

About the Danish migration history and integration policy

The figures of the employment rate of immigrants that were shown seemed very high, which is positive news. Though a few remarks could be made. First, the figures are relatively high, and secondly the figures don't say anything about the part-time work, which is mostly the case for female workers, and which has a big impact on the financial and social situation. Furthermore, it was interesting to hear about the policy towards highly qualified immigrants. Denmark is actively seeking for highly skilled personnel in very specific technical areas, because there are just not enough engineers in Denmark itself. To not only attract but also to retain them, Denmark offers different kinds of financial incentives (tax-reduction, education grants, ...) to keep them in Denmark. However low-skilled employers do not have these advantages. This difference in approach seems also reflected in the terminology of different sort of migrants: expats, migrants,

Diversity policy in ISS

ISS shows how companies and the government can build long-lasting win-win cooperations, if both parties take up their responsibility. Companies who can offer a win-win proposal to the government, can find creative ways to get their diversity initiatives co-financed. ISS started with the acknowledgement of a special "X-factor" which determines whether employees get the chance to acquire higher positions in the company. This special factor can refer to being Danish, Rip-rap-rup-effect, customer's reaction, minority behavior and so on. By acknowledging these factors, ISS welcomes an active policy towards migrant employees and their professional mobility chances, by offering all employees language lessons and an on the job training by a manager. Hearing the experiences of the migrant workers of ISS who had the opportunity to have an on the job training in guidance of a manager, an active policy is needed. If they were not asked by their management to do so, they would not have done it because of the fact they did not hear of these opportunities, or because of a lack of self-confidence.

Topsoe and Novozyme

These two companies are very international oriented, looking for highly skilled personnel all over the world. The first remark is that these companies declare that they do not have developed a specific policy towards migrant workers, for them it is a natural mentality (diversity is a reality, it is about how to use diversity as an engine for innovation). In approaching people with different cultural background, they do not fall back on an exhaustive list of cultural features. Rather other factors are taken into account, such as the basic manager's skills, age and experience. Managers are left a lot of freedom to give meaning to culture and their management practice. They do see the need to raise the awareness of the Danish company culture (though it is difficult to say what it is), that can be characterized by direct communication, task-oriented, Therefore the company offers intensive language guidance on the work floor, so that all employees can be integrated in a Danish based company. According to the experiences of an immigrant (expat) employee culture has no influence on the recruitment of managers (instead "the best man on the job"), and that integration starts with learning Danish. Since these companies are so internationally oriented and based on the work of highly skilled personnel, these companies did not actually show how they would approach low-skilled personnel and their professional mobility chances in the company.

Employee of municipality "Culture and sports"

The question was raised whether extra attention must be paid to cultural diversity by the recruitment. The reaction was very precautious because migrants would not like to be recruited on the basis of cultural diversity, they want to be selected on the basis of their competences. It was not very clear whether attention must be paid or not, because on the other hand gender could be a criteria for recruitment in support of the composition of a more diverse team. Furthermore, when the question was raised whether ethnic culture is politically more loaded, the discussion started to get confused.

One voice said that not all differences have the same politically tensed meaning, such as gender is accepted, but ethnic culture is sometimes tried not to be called by its name.

The ministry of integration

The ministry of integration has two central tasks: regulate and control migration, and integration (value based aspect), focused on education and the labour market. The ministry mentions the terminology: old comers, new comers, highly skilled/lowly skilled. According to the policy employment is seen as the key factor for integration; it is not a question of whether but of how. Diversity hereby is seen as advantageous e.g. heterogeneity supports innovation. The ministry of integration set up a diversity program that starts from two paradoxes: a lack of employees vs. unemployment; and reserves among companies vs. good experiences of other companies. Therefore the ministry sees a task in breaking down the barriers, by changing the attitudes. Projects of good practices are disseminated, stretching over broad range of themes, partners, and projects. Further a survey is held among companies concerning their attitudes towards ethnic minorities. For advise the ministry counts on Nydansker. The neutrality of this independent organizations generates the legitimacy of the cooperation, which could not be the case when the government cooperates with a specific company. The cooperation finds place in different areas: operational, telling and showing good examples, generating good ideas for concrete projects, and membership in the board.

Nydansker

Nydansker is an independent organization with strong links with the ministry of integration (which has a strong national network of all municipalities in Denmark). This policy is concerned with ethnic minorities on the labor market, mentoring, intercultural collaboration, building up partnerships and the mobilization of the civil society. It is strong in setting up cooperation with a broad range of private companies. Because these companies are more and more confronted with a lack of personnel, they are more open to cooperation to recruit also immigrant personnel. Nydansker developed a lot of different tools such as, mentoring, cooperation with job centre, 80/20 (20% education). Another activity is family mentoring, an initiative to look for host families who welcome new immigrant employees of different companies. Nydansker is also occupied with training managers and teachers to become intercultural ambassadors. Therefore they developed a homepage with IC-tools, exchange of information etc. Concerning minorities and management, Nydansker developed a web connected database, where different themes are elaborated in cooperation with companies. Occupation.now is an initiative to set up partnerships that are focused on the last group of unemployed people who do not find their way to the labour market. Therefore they develop corporate responsibility actions. Important is that the positive results are brought into vision positively. A web-based tool has to boost collaboration between different actors. The mobilization of the civil society happens in cooperation with different organizations of the civil society, e.g. the association of active women, who try to lead women to the labor market. They are supported by a guide that helps them to organize meetings.

The founder of Nydansker showed that initially migrants were financially supported by the government, but not led to the labor market. This led to the perception that migrants took advantage. He came up with the idea that companies and the government need a push to bring good ideas into practice. The government had to see that the cost that are linked with leading immigrants to the labor market cannot solely be carried by companies.

The task of Nydansker is well explained by Torben. According to him best practices are necessary to break down the barriers that prevent companies to translate diversity into practice. In reality only a few companies want to make free budget for diversity. To push companies partnerships between companies and the government can help. The government declared its responsibility to realize diversity on the work floor. More and more companies also see the advantage of diversity. Nydansker has proven its expertise and expertise, and won credibility and was asked as an advisory partner for the government. Nydansker is known as organization as a pioneer, coming up with innovative ideas. Three main tasks are: member related services, area of development (tools, methods, ..) and influence (dissemination, agenda setting, knowledge sharing, good practices, ...). The members are very diverse, such as private sector, education, community, local government etc.