

Title: *Refugees and Migrants as Mentors? A New Way of Mentoring?*

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Number of participants: 9

Starting questions:

Can and should refugees and migrants act as mentors? Is this a new way of mentoring? Which challenges with which strengths and problems could occur in this setting? Do mentoring programmes have to work differently to incorporate migrant mentors? Is it especially important to pay the mentors or to provide them with other resources?

Sequence of content/methods:

The session started with a self-introduction of all participants. The speaker presented the project "Schulmentoren, Hand in Hand für starke Schulen". In this project, pupils act as mentors for younger pupils with the aim to support them in their learning process. Also the mentors are supposed to profit using the idea of learning by teaching. According to the increased number of pupils with migration background in Germany, such mentoring projects for pupils raise the questions (1) on how important identification potential is in mentoring and (2) if refugees and migrants are ideal mentors and (3) how they can be motivated to act as mentors.

In the following 9 minutes, the participants worked in groups of 2-3 people and discussed strengths and limitations of migrant mentors. They wrote their results on cards and discussed them with the whole group.

Main results/arguments discussed in the group:

There are special conditions, strengths and limitations in mentoring done by migrants and refugees.

- 1) Strengths are that migrant mentors can act as role models, know the problems of a life as a migrant/refugee and that they might speak the same language as the mentees. They can also give them the feeling of being home, when they share the same cultural background.
- 2) On the other hand, it could also be a limitation or disadvantage, if mentor and mentee come from similar regions as they could come from competitive/rival cultures and mentoring coordinators might not always be aware of all present conflicts and disregard such problems in the matching process. Additionally, a refugee might not have a deep experience in specific topics as he or she is new to the country. Their similarities might also create a relationship, which is too close to be a professional mentor relationship as the mentor might identify.
- 3) Furthermore many migrants and refugees don't have a lot of free time as they need to get themselves settled in a foreign country. It is important to be aware of their possibly rare time resources and to make sure that the mentoring is not an extra burden for the mentor in regards to time and emotional or logistical factors.
- 4) As a conclusion: it is important to be aware of the challenges and the complex structure migrant mentoring might have and, hence, to adjust the structure of such specific mentoring programmes to involve this target group of mentors.

One thing that was laughed about:

"We have a minority of people who want to mentor everything and everybody!"