Islamophobia in Germany

In Germany a considerable part of population has migrant background, and the major part of them are Muslims. A great danger is to confuse Islamists and Muslims in general, which strengthens the closed view of Islam. Another danger is to continue the policy of ethnic communities separate from the German majority. Lifelong learning should look for ways to allow neighbours to get to know each other better.

Yasemin Karakasoglu and Sigrid Luchtenberg
Although Germany has recognised itself as a multicultural society, as well as a country with great immigration, there are still, by the side many successful changes towards a multicultural society, difficulties to cope with diversity. Xenophobia and Islamophobia are such challenges.

In this paper, we will first briefly discuss the role of Islam and Muslims in Germany. Thereafter we will give a definition of how we understand Islamophobia. In the third section we will examine fields of tension between Muslims and the majority society, where (latent) Islamophobia can be detected. To determine these fields we will look into the main topics in the recent discourses on immigration and multiculturalism. In our fourth section we want to examine how the danger of growing Islamophobia can be countered in teacher education as an important part of tertiary (adult) education. In our last section, we will show some examples of best practice in order to overcome Islamophobia.

MUSLIMS IN GERMANY

Muslims came to Germany in larger numbers as migrants for work — they were called guest workers in the sixties — since Germany needed workforce for the then booming economy. Therefore, most Muslims in Germany are of Turkish origin, they are the largest group of migrant workers. Most of them are Sunnis, but there is also a high number of Alevites. The Muslim Brotherhood (mainly Egyptian, but also active in other Arab countries) is active among parts of the Arab Muslim population in Germany, while Shia activists are known to be influential among the Lebanese, the Palestinians and the Iranians as are other Shia-related groups, such as the Alawi. There are also Muslims from the former Yugoslavia, and from Asia and Africa. Islam has become the third-largest faith in Germany, after the two Christian denominations. The total number of people with a predominantly Muslim background had grown to three million by the year 2002 — that is 3.4 percent of the total population of Germany (cf. Lehter-online 2006).

Religion has proved to be of particular importance for Muslims in Germany. Two thirds of young people consider themselves religious or very religious. Today 80 percent of the Turkish but only 45 percent of the German population regard religion as very important for a satisfying life. Turkish migrants practise their religion regularly in everyday life, which is not only unusual, but often even out of all reason for many Germans (Deutsche Shell 2000). Muslim migrants can be regarded as an ethno-religious sub-proletariat in Germany due to the social problems of unemployment and non-integration many of them face.

DEFINITION OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

Van Driel (2004) defines Islamophobia as 'an irrational distrust, fear or rejection of the Muslim religion and those who are (perceived as) Muslim'. Islamophobia is thus a subcategory of xenophobia and closely related to anti-Semitism as another rejection of an ethno-religious group. Islamophobia is close to discrimination and racism on a private, societal, political and institutional level (cf. Karakasoglu & Lichtenberg 2004).

Muslim migrants have long been in the centre of xenophobia in Germany but it is often impossible to differentiate between a more general xenophobia refusing all alien persons and foreigners and Islamophobia as specifically rejecting this religion. Yet, one has to consider that not all rejection of Islam is Islamophobia — there are e.g. feminists, atheists or people who would prefer an even stronger secularism as the one established in Germany.

The British Runnymede Trust (1997) distinguishes between closed and open views of Islam making eight distinctions:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinctions</th>
<th>Closed views of Islam</th>
<th>Open views of Islam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Monolithic / diverse</td>
<td>Islam seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities.</td>
<td>Islam seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Separate / interacting</td>
<td>Islam seen as separate and other (a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures, (b) not affected by them, (c) not influencing them.</td>
<td>Islam seen as inter-dependent with other faiths and cultures (a) having certain shared values and aims, (b) affected by them, (c) enriching them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inferior / different</td>
<td>Islam seen as inferior to the West - barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist.</td>
<td>Islam seen as distinctly different, but not deficient, and as equally worthy of respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Enemy / partner</td>
<td>Islam seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in a clash of civilisations. Islam seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Manipulative / sincere</td>
<td>Islam seen as a political ideology, used for political or military advantage.</td>
<td>Islam seen as a genuine religious faith, practised sincerely by its adherents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Criticism of the West rejected / considered</td>
<td>Criticisms made by Islam of the West rejected out of hand.</td>
<td>Criticisms of the West and other cultures are considered and debated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Islamophobia seen as natural / problematic</td>
<td>Anti-Muslim hostility accepted as natural and 'normal'.</td>
<td>Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lost they be inaccurate and unfair.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Especially the first three points of the closed view characterise Islamophobia in Germany, while item 4 to 7 hold more true with regard to Islamist groups or Islamic persons less than for Muslim groups or Muslims. Islamophobia is probably not yet regarded as natural or normal, but many Germans can understand anti-Muslim feelings and attitudes. On the other side, the open view on Islam is only seldom expressed.

All events of terror related to Islamist groups add to Islamophobia, among which September 11 and the following terrorist acts in Madrid and London play a dominant role. The worldwide less prominent murder of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands in 2004 has had an astonishingly big reaction in Germany, adding enormously to an increasing Islamophobia. Possible reasons for that are that the Netherlands is a neighbouring country, the fact that the Netherlands were so far regarded as an example for a successful multicultural and multi-faith society, and the fact that the murderer was an 'integrated' Muslim.

**EXAMPLES IN DISCOURSE**

In 2006, a public opinion census (Allenbacher Archiv 2006) found that 67 percent Germans relate Islam to violence compared to 65 percent in 2004, and 83 percent think that Muslims are fanatic and radical compared to 75 percent in 2004. Yet, the majority (66 percent) still regard only individual people as radicals who threaten our society, while 28 percent think of Islam in general as a threat. On the other side, 46 percent fear terrorist acts in Germany in the near future and 42 percent are afraid that terrorists might be among the Muslim population. These results show clearly that Germans are uneasy about Islam and Muslims in Germany. We want now to find out where there is Islamophobia in Germany.

Looking into the relevant discourses on migration and multiculturalism turns out to be a way to detect Islamophobia in Germany. There are several relevant events that still dominate the public discourse:

**THE HEADSCARF DISCOURSE**

A young Muslim teacher of Afghan origin was at the centre of a controversy about whether Muslim women teachers should be allowed to wear Islamic dress in German schools. It is the case of Fereshteh Ludin, who was trained as a teacher in Baden-Württemberg. According to their Ministry of Cultural Affairs the headscarf was at variance with basic Christian values and constitutional secularism alike. As a symbol of backward, fundamentalist Islamic attitudes, its message was in opposition.
to the principles of freedom of thought and of the equality of the sexes. Against this image of the headscarf, Ludin emphasized in interviews that she would always defend those two principles in society, that it was her own decision to wear it as a personal symbol of what Islam meant to her, and that she did not consider it a way of putting pressure on those Muslim girls who did not wish to wear a headscarf. The case was finally dealt with at the Federal Court in 2003 with a very unclear decision that allowed the states to make their own rules. The Federal Court only demanded that members of different religions have to be treated equally. The result is that many states are preparing or have already launched “anti-headscarf laws”. Only the state of Berlin has clearly forbidden all religious symbols while other states like Bavaria only forbid symbols of Islam. This holds true with teachers and other public employees, whereas female students are allowed to wear the headscarf. The whole debate has deepened the feeling of otherness with regard to Muslims.

The headscarf discourse is strongly related to

THE LEITKULTUR DISCOURSE

This discourse is not new in Germany, but was revitalized after the murder of Van Gogh. It has remained unclear what the main items of this leading culture are, so that it turns out that ‘Christian’, ‘German culture’ and ‘Western values of democracies and Human Rights’ are part of it. A similar discourse also exists in other countries where diversity is normal. In general, it is the question of cohesion, which does not deny diversity but tries to find or establish a relationship between the members of a society. The Leitkultur debate starts from the idea of homogeneity which will allow diversity within its frame, while the question for cohesion starts from heterogeneity. The Leitkultur discourse became also relevant when the application of Turkey as an EU member state was a political topic (cf. Manz 2004 for further details).

Especially the reference to Christian-

It is not only misleading with regard
to German history but also clearly exclu-
sive with regard to other religions.

This discourse is awakened whenever
diversity becomes obvious and especi-
ally when diversity is regarded as
even dangerous. The headscarf is an exam-
ple of the feeling of strangeness within
diversity.

THE BUILDING OF MOSQUES

Mosques in Germany have long been part of a migration discourse with a

generally negative attitude. Allenscher-
er (2006) found that 56 percent of Ger-
mans thought that the building of
mosques should be forbidden in Ger-
many, yet the argument was not be-
cause they would not fit into the coun-
try but the fact that some Muslim

countries do not allow the building of
churches. This argument indicates that
many Germans do not differentiate be-

tween Islam as the religion of their fel-

low members of society and Islam as a

religion to be found in many countries
worldwide. This is an important fact
with regard to the attitude of Germans

towards Islam and Islamophobia.

The rejection of mosques in the

neighbourhood is also related to the

Leitkultur discourse with its focus on

Christianity even if a large part of the

German population no longer belongs
to any Church.

Most mosques are still nearly invis-
able since they are located in private

houses or their backyards or even more

often in industrial sites. Muslim com-

munities who ask for permission to

build a “real” mosque often face rejection

and are involved in heavy fights

with the respective city and its citizens.

THE INTEGRATION DISCOURSE

Integration has been a key word in the

immigration and multicultural dis-
course ever since migration into Ger-

many began, and even more since it be-
came clear that this was an irreversible
development. Nearly all discourses

which we have regarded separately so far are involved in the integration dis-
course. All these facts are combined as

signs either of integration or non-inte-
gration. Language skills are viewed as a

necessity for integration and lack of

them is thus logically lack of integra-
tion or – worse – a sign of unwilling-
ness to integrate. The danger lies in

the official view that the combination of

lack of German and being member of a

Muslim community arouses suspicions of not only not being willing to be

come a member of this society but of

perhaps wanting to destroy it.

The integration discourse was highly

relevant in spring 2006 when the regula-
tions for citizenship were reviewed,

beginning in the state of Baden-Würt-
temberg where a special questionnaire

for Muslim applicants was created.

While this was finally cancelled, most

states began to consider questionnaires of a more general kind, with questions

about German political institutions etc.

The discourse on non-integration is

too related to that of

PARALLEL SOCIETIES

Since integration has always been a

keyword in the German immigration and multicultural discourse, all

forms of segregation have been consid-

ered with mistrust though the immigra-
tion history in countries like Australia

shows that new immigrants tend to

move into their own ethnic communi-
ties for the first times in the new coun-

try, but will soon settle elsewhere once they have found a place in society.

In Germany, the retreat into their

own ethnic community seems to be of a
different kind since it is partly a reac-
tion to the fact that Germany has clear-
ly rejected the idea of a diverse society

for many years and thus provoked

many migrants to prefer to live among
themselves. Events like the riots in

France in winter 2003–2006 have

strengthened the German attitude of

mistrust towards these ethnic – mainly

Turkish and thus Muslim – communi-
ties, even more since it turns out that

children from these communities

cannot speak German when they enter

school despite the fact that they were

born and raised in Germany. Further-

more, it is feared that migrants who

live separately from the mainstream so-
ciety could radicalize. Sen (2002) con-
firms the development of an ethnic in-
fracture in Berlin and big cities in North Rhine-Westphalia where nearly all demands of daily life can be fulfilled so that there is no longer any need to mingle with the German society. Even sport often belongs to the areas where ethnic groups now separate into ethnic sport clubs.

The social hostility against these ethnic and Muslim communities intensifies the togetherness of ethnic communities but the developed structures in these communities now also demand their continuation which can be regarded as a kind of vicious circle.

THE FUNDAMENTALISM DEBATE

After September 11, international Islamist terrorism has become the main source of Islamophobia in Germany and most other European countries. In the political and public discourses Islamist terrorism is related to fundamentalism as a form of misled religion, and it is acknowledged that fundamentalism is possible in all religions, especially since Christian examples are well known, e.g., the anti-abortion activists in America. Nonetheless, Islamist terrorism is felt as a direct danger for everyone and is thus much more in the discussion than any other religious fundamentalism. It is usually made clear that there is an important difference between faithful Muslims and Islamist terrorists or fundamentalists, but each act of terrorism, as well as reports of fundamentalism e.g. in Iran or Afghanistan, can easily enhance Islamophobia. The comparison between public opinion polls in 2004 and 2006 as described above is a clear sign for increasing Islamophobia (Noelle & Petersen 2006).

ETHNIC CRIME

Ethnic crime has been a major topic in the migration and multiculturalism discourse in Germany, but it has only recently been related to religion and traditions. Before, the discussion was mainly about the percentage of migrants who commit crimes like thefts, drug smuggling, robberies or murders. Honour killing has become a prominent example for ethnic crime that is related to religion, even though it is a tradition, not religion. In the public opinion honour killing is regarded as a Muslim crime, which is due to the fact that some very spectacular examples have happened within the Turkish-Muslim community. A recent case in Berlin – the murder of Hatun Sürucu by her younger brother due to her ‘Western’ life style – led to a broad discussion on such killings, which was deepened when the court did not sentence the elder brothers for want of evidence who were supposed to have organized the murder. While the deed has certainly to be condemned, the discussion focussed on the question of whether such persons who were not willing to accept Western values should be forced to leave Germany.

Forced marriages

The situation of Muslim girls and women has always played a special role in the discourse on migration and multiculturalism. Many studies, interviews and comments declare these girls as being torn between the rules of the family at home and their – German – peer group at school or on the job. Thus, the headscarf becomes a sign of parental – or sometimes marital – victory. More careful studies give different results:

- There are many self-confident female Muslims wearing headscarves (cf. Karakosoglu 2003).
- Many female Muslims have adopted a multiple identity which combines home rules and peer group rules (cf. Boos-Nünning/ Karakosoglu 2005).

Yet, the suppression of girls and young females remains a fact, as do cases of forced marriages. Therefore, the German government is preparing a law against forced marriages, and different organizations give shelter to girls or young women who hide from their parents or a husband not wanted.

On the other side it has to be taken into account, that in the public discourse a differentiation between an arranged and a forced marriage is only seldom made.

The examples discussed above show no explicit condemnation of Islam but a high degree of mistrust. Furthermore, they indicate that politics does not take a firm stand to condemn Islamophobia as part of xenophobia but there are many examples where politics – intentionally or unintentionally – add to Islamophobia in the population.

TERTIARY EDUCATION: THE EXAMPLE OF TEACHER TRAINING

It is considered as commonplace that education of tolerance and acceptance of diversity should start as early as possible, but it should also be taken into account that adults need support in overcoming xenophobia. Thus it is part of lifelong learning.

Teacher training is an important part of adult education since teachers will later on work with children and juveniles but are also often regarded as a role model in many communities so that they can function as intermediaries among adults.

Unfortunately, most teacher students will not be confronted with studies on Islamophobia since in the pedagogical part of their studies (in Germany, students have to study two subjects and a certain amount of Educational Studies) topics like multiculturalism, migration, the situation of migrant students, racism can, but does not have to play a role. In these seminars in tertiary education, it turns out that teacher students have only little knowledge about Islam, but they are aware of this fact and are eager to learn more. Yet, knowledge alone is no guarantee for better understanding or abandonment of latent Islamophobia or simply dislike of Islam.

German female students often express a lack of understanding that female Muslims wear a headscarf and abstain from many things that are normal parts in the daily life of the other German young females. Besides knowledge, it is tolerance of diversity which has to be learnt by the prospective teachers. It is no doubt a difficult task to learn to accept different lifestyles without giving up individual attitudes and personal approaches as long as they are not based upon ignorance. Nobody has to give up his/her atheism in...
order to accept a different faith. On the other hand, prospective teachers have also to learn to judge between Muslim and Islamist attitudes.

There is a danger contrary to Islamophobia which could be described as an exaggerated acceptance. In one of our seminars the question was asked whether it would in secondary school be appropriate to talk about homosexuality, which is normal in certain subjects. Some students thought that the topic should not be taught because homosexuality is regarded as a sin in Islam. Here, a constructive debate is necessary on how the rules of religions are limited by the constitution and the Human Rights. This will lead to the capacity to understand that all inhabitants in Germany live in a diverse pluralistic society and have to accept diversity and pluralism. This includes awareness of all forms of dangers for pluralism, including xenophobia and Islamophobia. The latent Islamophobia that often occurs in public discourses demands that teacher students (as other adults) become more capable to detect signs of xenophobia and Islamophobia, and not least in the media. Thus, tertiary education is an attribution to lifelong learning (cf. Luchtenberg 2000 for further aspects).

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

We have shown that the German politics as well as main parts of the society are very hesitant to accept Muslims as inhabitants. (Latent) Islamophobia is widespread and needs to be fought against. Yet, we want to finish this chapter by referring to examples how this fight has already begun.

Xenophobia has been made out as a danger for Germany as a country where approximately more than 15 percent of the population have a migrant background. Since 2000, many activities have been initiated as part of a national alliance “for democracy and tolerance - against extremism and violence” (BfDT 2006). In the educational sector, the concept of ‘Schools without racism’ has attracted some attention in recent years (schule-ohne-rassismus 2006). It is certainly worthwhile to stress the fact that ‘Schools, without racism’ is a European movement to combat racism (schoolwithoutracism-europe 2006).

The amount of activities against racism and xenophobia should not belie the fact that the majority of Germans are not very familiar with them, and furthermore, that most of them do not explicitly include the combat against Islamophobia. Many of these programmes address children and juveniles though some are also meant for adults.

In the view of German officials, the World Championship in soccer in 2006 proved that Germany is open to international cultures and people around the world. The easy way in which Germans dealt with guests from many foreign countries has superposed most negative discourses with regard to German xenophobia while fear of attacks had been expressed before the games. Furthermore, negative discourses on multiculturalism and migration as described above have taken a back seat since then. Even the reports from Great Britain in August 2006 about possible terrorist attempts have not revived them. Certainly, this is also partly due to the summer season. Besides this, there are some serious examples of combating not only xenophobia in general, but Islamophobia in particular, mainly by creating ways to learn to know each other. The most prominent examples are the ‘Open Mosque Day’ events in October, when Non-Muslim Germans are invited to their neighbourhood mosque, and Islam-discussion groups, mainly between Christian Germans and Muslims. Most of these events are on a religious ground while a high number of Germans have become non-religious. To include them, the activities should not address Christians but simply Germans with an interest in their neighbours.
RESOURCES
Allenbach Archiv (2006) IfD-Umfrage 7089 (Public opinion census).
http://www.ifd-allensbach.de/Seiten/FAZ.html
Schoolwithoutracism (2006) http://www.schoolwithoutracism-europe.org/ (read 19/08/06)

CONTACT
Prof. Dr. Sigrid Luchtenberg
FB Bildungswissenschaften
Uni Duisburg-Essen
45117 Essen
Germany
E-mail: sigrid.luchtenberg@uni-duesseldorf.de

Dr. Sigrid Luchtenberg has a PhD in German Linguistics and Literature (Bonn University 1975) and a Habilitation in Multicultural Education (Essen University 1993). She is Professor at the faculty of education at Duisburg-Essen University, Germany. Her research interests and publications have always been in German as a first, second or foreign language, as well as Language Awareness, but meanwhile multicultural education, multilingual communication, the multiculturalism discourse in the media, The European Dimension, Human Rights Education, citizenship education in a multicultural society as well as Xenophobia and Islamophobia have become her dominant areas of research. Multicultural education is closely connected with comparative education (with a focus on Austria, where she has stayed several times as a Visiting Professor at the University of Sydney).

Dr. Yasemin Karasoglu is Professor for Intercultural Education (University of Bremen). She did her Master of Arts in Turkology (University of Hamburg), and she has been researcher at the Center for Studies on Turkey in Essen, researcher at the chair for Intercultural Education at the University of Essen. She has PhD in Educational Sciences. Her current research interests are Educational careers and living conditions of migrant children in Germany, Islam as a factor of multiculturality in German schools, The headscarf-discussion in German schools. Professor Karasoglu is Supervisor to the Federal Government in questions of Islam in Germany, and youth with a migrant family background.

CONTACT
Dr. Yasemin Karasoglu
Postfach 330440
28334 Bremen
Germany
Phone: +49 421 218-2063
Fax: 0421-218-9743
E-mail: karasoglu@uni-bremen.de

Dr. Yasemin Karasoglu
Intercultural Studies, Diversity and Adult Continuing Education

Teachers and learners in dialogue. Estonians and Russians in Estonia

What to do about Culture?
Spontaneous versus non-spontaneous acquisition of knowledge
Intercultural learning, respect of diversity and integration

The image of the Other in history teaching

Diverse approaches towards a diverse past. History project in South Eastern Europe

Cultural Diversity for All

The first affirmative action by the French

Colours - art therapy against xenophobia

Islamophobia in Germany

Migrants as change agents in 'learning to live together'

Austrian adult education faces modernisation