

Refugees on Their Way into German Higher Education

(Projekt: WeGe - Wege von Geflüchteten an deutsche Hochschulen)

Question and relevance

Educationally well equipped refugees bring along particular opportunities and challenges for integration in educational systems and labour markets of host countries. Often discussed in light of expected skills shortage and knowledge economy this issues causes challenges and opportunities for universities and preparatory colleges as well as prospective students with refugee background. Funding programmes have been established (DAAD integra, welcome).

We investigate for the first time the situation of refugees on their way to German universities through preparatory courses. Our main research questions are:

- Which factors encourage or hamper a successful integration in higher education?
- Are there specific problems of the education-related person-environment fit?
- What role does higher education play for well-educated refugees?
- How do they perceive the German higher education system and vice versa?

Literature review and conceptual framework

While investigating the **pathways** of refugees through their **preparation for higher education** entry we have to take into account the concurrence of **forced** with other forms of **migration** (King 2012), as well as the phenomenon of **transmigration** (Faist 2010; Gogolin/Pries 2004).

Migration outcomes depend on **social networks** (Beaman 2012; Williams 2006).

Decisions concerning migration and education often occur between the poles of between domestic **obligations** and strong individual **agency** (Castles et al 2014).

While (higher) education is central for refugees' **integration** and acquirement of **capabilities** (UNHCR 2012), research is rare in this area (Crea 2016; Crea/McFarland 2015).

The pathway of forced migrants to higher education requires work on **identity** and **new attachments** in new (**learning**) **environments** (Morrice 2011).

The **legal and social category „refugee“** can induce stigma (Morrice 2013) and hinder both educational decisions (Gatelay 2015) and attainment in learning environments. Tensions between personal and institutional **habitus** may come to the fore (Morrice 2013; Bourdieu/Passeron 1971).

But higher education programmes can serve as beneficial **educational** and **psycho-social intervention** as well (Crea 2016).

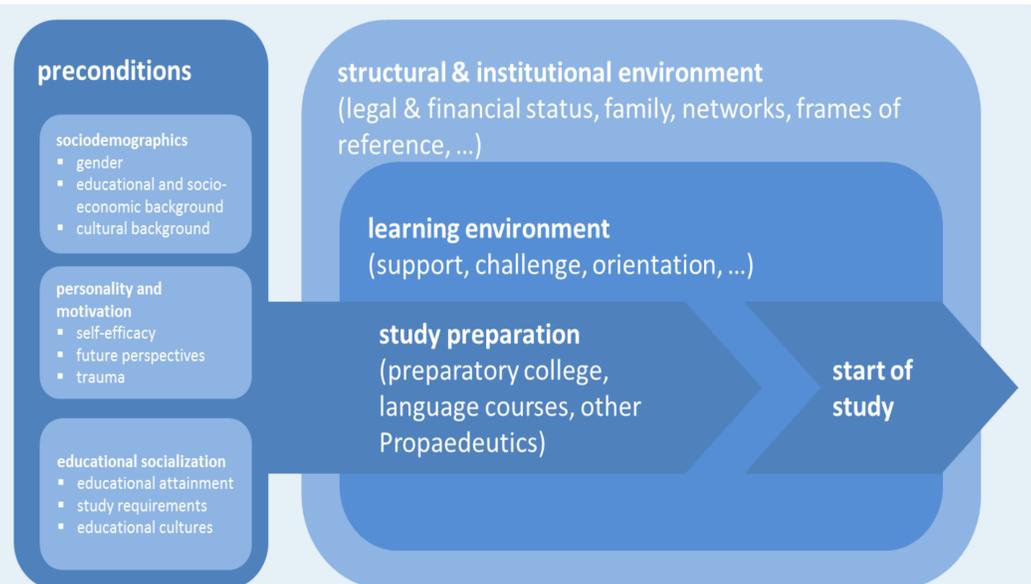


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research design

We will conduct a study with a **mixed method design**, integrating a **quantitative panel** study of refugees and other migrants in preparatory courses, **qualitative expert interviews** with staff from universities and preparatory colleges, and a **qualitative panel of episodic interviews** with refugees, planning to study at university.

The research will be conducted within **five regional clusters** scattered across Germany, each featuring at least...

- one university,
- one university of applied science, and
- one preparatory college.

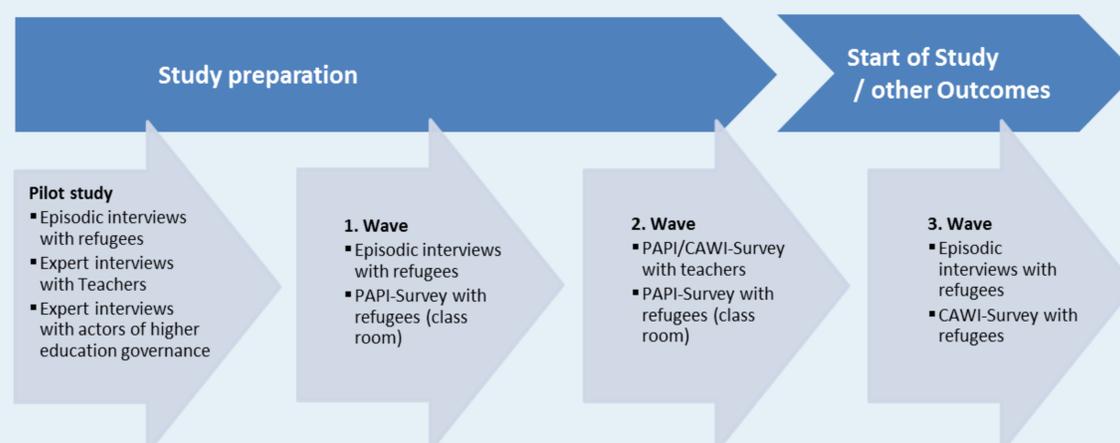


Figure 2 Research Design