

No lost generation: Education for refugee children.

A comparison between Sweden, Germany, The Netherlands and Turkey

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EUI Forum on Migration, Citizenship and Demography in Florence

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“Despite broad agreement on the fundamental role of schools, varied standards of reception for newly arrived students, which result from a lack of policy, guideline, and resources, are undertaken, and they seem to be an endemic problem that transcends national borders”

(Jenny Nilsson and Nihad Bunar, 2016, 400)

Introduction

The research debate covering the so-called ‘refugee crises in Europe’ has largely been addressing issues like border control, EU policies - or the lack thereof - and the political backlash in the form of anti-immigrant sentiments. Follow-up questions about the integration of refugees and their children into society, into education and work now slowly appear on the agenda too.

Although the current attention for the issue of integration of children of refugees into education is recent, several researchers in Europe have addressed this issue for previous waves of refugees’ children. The findings of one of the largest European studies on the topic, *Integrace*, a comparative study which includes Sweden and The Netherlands, will figure

¹ We would like thank Alireza Behtoui for helping us finding relevant English language literature for Sweden for this paper.

prominently in this paper. Next to this study there are smaller national or local studies that are often descriptive or are evaluating so-called good practice examples in cities and schools.

We do not pretend to have a full overview of the studies conducted, but our first impression is that compared to the huge amount of studies into the education of children of immigrants, the attention for refugee children in education has been rather limited and often refugee children are not distinguished separately (Bloch et al. 2015). While, for instance, data on school results for children of immigrants are usually readily available on a national or city level, this sort of data is lacking for refugee children. Sometimes groups can be identified because of their national origin, knowing that most of the people of that particular group came as refugees. The limited data show that refugee children usually face more barriers than children of immigrants (Mc Brien 2009; Bloch et al. 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011). A further observation is that the usual differentiation between refugee children who are born in the country of migration and those who came during the compulsory school period (the in-between generation) are mostly not made. However, education research has shown time and again that this distinction is important to make when seeking to explain the variation in outcomes both within groups and between them (Bloch et al. 2015, 15; Crul et al. 2012; Heath and Brinbaum 2007; Holdaway et al. 2009; OECD 2010). Furthermore, there seems to be a lack of attention in the literature for the development of school careers over time. Often researchers take a snapshot of the treatment of refugee children in the so-called *welcome, introduction* or *submersion classes*. Of course this is a crucial element for the children to be able to start successfully in education, but it only tells part of the story. What happens after these classes is equally fundamental. In what sort of educational track are they admitted? Do they still get second language support or other additional support? Are they allowed to continue their studies after compulsory education? The quick overview of the literature, and we apologize in advance for missing relevant studies, shows that most studies do not answer a lot of these crucial questions.

Furthermore, this paper is an attempt to draw away from what Nilsson and Bunar (2016, 401) call singular factors, such as trauma or individual background factors. Instead we will focus on institutional factors that influence the opportunities of refugee children in education on the macro, meso and micro level (see for studies on children of immigrants: Crul et al. 2012; Crul et al. 2013; Keskiner 2013; Schnell 2012). We will analyse educational institutional arrangements comparatively across countries as formulated in the Integration Context Theory (Crul and Schneider 2010; Crul and Mollenkopf 2012; Crul et al. 2012; Crul et al. 2013; Crul

2016). This theory roots in research into the effects of differences in the school system differences on the educational and labour market careers of children of immigrants. We will make a cross-country comparison of seven important institutional arrangements that we identified as being influential for the school careers of refugee children: (1) Entrance into education; (2) So-called welcome, submersion or introduction classes; (3) Pre-school arrangements; (4) Second language instruction; (5) Additional support; (6) Tracking; (7) Education after compulsory school.

We identified both similar and different institutional arrangements at work in the case of refugee children. Institutional arrangements differ because of school system differences, the time lapse before entering formal education or the specific legal arrangements in terms of accessing pre-school, or the options for attending school after reaching the age when compulsory school ends.

For our analysis of the impact of these institutional arrangements we made a literature overview, looking specifically at Sweden, Germany, The Netherlands and Turkey. We have chosen the three European countries because they are the three countries in Europe that received the highest numbers of refugees and thus also have the highest numbers of refugee children entering their educational systems. Also, they have very different institutional arrangements aiming at integrating refugee children in education. This makes it interesting to compare them. We additionally chose Turkey because we wanted to broaden the perspective beyond Europe by including a country that also received thousands and thousands of refugee children over the past few years. It is important to note that *most* refugee children that fled Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea or Iraq reside outside of Europe, and are entering – or not – the educational system in for instance Jordan, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Turkey. Whether Turkey is able to cater to the educational needs of the refugee children is of crucial interest to a European audience, considering the recent Turkey-EU deal, which increased Turkey's responsibility as a receiving country.

Our paper addresses the importance of the seven institutional arrangements we identified as key in separate paragraphs. In the discussion paragraph at the end we will try to tie their effect on the school careers of the children of refugees together.

The challenges for the four countries in scope are very different. The number of refugees entering Turkey or Germany are much higher compared to Sweden or the Netherlands. To exemplify this with some numbers of the Syrian refugees in Turkey: according to a report by

HRW (2015), as of October 2015 more than 1.9 million Syrian asylum seekers/migrants were registered in Turkey, of which nearly 1.7 million reside outside of the refugee camps.

Children from 5 to 17 years old make up around 780.000 within this population². While in the refugee camps 90 percent of the children attend schools, these children only form 13 percent of the Syrian children in schooling age living in Turkey.

The high influx resulted in a much higher demand on the existing school facilities and resulted in many temporary solutions to deal with the reality on the ground. Also, different refugee populations came to the four countries, resulting in different challenges regarding education. In Sweden, for instance, an additional challenge is that about half of the refugee children are unaccompanied minors (Rydin et al. 2012, 185; Çelikaksoy and Wadensjö 2015). Children from different origin countries also differ because some children have not been going to school for two or three years before they reached Europe. Integrating these children into schools asks for additional measures. Next to learning a new instruction language and adapting to a new curriculum, they also need to adapt to being in a school environment again. Furthermore, they often lag behind in school subjects in relation to their own age cohort, which means that they have to be in classes with children that are sometimes up to two or three years younger.

A proper comparison would therefore ask for a comparison of similar groups that came at the same time period with similar educational histories in the origin countries. Such detailed studies are not yet available for the countries under study in this paper (See for a comparison of the same refugee group in France, The UK and Switzerland: Bloch at al. 2015). We are aware of these limitations, but, at the same time, we think this should not prevent us from looking into differences across countries in both the opportunities and the blockades that school systems and legal regulations present.

Entrance into Compulsory Education

Compulsory school covers different age groups in the four countries under comparison. In the Netherlands compulsory school is targeting four to sixteen-year-olds, but if students at the age of sixteen did not obtain a minimum qualification of lower post-secondary vocational

² Before the war in Syria broke out, primary school participation rate was 99 percent, for secondary school the rate was 82 percent. Participation was equal for male and female students. Today, according to UNICEF, approximately 3 million Syrian children, in and outside of Syria, cannot go to school.

education yet, they have to stay in education till the age of eighteen. In Germany and Sweden compulsory education covers the age range between six and sixteen. The right of entrance into compulsory education in all three European countries is guaranteed by law. All three European countries have the policy that children in compulsory school age should have access to education as soon as possible. The European regulations stipulate that children should be included in education within three months (article 14 paragraph 1 European Regulations 2003/9/EG). Sweden has put a further time limit of one month after arrival as the legally binding limit for entrance into school (Rydin et al. 2012, 193). In Germany and The Netherlands no such further legal binding limits exist. In practice the time lapse between entering the country and entering school amounts to three months or even up to a half year in all three countries (See for Sweden: Rydin et al. 2012, 199). Especially in the last two years when many refugee families were housed in temporary shelters and camps and people had to move several times before they were housed in more permanent asylum seekers centers, education for the children in school age was often arranged in an improvised manner.

In the Netherlands, participation in education is compulsory for refugee children in compulsory school age regardless of their status. In Sweden and Germany, however, there is no obligation to attend school for those who are still in the process of status definition and who therefore do not have a residence permit yet (Rydin et al. 2012, 191; Bourgonje 2010, 47), although in Germany language courses in the Reception Centers are in theory obligatory. This results in small groups of children not attending school in Germany and Sweden (See for Sweden: Rydin et al. 2012, 193) but it also effects the quality and amount of schooling children receive in these two countries (idem.). In Germany, for instance, in some cases children would receive language education for only a few hours a day in the asylum seekers centers rather than going to a regular school on regular school hours. Nilsson and Bunar report in their article that also in Sweden children who are still in the asylum seeking procedure are often offered 10 to 50 percent less schooling, and often only for a limited number of school subjects, than regular school children (Nilsson and Bunar 2016, 403).

Turkey is also legally bound to provide schooling to refugee children, irrespective of their status³. Also, in October 2014 a new regulation was published, called the Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR) which became the main domestic legislation to govern Turkey's de

³ Turkey is party to the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Children, where article 22 obliges the signatory countries to provide protection and schooling to all asylum seeking and refugee children. Also, Turkish law (5395) obliges the Turkish state to provide education and protection to minors, irrespective of their nationality.

facto temporary protection for Syrian refugees in the areas of education, health and social protection. TPR should ease the process of enrollment in schools, allowing refugee children who are registered in Turkey to enroll in public schools and in temporary education centers established for Syrian children (ÇOÇA 2015).⁴ However, research shows that the majority of the Syrians are not well-informed about their children's right to education (idem). Also, the procedure of registration does not always run smoothly due to a lack of infrastructure and many refugees are not able to register themselves. Due to lack of financial support, the majority of the Syrian refugee families experience severe economic hardship, which forms one of the major impediments against Syrian children's participation in education (HRW 2015). The fact that Syrian refugees have no work permission created a huge black labour market in Turkey, and this, in combination with the poverty of the families, created a situation where child labor became common among Syrian children (Mutlu et al. 2015).

Welcome, Submersion, Preparation, International or Introduction Classes

As the title of this paragraph reflects, the names used for the classes in which refugee children are placed before going to regular classes differ between countries, and, over time, also within countries. The actual pedagogical practices also differ a lot. When the children enter education they usually do not have any command of the national language yet. In all three European countries special provisions are set up to accommodate them to learn the second language, either in special classes or in special schools.

In the Netherlands, during the period when the children are still in the asylum procedure, they are often taught in an elementary school especially founded on the premise of an asylum seekers center (Ingleby and Kramer 2012, 263). Depending on how long they are in the procedure to be granted a legal status as recognized asylum seekers, this can take up to two years. In other cases, for instance in the case of small-scale asylum seekers centers or when the center is located not in a remote area but within a city or larger village, they would attend a regular elementary school. Depending on the number of refugee children in that school, they would first go to an immersion class for one year, although for some children, depending on their second language progress, this can be extended to two years. The timing of entering education is crucial, as at age twelve children are selected for different school tracks in the

⁴ Local authorities were held responsible to monitor the registration of Syrian refugees in public schools to ensure their access to education (ÇOÇA 2015). In order to enroll, the children have to be registered with the local police office or the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, the state institution running the majority of the refugee camps for Syrians.

Netherlands. Children older than twelve are directed to international transfer classes (ISK) in a local secondary school for one or two years (Ingleby and Kramer 2012, 263; Stavenuiter et al. 2016, 7).

In Germany, children attend so-called preparation or introduction classes for one or two years, before they are transferred to regular classes. Depending on the state, city, or even the school this can be followed by more assistance with German as a second language in case their German proficiency still lags behind. There are some preparation classes attached to Gymnasia, but in general pupils attending preparation classes in secondary school are in *Hauptschule* or *Realschule*, lower and middle level vocational education. In Germany, the sheer number of refugee children in the past two years has been overwhelming and the task on the level of *Bundesländer* (states) and cities has therefore been gigantic. In Hamburg, for instance, about 400 young children per month extra had to be placed in education up to the summer of 2015. Every month also at the level of secondary vocational education four to five new classes had to be added in Hamburg only. In about a year's time 143 new teachers had to be hired to teach the children in these new vocational classes (Pressestelle Senats Hamburg November 2015).

The situation in Sweden varies between schools. However, the general policy in Sweden is to keep children only for a very short period in international or immersion classes. Examples of schools keeping children in such classes for only two or three weeks are described as ideal cases (Rydin et al. 2012, 204). Pupils are then transferred as quickly as possible to regular classes, often with additional courses aimed at second language education. Partly, this is enabled by the fact that Swedish schools offer second language education as a regular subject from elementary school up till the end of upper-secondary school, making it easier to incorporate students with a migration background – both refugees and others - into regular classes after a short period of time.

In Turkey, *temporary education centers* are established to provide education to Syrian children both in and outside of the refugee camps (HRW 2015). Though these centers have begun as private initiatives, some signed a protocol with the Turkish government and receive financial support and are free of charge, others remain private with low fees which are nevertheless unaffordable for many Syrians struggling with economic hardship. Furthermore, the temporary education centers are not sufficient in number or capacity to cater the educational needs; out of 81 municipalities where refugees are registered, they exist only in

19 cities. According to the HRW report (2015) in the academic year 2014-2015, there were 34 centers in and 232 centers outside the refugee camps. Operating on primary and secondary school level, in year 2014-2015 more than 170.000 students were enrolled in the temporary education centers, opposed to only around 36.000 in Turkish public schools. This underlines that the majority of the Syrian refugee children receive their education in these centers. However, due to lack of sufficient funding, many of the centers face closing, since the Syrian refugee population is not able to pay for these courses. For example, while in Reyhanli 19 schools opened in 2014, only three were left by August 2015 due to lack of funding (Amos 2015). The centers follow an almost identical curriculum as Syrian schools - and the pupils receive the classes in Arabic - which is prepared in a cooperation between the Syrian Interim Government's Ministry of Education and the Turkish Ministry of National Education (HRW 2015). It is unclear how the students who attend such centers will be integrated into the Turkish educational system to further their education.

Pre-school Arrangements

For very young refugee children it is important how the access to pre-school is arranged. Compulsory school starts at different ages in the three European countries: in Sweden at seven; in Germany at six and in the Netherlands at four. Especially in Sweden and Germany the access to pre-school is therefore very important because of the larger age group - and thus larger numbers - of young refugee children affected.

In Germany, the development of pre-school facilities for disadvantaged children and children of immigrants has been strongly stimulated in the last decade. There are no figures available, as far as we know, about the inclusion of refugee children especially in pre-school facilities. As soon as parents receive an official asylum status they will be treated like other parents in Germany and have access to pre-school under the same conditions. Costs for child care differ between Bundesländer and even between cities. A special effort is made to include children in the last year before compulsory school starts at age six. In some Bundesländer you can enroll your child in pre-school during this last year without further costs.

In the Netherlands, pre-school education is in general organized very differently than in Sweden or Germany. Middle class families with both parents working usually send their children to either private or publicly founded pre-school facilities five days a week for the full

day. The considerable costs of attending these pre-school or so-called crèche facilities are paid by the parents and partly by the employer. Children of disadvantaged families, many of them with an immigrant background, can attend special subsidized pre-school facilities with an emphasis on second language learning, three mornings or afternoons a week. This means that they spend much less hours a week in day care and are also mostly segregated from children whose first language is Dutch. Places in these subsidized pre-school facilities, which also only largely exist in the larger cities, are limited. In which way refugee families are able to secure places for their young children in these pre-school facilities is unknown.

In Sweden, refugee children in the pre-school age, regardless of their status, are treated equally to children who have Swedish citizenship (Niemeyer 2014, 17). This is interesting, since in Germany and The Netherlands access is linked to the legal status. If a pre-school age child arrives in Sweden, it may attend what is called *open pre-school*, which is free of charge. In the larger cities with a high proportion of children with a mother tongue other than Swedish, there are special pre-schools focusing specifically on Swedish language acquisition (Rydin et al. 2012, 197). However, not all the refugee parents are aware of this option to send their children to pre-school without costs.

In Turkey pre-school is mostly private and in our literature review we were not able to find any provisions for refugee children.

Second Language Instruction

The provisions for regular second language instruction are, again, very different across countries. In the Netherlands, refugee children in elementary school attending welcoming classes and children in secondary school in international classes get intensive training in Dutch as second language for one or two years (Stavenuiter et al. 2016, 7). In most cases this is done in small classes (15 children) and the teacher is trained in second language education and special teaching material is used. When they are transferred to regular classes in elementary school, often some extra second language instruction is still provided by the regular teacher. In regular secondary education, however, second language instruction is not available. This obviously has negative consequences for the further school career (Van Hasselt and De Kruyf 2009, 9).

In Germany, there is second language support in elementary school (up to age ten or twelve depending on the Bundesland). Niemeyer (2014, 57) emphasizes in her study that it is important that *“nowhere is stated that German as a second language has to be taught in school.”* The Mercator Foundation recently released a report that teacher training in second language education is still insufficient (see also Niemeyer 2014, 47). Study methods and techniques for second language education were often missing in the past (Niemeyer 2014, 48). In some of the German schools there is a separate second language teacher available, in others school teachers are additionally trained in second language teaching, but. this training usually consists of only one day (idem.). In daily practice it is these regular teachers with scarce training that provide additional second language instruction in the classroom (Niemeyer 2014, 57). However, new programs on second language education are quickly expanding. In 2014, only in one Bundesland was the second language teacher training compulsory for school teachers. Today this is true for five Bundesländer.

In Sweden, the subject Swedish as Second Language (SSL) is offered in both elementary and upper-secondary school (up to age 18). The head teacher decides which students need to follow SSL (Rydin et al. 2012, 196). The fact that second language education is also offered in upper-secondary schools is particularly important for refugee children who come at age twelve or later. In Sweden, this age group will attend regular classes with extra support in Swedish as a second language very soon after entering the education system. In Germany and The Netherlands, these pupils, because regular second language instruction is absent in secondary education, would be taught in special submersion or introduction classes, which sets them back in their academic options. Important to note is that in Sweden, Swedish as a second language is a subject with separate teaching materials (syllabus) and instruction, equal to teaching Swedish as a first language (Bourgonje 2010, 48 and 50). Specially trained teachers instruct Swedish as a second language (Nilsson and Bunar 2016, 409). Some reports, however, stipulate that the status of these teachers is considered lower than that of a regular teacher giving Swedish as a first language (Bourgonje 2010, 50; Nilsson and Bunar 2016, 409). You can choose to take Swedish as a second language as an exam subject in Gymnasium and the mark for the subject is counted as a normal entrance mark for university (Rydin et al. 2012, 196). In Germany and The Netherlands, second language instruction is seen as additional to the regular language instruction. As a result, the extent to which extra materials are used and quality and number of hours of the second language instruction will differ from school to school and from teacher to teacher.

For Turkey, our literature overview shows that, next to economic hardship forcing many children into the black labour market, lack of national language proficiency is the main obstacle Syrian children face in accessing education. Except for the Turkmen ethnic minority, who speak Turkish, Syrian refugee children do not speak Turkish and the most common languages are Arabic and Kurdish. The only possibility to receive education in Arabic is at the temporary education centers discussed in the paragraph above. For the rest, the Turkish education system is highly central and leaves no room for public schools to cater the urgent need for Turkish language training. Turkish language courses seem to be handled on the local level with initiatives from the municipalities or NGOs, but these efforts remain very limited. Syrian children in theory have the right to enroll in public schools, but there is no infrastructure for them to learn Turkish or attend any form of transition classes. In a report by the Istanbul Bilgi University Children Studies Department on the educational conditions of Syrian children in Istanbul (where more than 300.000 Syrians reside), the researchers studied three schools in three districts where none of the schools provided Turkish language courses for the already limited number of Syrian children attending these schools (ÇOÇA 2015). This condition also leads to differential results for younger and older children. In their 2015 report, HRW underlined that younger Syrian children learn Turkish faster (hence do better in school and are integrating faster), yet older children's lack of language proficiency lead to becoming isolated in classrooms, leading to drop out or even not being accepted for enrollment in the first place. Many of these older children end up entering the labour market working in very low paid and difficult conditions. For that matter, the HRW 2015 report called for more flexible administration procedures to cater the needs of the refugee students (such as enrolling a 10th grader in 9th grade) and emphasized the urgency to launch Turkish language courses on a national scale⁵.

Additional Support

Most educational research has focused on gaps in both the cognitive and the language skills that children of refugees face because of the disruption of their school career in the country of origin and during the – sometimes long – travels to the destination country. They need to learn a new language, adapt to a new curriculum and sometimes also to a new learning style. Additionally, refugee children often have experienced traumatic events and sometimes lost close relatives and friends. A recent research showed that 79 percent of Syrian children in a

⁵ HRW 2015

Turkish refugee camp have someone in their family who died because of the war, more than 60 percent saw someone get kicked, shot or otherwise physically hurt. Nearly half (45 percent) of the surveyed children experienced PTSD symptoms (Sirin and Rogers-Sirin 2015, 13). Emotional and psychological help is often provided on an individual basis through the regular health care system, both within and outside schools (See for the Netherlands: Ingleby and Kramer 2012, 266).

It is important that also in school there are staff members that act as confidants for the refugee children to help and support them. This can be the assigned class mentor, a specially assigned staff member from school, a social worker or a guardian in case of an unaccompanied minor. In all three European countries, a person fulfilling this particular role can usually be identified. These people usually intervene when school results drop or fail to meet expectations, when pupils show emotional or psychological problems, when important decisions are to be made about school and or subjects in the curriculum chosen, or, very important, when legal aspects hinder access to schooling opportunities.

In Germany and the Netherlands, there is no obligation for schools to assign such a support person to refugee children. Support therefor varies and is dependent on the regular existing support structure in schools. In Germany, it seems that often a teacher is taking up this role (Niemeyer 2014, 47), while in the Netherlands, it is either the school mentor, someone from the schools' support staff or, in case of an unaccompanied minor, the guardian.

In Sweden, a person is assigned to support pupils that have attended an international class. Schools are obliged to allocate this additional support through a support teacher. The support teacher starts giving support once pupils are transferred to a regular class (Bourgonje 2010, 48 - 50; Niemeyer 2014, 23 and 55). This could be individual support or support in a small group or even in the regular class (Niemeyer 2014, 23). This comes across as an ideal situation. Reports, however, note that support teachers in practice often lack the time to give proper guidance (*idem.*)

In Turkey, counselling facilities are available in public schools, yet these facilities do not seem to be equipped to support Syrian children who have suffered serious traumas. The study by Istanbul Bilgi University Children Studies Department showed that the language barrier, combined with a lack of motivation or qualification of the student counsellors who already suffer from work overload, form the major reasons for the lack of support (ÇOÇA 2015). While school staff expressed that they expected such help to be provided outside the schools

by NGO groups, none of the Syrian students who participated in the study mentioned receiving any support outside of school. However, focus groups with Syrian children and students underlined the necessity of psychological support because of the experienced serious war traumas (idem).

Tracking

The way the different school systems track pupils in secondary school is very different across the three countries. The effects of this have been extensively documented for children of immigrants (see Crul et al. 2012; Crul et al. 2013). The strongly stratified German school system in combination with the early selection makes it much more difficult to pursue an academic track which prepares for higher education for children of disadvantaged immigrant origin. The more open meritocratic school system in Sweden with its late selection and less selective tracking system offers much more possibilities to continue into some sort of post-secondary or higher education. The case of the Netherlands lies in between, with a rather early selection at age twelve and a tracking system that is comparable with the German system, but offers ample opportunities to move from a vocational track to an academic track through alternative routes. Turkey has a comprehensive education system, slightly similar to Sweden, where an overt form of tracking does not take place in the compulsory education system. Yet there are prestige differences between selective and non-selective educational institutions both in the public and the private domain, which act as a covert stratification system with regards to the access to higher education.

The starting situation of refugee children is crucial in because of the effect of tracking and early selection. In general, we can say that the age of arrival determines how much they are blocked by the general institutional arrangements of early selection and tracking. A student that arrives in the Netherlands at age twelve or later already missed the crucial national test that determines their tracking advice. They are placed in a ISK submersion class for one or two years (Dourelijn and Dagevos 2011, 95; Stavenuiter et al. 2016, 7). By the time they are admitted to regular classes they often lag far behind in terms of the level of instruction in subjects in the academic track. This will, regardless of their intellectual capacities, de facto mean placement in one of the vocational tracks in year 3 or 4. Year 4 is the exam year. Because of the short period spent in regular classes, most pupils then are assigned to one of the lower levels of vocational education. According to a recent survey, 70 percent of the children going to ISK submersion classes from there goes to the lowest forms of vocational

education. For the average student of Dutch descent, it is the other way around: only 30 percent attends this lowest track (VO raad 2016; See for similar results on ISK classes from an earlier period Van Hasselt and De Kruyf 2009, 6). These levels only give access to short one or two-year post-secondary vocational tracks aimed at making the transition to the labour market in manual jobs. In the Netherlands, these tracks are commonly assigned to children with learning or behavioral problems. These tracks are known for their high levels of disruption in class and high drop out rates. In certain tracks, drop-out rates go up to 40 or 50 percent. This school climate is hardly conducive for refugee children that often have to deal with trauma and whose intellectual capacities often far exceed those of the other children in these tracks. Of those who are already older than 15 or 16 and cannot enter secondary education anymore, 80 percent enters the lowest forms of post-secondary vocational education (VO raad 2016; See for similar results on ISK classes from an earlier period Van Hasselt and De Kruyf 2009, 7). These one or two-year tracks are aimed to directly transit to the labour market in unskilled jobs. One of the factors related to the poor educational outcomes is the lack of second language teaching after the students are transferred from the international classes to the regular classes (Van Hasselt and De Kruyf 2009, 9). Another problem is that the international classes continuously take in new students which disrupts the learning situation in the class (idem, 11). A broader study on refugee groups, not only those who went to an international class, showed the same poor educational outcomes for refugee groups. Less than half of the Iraqi and Afghani young adults between the age of 20 and 34 obtained a diploma for a short post-secondary vocational education. The majority of the remaining students did not even manage to attain what are considered the lowest vocational certificates. Of the Somali refugees in this age group, about a quarter attained this very low level of education (Dourelijn and Dagevos 2011, 93), making their prospects on the labour market very bleak. The good news is that the younger cohorts who started their educational career in the Netherlands already in elementary school (after an introduction class) do much better. Children of Afghan and Iraqi origin now are almost at par with children of Dutch descent when it comes to attending academic tracks (idem, 98). This only goes to show that it is especially refugee children entering the Netherlands around or after age twelve who are getting crushed between the tracking wheels of the Dutch school system.

In Germany, the situation is similar to the Netherlands, with the exception of some Bundesländer where the selection is even earlier at age ten. Most of the refugee children

arriving after elementary school age will be placed in *Hauptschule* or *Realschule*, the two vocational tracks. A brochure for unaccompanied minors in Germany is quite telling:

“In Germany all children and teenagers under the age of sixteen have the right and duty to go to school. This is called compulsory attendance. Usually you would start off with the “Hauptschule” where you have the possibility to get a “Hauptschuleabschluss” (secondary school qualification).

Only a small proportion of pupils of German descent go to *Hauptschule* and many German parents will avoid this school at all costs. In the case of refugee children, however, for many teachers and policy makers this seems to be the highest aim (see also Niemeyer 2014, 46).

At age sixteen, some even one year earlier, *Hauptschule* or *Realschule* pupils should enter into an apprenticeship track. Second language difficulties however often impede these children from finding an apprenticeship. For children of immigrants who are born in Germany (the second generation) discrimination in finding an apprenticeship is already clearly established (Crul et al. 2012). For refugee children, who are mostly not born in Germany, the chances to find an apprenticeship place are often even bleaker because of German language deficits, lack of experience in the system and resulting poor grades (Niemeyer 2014, 16). Furthermore, there is a competition for apprenticeship places among students that have diploma's on different levels. It comes as no surprise that those who have a *Gymnasium* diploma are most favored by employers, followed by those who have a *Realschule* diploma. Children with a *Hauptschule* diploma have the least chances of getting an apprenticeship position (Crul et al. 2012). The negative consequence is that students who leave school without doing an apprenticeship, in a system that relies so heavily on apprenticeships, also have great difficulties to enter the labour market and find a steady job. Apprenticeships are more often than not the door to the first paid job.

In Sweden, the first selection point is at age fifteen when students choose, or are recommended to different programs within *Gymnasium*. The choice made here does limit the options in the further education, but all programs give access to higher education. However, those students who at fifteen go to more vocational oriented programs often continue into a form of post-secondary vocationally oriented education at age eighteen, which is not part of the higher education system. The report of Çelikaksoy and Wadensjö, focusing on unaccompanied minors, presents some educational outcomes of refugee children. The group of unaccompanied minors is more at risks than children who came with their parents. But still,

even for them, the educational results far exceed those in Germany and the Netherlands for refugee children. Of the 19-year-olds 77 percent of the females still follow education in Sweden and of the males 88 percent (Çelikaksoy and Wadensjö 2015, 15). Even of the 21-year-olds about half of this group is still in education. Among the men in the age between 24 and 27 about 40 percent is in undergraduate training and another third is in adult education. Among the women about a quarter is in undergraduate education and about half in adult education (idem, 16). The figures show that a considerable part of these refugee children, who are to be considered highly at risk, reach higher education in Sweden.

Since the Swedish system is geared towards getting as many students as possible into higher education by keeping opportunities open till age eighteen, those who do not manage to get into higher education or fail in higher education, often find themselves in a precarious situation. In Germany and the Netherlands, many of those unable to access an academic track were able to follow apprenticeship tracks offering them an entrance to the labour market. They can show a potential employer their track record of their apprenticeship place. And, again, many indeed get their first paid job through the apprenticeship.

In Turkey, the newly adopted 4+4+4 system, requires young people to go to school until age eighteen. While the system has no specific tracking moment like in the Netherlands or Germany, there are significant distinctions between selective and non-selective educational institutions and the quality of education, both in the private and the public domain. These distinctions become crucial when gaining access to higher education. The studies overviewed for this paper only mention participation of Syrian children in non-selective public education and in temporary education centers (ÇOÇA 2015; HRW 2015; Mutlu et al. 2016). While the experience of Syrian children varied across individual cases, younger children seem to have a more positive experience since they learned Turkish faster compared to older children who seem to suffer more from the lack of Turkish language courses and a lack of adaptation (ÇOÇA 2015). The studies underscore how Syrian children suffered from serious stigmatization and discrimination from other pupils, but also occasionally from school staff and other parents. The studies called for increasing awareness that education should be perceived as a “right” for Syrian children rather than a “favor” (Mutlu et al. 2015) and that school staff needs further assistance to deal with the conflicts between pupils and provide a more peaceful schooling environment. Yet, given these harsh conditions, the very few Syrian children who manage to attend a non-selective public school, might face serious difficulties in accessing higher education.

Education after Compulsory School

The three European countries differ in when their compulsory school ends (either at age sixteen or eighteen), but they also differ in the rights and opportunities to continue studying. The Netherlands provides an extensive loan system for studying after compulsory schooling. The right to a study loan applies to all whose asylum request has been granted and have the official refugee status. For all others who do not have an official status yet the right to start a study ends at age eighteen. Who at age eighteen does not yet have the (temporary) resident permit granted with the refugee status cannot start a study in post-secondary or higher education. The process of obtaining this status takes up to one year or more, depending of the country of origin, after asking asylum. Many of the refugees that started late in the Dutch educational system are in a low-level one of two-year post-secondary vocational track, finishing it when they are around eighteen years old. If they did not obtain their status yet, they lose their right to further education. Even if in the near future they obtain the right to study again, this disrupts their studies and perspectives. Another potential obstacle is the Dutch system of study loans. Youngsters get a study loan when they attend post-secondary vocational training. By the time they finally can climb up from post-secondary vocational training to higher vocational education (four or five years later) their student loan credit is already mostly or completely used, meaning they can only continue their studies on their own resources. In practice, this means they have to work next to their studies which increases the chances of dropping out.

Students who want to study in higher education first have to complete four language courses to obtain a Dutch language certificate on the level of academic Dutch (B2). This means that on average students can start their studies only after two years or more (Ingleby and Kramer 2012, 266). Taking into consideration that much of the curriculum nowadays is in English, especially in Masters' programs, this seems an obstacle the students can do without.

In Germany compulsory school ends at age sixteen. For those who arrive later and do not have a high school diploma, possibilities are mostly offered in the field of vocational training. There are programs now in most Bundesländer to open more opportunities for these youngsters to be included in vocational education. The most problematic part here is to find enough internship and apprenticeship place in the private sector, since this practical part is an important element in the German so-called "dual system" of vocational training.

In Sweden compulsory education ends at age sixteen, but pupils that are still in upper-secondary school when they turn seventeen or eighteen do have the right to continue their education like regular students, even when they do not have a recognized asylum seekers status. This is important because especially unaccompanied minors often arrive between the age of fifteen and seventeen years old (Çelikaksoy and Wadensjö 2015, 14). Young adults arriving after the age of eighteen can attend general adult education or Swedish for Immigrants (FSI), classes for adults to learn basic Swedish.

Adult education is an important route to educational qualifications for students who arrived at a later age. In the Netherlands, this route is often used by students who are too old to thrive in common secondary education, but need a diploma from an academic track before they can enter higher education. Adult education is in the Netherlands quite marginal compared to mainstream education. Many refugee children and students are therefore not aware of the possibilities adult education could offer them. The big advantage is that in adult education they often are the somewhat younger student in class, instead of the much older one, and they meet people who are equally motivated to succeed.

Also in Germany there are plenty of possibilities and programs for adult education, including programs for attaining school qualifications and language certificates. The main problems in the German system are the lack of information and the costs. In the face of the refugee crisis, many institutions for adult education started to offer free courses at least at the basic level, but sometimes costs are also taken over by the government. Especially the state-owned *Volks-hochschulen* have played an important role in this – like they did before for immigrants and refugees of previous waves. Quite new has been the initiative of universities to offer free language courses to refugees (often organized by student organizations), to recognize voluntary help to refugees as internships, and to establish mechanisms for the recognition of foreign diploma's and school certificates.

In Sweden, adult education is a much more mainstream institution compared to the Netherlands and Germany. The awareness of this option is therefore much bigger. Also in the past, adult education was an important entrance into the educational system for migrants. Many first-generation Turkish and Yugoslavian migrants went to adult education to learn Swedish as a second language. Therefore, adult education in Sweden is now very much attuned to the needs of the new arrivals. A diploma of adult education can be used to enter higher education or a form of post-secondary education.

In our literature overview, we did not come across adult education opportunities for Syrians in Turkey, since the existing research concentrates mostly on the pressing situation of Syrian children's (lack of) education. Regarding higher education in Turkey, there are some provisions which allowed Syrian university students to enroll in seven higher education institutions near the Syrian border with a "special student" status. According to the Turkish Higher Education Institutions (YÖK) in the academic year 2014-2015, 3397 male and 2163 female Syrian students were enrolled in a higher education institution (Mutlu et al. 2016, 42). Widespread participation of Syrian university students in Turkish higher education is, however, not accomplished and these developments were merely seen as the first steps, despite hardships.

Conclusion and Discussion

The overview of the differences of these seven key institutional arrangements and their effects on school outcomes show a clear distinction between favorable and less favorable institutional arrangements. High quality continued second language instruction offered at all school levels - by properly trained teachers and using specifically developed teaching materials - is probably the most important institutional arrangement. Apart from this, accommodating access to all types of educational tracks (regardless of the age you enter education) is important. As we saw, in Germany and the Netherlands only vocational tracks are open to many refugee children. For the very young refugee children immediate open and free of costs pre-school arrangements are especially important. For refugees in the age category around the end of compulsory school, adult education - which also gives access to a pre-academic secondary school diploma's and thus to higher education - is especially important.

In a way the most difficult group to integrate into the educational system of the host country are the pupils arriving at the end of elementary school or during secondary education. This is the time when important tracking decisions are made. School systems characterized by early selection and a strong stratification seem to waste a lot of talent, because they direct the majority of those pupils to a vocational route. Because of second language problems these children are often streamed towards the lower end of the vocational training system - a track that hardly suits the majority of these students given their intellectual capacities. Also in comprehensive systems, such as in Turkey, the lack of second language training impedes children the full participation in the education system needed to realize their potential.

Important for the evaluation of the impact of different institutional arrangements is to see them in relation to each other. For instance, the, in comparison to Sweden, more poorly organized second language instruction in Germany and The Netherlands in relation to the early selection and tracking that results in an over-representation of refugee children in vocational tracks. These factors in combination create an accumulation of disadvantage. This also means that the good practice of Sweden to limit the time in immersion classes cannot be transplanted as such to Germany or The Netherlands. In Sweden, the transfer to regular education is combined with continued instruction in the second language. Since this is not offered in Germany and The Netherlands, children would be destined to fail when being transferred to regular classes too quickly.

It seems that across countries there is also an important difference *in vision* on what it takes to include newly arrived refugee children in education. In Sweden, the ambition is clearly stated to give refugee pupils an equal chance to reach school outcomes at par with children of native descent. This means that also for refugee children, of course depending on their intellectual capacities, the aim should be to reach higher education.

In Germany and the Netherlands, the aim seems much more limited and short term. Most policy measure are aimed at, and limited to, the transition or immersion phase. The fact that due to how things are organized within the school systems most refugee students end up in the (lowest) vocational tracks seems more or less accepted as a given. In Germany there is, however, a hopeful recent development to also accommodate refugee children in immersion classes in Gymnasium schools.

In Turkey, an excruciating two thirds of the refugee children do not participate in education. Among those who do, the majority attends temporary education centers where they follow a Syrian curriculum. This shows that Turkey does not yet wish to see the refugees and their children as long-term inhabitants who must be enabled to build a future. Among the 780.000 Syrian refugee children, only around 36.000 attend public schools. The studies from these public schools show that education is seen more like “favor” to these children, rather than having the aim to provide them with equal chances to participate in education.

The Swedish example, although not perfect in itself, shows that support has to be given throughout the school career. The clearest example being second language instruction. Sweden has formulated ambitions on second language learning in the standard curriculum, starting at pre-school and continuing all the way up to the end of upper-secondary school and

even into adult education. In the Netherlands and Germany, the ambitions are much more limited, giving only a limited amount of additional training in pre-school or elementary school or during the immersion or introduction year in secondary school. However, to learn a language on an academic level, one or two years of additional instruction are usually not enough.

To expect that governments would fundamentally change their school systems in place because of this relatively small group of pupils is of course unrealistic. Both in Germany and the Netherlands alternative scenarios have to be developed to accommodate this particular group. Adult education could, for instance, play a much more prominent role in preparing talented students for high school exams. In post-secondary vocational education shorter and faster routes could be offered to accommodate students that have the ambition to continue into higher education. Pre-school education should be made available for the very youngest group (0-4) of refugee children immediately, regardless of their status, so that they are already fluent in Dutch or German before entering elementary school. Secondary schools should be offered the opportunity to extend the time to give additional second language instruction to bring it up to the level of academic Dutch or German. These measures can be taken with some of the good practice from Sweden in mind.

A last observation is that in Sweden more researchers than in Germany or The Netherlands seem to be working on the topic of refugee children in education, and they are also more critical about the specific educational policies developed in Sweden than their German and Dutch peers. Swedish researchers critique, for instance, the issue of segregation of refugee children or the fact that not all pupils who have the right to mother tongue teaching receive it (See for instance Nilsson and Bunar 2016). The irony is that in Germany and The Netherlands mother tongue teaching is simply unavailable and therefore also mostly remains undiscussed in research. In Germany and The Netherlands refugee children are far more often segregated from regular pupils and for a much longer period than in Sweden but researchers seem far less critical about it than in Sweden. What is considered normal in a country's policy, also seems to extent to what researchers find normal. In Turkey, the studies we were able to find on Syrian children were critical towards the government. These studies did acknowledge the difficulty to accommodate the sheer number of Syrian refugee children, nevertheless they also critique the gaps and provided concrete policy suggestions to improve the schooling situation. By comparing the four countries in detail both the gaps and successful interventions become apparent. This is precisely why comparisons across countries are so valuable.

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