



Case study - Interview with 3 UAMs from Afghanistan in a German language class,

January 23, 2014

Interviewer: Could you tell me something about yourselves?

UAM1: My name is N. and I am from Afghanistan. I came to Germany one year ago and now go to school to learn the language. I am preparing for my 'Hauptschulabschluss'¹. In Afghanistan I went to school for 8 years. I learned English and Maths. I lived in Kandahar for 4 years and then moved to Herat.

UM2: My name is S. and I am from Afghanistan. I am 17 years old and I have been living in Hamburg for 19 months. I am preparing for my 'Realschulabschluss'² and attend additional German language classes twice a week. I live in a group home for UAM with three boys from Somalia and India. We get along well. In Afghanistan, I was taught by a private teacher and then went on to school for 4 years. I lived in the Eastern part of Afghanistan. In my village there were not so many schools (laughs) . My father and mother are uneducated, so my brothers and I had to be taught by a private teacher.

UM 3: My name is D and I am also from Afghanistan. This year I want to finish my 'Realschulabschluss'. I've been in Germany for two years. I didn't go to school in Afghanistan, but went in Iran for six years. Then I left Iran for Germany.

Interviewer: What did you know about Germany before you came here?

UM1: I was thinking about Germany, I thought it was a very nice country because I have seen a movie. I said, I will go to Germany and I will learn, and I will work, I will be a good doctor. When I

¹ Initial school degree after 9 years of school attendance in Germany

² More advanced school degree after 10 years of school attendance in Germany



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came here I saw it is a very nice country. But I realized that it is very difficult to become a doctor, it takes 7 or 8 years, now I don't want to become a doctor.

Interviewer: Where are your families?

UM2: My parents and my brothers are in Afghanistan. My grandmother and my uncle are in Germany but I live by myself in a group home.

UM1: I am here without my parents. My sister and her husband live here but I live by myself in a group home. I have my sister here, but I have a hunger for my mother and my father. I miss my family.

UM3: I live all by myself in Germany in a group home for UAM.

Interviewer: Are you in contact with your family?

UM 1: Yes, I am in contact with my mother by telephone but not by the internet. I have internet access but my family doesn't. My mother doesn't know facebook and things like that. She does not even know how to write a number, how can she know about facebook? But my mom knows how to cook very well (laughs). I miss my mother, I haven't seen her in 4 years.

UM 2: I am not in contact with my family. I haven't seen my mother, father and brothers since 2 years. It is very difficult to maintain contact. Where my parents live there are no cell phones or anything like that. You have to go to the next city and call from here. In the village there is no network.

UM3: I call my mother every second month. She is in Iran and with a phone card of €2.50 I can talk to her for 50 minutes.

UM1: When you call Afghanistan it costs €3 to talk for 15 minutes, it is much more expensive.

Interviewer: What experiences have you had during your transit through other countries?

UM3: In Iran you are not allowed to go to school if you are from Afghanistan. You have to pay €300 to be allowed to go to school. If you don't pay, the police comes and takes you back to



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Afghanistan. Iran is a horrible country. I hate it. That's why I have left Iran for Germany. From a friend I heard that you can go to school in Germany and that you can get your passport in 1 to 2 years. But I still have a "Duldung"³. Otherwise everything is good, I am very happy in Germany. I go to school and next year I want to start an apprenticeship. I would really like to fly to Iran once to see my mother. I miss my family so much. I have been in Europe since 3 years, thereof 1 year in Greece.

UM1: I don't want to speak about Greece. I have spent 3 months in jail in Greece. 3 months and 10 days. When I said, I want to go to a camp they said ok, but only if you don't go to another country or another city. I said ok and I signed a paper and went to a camp. A lawyer told me that I should wait for one year and then I could go to join my sister in Hamburg. I waited for one year and then the lawyer said no. So I paid money to a trafficker to come here. The lawyer said your sister doesn't have a passport and that doesn't work.

UM2: When I think of Greece...there you have to pay €5 for one day to be able to live in a camp. If you don't have money you sleep on the street with no food. Then the police come and you have to pay a fine to be in the street. It is horrible in Greece! The police came and wanted to have my passport. When I said, I don't have a passport I had to go to jail.

UM3: They beat you in Greece. I still have pains in my back. The police beat you with bats.

Interviewer: So, you all came on your own without waiting for the Greek authorities?

All: Yes!

Interviewer: Did you know anybody in Hamburg?

UM2: I don't know why I came here. But I find Hamburg better than other cities.

UM3: Yes, Hamburg is the best city. One also calls Hamburg the "heart of Europe"

UM1: Hamburg gave me a place to stay, Hamburg lets me stay here and know I want to give something back. I want to become something and give back.

³ Limited permit to stay – „temporary suspension of deportation“ with limited rights and access to services



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UM2: You have to pay taxes (everybody laughs).

UM1: Yes, of course, that is guaranteed.

Interviewer: What don't you like about Germany?

UM3: The asylum issue makes me nervous.

UM2; Yes, that's the same for me – issues of passport and asylum. In the beginning I was told wait for 18 months and then you get your passport. You can go to Berlin and pick it up. Now I have waited for 20 months already. I only have a 6 months "Duldung". There were a lot of promises but nothing came true. I cannot concentrate on my schoolwork, because I constantly think about that. That's why I got bad grades in maths and political sciences. I feel ashamed that after 19 months I still haven't mastered physics and political sciences. Normally I know the solutions but if I sit in a test my thoughts start to wonder...that's why my grade are not good....I just want to hear a "yes", "yes" you can stay! Family problems, passport problems, school problems, it's too much for me.

UM1: I like it here but I miss my family that's why I am unhappy.

UM3: 1.5 years ago my asylum request was rejected. Since then I haven't heard anything from the authorities. I only get a "Duldung" every 6 months.

Interviewer: What are your future plans?

UM1: I want to become a policeman.

UM3: I want to work as a carpenter. I have worked in Iran as a carpenter for 1 and a half years. I had contact with a carpenter in Germany. He said, I could write an application, when I am done with my school. But nobody wants you if you only have a "Duldung". I wish that I will get my passport sooner so that I can see my family. Then I come back to start my apprenticeship.

UM2: I am interested in technical professions. What is an Airbus? I want to do an internship. I am trying since 1.5 years to get an internship at Airbus. First time, they told me you only have 3



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months “Duldung”. Then I sent it again and she said you don't have a report card, and then she said, why do you want to do an internship with us. I said, I like the appliances, I like the company, but then she asked for a report card again and said I can't work there. She told me to try again next week.

Interviewer: Are your parents happy/proud that you are here?

UM3: When I talk to my mom, she asks are you going to school are you doing your Abitur⁴, are you going to university. She doesn't know what all this means. Then I tell her, yes, yes (laughs). She has never been to school. She doesn't know, that it is more difficult to go to school than to go to work.

UM2: I feel happy when my parents and my brothers are happy. I am not sure if I will be a good man in the future. In English “family” stands for: father and mother, I love you.

UM1: Yes, my mother is proud of me. Mama is always Mama.

Interviewer: Do you see your future here in Germany/Hamburg or elsewhere?

Everybody: here in Hamburg!

UM1: I want to go back to visit. Then I definitely want to come back to Hamburg.

SH: Are you satisfied with the way the school works?

UM3: Yes, it's okay, but half of my class is from Afghanistan. We are always speaking in our Afghan language, we are not learning German. The rest are from Poland, Guinea. That is our problem. The schools often have a particular aisle on which you find all "integration classes", separated from the others. You only have foreigners in these classes.

Interviewer: How could this be resolved?

⁴ Most advanced school degree after 13 years of school attendance in Germany



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Teacher: the class size should be reduced; the average is now 25 students. That is too much for students who are new. The groups should be made smaller and students mixed better. I have seen schools with designated aisles for integration classes and the German students are located in different floors, so there is no integration but they are segregated. So they remain amongst themselves. They use their mother tongue to get back the feeling but don't have contact with Germans. They rarely have German friends.



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