning dialogue between religions and cultures", as is called for in the Weimar Appeal, adopted by the Conference of the Ministers for Culture on March 14, 2003. "Within the framework of their educational mission, schools must impart democratic values and must be open to different cultural traditions and religious and ideological convictions. At the same time they must promote solidarity and intercultural skills".⁴⁸ Also included here are religious education in the school and new and amplified approaches to the pedagogy associated with the subject of Islam. Instruction on Islam is to provide young people access to a modern and enlightened understanding of the religion. This will, however, require greater organisation of Muslims in the various states, the development of suitable curricula and the establishment of chairs for Islamic theology at the universities to guarantee appropriate education for teachers of Islamic religion.

Required for implementation are not only redoubled efforts by the national, state and local governments, but also the establishment of integration networks at the local level. Acting as operatives in the civilian society, immigrants' self-help organisations can in this case make an important contribution to integration. On the one hand they create social networks which, with their self-help approach, can promote the integration process. On the other hand they influence immi-

48 Conference of the Ministers of Culture (2003: p. 135).

grants' social orientation. "They can considerably strengthen acceptance for integration policies within the ethnic groups and spark interest in integration projects."⁴⁹ In this context, local Mosque associations and Islamic organisations are called upon to "support the state and society in the integration of Muslims. They are also responsible for seeing to it that Muslim youth take advantage of the opportunities which the educational system in a secular state offers to all young people".⁵⁰

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49 Expert Council for Immigration and Integration (2004: p. 324).

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Appendix

Weimar appeal

“Educational institutions, schools above all, are outstanding places for learning dialogue between religions and cultures. Within the framework of their educational mission, schools must impart democratic values and must be open to different cultural traditions and religious and ideological convictions. At the same time they must promote solidarity and intercultural skills. In many schools, pupils of Muslim faith learn together with children and young people of other religions and world views. Here the task of creating a learning community and of engaging in dialogue develops in the course of everyday school life. [...]

All Länder agree that the religious education of pupils of Muslim belief belongs to the mission of schools. Several Länder have established religious education in Islam or plan to offer it. We think that this education should be given in German. Muslims support Islamic religious instruction in German in the spirit of the Basic Law. This subject can only be established, however, if Muslims in the various Länder form religious communities which are in conformity with the requirements of the Basic Law. It has to be taken into account that Islam does not have structures like an official church. [...]

The common instruction of Muslims and non-Muslims can only be successful for both sides if it proves itself in school life. Examples of good practice are the observance of Islamic dietary rules at school festivals and celebrations and the exemption of pupils of Muslim belief from lessons on Muslim religious holidays. Conflicts may arise if the religious rules of Muslims do not coincide with the expectations and requirements of schools. We consider some basic rules to be necessary in this context.

It is not the task of schools to evaluate religious beliefs as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ if parents or pupils of Muslim faith demonstrate a comprehensible moral conflict. Schools should be aware of how much stress can be placed on a pupil if he or she becomes the subject of disagreements between school and parents. They know that pupils who wear a headscarf for religious reasons are protected by Art. 4 of the Basic Law. [...]

Local mosque associations and Islamic groupings are called upon to support state and society in the integration of young Muslims. They are also responsible that Muslims make use of the opportunities offered to all young people by the education system in a secular state. In the course of its history, Islam has repeatedly been capable of taking account of the living conditions of Muslims in the interpretation of the Koran. Especially young people of Muslim faith in Europe need such guiding principles and support.

The integration of pupils of Muslim faith as a reciprocal giving and receiving can enrich the education system and, above all, schools in Germany. Moreover it can make a key contribution to a culture of mutual acceptance in our country. Therefore we call on everyone who is responsible for the education of young people to join us in this endeavour.

Weimar, 14 March 2003