

A new aspect of internationalization? Specific challenges and support structures for refugees on their way to German higher education from the perspective of members of higher education institutions

Jana Berg, German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW)

berg@dzhw.eu

Topic and Relevance

- .Rise of immigration to Germany in the years 2011 till 2016, with a peak in 2015 (especially from Syria)
- .Education is crucial for social and economic integration (not only) of migrants
- .Labor market success largely depends on education and training acquired in the host country
- .Internationalization and Diversification central topics for Higher Education Institutions

Study Design

Research interest: Specific challenges for refugees and support offered for them from the perspective of members of 5 German higher education institutions

- .Document analysis (Mission Statements, Website-Information for Refugees)
- .Qualitative expert-interviews (international office, first contact, vice-president for internationalization)

Sample:

- .8 interview-partners from 5 German HEI
- .HEI selection based on location, support for refugees, diverse mission statements, at least one university of excellence
- .3 universities, 2 universities of applied sciences from 4 German states (*'Bundesländer'*)

Specific challenges on the way to higher education for refugees and asylum seekers: an intersectional approach

- .Challenges from the perspective of members of the higher education institution
- .Factors that influence the inclusion into the HEI as an organization (Weinbach 2008)
- .Not a holistic representation of all challenges refugees face within the host society
- .Specific combination of interdependent challenges
- .Challenges have impact on different aspects of higher education: Entrance criteria, learning conditions, basis of existence etc.

Specific challenges for refugees and Asylum seekers on their way to higher education for

- .Language
- .A multitude of bureaucratic requirements
- .Finances
- .Entrance Qualification and missing documents
- .Gap in educational biography
- .Study culture
- .Social Isolation
- .Information
- .Residential status
- .Residence obligation and infrastructure
- .Trauma and psychological stress
- .Absence

Support Structures at German HEI

UAS A

- .praxis-oriented teaching
- .internationally oriented research
- .well appointed with funds and staff
- .3 stages preparatory program in close cooperation with local companies
- .Focus on online learning
- .Benefit during application-process
- .50% position to counsel refugees

UAS B

- .practice-oriented
- .close cooperation with local companies
- .Strong focus of social integration within the internationalization process
- .Close cooperation with local university
- .Credit for active students in order to acknowledge and support their voluntary work
- .20% position to counsel refugees started in September

Support Structures at German HEI

University C

- .University of Excellence
- .High quality research
- .Strong focus on internationalization und diversity
- .Well funded
- .Psychological Counselling for traumatized people
- .Position for the counseling of refugees within office for diversity

University C

- .One of the leading German TUs
- .Strong focus on internationalization
- .Student volunteer projects and positions for students to maintain their engagement
- .50% position for the counselling of refugees

University E

- .Strong focus on internationalization
- .Biggest university in the sample
- .Website Information available in various languages
- .Network for academics with refugee background
- .50% position for the counselling of refugees

Support Structures at German HEI

- .Support is based on voluntary work
- .Path dependency: Support depends on pre-existing structures

Examples for HEI-specific offers:

- Strong inclusion of students in support structures
- Offers for traumatized students
- Strong collaboration with local businesses
- Information available in a variety of languages

Generally offered:

- Language classes
- Academic preparation
- Social integration
- Access to infrastructure

.'Reflexivität': All sampled HEI reacted to the increased numbers, support started in 2015

.Support and institutionalization depends on funding

.No holistic approach to the challenges refugees face possible:

University is one actor within a society, everybody needs to help

Implications for Higher Education Policy

- .The HEIs support of refugees depends on funding. Since finances are important to refugees as well as universities, the institutionalisation of supportive structures like counselling and special offers for refugees as well as the funding of refugees costs of living should be supported as much as possible.
- .Most HEIs started their programs with volunteer work based on a try and error strategy. A strong network and guidelines concerning regulations and demands of other institutions can be a lot of help for them.
- .The information on the possibilities of studies for refugees should be pointed out to other relevant actors active in counselling refugees.
- .Diversity and internationalization should be framed as positive factors within a globalized world and refugees should be seen as prospective highly capable students instead of exclusively focussing on their special needs.

Implications for Higher Education Policy

- .The HEIs support of refugees depends on funding. Since finances are important to refugees as well as universities, the institutionalisation of supportive structures like counselling and special offers for refugees as well as the funding of refugees costs of living should be supported as much as possible.
- .Most HEIs started their programs with volunteer work based on a try and error strategy. A strong network and guidelines concerning regulations and demands of other institutions can be a lot of help for them.
- .The information on the possibilities of studies for refugees should be pointed out to other relevant actors active in counselling refugees.
- .Diversity and internationalization should be framed as positive factors within a globalized world and refugees should be seen as prospective highly capable students instead of exclusively focussing on their special needs.
- .Revise Access criteria



Thank you