

YOUNG REFUGEES' PATHWAYS IN(TO) EDUCATION

Teacher and student voices:
challenges, opportunities and dilemmas

Brit Lynnebakke, Lutine de Wal Pastoor & Ketil Eide

Brit Lynnebakke, PhD candidate
Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress
Studies
Oslo, Norway

Lutine de Wal Pastoor, PhD
Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress
Studies
Oslo, Norway
&
Danish Research Centre for Migration, Ethnicity and
Health (MESU), Department of Public Health, Univer-
sity of Copenhagen, Denmark

Ketil Eide, PhD
University of South-Eastern Norway
Porsgrunn, Norway

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Executive summary

This report addresses the findings of the qualitative research project Educational and psychosocial transitions encountered by young refugees upon resettlement in Norway (TURIN). The TURIN project is a substudy (3a) of the Nordic research project 'Coming of Age in Exile' (CAGE) (2015–2020) and has been conducted by researchers from the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) and the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN).

In the study, the term 'young refugees' refers to all young people with a refugee background, i.e. young people who were granted a residence permit on protection or humanitarian grounds as well as those who were family reunified to a refugee.

The study The TURIN study applied a qualitative, ethnographically oriented approach, based on semi-structured interviews and observations in five upper secondary schools in four municipalities in Norway. The researchers conducted interviews with 47 young refugees as well as 46 teachers and other school staff members. Additionally, the study involves studies of national education and integration policy documents.

Background and purpose

The TURIN study's main aim is to gain more knowledge about what may

promote or inhibit young refugees' successful educational and psychosocial transitions in the early resettlement period. Experiences during resettlement can be crucial for young refugees' long-term education and mental health outcomes. Most of the interviewed young refugees are *late arrivals*, i.e. teenagers who arrive in the new country aged between 14 and 17. Late arrivals often deal with critical educational challenges, since they must learn a new language and complete school within a few years. This can be particularly challenging for students with little or disrupted formal education from the country of origin. Additionally, previous research shows that the various psychosocial challenges late arrivals face can negatively affect their educational outcomes (including dropout). This, in turn, can negatively affect their later work opportunities.

In addition to the educational and psychosocial challenges (e.g. disrupted social bonds) that many late arrivals encounter regardless of their migration background, many young refugees have had difficult and potentially traumatizing experiences before and during their flight. Moreover, they often have worries about family members who still live in unstable conflict areas. It is well documented that pre-migration/flight/post-migration stressors increase vulnerability to psychological distress. Experiences after migration are crucial for mental

health outcomes. Several studies have found that post-migration stressors are just as strong, or even stronger, predictors of mental health outcomes as pre-migration traumatic experiences. For refugee children and youth, school is a central everyday arena that can have a stabilizing function. Schools may support young refugees' psychological well-being if they experience it as a setting for mastery, future hope and positive social relations.

We argue that young refugees' initial period of resettlement may be marked not only by numerous challenges but also by optimism and future hope since they commonly experience more stability and opportunities to plan and influence their future compared to the unpredictability and turbulence many experienced during prolonged periods in war-affected countries, during flight and as asylum seekers.

The TURIN study adds knowledge to the broader field of minority language youth and education through its focus on migration category, i.e. refugees. Extensive research has studied how variations in immigrant/descendant youth's educational experiences and outcomes reflect country background and socio-economic background. We argue that it is also necessary to address how migration background, i.e. in this case refugee background, may influence educational experiences and outcomes.

Educational transitions – central issues

Central issues emerging from the findings concerning educational transitions, are challenges related to motivation and mastery, time spent on education, the preparatory class, language-related issues and teachers' diversity/refugee competence.

Motivation. Both school staff and student accounts indicate that many young refugees are highly motivated to succeed in school. Students tend to express high motivation levels regardless of the educational levels they aspire to. Moreover, students describe how hard they work to reach their goals. Several describe the extra time they put into schoolwork because of Norwegian language challenges. School staff state that over time, it can be challenging to sustain many newly arrived students' high motivation. Motivation can wane when language and school are more difficult than first expected. Moreover, teachers can find that it is difficult to support motivation in both the longer and shorter term, as they need to both encourage students' current work and prepare them for future educational and work-life demands.

Time. Some young refugees want to complete school as soon as possible in order to start working. This can be driven by goals of economic independence and/or wanting to provide economic assistance to family members (in Norway or abroad). Some students choose a vocational track so that they can start working sooner. This choice

can be part of a long-term strategy, as some students report that they plan to later qualify for and pursue higher education whilst earning money in a trained vocation.

Occasionally, teachers and other school staff advise students to spend an extra year on their education when individual students struggle a lot with learning Norwegian and/or have limited previous education. This advice can clash with students' urgency to move forward and complete their education. In addition to economic reasons, young refugees may resist extended tracks because of a need for social continuity and/or because of associating extended tracks with a sense of shame and failure. Some school staff have had positive experiences with reducing such feelings of shame and failure through explaining that the extended time option is a part of the right to individually adapted education in Norway, and by highlighting to these students what they *have* achieved over a short time.

The preparatory class. The preparatory classes are introductory provisions at upper secondary schools that prepare recently arrived students for the transition to regular upper secondary classes. There can be large heterogeneity in the preparatory class students' prior education and Norwegian language proficiency, which can entail a substantial challenge for teachers in providing individually adapted education. In the studied schools, students report different levels of educational contentment with the preparatory class. In some schools,

many say they are very content with the educational content, whereas in other schools a few students express strong educational discontent. These differences seem to reflect the different levels of teacher competence in teaching minority language students in the schools under study. Another finding is that the preparatory class can be an arena for extended vocational guidance for newly arrived students. Moreover, the class can be a potential arena for conveying Norwegian school culture and school expectations more explicitly.

In regard to social aspects, the preparatory class seems to provide a sense of belonging in several of the studied schools. School staff and students report good social relations that criss-cross country backgrounds and migration categories. A few preparatory class students are negative about attending a different class from majority Norwegians because they want more contact with them. School staff tend to underscore the educational needs for the preparatory class; however, some reflect on teacher-initiated efforts to increase contact between regular and preparatory class students outside the classroom. These efforts have produced mixed results; in some cases, teachers describe awkward, forced interactions.

Language. The findings confirm the importance of time and patience for mastering a new language. Also, students who describe the school subject levels as manageable due to their prior education say that because of the new language they often spend much

more time than they usually would have done on their schoolwork. Some students and school staff elaborate on language-related challenges in social interactions. Students describe different reactions to language challenges. These differences can reflect different time stages in the resettlement experience, personality differences, and differences in past and present resources (e.g. educational levels and school support).

Another language finding is that prior knowledge of English can be beneficial for newly arrived students. In addition to the obvious benefit when attending English classes, it can be beneficial because of previous experience with learning a new language and/or because these students can occasionally get words translated.

In one of the schools, newly arrived students were language tested at the beginning of year two in upper secondary school. Students express strong negative reactions to taking the test and how it is administered. They see the test as an 'intellectual attack' and oppose it because they do not want to risk repeating the previous school year.

In another of the case schools, the library has been strengthened to provide additional educational support, especially for minority language students. Moreover, the library is located centrally in the building and has IT and psychosocial staff services located close to it; hence, the library can contribute both to psychosocial and educational support.

Teachers' professional competence and school diversity. Teachers and other staff in some of the schools report confidence regarding working with newly arrived young refugees based on both their formal competence and the school's long experience with student diversity. However, in other schools the staff report they lack the necessary competence and experience, and feel rather uncertain in how to deal with newly arrived students.

Psychosocial transitions – central issues

The findings on psychosocial transitions highlight the impact of refugee students' mental health and social relationships on their well-being and functioning in school and outside of school.

Family. Many young refugees report that their families contribute to sustaining their motivation for schoolwork and for completing their education. In contrast to previous research on young immigrants, it is not a strong theme in the student interviews that they are cultural brokers and interpreters for their families. However, a few school staff members comment that they sometimes find that newly arrived students can be absent from school because of family commitments, for example because they follow family members to public offices.

Several unaccompanied refugee minors report that it has been very difficult not having their family around them to guide and support them in

everyday life in a new country. Furthermore, they share feelings of grief and talk about worries about their family's situation abroad.

Peer relations. A central finding in several of the schools is that language minority students often have good social relations across different migration categories and country backgrounds. There may be several reasons for this, including cultural differences and identification because of having experienced migration. Relatedly, teachers and students comment that recently arrived students sometimes have a sense of belonging in schools with a certain level of ethnic, religious and other forms of diversity and prefer these schools for this reason.

As regards majority Norwegians, many refugee students report that they have little interaction and few friendships with them, and that they miss this. Some emphasise that this is negative for their Norwegian language development and social and cultural integration in Norway.

Mental health. It is likely that the reported worries about family members abroad and a sense of loss and grief negatively contribute to students' psychological health. However, few of the student interviewees report current psychological distress to the extent of it negatively inhibiting their everyday functioning through, for example, school absence or concentration problems. One possible reason is that many have some level of social support in-

side and outside school. Several students report that they after arriving in Norway had experienced mental health problems, for example before being granted residence, and that they previously received help from mental health professionals.

Several school staff members underscore the increase in mental health challenges among all young people in Norway today, and some underline that other students may also have experienced traumatic events. Some of the interviewed teachers comment on a general connection between psychological distress and school absence levels, i.e. referring to all students at school. School staff do not report that young refugees have higher absence rates than other students.

School staff interviewees tend to focus more on educational than psychosocial issues when commenting on young refugees' challenges in school. Several teachers acknowledge the school's role in promoting (young refugees') psychological well-being. However, one recurring teacher statement is that the school is an educational, and not a care, institution. Furthermore, the findings illustrate individual differences among teachers in how they interpret psychosocial aspects of their role. The findings also highlight that non-teacher professions inside and outside school (e.g. school social workers) can have an important additional psychosocial role to teachers.

Dual awareness. Some school staff members report that they want more

knowledge on trauma and on how to build good social relations with refugee background students. At the same time, several of the same staff members underscore that it is important to see young refugees as individuals and not as a category with shared characteristics. These interviewees seem to seek a balance between an aim of being aware of group-level challenges and an aim of not pigeonholing.

General discussion

The TURIN interviews focus on refugee students' and school staff's individual experiences, i.e. the micro level. However, the findings draw attention to how macro-level conditions (e.g. school policy and teacher demands) influence these experiences, which we also bring into the discussion below.

Resources, challenges and opportunities. The first part of the discussion highlights challenges, resources and opportunities for schools, school staff and young refugees.

- *When a year is not enough*
In some cases, newly arrived students might benefit from spending extended time at upper secondary school, which often stands in conflict with the urgency many young refugees can experience to complete school as soon as possible. Schools may to some extent mitigate a sense of failure through conversations on why an extra school year can be a good investment. Furthermore, schools can invite
- *Motivation affects outcomes, but it is not enough*
Young refugees' often high motivation to succeed is an important resource when resettling in a new country. Previous research suggests that high motivation to some extent can decrease educational inequities, but it has also been found that educational policies and a supportive environment are decisive factors concerning school outcomes.
- *The importance of teachers' and schools' formal competence*
The findings underscore the need for formal teacher competence in teaching of and in a second language and that schools need to have adequate routines and knowledge on language assessment. If not, it can affect the educational experiences (including motivation) of students and increase a risk of a sense of failure and stigma.
- *Benefits of school diversity*
The findings suggest that having a long experience of school diversity can be an additional asset for

schools that work with young refugees. At best, this may contribute to a practical know-how and reduce social distance to newly arrived students. The findings also indicate that school diversity can contribute to newly arrived students' sense of belonging. This should also be seen within the context of the social distance young refugees often experience from majority Norwegians.

- *Potential of the preparatory classes*
We discuss social pros and cons of the preparatory class provision. The main pattern in the findings is that there are many positive aspects of attending the preparatory class. In addition to educational benefits (assuming that the teachers are well qualified), the class can provide a sense of belonging in a new country while learning the Norwegian language. We argue that schools should systematically utilise the potential of the preparatory class as an arena for extended vocational guidance and more explicit knowledge on Norwegian school culture.
- *Combination classes as a positive alternative*
TURIN has studied schools with preparatory classes, not combination classes as the schools under study not (yet) offered this rather new alternative introductory provision. However, several of the TURIN findings support that combination classes seem to be a fruitful

way forward. Teachers in the TURIN study report challenges related to the large heterogeneity in the preparatory classes. The combination class provision entails strengthened individually adapted education pathways that reflect students' educational progress and levels, which can also be positive for many young refugees who are eager to move forward in the educational system. Additionally, participating in regular classes means more shared arenas with majority students.

- *Schools should have arenas that facilitate social contact with majority students*
Schools should consider how to create arenas that promote contact and joint interaction between majority students and newly arrived students (including preparatory class students), preferably in settings where varying language proficiency matters less. Examples of possible activities include sports activities, board games, cooking and music in designated activity rooms, for example during midday breaks. Schools and school policy makers can also consider shared art and physical education classes for preparatory and regular class students.
- *Further research on the views and experiences of majority students*
To obtain increased knowledge on social dynamics between newly arrived students and majority stu-

dents, further research can also investigate the experiences and views of majority students on these encounters – or the lack thereof.

Dilemmas. The second main part of the discussion outlines three central dilemmas drawn from the findings that school staff can encounter in their work to support young refugees' educational and psychosocial transitions. As inclusive education researchers point out, dilemmas entail the coexistence of conflicting demands. There is not a standard suitable way of solving a dilemma. This does not mean that dilemmas cannot be met through concrete measures, but that measures need to be implemented whilst considering both the individual and the wider institutional and sociocultural context.

Dilemma 1: Seeing the individual and group-level challenges

At first sight, it may seem inconsistent that some of the same school staff individuals stress individuality and heterogeneity within the enormous 'refugee' category, whilst they also state that they would like the school to have more knowledge on refugees. However, this duality can be conceived as an asset, as these staff members seem to actively relate to what inclusive education researchers call 'the dilemma of difference'. In the worst case, recognising and emphasising difference can come with a risk of stigma. On the other hand, refugees have distinct challenges on a group level that may negatively affect their

educational experiences and outcomes. From a policy perspective, it is crucial to focus on group needs in order to ensure adequate educational and psychosocial provisions that level out educational inequities for late arrivals through targeted measures. For practitioners and researchers, the dual gaze should be present in order to avoid stereotyping and one-dimensional approaches.

One way that schools can facilitate teachers getting to know young refugee students individually is by ensuring that preparatory classes are not too large.

Further research on young refugees and education can benefit from a fine-grained analysis of different subcategories, addressing, for example, the impact of previous education, experienced trauma, length of residency and intersectionality on post-migration education experiences and outcomes.

Dilemma 2: Sustaining motivation vs preparing for future demands

Teachers can face a challenge in sustaining newly arrived students' often high motivation levels in the shorter term whilst they must also prepare them for future educational and work-life demands.

The dilemma cannot be solved once and for all. However, we put forward some initiatives and measures that schools and school policies can consider.

- Preparatory class teachers can give individual students oral or written feedback on assignments, meant to both encourage and point out areas for improvement in a pedagogical way.
- Schools can convey explicit knowledge on the school culture (including teacher expectations and assessment procedures) and provide extended vocational and educational guidance in admission conversations, the preparatory class and through an extended use of school advisors. This is important for making well-informed educational choices and for long-term motivation.
- Schools can systematically ensure that school staff inform newly arrived students about vilbli.no, a website that provides information in numerous languages on different upper secondary tracks.

Dilemma 3: Balancing educational and psychosocial demands

In their statements, teachers in the TURIN study take for granted the psychosocial/educational link and their responsibility in providing a good psychosocial learning environment. However, the interviewed teachers underline that psychosocial measures within the school can only *to some extent* attend to the needs of students who undergo severe distress. Previous research has pointed out that teachers in Norway deal with two recent trends in education policies that have contradictory implications: 1) in

Norway, as in and other western countries, schools and teachers face more pressure due to 'school accountability regimes', i.e. schools becoming accountable to the educational authorities for their students' achievements; 2) the teacher role is increasingly conceived as a care profession. Additionally, and partly reflecting the latter demands, teachers are often under strong time pressure.

We acknowledge this tension and dilemma, but comment on some approaches that schools may consider to address these conflicting demands:

- The psychosocial aspects of the teacher role are crucial. However, (refugee) students' psychosocial needs should also be supported by strengthening or maintaining the presence of other occupations at the schools – such as school health nurses and social workers who have regular, and sometimes less formal, contact with students.
- Innovative solutions can be sought that are aimed at maximising and strengthening current school occupations, as suggested by the school with a stronger emphasis on the library's role.
- Schools can offer students psychoeducation. Additionally, preventive school-based group interventions with a less individual focus may be a good option.

Concluding remarks

With large numbers of young people and children on the move, schools may expect highly diverse groups of students and, among these, many from refugee backgrounds. Teaching refugee students is already part of many Norwegian teachers' everyday reality in the classroom. Schools should be allocated the necessary resources to strengthen teachers' and other staff members' competence and availability for newly arrived students. Refugee-competent schools can make a decisive difference to young refugees who need to find their way in(to) Norwegian schools and the wider society – to the benefit of both Norwegian society and young refugees themselves.

1. Introduction

'Educational and psychosocial transitions encountered by young refugees upon resettlement in Norway'¹ (TURIN) is a qualitative study aimed at gaining greater knowledge about the educational and psychosocial transitions that refugee young people encounter upon resettlement in Norway and how the transitions are dealt with – by themselves, the people around them, teachers, schools and educational authorities. TURIN is a substudy of the Nordic research project 'Coming of Age in Exile' (CAGE, 2015–2020), funded by NordForsk, which aims to investigate how socio-economic and health inequities develop during the formative years in young refugees, and how they relate to each other and to key areas of welfare policy like health services, education, employment and housing in a cross-country comparison framework.

After having been granted residence in Norway, young refugees – either accompanied by family or unaccompanied – are resettled in a municipality. During the early stages of resettlement, while adjusting to their new environment, young refugees face several critical transitions. Three salient transitions that may facilitate or impede successful resettlement are processes of socialisation, i.e. the development from childhood to adulthood, social and cultural integration in a new society, and rehabilitation, i.e.

the (re)construction of a meaningful life after potentially traumatising pre-migration events as well as exile-related stress (Pastoor, 2017). Resettling young refugees may deal with these transitions at different speeds, depending on their personalities, previous experiences and current circumstances (Kohli, 2007).

For young refugees, the developmental tasks of adolescence may become more difficult due to the often traumatic and stressful nature of 'the refugee experience',² even after they have resettled in a new country (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012; Pastoor, 2015). The developmental and psychosocial transitions may not only bring about mental growth, psychosocial adjustment and well-being but may also lead to increased vulnerability, risk of maladjustment and marginalisation as well as school dropout (Pastoor, 2015, 2017).

Schools play a central role in supporting newcomer refugee students through the challenges related to educational as well as social and emotional adjustment (Bennouna et al., 2019; Pastoor, 2015). Adequate education and support during the initial years of resettlement, along with young refugees' strong commitment to succeed, appear to be decisive factors for school success, psychosocial well-being and long-term adjustment (Eide & Hjern, 2013; Hamilton &

¹In short referred to as 'Transitions upon Resettlement in Norway' (TURIN).

² We acknowledge the large heterogeneity of experiences and subcategories within the refugee category.

Moore, 2003; E. Montgomery, 2011).

Many of the refugee students interviewed in the TURIN study come under the definition of late arrivals, i.e. teenagers that arrive in the new country of residence between the ages of 14 and 17 (Huddleston & Wolffhardt, 2016). As the OECD's PISA results show, 'age at arrival' implies distinct educational challenges that may negatively affect educational outcomes since late-arriving newcomers must adapt to, and complete, lower and upper secondary school in the new country in the course of a few years. During this short time, they must learn a new language, catch up in the country's education system and, eventually, also choose an appropriate school programme with respect to post-secondary opportunities. All this can be particularly challenging for those who have no or little formal education from the country of origin. In light of these challenges, it has been called for that late arrivals are provided with adequate additional support to get the opportunity to catch up on the language and school competences they need to succeed in school (Huddleston & Wolffhardt, 2016, p. 27). A supportive school environment and the quality of teaching are important factors in improving newcomers' learning outcomes. Even though newcomers, especially late arrivals, initially may underperform academically, their educational performance improves significantly over time when receiving adequate support (UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, 2019).

In Norway, minority young people

who have immigrated themselves, like the refugee young people in the TURIN study, have a significantly lower completion rate in upper secondary education than Norwegian-born youth with minority or majority parents (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2010; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2016a). It is important to gain a deeper understanding of why many young refugees who initially show high motivation and determination to succeed in school (Pastoor, 2015; UNHCR et al., 2019) may eventually fail to complete upper secondary school, and to explore how resettling refugee young people can be supported to reach their full potential in school.

1.1 The study

The TURIN study adopted a qualitative, ethnographically oriented approach, based on semi-structured interviews and participant observation in five upper secondary schools in four municipalities in Norway. The study comprises individual interviews with 47 young refugees as well as individual interviews and a few group interviews with 46 teachers and other school staff. Furthermore, the study involves studies of national education and integration policy documents.

TURIN's data collection has been carried out in collaboration between the research teams from the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) and the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN).

1.2 Aims and research question

The TURIN study's *primary aim* is to gain new and better insight into what may promote or inhibit young refugees' successful educational and psychosocial transitions in the initial, often crucial, stages of resettlement.

Thus, the *main research question* of the TURIN study is: which factors may facilitate or impede resettling young refugees' development, learning and psychosocial well-being in school and beyond?

The study's subsidiary aims:

- To acquire more knowledge about the educational and psychosocial transitions refugee young people face upon resettlement, and what the challenges associated with these transitions mean for their functioning in everyday life in general and in school in particular
- To increase understanding of young refugees' resettlement based on their *own* experiences – what they themselves perceive as decisive factors for school success and psychosocial well-being
- To examine the role of teachers, school staff and schools in promoting young refugees' development, learning and psychosocial well-being.
- To gain better insight into national educational policies and municipal practices concerning educational provisions and psychosocial follow-up of recently resettled refugee students

The TURIN study is of an explorative character, which facilitates bringing about new research questions to be further investigated in the present study as well as in future follow-up studies. Furthermore, the study allows comparison and contextualisation of findings from other CAGE studies, such as the comparative analysis of Nordic education policies (Tørslev & Børsch, 2017) and the comparative register studies on education outcomes among migrant children and young people in the Nordic countries (CAGE, forthcoming)

1.3 Terms and concepts

Young refugees

The term 'young refugees' refers to all young people with a refugee background, i.e. young people who were granted a residence permit on protection or humanitarian grounds as well as those who were family reunified to a refugee.

Throughout the report, the young refugees under study (aged 16–24) may be interchangeably referred to as 'young refugees', 'refugee young people', 'refugee youth' and 'refugee students'. In this regard, it needs to be emphasised that young refugees are a very heterogeneous category of young people that varies widely in terms of educational and psychosocial needs and resources.

Newly arrived students

Upon entering the educational system, refugee young people may be labelled with one or a variety of concepts (Bunar, 2019), such as newly arrived, recently arrived, newcomers, migrant students, (language) minority students or language minorities with short residency.

In Norway, the Ministry of Education stated in Prop. 84 L (2011–2012) who should be considered as 'new arrivals' as regards the Education Act. The Ministry thinks that the concept of new arrivals should not be fixed in time, but that it in itself implies a certain delimitation of time. The municipalities/counties themselves should consider whether a pupil is in need of an introductory provision (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2012).

Newly arrived students have rarely been a distinctive category, neither in education studies nor in education policies. However, lately, attention has been drawn to newly arrived migrant students as being a new target group in international research and policy-making (European Commission 2013, 2015):

Newly arrived migrant students (further – NAMS) are a new target group that has not yet been explicitly identified and defined within EU policy-making and that of many European countries. NAMS are included in some of the large scale survey samples (PISA, Thomas and Collier's), but they are not always differentiated from the

native born second generation immigrants. Often they are put into a broader category of "students with migrant background". Although NAMS do share some characteristics with second-generation immigrant children and may encounter some of the same challenges at school, in many ways they are in a more precarious situation. (European Commission, 2013)

Countries identifying newly arrived students as a separate target group often do so in their language support initiatives (European Commission 2013).

Introductory class vs. preparatory class

For language minority students who have recently arrived in Norway, the educational authorities may organise special educational facilities in separate groups, classes or schools. These introductory provisions apply to primary, lower and upper secondary education (see Chapter 3 – The Norwegian Educational Context).

Internationally, the 'separate class' model is one of the most widely applied educational provisions, as reported in the literature about newly arrived minority students (Bunar, 2019). These classes are referred to as introductory, preparatory, welcoming, pull-out, international, etc. In this report, we use the terms introductory classes for classes preparing newcomers for primary or lower secondary education, and preparatory classes for introductory provisions at upper secondary schools that prepare recently

arrived minority students for the transition to regular upper secondary education.

Resettlement

Initially, the term 'resettlement' was confined to the relocation of UNHCR-designated 'quota refugees'. In this report, the term refers to all people who were forced to move and settled in another country that granted them a residence permit, either based on a need for protection or on humanitarian grounds. Moreover, the term 'resettlement captures the complex transitions necessary for people 'to adjust to life in a new land' (Wade, Mitchell & Baylis, p. 3). In this report, we particularly focus on the educational and psychosocial transitions resettling young refugees face when adjusting to a new school system and a new life in Norway.

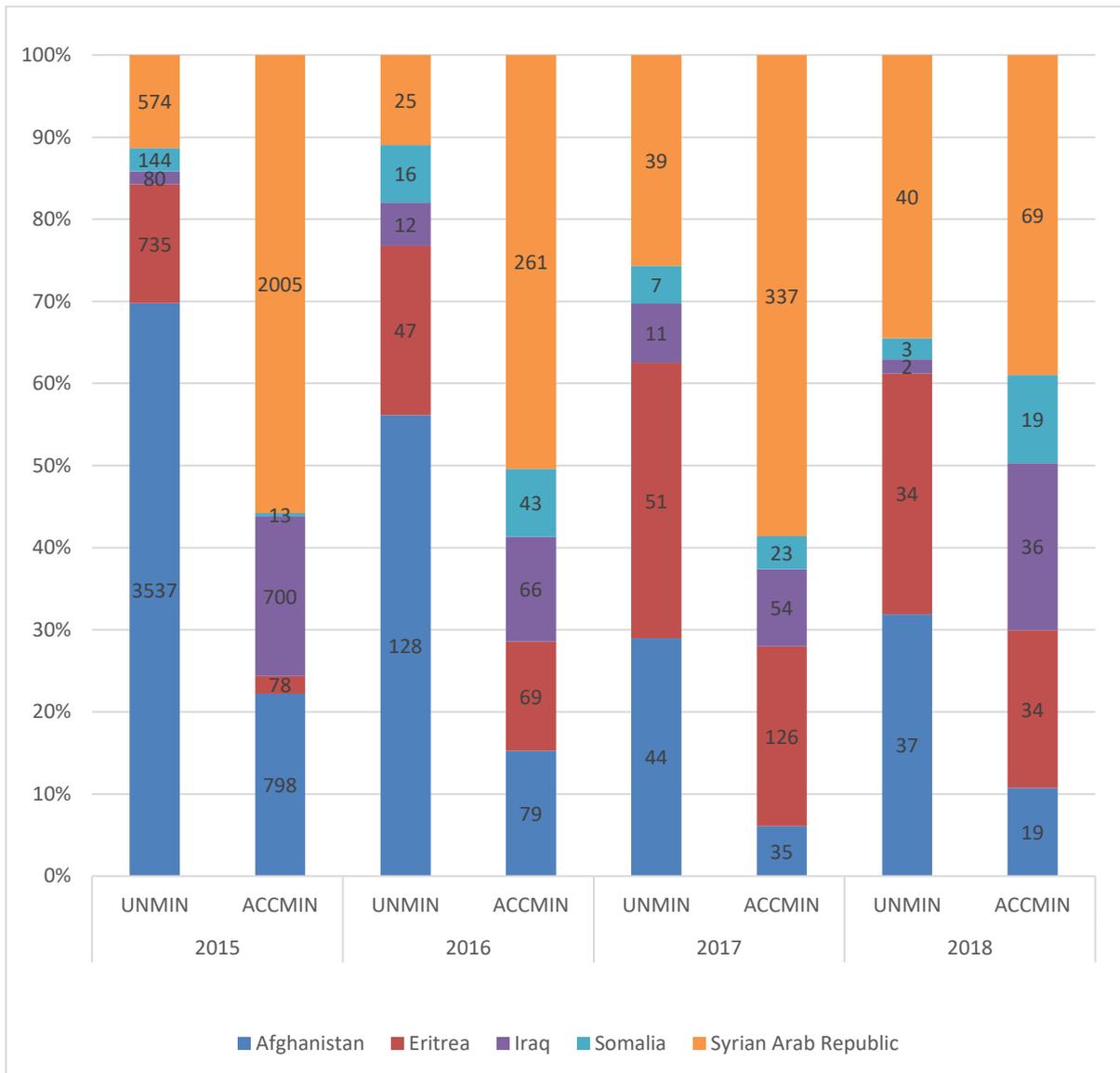
1.4 The structure of the report

The remaining part of the introduction section outlines the Norwegian immigration and education context, previous research findings and the TURIN study's theoretical framework. From there, we proceed to the methods section. The findings section addresses educational and psychosocial transitions. In the general discussion, we address challenges, resources and opportunities for the schools and refugee students, followed by three dilemmas that school staff often have to relate to. In the discussion, we also suggest some initiatives/measures schools and school policy can consider based on the findings. The report ends with some concluding remarks.

2. The Norwegian immigration context

Refugee children and youth constitute a large proportion of all refugees arriving and resettled in Europe every year (Eurostat, 2017; UNHCR, 2015), including in the Nordic countries. In 2015, more than 9,000 asylum-seek-

ing children and youth arrived in Norway (Figure 2.1.), and numbers of arrivals were likewise high in other European countries due to what was referred to as 'the European refugee crisis'. Since then, the number of arrivals has decreased.



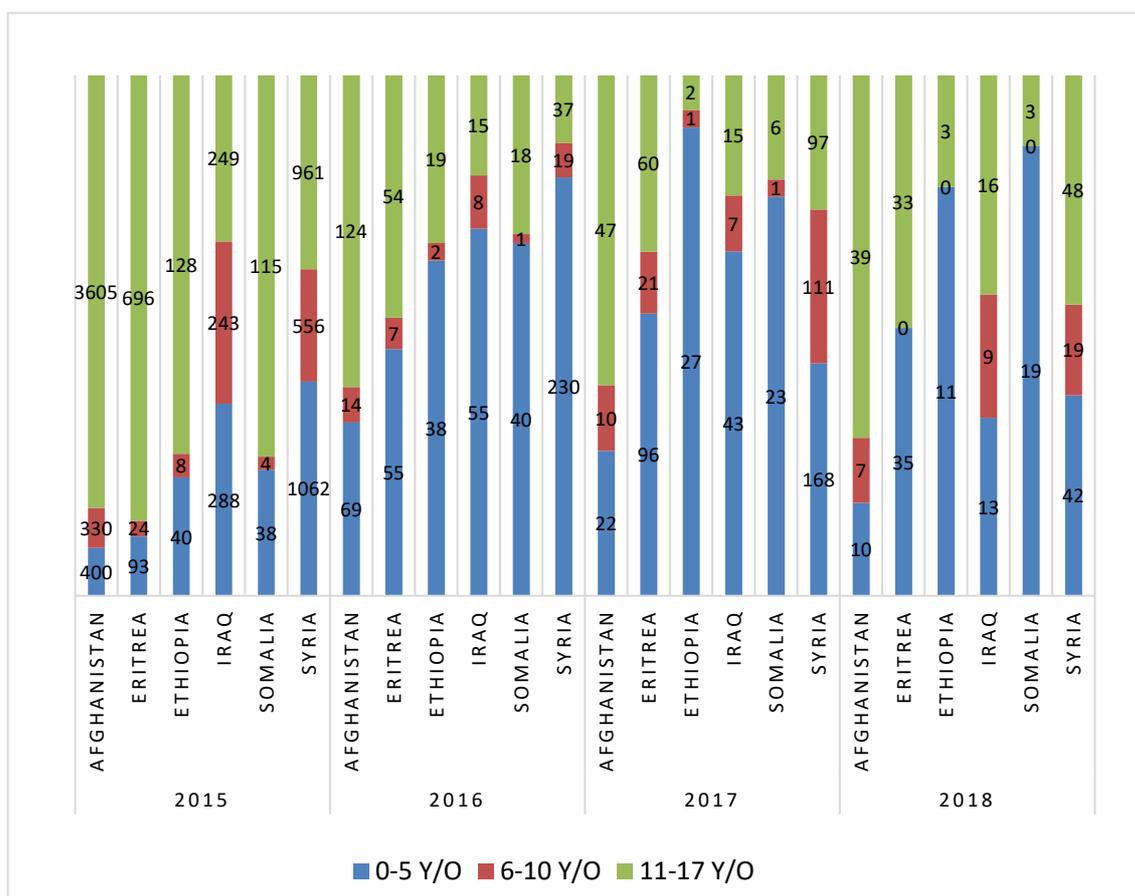
(Source: UDI 2019) (UNMIN = Unaccompanied Minors; ACCMIN = Accompanied Minors)

Figure 2.1. Numbers of asylum-seeking children and youth in Norway by year of arrival, citizenship and status (accompanied and unaccompanied).

The bar chart illustrates the number of young asylum seekers (< 18 years old) who arrived in Norway during the period 2015–2018 based on citizenship and status (accompanied vs unaccompanied).³ There was a substantial drop in the number of young asylum seekers between the years 2015 and 2016 for both the accompanied and unaccompanied category, as well as a change in their distribution based on citizenship. Afghanistan saw the highest number of unaccompanied minors in 2015 (n = 3,537), while Syria had the highest number of accompanied

asylum-seeking minors (n = 2,005). Since 2015, the number of young asylum seekers has decreased substantially.

Figure 2.2. illustrates the number of asylum seekers in Norway based on citizenship and age group from 2015 to 2018.⁴ Asylum seekers from Afghanistan aged 11–17 made up a sizable portion of asylum applications for the age group (n = 3,605) in 2015, while asylum seekers from Syria had the largest share of applications for the 0–5 age group (n = 1,062).



(Source: UDI 2019)

Figure 2.2. Young asylum seekers by year of arrival, citizenship and age group.

³³ See absolute numbers and detailed UDI references in Appendix 1.

⁴ See Appendix 1 for absolute numbers and detailed UDI references.

3. The Norwegian education context

3.1 The Norwegian education system

As part of a wide-ranging educational reform in 1997, *Reform 97*, compulsory education in Norway was extended to 10 years (from the age of 6 to 16). The 10-year compulsory school, called *grunnskolen* (meaning 'basic education'), is founded on the principle of a unified school system, providing free, equitable and individually adapted tuition to all students on the basis of a national curriculum (Tørslev & Børsch, 2017). Compulsory education comprises two main stages: primary education (grades 1–7) and lower secondary education (grades 8–10). In Norway, there is no formal tracking during the compulsory school years. Upon finishing lower secondary school, students have a right to upper secondary school, which nearly all students make use of.

Upper secondary education consists of a variety of general study programmes (5) lasting three years and vocational study programmes (10) lasting four years in total (including two years of apprenticeship training). In Norway, as in other Nordic countries, immigrant students choose vocational study programmes more often than non-immigrant students do (Tørslev & Børsch, 2017). The most popular vocational study programme at Vg1 level (year 1) is Healthcare,

Childhood and Youth Development, which is chosen by almost one in four vocational students (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2016a).

After having completed the vocational study programme, students who want to qualify for university admission have the right to one more year of the supplementary general study programme.

Adapted education and special needs education

Inclusive education is a fundamental principle in Norwegian education. In order to be inclusive, schools must organise and adapt their tuition to all students. Under the Norwegian Education Act (1998 §1-3), all education and training – throughout primary and secondary education – must be adapted to each student's abilities, qualifications and personal circumstances.

All students, and especially students with a refugee background, have different starting points and needs in education. Section 1–3 of the Education Act states that the training must be adapted to the abilities and prerequisites of the individual student. This means that the school is obliged to adapt the education so that each student can have a satisfactory learning outcome from the teaching. Adapted education is not a goal but a tool for

learning. Adapting the education to the individual student may involve varied use of relevant teaching materials, as well as different ways of working with the subject matter. There is a need for teaching aids specially adapted to newly arrived students who participate in preparatory classes (Rambøll, 2013). Students who do not benefit or cannot benefit from regular education are entitled to *special education* (also known as 'special needs education'), either within a regular course of study or within an adapted or alternative course of study.

Before a decision can be made that a pupil is to receive special needs education, the school will usually assess and, if relevant, try out measures that allow the pupil to benefit from the regular teaching.⁵ Before students can receive special education, there must be an expert assessment from the Educational Psychological Services, and an individual teaching plan (*individuell opplæringsplan*, IOP) has to be developed. The IOP has to show what objectives have been set for the teaching and how these objectives may be reached. When a student needs special education, the right to upper secondary education and training can be extended.⁶

Adapted language education for students from language minorities

The principle of adapted education, which is central to Norwegian education policies, also implies adapted language education for students from language minorities:

Students attending primary and lower as well as upper secondary school who have a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sami have the right to adapted education in Norwegian until they are sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to follow the normal instruction of the school. If necessary, such pupils are also entitled to mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching or both. (Norwegian Education Act, Sections 2–8 and 3–12)

In order to enable adapted language education in primary as well as in secondary education and training, two level-based curricula have been developed: 'Basic Norwegian for language minorities'⁷ and 'Mother tongue for language minorities'.

The target group of students in need of adapted language education is today more complex than before (Rambøll, 2016). A student category that has received more attention recently is the category of 'late arrivals', i.e. minority young people who came

⁵ This does not apply if it is obvious that the pupil will not benefit from such measures.

⁶ <https://www.vilbli.no/en/en/no/right-to-extended-teaching-training-period/a/029102>

⁷ In 2007, the level-based curriculum replaced the 'Norwegian as a second language' curriculum, which was based on age.

to Norway late in their teens and often have limited or interrupted formal education (Rambøll, 2013; Svendsen, Berg, Paulsen, Garvik, & Valenta, 2018). These young people often face major challenges when, after a relatively short period of residency in Norway (*kort botid*), they enter upper secondary education.

3.2 Increasing attention to the growing number of 'newly arrived'

As mentioned in the introduction, attention has recently been drawn to newly arrived migrant students as being a new target group in European countries' policymaking (European Commission, 2013, 2015). Also, in Norway, policymakers and educational authorities are paying increased attention to the growing number of students in Norwegian schools referred to as 'new arrivals' (*nyankomne*), meaning minority students who are new to Norway (Dewilde & Kulbrandstad, 2016). Previously, this student population was just referred to as 'language minority students' or 'students from linguistic minorities', which includes all students with a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sami. It can be very challenging for schools to ensure that newly arrived students, many of whom have refugee backgrounds, learn both a new language and the different school subjects in the new language as well as adapting to their new life in Norway. In order to promote students' learning outcomes and to counteract early

school dropout, it is important to make early efforts to support these 'new arrivals' (Berg et al., 2016).

Although inclusive education is a fundamental principle in Norwegian education, a change to the Education Act in 2012 made it possible for educational authorities to organize special introductory programmes for newly arrived students – in *separate* groups, classes or schools:

For pupils who have recently arrived, the county authority may organise special educational facilities in separate groups, classes or schools. If some or all of the education is to take place in such a group, class or school, this must be stipulated in the decision to provide adapted language education. A decision for such education in specially organised facilities may only be made if it is considered in the pupil's best interest. Education in a specially organised facility may last for up to two years. (Norwegian Education Act, Section 3–12)

Short residency in Norway entails rights to certain educational provisions such as adapted Norwegian education and a separate curriculum. Since 2013, students in upper secondary education with a short period of residency and individual decisions on adapted Norwegian education may follow a special curriculum: *Curriculum in Norwegian for language minorities with short residence in Norway – upper secondary education*

(Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017).⁸ The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (*Utdanningsdirektoratet*) defines 'a short period of residency' (*kort botid*) as six years or less.⁸

3.3 Education policies and provisions for newly arrived students aged 6–16

The Norwegian Education Act (1998) states that *all* young people aged 6–16 who are expected to stay in Norway for longer than three months have a right and an obligation to attend primary and lower secondary education. This means that asylum-seeking and undocumented minors under 16 years old are also entitled to free compulsory education. The municipalities are responsible for operating and administering primary and lower secondary education, whereas the county authorities are responsible for upper secondary education and training.

In order to facilitate access to primary and lower secondary education for newly arrived asylum-seeking and refugee students of compulsory school age, Norwegian municipalities have launched various kinds of introductory programmes. The purpose of introductory provisions is to enable newcomer students to learn sufficient Norwegian to be able to follow ordinary education as soon as possible.

In general, the introductory programmes for newcomers (aged 6–16) can be classified as follows:

1. Inclusion in *regular classes* in primary or lower secondary school (either from day one or after the introductory class). Newcomers may still get special Norwegian language tuition, bilingual subject teaching and/or mother tongue teaching;

2. *Special introductory classes*, with a particular focus on Norwegian language training. When the refugee students master Norwegian 'sufficiently' (a relatively indistinct term), both orally and in writing, they are transferred to regular classes;

3. *Combined classes*, i.e. regular classes combined with participation in introductory classes;

4. *Special introductory schools*, where newly arrived students follow a special introductory course at a school, which is not necessarily the local school.

The most common introductory programme for refugee students aged 6–16 is the mainstreaming model, i.e. enrolment in *regular classes*, possibly combined with an introductory class (Svendsen et al., 2018). Several Norwegian studies show large variation in the way municipalities organise introductory provisions for asylum-seeking and refugee children and young people. The Norwegian Official Report *Mangfold og mestring* (NOU 2010:7) (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2010) calls for national standards for *when* students can be transferred to regular classes. Moreover, school owners and

⁸ For more information (in Norwegian), see <https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/lareplanverket/forsok-og-pagaende-arbeid/bruken-av-lareplan-norsk-for-spraklige-minoriteter-med-kort-botid/>

school leaders require clearer national guidelines regarding *what*, i.e. the content of the introductory provisions (Svendsen et al., 2018).

Since *Reform 97*, all students who have completed primary and lower secondary education have been entitled to upper secondary education and training.⁹ Upon successful completion, upper secondary education and training, students will be qualified for higher education (university/university college) or a vocation. This only applies to students with a residence permit. However, young people under 18 who reside legally in Norway due to a pending application for asylum or a residence permit on other grounds are entitled to both lower and upper secondary education when it is likely that they will be in Norway for more than three months. Those who turn 18 during the school year are entitled to complete the school year that has started (§3–1, Education Act).

3.4 Education policies and provisions for newly arrived students above 16

Newly arrived young refugees over compulsory school age (16 and older) who have not completed Norwegian

compulsory school or comparable education (min. 9 years of primary/lower secondary education) may first need to follow a 'condensed' compulsory school programme, equivalent to lower secondary school (1–3 years), under the auspices of Adult Education.¹⁰ Some larger municipalities offer a compulsory school programme just for language minority young people targeting adolescents and young adults with short residency in Norway.

Introductory programmes for newly arrived pupils have existed in many municipalities for several years, although this offer was not statutory under the Education Act. On 1 August 2012, however, it was enacted by law (Education Act §§ 2–8 and 3–12) that municipalities and county municipalities can offer special education provisions (introductory and preparatory programmes) to newly arrived students. Introductory programmes are transitional offers that students can attend for two years (Education Act 1998). However, many school owners choose to limit the offer to one year in order to integrate the students into ordinary classes as quickly as possible (Rambøll, 2016).

⁹ According to Regulations for the Education Act (Forskriften til opplæringsloven), all young people who have turned 15 and completed primary and lower secondary education are entitled to upper secondary education. This is called 'the young person's right' (*ungdomsretten*) and applies until the end of the school year in which the young person turns 24. The young person's right also applies to young people who have completed upper secondary education in another country but whose education has not been approved in Norway. One can also apply for upper secondary education after having turned 24 years of age, when the so-called 'adult right' (*voksenretten*) is applicable: <https://www.vilbli.no/en/en/no/ungdomsrett-lovfestet-rett-for-ungdom/a/029099>

¹⁰ Adult Education, i.e. education and training organised especially for adults, is regulated by §4A of the Education Act (1998).

According to the Education Act, upper secondary school students who have a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sami also have the right to adapted Norwegian language tuition until they are sufficiently proficient to attend the regular teaching. A student eligible for adapted language tuition has the right to a maximum of two years of additional upper secondary education if necessary.

3.5 Completion and dropout in upper secondary education

Unfortunately, there is a relatively large number of language minority young people who do not complete¹¹ upper secondary education; in vocational study programmes in particular, the dropout rate is high. Although dropout is by no means an exclusively minority student problem, the concurrence of various background factors leads to a significantly higher dropout rate among minority students (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2016a).

Minority young people who have immigrated themselves, like the young refugees in this study, have a significantly lower completion rate than Norwegian-born youth with minority parents (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2010; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017). Only 56.8 per cent of minority students who immigrated themselves

and who started the first year / Vg1 in 2010 had completed upper secondary education within two years after the standard/prescribed¹² time in 2017. However, the longer minority students have lived in Norway, the more likely they are to complete upper secondary education. Moreover, age at arrival seems to be a decisive factor for school completion. Among minority young people aged 25–30, half of those who came to Norway at lower secondary school age (13–15 years) completed and passed upper secondary education or training. The corresponding figure for those who arrived at the age of 16–18 (the resettlement age for many of the refugee students in this report) is 40 per cent (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017).

When the causes of language minority young people's dropout from upper secondary school are discussed, factors such as socio-economic background, grades from primary school,¹³ the connection and transition between different school types, suitable teaching materials and the learning environment are pointed out. Furthermore, several studies show that weak knowledge of the Norwegian language, the teaching language at upper secondary school, is a decisive reason for minority students performing poorly in school and choosing to dis-

¹¹ The term *completion* is used to refer to students and apprentices who have passed every year of their upper secondary education or training leading to a diploma or a trade or journeyman certificate (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2016a, p. 100).

¹² Within two years after 'the standard time' (*normert tid*) means after five years for general study programmes and six years for vocational study programmes (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017).

¹³ Students leaving lower secondary school with the poorest grades are the same students at risk of dropping out of upper secondary education later on (Kartal, Alkemade, & Kiropoulos, 2019).

continue education earlier than majority students (Valenta, 2008; Wollscheid, Flatø, Hjetland, & Smette, 2017). As regards young people from refugee backgrounds, the challenges concerning mental health and well-being may also have an impact (Pastoor,

2015; Ryding & Leth, 2014). In Norway, adolescents who do not complete upper secondary school or vocational training may have difficulty getting into the labour market (OECD, 2014, p. 80).

Table 1. The Norwegian educational system and newcomer young people’s entry options

Compulsory education (<u>Grunnskolen</u>)		Upper secondary education (<u>Videregående opplæring, Vgo</u>)	
<i>A legal right and an obligation</i>		<i>A statutory right</i>	
Primary education	Lower secondary education	<u>General Study Programmes</u> Leading to higher education entrance qualifications (university or university college)	<u>Vocational Study Programmes</u> Leading to vocational qualification or lower-level qualifications. After completion, students can take one-year supplementary studies to gain access to higher education.
Grade 1-7 7 years (ages 6 to 12)	Grade 8-10 3 years (ages 13 to 15)	Vg1-Vg3 3 years (ages 16 to 18)	Vg1-Vg2 + 2 years apprenticeship 4 years (ages 16 to 19)
	10	Vg3	Vg3 Apprenticeship training 2 years
	9	Vg2	Vg2
	8	Vg1	Vg1
<p>Newly arrived language minority students, under 16 years of age, who have not completed primary and/or lower secondary education or its equivalent (min. 9 years) in their home country will be enrolled in primary/lower secondary education (either in a regular class or an introduction class).</p> <p>Students 16 years and older get enrolled in a ‘condensed’ compulsory education programme under the auspices of Adult Education.</p>		<p>There are two options for newly arrived minority students (16-24 years old) to get further prepared for upper secondary education: 1) Preparatory class (1 year) or 2) Combination class (1-2 years) at an upper secondary school.</p> <p>Both provisions aim at facilitating good transition to mainstream Vgo, and are offered to students who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) do not have an educational background corresponding to Norwegian compulsory schooling; b) have completed regular lower secondary school in Norway, but who need more training due to short residence time; or c) students who have a diploma from the home country that corresponds to Norwegian compulsory school, but need more Norwegian language and subject education before starting at Vg1. 	

3.6 Transition to upper secondary school: the preparatory class and the combination class

In 2016, the increased policy focus on the lower upper secondary school completion rates for newcomer language minority students resulted in a legislative amendment to the Education Act. This amendment allows municipal and county educational authorities to offer recently arrived immigrants and refugees (aged 16–24)

who have a right to start upper secondary education more primary and lower secondary education. Recently arrived students who have completed Norwegian lower secondary school or its equivalent (e.g. education from the country of origin that corresponds to Norwegian compulsory school) but need more training can prepare for upper secondary education by attending a voluntary one-year preparatory

class¹⁴ (*innføringsklassen*, also referred to as Vg0, i.e. year zero in upper secondary school) at an upper secondary school (see Table 1). The preparatory classes are relatively small, usually consisting of 12–15 students. The students are taught compulsory school subjects with a special emphasis on learning the Norwegian language.¹⁵ Another new provision facilitating the transition to upper secondary school is ‘the combination class’ (*kombinasjonsklassen*), which provides the opportunity for more differentiated education by offering level-

based education in some of the school subjects (Tørslev and Børsch 2017). Moreover, the students may also attend Vg1 classes in single subjects to ease the transition to upper secondary education. Both educational transition provisions, i.e. the preparatory class (1 year) and the combination class (1-2 years), are aimed at facilitating good transition to mainstream upper secondary education programmes as well as increasing completion rates for this particular student population (Pastoor, 2012/Forthcoming 2020)

¹⁴ We use the term ‘preparatory class’ here to indicate that this is an introductory provision preparing students for the transition to regular upper secondary education and not an introduction class associated with primary or lower secondary education.

¹⁵ There are no special requirements with respect to proficiency in Norwegian for admission to upper secondary education and training (vilbli.2019).

4. Previous relevant research and knowledge gaps

In this chapter, we describe relevant previous research that relates to young refugees' educational and psychosocial transitions. The first section notes the expansive existing research on young immigrants and education, and argues that within this field, the potential role of migration category has been given too little attention. The following section shows the distinct challenges that refugees can face on a group level, with reference to mental health and resilience. Furthermore, it emphasises changes in refugees' psychological health over time and proposes that resettlement can be marked not only by challenges but also by optimism.

4.1 Immigrant youth and education

Extensive educational research exists on young immigrants and descendants of immigrants in Norway and other countries. Much Norwegian research has focused on descendants of immigrants and has especially unravelled the importance of socio-economic background, parental influence and country background for educational aspirations and outcomes, as well as addressing the high social mobility of certain categories of descendants in Norway (Askvik, 2019; S. Fekjær & Leirvik, 2011; S. N. Fekjær, 2007; Hermansen, 2016; Kindt, 2017; Reisel, Hermansen, & Takvam Kindt, 2019).

In comparison, little Norwegian research exists on young refugees' educational provisions and experiences during the period of resettlement (see, however, Rambøll, 2013; Thorshaug & Svendsen, 2014). This reflects a wider international trend of not focusing on migration category within research on education and young immigrants and their descendants (Cerna, 2019; Ferede, 2010; cf. Pastoor, 2016b). As stated by Ferede in a Canadian context, and also applicable in Norway, 'knowledge specific to the resettled refugee experience is often lost within the folds of aggregated educational research' (Ferede, 2010, p. 79). Most research on immigrants and descendants in Norway and other countries encompasses all migration categories (labour/refugee/family reunification). Meanwhile, the educational experiences of young refugees in particular, and especially 'resettled refugees in the Global North' (Shakya et al., 2010, p. 66), is a relatively underexplored research topic. Brenner and Kia-Keating (2016); Cerna (2019); J. McBrien, Dooley, and Birman (2017); Overviews of existing research include J. L. McBrien (2005); Peterson, Meehan, Ali, and Durrant (2017). Especially in the resettlement context of European countries, refugee education is relatively underexplored (Pastoor, 2016b); an exception is the UK (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Hek, 2005; Rutter, 2006). Most publications concerning refugee education come from countries with long traditions of edu-

cating immigrant children, i.e. Australia, Canada, the US and New Zealand (e.g. Block, Cross, Riggs, & Gibbs, 2014; Decapua, 2016; Hamilton & Moore, 2003; Matthews, 2008; J. L. McBrien, 2005; Naidoo, 2015a; Pugh, Every, & Hattam, 2012; Shakya et al., 2010; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Wilkinson, 2002). Many young refugees' challenges (e.g. language and cultural differences) related to moving to and living in a new country can be shared with many non-refugee immigrants (Kao, 1999; see also Cerna, 2019, pp. 18-19). However, the 'refugee experience' – involving various pre-, trans- and post-flight experiences (M. Fazel & Stein, 2002; Stein, 1981) – may influence students' educational experiences in distinct ways.

4.2 Transitions upon resettlement and mental health

Upon resettlement, young refugees (often) face a number of critical challenges as a result of 'the refugee experience'. Many young refugees have had difficult and potentially traumatising experiences both before and during their flight (Fazel et al., 2012; Jakobsen, Demott, Heir, & Jakobsen, 2014; Jensen, Skårdalmo, & Fjermestad, 2014; Kohli & Mather, 2003; E. Montgomery, 2011; Pastoor, 2015), have disrupted family and other social ties (Peterson et al., 2017), and experience exile-related stress upon resettlement. These various experiences increase vulnerability to psychological distress and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (e.g. Jakobsen et al., 2014; Jensen et al.,

2014). Unaccompanied refugee minors are particularly vulnerable (Eide, Lidén, Haugland, Fladstad, & Hauge, 2018; Oppedal, Guribye, & Kroger, 2017).

In the new country, numerous factors can promote resilience or represent mental health risk factors for refugees, spanning individual, family, community and societal/structural factors (Fazel et al., 2012; Heeren et al., 2014; Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; see also Sleijpen, Boeije, Kleber, & Mooren, 2015). Earlier life experiences (e.g. family violence) before war-related exposure also act as risk factors for mental illness (Montgomery, 2010; Opaas & Varvin, 2015). In the post-migration situation, refugees' vulnerability can increase or decrease depending on, for example, income, economic hardship, housing, majority attitudes, social connections, language skills and the asylum-seeking process (M. Fazel & Stein, 2002; Heeren et al., 2014; Hynie, 2018). Different risk/protective factors in the past and present can interact and act cumulatively, affecting mental health outcomes (Fazel et al., 2012; Kartal et al., 2019).

The role of *post-migration experiences and conditions* (including school) in refugees' mental health cannot be exaggerated (cf. e.g. Heeren et al., 2014). Several studies have found that stressors related to post-migration experiences and conditions are just as strong, or even stronger, predictors of mental health outcomes as pre-migration trauma experiences (Heeren et al., 2014; Miller &

Rasmussen, 2010; Montgomery, 2010; see also Seglem, Oppedal, & Roysamb, 2014). The impact of post-migration stressors can interact with previous traumatic experiences, since '[t]rauma diminishes the capacity to deal with additional stress' (Kartal et al., 2019, p. 4).

In a school study, it is relevant to highlight the relationship between acquisition of the new language and mental health. Little/no knowledge of the new language can negatively influence mental health. And conversely, studies have identified that language acquisition can be a predictor of 'general distress, anxiety symptoms and even post-traumatic stress disorder' (Kartal et al., 2019, p. 5; see also Bogic, Njoku, Priebe, & Bogic, 2015; Fazel et al., 2012).

When studying young refugees' transitions upon resettlement, it is also important to consider how their mental health and well-being may change over time. Several studies show a decline in the prevalence of mental distress among refugees over time (Montgomery, 2010).¹⁶ Refugees' improved mental health may be related to obtaining a residence permit (Heeren et al., 2014; A. D. Ryan, Benson, & Dooley, 2008; Silove et al., 2007), better living conditions (see Jakobsen, Meyer Demott, Wentzel-Larsen, & Heir, 2017), improved proficiency in the new language and a decline in other stressful experiences that follow the immediate time after

arrival (M. Fazel & Stein, 2002; Hynie, 2018) related to, for example, knowledge about the system and cultural integration (cf. Sack, 1998). Schooling, adequate care and psychosocial support during the asylum and resettlement phases is crucial for young refugees' mental health and long-term adjustment (Eide & Hjern, 2013; Kohli & Mather, 2003; Mock-Muñoz de Luna, 2009; E. Montgomery, 2011).

Before resettlement, many refugees have experienced a long period marked by turbulence and unpredictability – starting with war-related pre-migration experiences, a difficult flight and, for asylum seekers, long periods of uncertainty and difficult living conditions in the new country. Whilst the initial resettlement period is often marked by many challenges, at this time they may also finally experience greater predictability and personal control over their lives.

For most refugee interviewees in the TURIN study, the increased stability upon resettlement coincided closely in time with their start at upper secondary school in Norway. As suggested by our findings (Section 7.1), the resettlement period may be marked by optimism and high motivation at school. The structure and regularity of school can potentially in itself contribute to a healing process after trauma (Hayward, 2017; Pastoor, 2012/forthcoming 2020; Rutter, 2006). In addition, upper secondary

¹⁶However, prevalence rates of psychological distress can still remain high after many years; see, for example, Driessen (2015).

school is typically a time characterised not only by learning but also by making choices about one's future education/vocation. This focus may potentially facilitate a sense of agency – in other words, one's ability to control future outcomes. Studies show that a sense of mastery positively influences 'the mental and physical health of individuals, irrespective of the seriousness of the situation' (Sleijpen et al., 2015, p. 173).

Several studies indicate that schools can contribute positively to mental health if students experience a sense of safety, mastery and belonging at school (Fazel et al., 2012; Pastoor, 2012/forthcoming 2020, 2015). And vice versa, if attending school frequently involves negative experiences, it may cause additional stress and a sense of failure.

5. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework employed in this report, drawing on both sociocultural and ecological developmental approaches, entails a holistic perspective on learning, development and psychosocial adjustment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Forman, Minick, & Stone, 1993; Michael Ungar, 2012; Michael Ungar, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch, Río, & Alvarez, 1995).

5.1 A sociocultural approach to learning and development

The adopted framework of sociocultural theory enhances our understanding of the relationship between what people do (action, interaction and activity) and their cognitive development, i.e. the development of their skills in communicating, thinking and learning (Forman et al., 1993; Rogoff, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch et al., 1995). The employed theoretical perspectives stress the *situated* nature of knowledge acquisition as well as knowledge itself: 'Knowledge is situated, being in part a product of the activity, context, and culture in which it is developed and used' (Brown et al., 1989, p. 32). This approach places emphasis on learning and development as a process that is inherently social and cultural, and as a process whereby meaning is made through joint interaction with other members of a society.

The implications of the sociocultural approach, emphasising learning as development through social interaction and participation in social practices, entail a fundamental challenge regarding the education of recently resettled refugees. The challenge upon resettlement is how to facilitate young refugees' adaptation to, and inclusion in, the new society through social interaction in the school context and beyond. The development and learning refugee young people may attain through participation in activities inside and outside school, as well as the opportunity to establish supportive relationships with others, are of decisive importance for their psychosocial adaptation and well-being (Pastoor, 2017).

5.2 An ecological approach to development and resilience

Bronfenbrenner (1979) draws attention to the central importance of environment or contexts in children and young people's development. According to Bronfenbrenner's *ecological* model, development occurs in a complex system of interactions and relationships across various settings that together constitute an ecological environment in which both people and systems affect and are affected by each other.

Furthermore, Ungar (2012) explains how interactions with school, family and community can promote young

people's development as well as their resilience. *Resilience* stands for positive development and psychosocial adjustment in children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced stressful life events and adversity (Masten, Herbers, Cutuli, & Lafavor, 2008; Niesel & Griebel, 2005; Michael Ungar, 2012; Michael Ungar, 2013). Developing resilience is not just the result of a person's individual characteristics but also depends on relational and environmental factors. Collaboration between the various everyday contexts in which the resettled young refugees participate is of great importance for developing competence, mastery and resilience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Masten et al., 2008; Michael Ungar, 2012; Michael Ungar, 2013).

5.3 Psychosocial transitions and adaptation upon resettlement

During resettlement, young refugees' psychosocial well-being and adaptation are affected by the close interplay between the psychological aspects of past and present experiences and their social interaction with others in their new environment.

The initial phase of resettlement may be regarded as a liminal period in a refugee's integration process, i.e. a transitional phase between separation (being an outsider) and incorporation (being an insider). In this critical phase, young refugees experience a number of 'psychosocial transitions' (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hamilton & Moore, 2003; Niesel & Griebel,

2005; Pastoor, 2015, 2016a). A successful transition requires a process of psychological and developmental restructuring on the inner plane (internalisation, cf. Vygotsky, 1978) to gain a better understanding of the new life situation and oneself.

Newly resettled young refugees need to go through several psychosocial transitions in order to come to terms with themselves, their traumatic past and their new environment. Three transitional processes, which are crucial regarding young refugees' schooling, are:

- *A socialisation process*: the development from childhood to adulthood, a process of acquiring the knowledge, skills and norms of the society one is part of.
- *An integration process*: the sociocultural adaptation to life in a new society with different linguistic, social and cultural demands for interaction and inclusion.
- *A rehabilitation process*: the mental recovery and restoration of meaning after traumatic pre-migration experiences, as well as dealing with post-migration demands and stressors.

The critical transitions that young refugees face upon resettlement can at times be quite demanding, especially because not all of them have parents that can support them or advise them. Nevertheless, with support and guidance from (other) significant adults that young refugees interact with, such as teachers, social workers and

guardians, these transitional processes can lead to development, adaptation and resilience (Antonovsky, 1987; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Masten et al., 2008).

5.4 Language and learning

The language used in the classroom is different from the language used in everyday communication. In the classroom one can find several interrelated, though qualitatively different, forms of language and discourse (Pastoor, 2008). The informal 'social' language of classroom interaction is similar to everyday discourse. However, the formal language of teaching and learning is called *educational discourse* (Mercer, 1995). Then, with the teacher's assistance, educational discourse may be generated into *academic discourse*. Academic discourse involves various forms of subject-specific language, allowing an academic way of communicating and reasoning in different content areas, such as language arts, social studies, mathematics and science. Academic discourse involves ways of reasoning and talking that (Vygotsky, 1986) has termed *non-spontaneous*, meaning they have to be learned. Thus, in order to be able to participate actively in the learning activities of the classroom, students need to acquire the different forms of language that classroom discourse consists of.

As the language of instruction in main-

stream schools in Norway is Norwegian, young refugees need to learn Norwegian in order to be able to succeed in school. In the education system, Norwegian is referred to as language minority students' *second language*¹⁷ (even though it may even be the third or fourth language they learn). The language the minority students previously have acquired at home or in school in their country of origin is referred to as their *mother tongue* or *first language*.

It often takes time for minority students to develop the language competence that is required to succeed in school. Even though students may speak the second language well socially, they may have problems with the language used in the classroom, especially the more academic, subject-specific genres used in content lessons. While it takes language minority pupils approximately two years to develop second language proficiency at the level required for social talk, it may take between five and seven years to come up to grade norms in second language academic skills (Cummins 2000).

Cummins (2000) emphasises in his work on second language acquisition that in order to make progress, language minority students must understand the social and cultural context of their learning in a second language. The context-reduced or decontextualised teaching and learning that goes

¹⁷ 'Second' in *second language* refers to a non-native language acquired after the *first language*, that is, the mother tongue. In contrast to a foreign language, a second language is learned in the environment in which that language is spoken, e.g. Somali speakers learning Norwegian in Norway.

on in schools may be difficult to grasp for students with limited second language proficiency (Pastoor, 2008). The increasing decontextualised academic language is particularly challenging for late-arriving newcomers in secondary schools (Sugarman, 2015).

Newcomers' second language proficiency and cultural knowledge will be promoted by social interaction between them and 'more competent others' (Vygotsky, 1986) – both adults and peers – in the host society. Measures and strategies that promote young refugees' social interaction with native speakers of the majority language in school and beyond can improve not only their language skills but also their educational achievements (European Commission, 2015; Pastoor, 2017; Watters, 2008).

What makes a difference?

Not only for the education authorities and policymakers in Norway, but also in many EU countries, a central question is how to accomplish higher attainment and reduced gaps in newly arrived migrant students' educational achievement and progression. The report 'Language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms' (European Commission 2015, p. 82) answers the question 'What makes a difference?' as follows: '... there is conclusive evidence that language competences are related to achievement in other competences, and that *targeted and continued support in language learning* enables this' (emphasis added). Then

it continues that there is indicative evidence (supported by practitioners) that the following will contribute to raising the attainment of newly arrived migrant students (NAMS):

- Supplementary education (both formal and non-formal) in school and out of school which includes help with homework, language learning (including mother tongue learning), and mentoring during activities;
 - Immersion in mainstream classrooms with support from specialists and with teachers who have the competences and experience to tailor teaching to children in the class without the same level of competency in the language of instruction;
 - Increasing their parents' support and encouragement in their education, including their development of language competences;
 - Developing their mother tongue competences.
- (European Commission 2015, p. 82)

The EU report further emphasises that there is no conclusive evidence about the length of time that newly arrived migrant students should spend in introductory classes, but there is indicative evidence that this should not be lengthy and should include a transition to immersion with support (European Commission 2015).

6. The study

The NKVTS and USN teams jointly developed the project description and interview guides of the TURIN study. Subsequently, the data collection was carried out by the two teams in parallel between June 2016 and June 2017 in five upper secondary schools in four municipalities: three schools in the Greater Oslo Region (hereafter GOR), conducted by the NKVTS team, and two schools in smaller towns in South-Eastern Norway (hereafter SEN), conducted by USN researchers. The selected upper secondary schools offer academic and/or vocational education programmes.

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews (lasting between 45 minutes and two hours) were conducted with refugee students and school staff. In the NKVTS team, two researchers and a research assistant conducted fieldwork and interviews at one school each. In the USN team, one researcher conducted interviews and fieldwork at one school, and three researchers conducted interviews at another school in the SEN region.

The main interview guide themes for young refugees included questions on everyday life, school experiences, psychosocial aspects of resettlement, life before arrival in Norway, and future plans and aspirations. The main themes in the school staff interviews were professional and educational information, the school's population with a focus on questions on minority

language students, the school's provisions for minority language students, experiences with refugees in their work, whether young refugees differ from other minority language students in their experience, views on young refugees' transitions to upper secondary school, the school's meaning for refugee students, the school's psychosocial provisions and vocational guidance. At the end of both interview guides, interviewees were asked whether they wanted to add something, how they experienced the interviews and whether they had questions.

6.1 Data collection and participants

The schools. The selection criteria of the five upper secondary schools were based on localisation (in different counties) and having different study programmes. The study includes schools with either general or vocational studies, or a combination of both. The aim of the design was to generate findings from a broad set of upper secondary school contexts in Norway.

Access and recruitment. Based on the acquired consent from the Norwegian Data Inspectorate, the county education authorities were contacted and asked whether they were interested in participating in the study, and

which schools it was relevant to approach.¹⁸ All the contacted schools agreed to participate, welcomed the researchers into the classrooms and facilitated interviewee recruitments.

For the refugee student sample, the TURIN study recruited interviewees with six years' or less residency in Norway (cf. Chapter 3). In most of the case schools, the interviewers did not approach the refugee students directly. First, the teachers introduced the researcher to the class, and then the researcher presented the study to the students. The researchers' frequent school visits enabled the students and students to become familiar – and in some cases acquainted through conversations – before the interviews. Students who were identified by the researchers as refugees were invited to participate in the study. This 'stepwise' recruitment approach was chosen to develop reciprocal trust, which was especially important since the interviews could entail sharing sensitive or personal information.

Participants. In the GOR schools, interviews with 25 young refugees with a 'short period of residency' in Norway were conducted ('short period of residency' follows the definition of six years or less by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training). They were aged 16–24, except for one interviewee who was 25. In regard to previous education from the country of origin, nine of the

GOR students had no or no full-time formal primary school education. Three had completed primary school. Nine had completed, or almost completed, the equivalent of Norwegian lower secondary school. Four had completed, or almost completed, upper secondary school.

In the SEN schools, interviews were conducted with 22 young refugees with a 'short period of residency' in Norway. Five of the students at the SEN schools had only spent a few years at primary school in the country of origin. Seven had completed primary school. Nine had completed lower secondary school in their country of origin and one had completed upper secondary school before migrating to Norway. For details on the students' country backgrounds, migration category upon arrival, current school class, household and gender, see Table 2.

Twenty-eight school staff members were interviewed in the GOR schools, and 18 in the SEN schools. As shown in Table 3, the school staff sample comprises several professions.

¹⁸ In Norway, the county authorities are responsible for operating and administering upper secondary education and training.

Table 2. Refugee student interviewees

	Greater Oslo Region N = 25	South-Eastern Norway N = 22	Total N = 47
Migration category upon arrival¹⁹			
<i>Unaccompanied minor asylum seeker</i>	9	6	15
<i>Family reunification</i>	8	3	11
<i>Asylum seeker, arrived alone (over 18)</i>	4	2	6
<i>Asylum seeker, arrived with family</i>	1	6	7
<i>UN quota refugee</i>	3	5	8
Country background			
<i>Eritrea</i>	9	6	15
<i>Somalia</i>	7	5	12
<i>Syria</i>	4	-	4
<i>Afghanistan</i>	3	6	9
<i>Other countries²⁰</i>	2	4	6
Current school class			
<i>Preparatory class</i>	12	6	18
<i>Year 1</i>	5	8	13
<i>Year 2</i>	6	7	13
<i>Year 3</i>	1	1	2
<i>Apprenticeship</i>	1	-	1
Household			
<i>With family/partner</i>	14	16	30
<i>Shared accommodation (private or municipal)</i>	10 ²¹	3	13
<i>Alone</i>	1	3	4
Gender			
<i>Female</i>	6	14	20
<i>Male</i>	19	8	27

¹⁹ All interviewees had been granted residence in Norway at the time of the interviews.

²⁰ Not specified for anonymity reasons.

²¹ Includes two minors living in supported residential living arrangements.

Table 3. School staff interviewees

	Greater Oslo Region N = 28	South-Eastern Norway N = 18	Total N = 46
<i>Teachers</i>	10	9	19
<i>Teacher coordinators</i>	3	2	5
<i>School leaders and administrative staff</i>	4	3	7
<i>School social workers</i>	4	1	5
<i>School advisors</i>	4	2	6
<i>Others²²</i>	3	1	4

²² Not specified for anonymity reasons.

6.2 Data handling and analysis

Professional transcribers at NKVTS and USN transcribed all the interviews verbatim. In the NKVTS team, all interviews were coded in NVivo by Lynnebakke – in close, regular dialogue with Pastoor during the different coding stages, including discussions on how the findings related to prior research and theory. To get closer access to non-verbal cues such as tone of voice and length of hesitations, most of the coding of the transcriptions was conducted whilst listening to the recorded interviews. This seemed to reduce the distance to interviewees by getting more knowledge about personalities and aspects of the interview situations such as the extent of conversational flow and interviewer/interviewee contact (e.g. personal chemistry and the interviewee's expressed trust). The coding started with open codes and proceeded to larger categories and reorganising of the codes into coding trees through several cycles (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2016). The analytical approach used during the coding process aligns with Timmermanns' and Tavory's (2012) approach of combining abductive reasoning with grounded theory methods. The codes were defined while working with the data, some being more influenced by the initial research questions than others. Some of the overarching categories defined in the later coding stages were defined during coding – due to strong recurring

unanticipated themes raised by interviewees – while other overarching categories (e.g. 'language', 'psychosocial' and 'resilience') were based on the initial research questions and previous research and theory.

In the USN team, the coding followed the approach of Braun and Clarke (2006) by using thematic analysis inspired by grounded theory, starting with open coding to enable familiarity with the interview transcripts. Initially, many concepts and themes of interest were found. Further USN analysis particularly addressed in depth two overarching topics: 1) teachers' perspectives and reflections on refugee students and how the teachers relate to students' aspirations in one of the schools, drawing on Weick et al.'s (2005) theory of sense-making in the analysis; 2) how to understand refugee students' protests and views on language assessment in one of the schools. The analysis of these findings used a critical socio-linguistic framework (Shohamy, 2001).

As can be seen above, the USN and NKVTS researchers worked as two teams during the data collection and main stages of the analysis. The two teams did not have access to each other's interview data. For this report, the merging of the two teams' analysis and findings was done through commenting on and exchanging research findings for each empirical section of

the report, through several meetings (in person and on Skype) and e-mail exchange. In the findings section, we explicitly state when the findings only refer to GOR or SEN findings. These references signify that the topic was either absent or contrasting in the other region. When we do not state GOR/SEN region, the findings overlapped. Although the TURIN study's design is not a (school/regional) comparative case study, there were a few remarkable and interesting differences between the SEN and GOR findings on certain subtopics that may suggest school-level differences. We contrast and comment on these subtopics in the report. We acknowledge that some of these differences to a certain extent might reflect different interview approaches in the two teams (resulting in the interviewees sometimes explicitly emphasising some topics at some schools and not at others). Hence, we discuss these contrasting findings between the two regions in a preliminary manner that should be read as relevant issues to explore in further research. Whilst we are aware of how the structure of the interview guide influences interviewees' accounts, the analysis draws primarily on interviews with rich, more elaborate accounts on the article topics in order to portray interviewees' accounts as much as possible on their own terms.

For the purpose of readability, some of the quotes used in this report have been lightly edited from their verbatim version.

6.3 Analytical and methodological challenges

The student interviews varied greatly in length and elaboration. Many interviews were marked by a trusting atmosphere and the interviewees appeared to be engaged in the interview topics and took the initiative in raising new issues. However, a challenge in some of the student interviews was the Norwegian language competence of some of the relatively recently arrived interviewees. This resulted in shorter, often affirmative answers that should not be taken at face value. Using an interpreter could have been an alternative, though this also has challenges (Block, Warr, Gibbs, & Riggs, 2013, p. 79). Furthermore, the public, relatively formal setting of interviewing in schools may also have influenced, in particular, student interviewees' degree of openness. Regardless of the interviewing context, some young refugees may not want to open up about personal reflections and experiences due to both common adolescence development processes and healing processes. With regard to adolescence, having privacy can be a way to develop autonomy as an adolescent. As for healing processes, the strategies for dealing with psychological distress and trauma can vary over time, where talking about distress can seem helpful to healing at some times and disruptive at other times (Kohli, 2006). In addition, individuals vary in their coping strategies and how they experience talking about personal difficult topics. Finally, it could be that politeness, interviewee/interviewer

age differences, and/or trust and rapport issues influenced shorter comments in some of the interviews (cf. Wernesjö, 2012).

6.4 Ethics

The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD²³) was notified about the research project and approved it, and it gave us guidelines on securing the anonymity, confidentiality and storage of data. Each participant signed a consent form (approved by the NSD) after having been informed about the study's aim, data collection, data management and the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

The challenge of interviewing and reporting on (young) people in a language they are not yet fluent in is not only a methodological but also an ethical issue. We have tried to remedy

this to some extent by largely omitting from the analysis the interviewees who had low levels of Norwegian proficiency and who thus could initiate and elaborate on topics in the interviews only to a low extent. The in-depth examples and quotes used in the report primarily come from refugee students with good or very good Norwegian language skills.

For anonymisation purposes, we have used pseudonyms for all interviewees and omitted certain details in interviewees' flight experiences from our descriptions.

We will now turn to the findings. The analysis of, and discussion on, the findings will be followed by a general discussion and finally some concluding remarks.

²³ The Norwegian Centre for Research Data or NSD (the Norwegian abbreviation) is the national competency center for data protection in research.

Findings: Analysis and discussion

The TURIN study aims to explore educational and psychosocial transitions that young refugees experience upon resettlement and what these mean for young refugees' functioning in school and beyond. Therefore, we present the findings along these two dimensions of the transitions encountered, i.e. educational and psychosocial transitions.

The *educational* aspect of transitions is understood here as education-related processes of adjustment, such as the transition from school in the country of origin to school in Norway, and the transitions between different school types in Norway. The *psychosocial* dimension of transitions refers to 'the reciprocal relationship between inner psychological processes on the

one hand and social relations and external conditions on the other' (Nygren, 1996, p. 16). Psychosocial support for young refugees is understood as the provision of psychological and social resources to increase their ability to cope with the transitions they have to deal with.

Although the two dimensions of the transitions are presented separately, the presentations below will show that the focus on one particular dimension is first and foremost an analytical distinction; in the young refugees' everyday lives the two dimensions of the transitions upon resettlement are interrelated. As we proceed, the relations between them and the intersection of educational and psychosocial transitions will become evident.

7. Educational transitions

Below we present central findings concerning educational transitions, addressing challenges related to motivation and mastery, time spent on education, the preparatory class and language-related issues.

7.1 Motivation and mastery

School staff accounts

A recurring theme among school staff (mainly teachers) is that they experience immigrant students (including refugees) as highly motivated at school, as has also been found in previous research in Norway as well as in other countries (Reisel et al., 2019, p. 856, on immigrant youth in Norway; see also Naidoo, 2015b, Naidoo et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2010; and e.g. Stevenson & Willott, 2007, on refugee youth in Australia and Canada). For example, the special education teacher Ella states:²⁴

The preparatory class students are often more motivated than many majority Norwegian students. Because they kind of know that they have to master [school] to get ahead.. [...] I think they are very motivated [...], to do their best. And that is not always the case with majority Norwegian students.

Another recurring comment among school staff was that they perceived

refugee students as often being polite and/or grateful. Some say that the preparatory class is a popular class to teach because the students are seen as very motivated and polite (however, many school staff are reluctant to categorise refugee students but rather emphasise heterogeneity within the category – see Section 8.6).

Several teachers talk about the importance of mastery experiences for (sustaining) students' motivation. Some describe young immigrants (including refugees) who start with high motivation levels that can sometimes waver over time and be replaced with frustration as they find that attending school whilst learning a new language is more difficult than they had expected. Thor, a vocational track coordinator, comments:

There is a polite minority student who comes in and is grateful for having been allowed to start upper secondary school, and who thinks it's nice to become part of the Norwegian social milieu and meet his teacher – a teacher who is a nice guy and wishes him well. And then you see, after a while, that his eyes start to swim and [...] [he] didn't get anything. (Thor, vocational track teacher)

Some teachers find it difficult to give students only low grades, as this may

24 Transcription conventions: [...] indicates that some text has been left out of the excerpt, [text] indicates additional information. Ellipses are used to indicate a hesitation or pause.

impede motivation over time. One teacher says that she tells students the following concerning their grades:

'It's not because you're not smart, but because it takes time to learn.' I try to say that [to students], but it doesn't sink all in. So, handing back assignments, it's never nice at all when here you are E and F. That I find to be the most difficult and painful thing in my job, and I don't know what I can do about it.'

Some SEN teachers see it as evident that many refugee students have an inadequate language/educational foundation to succeed at school in the short term. They regard grading as counterproductive to providing the care they see the students as being in need of.

When sustaining motivation, teachers also need to consider individual students' mental health and well-being. Previous studies show that achievement can influence mental health and vice versa (Mælan, Tjomsland, Baklien, Samdal, & Thurston, 2018, p. 17). A few school staff members comment that refugee students who experience psychological distress can face additional challenges in sustaining motivation. The preparatory class teacher Anna elaborates on changed motivation over time and on that mental health and motivation can influence each other:

Interviewer: Have you found that the physical and/or mental health of [refugee] students has

negatively affected their school functioning?)

Anna: Yes...both. [...] Most refugees I have taught have struggled psychologically. Often, it's a bit like they're in an early phase of being in love when they come to Norway, because now they have arrived in a safe country and everything is going to be so good and [they can have] very high expectations and suchlike. And then they learn quite a lot of Norwegian in the beginning, but then they see that things are more complicated [than they expected] and that they need to learn much more. And it wasn't quite the way they had thought, and then they get a bit burnt out, eh, and it's like such normal migration problems, and those who in addition have traumas get hit especially hard. Then they can be incapacitated for learning for shorter or longer time periods.

The school social worker Sophia comments on how some students can build up too high absence levels because they stay up late at night and sleep in. Furthermore, she reflects on how such challenges may be exacerbated by inadequate knowledge of the Norwegian school system and experiencing cultural differences in the school system. In her experience, some students can regularly be late and be unaware of the rule in Norwegian schools where being more than 10 minutes late is treated as missing the whole class. Building up too high

absence levels 'does not help [motivation but] contributes to breaking them more down', Sophia comments. Her statement illustrates how struggling with school may also lead to psychological distress. This is also observed by a form teacher of a preparatory class, who comments: 'Students with high motivation can feel like failures when they struggle and don't manage at school, [they] can get anxiety, depression.'

In one of the SEN schools, the findings suggested that teachers are 'biding time', hoping that learning and health outcomes will improve without specific measures. The teachers feel emotionally close to their students, yet also describe them as strangers to the Norwegian school system. They assess most students as not having the necessary qualifications to realise their aspirations in upper secondary education within the given time frame. They see the young refugees' challenges in conforming with student role expectations as the main reason for this. They have not shared this assessment with students for fear of 'killing their dreams'. Instead, they try to persuade them to lower their aspirations by talking positively about alternatives such as spending one more year learning more Norwegian or aiming for vocational training instead of higher education. Weick et al.'s theory of sensemaking (2005) provides a useful framework for understanding these findings. The theory concerns the reasons people give for their understandings and actions, and how their understandings are constructed

retrospectively based on experience in specific contexts, in this case a school. When deciding on how to understand and relate to student aspirations, teachers draw on a variety of resources – some related to educational policies, others to institutional practices and available resources in the school.

Other school staff members describe a dilemma concerning how to sustain language minority students' motivation whilst also preparing them in a realistic way for further educational and vocational demands. For instance, Thor says that vocational track teachers try to prepare students for apprenticeships and work life by modelling work life. He explains that in the vocation he is responsible for, it is crucial for job performance to independently make safe, sound decisions as soon as one starts the apprenticeship. Relatedly, the preparatory class teacher Anna brings up the challenge of preparing students realistically for regular upper secondary school:

I try to show that I care about how they are. And have small chats now and then, I think that is important. [...] and I accept that life isn't always easy. But I expect them to put in effort at school also. [...] And there's something about telling them that upper secondary school is on a quite high level [...], and [conveying] to them that they [need to reach that level]. So they can choose not to do so much now, but then they get a shock next year. So a mix of understanding and reality check is good.

Here, Anna expresses a tension in her teacher role between attending to young refugees' psychosocial and educational needs, and how to balance these needs. The school social worker Sophia seems ambivalent about the extent to which the school should adjust education to individuals' level and situation:

[I[t's a very bad combination [with feeling one is in a hurry] that they often perhaps are sent too early, they are thrown into [regular] Norwegian classes, but I also think it's very healthy. Because that's where they must start to make a spurt and try to keep up. But for many, it can at the same time be very demotivating because it makes them kind of lose motivation and [...] their sense of mastery.

Thus, it might be rather challenging for school staff to sustain the motivation of students with Norwegian language challenges, sometimes little prior education and/or challenges related to the refugee experience. Sophia's quote shows that school staff may not have a set conclusion on how to deal with a dilemma of balancing educational and psychosocial demands when working to sustain motivation. Above, Sophia expresses that it can be both potentially healthy and potentially demotivating to be immersed in a regular class at an early stage, and acknowledges that individual differences can shape these reactions (see also Sleijpen et al., 2015, p. 172, on resilience and individual

differences in how one reacts to accumulating challenges). Sophia's comment reflects that the dilemma, as with all dilemmas, cannot be resolved through a 'one-size-fits-all' approach (Jortveit, 2014; Michailakis & Reich, 2009, p. 42).

Student accounts

Many students report that they have clear educational/vocational plans and that they work hard and systematically to reach their goals. With few exceptions, students do not report that they feel overwhelmed by schoolwork (in the sense that it disrupts their everyday functioning). For many interviewees, previous schooling seems to play a role here. For the GOR findings, the fact that many students seem to perceive school as achievable should also be seen in conjunction with the fact that many students report contentment with teachers, good peer relations and supportive family relations (Section 8.1).

With few exceptions, their high motivation is not channelled into plans of high status/high education positions (in contrast to several Norwegian studies on language minority youth (see e.g. Fangen & Lynnebakke, 2014; Finne, 2010; Leirvik, 2010; Støren, 2011). Only a few students in the sample aim for high status positions. Furthermore, students who express high motivation and a willingness to work hard tend to do so regardless of the educational level they aspire to. For example, one vocational student who aims to become an excellent car

painter expresses just as high – or perhaps even higher – motivation levels as another student who aims to become an architect.

Some students share experiences that they have changed their initial motivation and future plans. A 20-year-old second year student, Daniel, has readjusted his vocational plans because of language challenges:

Interviewer: Has upper secondary school been as you expected before you started, socially and regarding the school subjects?

Daniel: Oh, one dreams about many things. But my [laughs] dream was to become a pilot. Or a [...] doctor. [...] But well, in my home country everything [at school] was in English, right. But when I came here, everything is in Norwegian, right. School, everything. So it gets difficult, right. It was difficult to reach that goal.

One student comments on a contrast between his country of origin and Norway in terms of the social mobility that 12 years at school generally can enable. When he attended preparatory class, he planned on going to university; however, now that he attends the first year of upper secondary school he has changed his plans:

It takes too long. I have to go four or five years at university or

university college.²⁵ [...] I have gone to school for eight years in the home country. Then I came to Norway and started Adult Education and [later attended] preparatory class. Then I started upper secondary school. So in fact, I have attended school for 12 years. So if I was going to become something I [would] have [by] now. That's the way I think [laughs].

The difference between what 12 years enables in his country of origin and in Norway demotivates him and can be a source of frustration and 'impatience' about not proceeding fast enough. On the other hand, his decision to focus on completing upper secondary school (which, after all, is voluntary) may also be seen as a way to sustain his own motivation as much as possible.

7.2 Time spent on education

School staff accounts

As outlined in the introduction, late arrivals need to catch up with a lot over a few years in Norwegian upper secondary school. Young refugees are often delayed in their education due to educational disruptions before and/or during flight (e.g. Dryden-Peterson, 2015). The school staff and student interviews show that refugee students can be eager to move forward at a reg-

²⁵ The Norwegian term is '*høgskole*' and denotes an institution that usually provides vocational higher education.

ular pace once they have begun Norwegian school. At the same time, teachers and other school staff may in some cases want some refugee students to *hurry slowly*, as a Norwegian saying goes, in order to be well prepared for the next educational and vocational stages. Several teachers suggest that it can be beneficial for some students who struggle with Norwegian and/or have little prior education to spend extended time on their education. Here, school staff especially mention the option of taking one of the upper secondary school years over the course of two years (an option enabled by the right to individually adapted education for recently arrived students in Norwegian school). For example, the vocational class coordinator Thor comments that although students may be formally qualified through their grades to advance to the next year, their actual Norwegian language proficiency may be inadequate for mastering the next year. In these cases, he deems it better to take the first upper secondary school year over two years. Thor comments that there can be a huge leap from the first to the second year in terms of the required Norwegian language skills, explaining that whilst the first year focuses on performance, in the second year, 'one also needs to explain, explain why, and reflect', which are crucial skills for a craftsman.

Another school staff member's suggestion is that it should be possible for students with very little prior schooling to spend more than one year in the preparatory class. A third suggestion,

by an office staff member who has good contact with many students, is that some students could benefit from spending a bit more time in lower secondary school. She comments that by default, pupils who complete lower secondary school are expected to continue at upper secondary school, and that this can be unfortunate for recently arrived students who have only spent a short time – sometimes only a month – in lower secondary school in Norway. No school staff interviewees suggest that refugee students should spend more time in Adult Education. On the contrary, some interviewees state that extended time in this type of education is not a good idea because of age differences between the young refugees and most of the other Adult Education students.

Meanwhile, several school staff members report reluctance by young refugees who are advised to spend a longer time in upper secondary school. In particular, a school advisor, Bente, elaborates on this:

What can maybe be a bit difficult when one compares young ethnic Norwegians with mental health challenges and a refugee with mental health challenges – I experience that when it is maybe a bit more difficult for a language minority student to say yes to adapted education. Because I think that those who have grown up in Norway are much more used to systems that can adjust and assist and that it's for the best. Eh... But I just see how difficult it is to get [language minority] students

to spend an extra year on grade 1 in upper secondary school, for example, even if it's because of language. And it doesn't help if the student in addition has mental health challenges because many feel a kind of shame, a sense of defeat, [that they are] not good enough, don't manage [...] But I think it's maybe also cultural [...], because they have grown up in an entirely different system than what we have, right?

Bente comments on the fact that the right to individual adjusted education in Norway also includes the option to take the first year over two years, whereas in many other countries it can be seen as failing because of being 'stupid'. In addition to such cultural differences, Bente comments that refugees may want to move forward because they are often a bit older than their classmates, which may add to a sense of defeat if they spend extended time:

When one starts upper secondary school one has the same amount of years and rights as all other students, so it doesn't really matter if you start when you are 16, 18 or 19, right? [...] But they find themselves that they have little time. They are older than others, they want to manage...just as much, right? [they think]: I'm not 19 and am going to manage anything less than a 16-year-old. That's defeat. [...] So they have little time. So we work a lot with this

process. And [emphasising to students] 'do you want to do well or do you want to hurry?' Often we must differentiate between those things.

Bente and her school advisor colleague (who participates in the same interview) add that the sense of urgency may increase because of wanting to earn money. Bente highlights that they often want to manage financially on their own. In addition, the school advisors and other school staff interviewees state that many want to start working soon in order to send remittances to support family in the country of origin.

Another school staff member explains a strong reluctance for extended time and wanting to proceed at a standard pace through upper secondary school with that in certain cultural backgrounds, 'getting the papers' as proof of having passed is more important than mastering the subjects. It is unclear from our data what this school staff member bases this view on and whether it is his own interpretation or not.

Some GOR school staff members, such as Stine and Bente, describe how they try to get refugee students with little prior education and/or low Norwegian language skills to spend a bit longer in upper secondary school. Stine comments that for school advisors it can be difficult to explain the system also due to language challenges. Nevertheless, Bente and Stine have found that students can become less reluctant to spend more time on

their education after the advisors and/or their parents (if the students are less than 18 years old) have talked to them. In such conversations, they emphasise how much the students *have* achieved compared to students who have been through the entire Norwegian school system since childhood, and stress that it can be worthwhile spending an extra year. Also, they try to convey that students are entitled to financial support during education in Norway. In another school, the school social worker (*miljøarbeider*) Sophia says that she tries to convince students who could benefit from extended time to regard the opportunity of individually adjusted education as a positive good and comments that the opportunity will not be available forever.

Student accounts

A few SEN students relate age differences between themselves and their classmates to a sense of urgency to complete school. One student comments on feelings of shame and defeat connected to spending a longer time in school, but with reference to other recently arrived students and not other younger majority students. In addition, some SEN students say that they do not want to spend more than one year on a grade level because they lose continuity in their social bonds. Because peers are usually very important at this life stage, such continuity is important for all youth. However, such continuity may have a particular urgency for young resettled refugees

who often have already disrupted social ties with people in the country of origin/transit countries. In addition, those who have been asylum seekers have often lived fragmented lives in Norway in different asylum reception centres before resettlement (e.g. Svendsen et al., 2018, p. 22).

A few of the SEN students readjusted their initial ambitions because of the many years needed to complete higher education, as they wanted to start working in their profession sooner. Some share that they want to start working as soon as possible in order to contribute economically to family in the country of origin. Twenty-one-year-old Henok explains how stressed he feels about getting an income in order to help family in the country of origin:

Henok: It's good to just go to school and have people who only go to school. It's very good. But for me, for example, who has family in [country of origin], well. They wait for you and such. So-

Interviewer: They wait for you to help them?

Henok: Yes, I must help them because I understand my family's situation.

Interviewer: And the situation is difficult?

Henok: Yes, yes. Yes. [...]

Henok: So if I don't work, I will get a lot of stress in my head. If I get a lot of stress in my head, there won't be school. [I have to] save the family first.

Henok's statement shows the complex interlinks that can exist between education, psychological well-being/distress and 'the refugee experience'.

In one of the GOR schools, some students have chosen to first complete a vocational education and plan on later taking the one-year supplementary general study programme (*påbyggningsår*) in upper secondary school that provides access to university and college (depending also on grade demands in particular studies). This choice enables income from a trained position while attending higher education.²⁶ Since this strategy is especially reported by students in one of the schools, it may be due to career guidance they have received from teachers/school advisors. In any case, the strategy seems well informed for students who struggle between the opposing desires of making money as soon as possible and getting a higher education.

In summary, the findings suggest that young refugees are eager to complete school, sometimes as soon as possible because of wanting to be financially independent, remittances and peer relations (wanting a sense of continuity). In addition, the interview with the school advisors suggests that spending a longer time can be experi-

enced as shameful due to cultural differences in national school systems. The findings, furthermore, point to strategies some students may use in order to start working as soon as possible.

7.3 The preparatory class

As detailed in Chapter 3, recently arrived students who have completed lower secondary school in Norway or its equivalent in the country of origin but need more training can attend a voluntary one-year preparatory class at an upper secondary school. As previously noted, the preparatory class teaching comprises compulsory school subjects with a special emphasis on learning the Norwegian language. Our findings pointed to how the class may potentially also be an arena for cultural integration and emphasis on vocational guidance. Previous research shows that there are large local variations in the way the preparatory class provision is organised and implemented (Rambøll, 2016). In contrast to other classes in upper secondary school, teachers do not have access to a national curriculum for the preparatory classes, but some counties have made their own curricula. Hence, preparatory class students' educational provisions and experiences can vary a lot between different schools. As the TURIN findings indicate, local variations can also reflect

²⁶ In Norway, most higher education is free. Combined student loans with low interest rates and stipends are provided during the study semesters by a state fund. However, many students also work part-time throughout their higher education to increase their income.

different levels of available competence in teaching minority language students in different schools.

Diversity in educational backgrounds

Some school staff members comment that one challenge for preparatory class teachers is the large diversity in students' prior educational levels in the same class and language levels (cf. Hilt, 2016; Hilt, 2017). The preparatory class teacher Birte, for example, comments that a consequence of the class diversity is that certain tasks can be too repetitious for some students while others continue to struggle despite many repetitions.

Educational experiences and challenges

No GOR students report discontentment with the educational aspects of the preparatory class. In the SEN schools, several students report that they like the teachers. However, a few SEN students express discontent with the educational content of the preparatory class. Because of this discontent, some SEN students see the year as a waste of time and state that they would have preferred instead to start directly in year one in upper secondary school. Some compare this with the Adult Education they have previously attended, where they experienced the teachers as more competent and knowledgeable in teaching language minority students. For example, a first-year student states, based on his previous experience:

I think [the preparatory class] is a waste of time. When I started preparatory class, I was 20. Now I'm 21, will be 22 next year, right. Some of those who attended compulsory school [adult education] with me started directly at upper secondary school without going to preparatory class. I can compare with my friends [classmates] now, they are 16 or 17 years old. [...] If they managed, it means that I would have managed very well [the year was a bit wasted [...]]. When we started preparatory class, we only had oral [training]. We had exams but not grades. We didn't have our own books [...] just sort of booklets [...]. Since they don't have grades, the students won't study well, and they will not practise.

The SEN/GOR differences in this student data may mirror a difference in the extent of available relevant school staff competence in teaching language minority students. Several SEN school staff members express a concern about a shortage of staff with qualifications on multilingualism and Norwegian as a second language, including in the preparatory classes (though some teachers do have these qualifications). This contrasts with the GOR schools, where several preparatory class teachers have high relevant qualifications obtained through education and experience related to language minority students and Norwegian as a second language, as we return to in Section 7.9.

Career guidance and cultural integration into Norwegian schools

The preparatory class is not only an arena for language and school subject learning but can potentially be an arena for explicitly and implicitly providing newly arrived students with knowledge on the Norwegian educational system and school culture. In two of the schools, interviewees report that a central responsibility of the preparatory classes is to provide information and guidance on how the Norwegian educational system works and on the different tracks in the school system, in order to assist newly arrived students to make choices for their future education. Some of the students who are asked (in open questions) whether they get sufficient information from school on the educational path and choices ahead refer to the information they receive from preparatory class teachers. Furthermore, the (previously quoted) advisors in this school visit the preparatory classes to inform about the educational system and the advisors' role and invite students to contact them. One of these school advisors comments that it is important to show up in classes since students vary individually in their inclination to actively contact the school advisor.

Several school staff members and students comment on differences between Norwegian school culture and the school culture of many other countries. The teacher coordinator Thor comments that the Norwegian school culture can be challenging if one is

used to more hierarchical teacher-student relations, as the Norwegian system has a goal of an egalitarian student-teacher relationship, enabled by student democracy and students' right to contribute to decision-making. Furthermore, he ponders on whether it can be difficult for many minority students to be direct towards the teacher because of what he perceives as a sense of gratitude:

To me it is not big words: I sincerely mean that students should have different [individually adjusted] education from the day they start school to the day they complete. [...] I think the culture in our school, where students can say that 'this doesn't work for me', it is kind of perceived [by many language minority students] as criticism. [...] language minority students are maybe more afraid to say [what they need] because..eh..ehh, I don't know, maybe it's something cultural, maybe it's gratitude, I don't know.

In another school, the preparatory class teacher Fredrik describes challenges related to how to convey knowledge on Norwegian school culture and expectations. He underlines that such cultural learning can involve navigating subtle codes and thinks that the preparatory class can play an important contributing role in cultural integration in Norwegian schools.

Fredrik: In Norwegian school culture, and in cultural understanding in general, [...] and in

Norwegian society in general we have quite a lot of invisible boundaries [...]. So they [immigrant students/refugee students] do not understand [...] my rebuke when they come in late. [...] When I point out that they are late it is a kind of rebuke, right. [...] And a Norwegian student would probably feel embarrassed, at least to hear it several times. But they [some language minority students] don't understand it. [...] That's also a reason why we have this preparatory year, they have to kind of learn this too.

Interviewer: That it is a rebuke.

Fredrik: Right. That they manage...that [they realise that] I actually write down every time they are late, right.

In another school, the school social worker Sophia is clear in her view that students from other countries need to be met with the same expectations as other students from day one. She claims that in the school in which she works, preparatory students meet less strict expectations than in other classes, as absence is 'not being noted down so much' (we do not have teacher data on whether this was, in fact, the case at the school). In her opinion, a lack of absence notes and grades in preparatory class is a disfa-vour to the students. Sophia comments that students can come from a school with a stricter school culture and get the wrong impression of what is expected in Norway and therefore do not get adequately prepared for regular upper secondary school.

These statements suggest that (at least in these schools) there may be a need for teachers to (even more) explicitly convey what is expected in Norwegian schools. Although cultural learning is learnt through practice, the preparatory class may be an arena that could allow time for conversations on different school cultures.

Preparatory class and social relations

Student accounts

Overall, refugee interviewees in both the SEN and GOR samples seem socially content in the preparatory classes. In several of the schools, teachers and students report that there is a good social milieu in the preparatory class, where students can experience a sense of belonging. In one of the GOR schools, interviewees state that students can feel a sense of belonging and/or identification in the preparatory class because they are in a similar situation – especially with reference to insufficient Norwegian language skills. Birte, a preparatory class teacher in this school, talks about previous students who return to visit the preparatory class because of their positive experiences there:

They [preparatory class students] say themselves that they are very positive about attending upper secondary school [...], many have experienced feeling completely on the outside in classes, right. Both are excluded or...haven't been part of the class and

suchlike, so we usually get feedback that here [the preparatory class] is a good place to be. I think that it seems like despite very different backgrounds, both refugees and not [refugees], that they.. feel like a group, at they belong, that it is a place they think it is good to be. [...] They feel a strong sense of belonging and you also see that many of the old [preparatory class] students come back to us, right. At the same time, they are very proud of having moved forward. It's kind of like, 'it's safe here, but at the same time "I am moving forward"".

Both school staff and students describe a tendency in schools at large for good social contacts and friendships between different language minority students' criss-crossing country backgrounds and/or migratory reasons. In the preparatory classes, a similar pattern is reported by school staff members and students in four of the schools. This is also backed up by researcher observations in the preparatory classes.

Several refugee students who attend both regular classes and preparatory classes express that they want more informal arenas inside and outside school to practise Norwegian (see also Section 8.1.). Some students are concerned about a lack of contact with majority Norwegians in the classroom. A few students think that it is unfortunate with the preparatory class provision *as such* for this reason.

I thought we would learn with [...] a mix, with Norwegians, so [...] we would learn good language [...] [become] friends [...] But everyone here [in the class] are foreigners and not so [laughs lightly] good at the language, right? [...] If I [...] make a mistake and pronounce something in the wrong way [...] to someone from [my] home country, another foreigner, [he/she] will understand what I mean. But maybe we [continue] to make [the] same mistake and have the wrong pronunciation, right? So we can't correct each other. But Norwegians [will] correct you and you learn more. A lot more. (Masud, 19, preparatory class student)

You learn a lot [from] Norwegians actually, if you come [in a class with them]. [But] Some [classmates] come from the same country, you hang out with them, right. You don't learn anything. You just speak your mother tongue. [...] But if you come [in a class] with Norwegians you get mixed with them. You learn about society, what it's like, right [...] I think that you get better at Norwegian if you go together [in the same class] with Norwegian people, right. (Tefsaye, 19, preparatory class student)

I think it's a very good system. [...] [But] the preparatory class should have a way to be with Norwegians. For example, the prepar-

atory class and a class with Norwegians from the school could meet and learn together for a full day once a week or once a month [...] Then I think one can get to know other Norwegians, and it will become easier between classes also [to interact]. [...] If you get friends, you will get good at language [...]. And you talk to them all the time. So I think that if there are also such systems, it will be [...] better. (Henok, 21, preparatory class student)

These quotes show that the few students who share this view feel strongly about this issue. They perceive the preparatory class as particularly unfortunate for language learning, as well as for friendships with majority Norwegians and learning about Norwegian society.

School staff accounts

No school staff members express similar concerns to the students quoted above regarding the preparatory class provision being unfortunate *as such* for language learning and social integration. School staff generally signal the educational need for the class. In one of the schools, some school staff members react to the physical placement of the preparatory classes. They describe the location as being too far away from the other regular school classes. One school social worker (*miljøarbeider*) suggests that the preparatory classes instead 'should have been located in the school's most central place to integrate them as much as possible' and

adds that the preparatory classes 'maybe shouldn't be placed beside each other'.

Some school staff members confirm that there is little contact between the preparatory class and other students when they are asked directly about this by the interviewers, but they say this does not differ from the general pattern in the school – as it is common to have most contacts and interaction with one's classmates or the same vocational track. However, several school staff members reflect on how to increase contact arenas between preparatory class students and other students. Some of these reflections indicate that teacher-coordinated contact between students with low Norwegian language skills and regular class students is not straightforward and that such efforts in the worst case can have negative unintended effects. One example is the school advisor Ida:

Interviewer: Maybe there should be some shared activities [between preparatory and regular class students].

Ida: Yes. But [...] one could also think that one gives it a year. I agree that [newly arrived students should be] socialised very quickly [with classmates when they start] in the first year [of regular upper secondary school]. [...] In preparatory class they tend to be a bit to themselves. [...] But I'm not so sure that that's a problem. I try to promote having some patience too, because it can get a bit artificial also. [...]and] then the contact isn't necessarily very

good. One sort of pretends, and sends them into [regular] classes and then they are actually not able to talk together so they don't get to know each other and then sometimes it does more harm than good [...]

Interviewer: I've seen in one of the classes that they work in pairs, where they sit together. That it [...] can make it easier to cooperate in certain tasks.

Ida: Yes, I think contact with other students is [...] important, but I'm just a bit afraid that [...] we will make a system where one [...] gets an illusion that [looks for words]..If the language isn't in place and they don't communicate particularly well, but we just create a system where they [...] are supposed to [relate], then they can [...] be polite from both sides, but it doesn't become a real [...] interaction or socialisation process. [...] So I think that one sometimes [should] have some patience, let the process unfold a bit. [...] [When I worked in] primary and lower secondary school I saw that adults constantly try to get involved, fix things, in order for friendships to develop, and then you see that they almost do more harm than good. [...] Polite children do as they are told and they supposedly play or supposedly talk together and then that's it, nothing more happens.

In a group interview in another school, teachers share similar reflections and experiences:

Teacher group interview participant 1: What's particular about the preparatory class students are the breaks. What happens in the breaks? Do they run around school and mix with the other Norwegian students? No. They sit together. It was like that last year, and it is like that this year. [...] There was a buddy system project with, I think it was one of the social science classes. But it was just partly successful, wasn't it? They didn't become proper friends and suchlike.

Teacher group interview participant 2: The sociology students were the worst. The preparatory class, they were – they tried a bit, or – it got very artificial. But these second year students just didn't know how to start a conversation, how they should get contact. They were friendly; it was [...] positive in that sense, but they just didn't manage. Even though we had prepared conversation topics and quizzes and everything.

A school social worker in another school reflects on how to create arenas where there is not a need for strong Norwegian language skills. His school has voluntary leisure activities in long midday breaks. These activities have included playing music in a designated music room, where preparatory class students have attended along with others. The school social worker comments that it has been a good integration arena and that they also see that having such activities to look forward to prevents dropout

among students (in general) who have felt alone. The school has also bought in board games for the library and arranged a sports tournament to promote more joint interaction.

The school staff accounts suggest that teacher-organised initiatives that aim for increased contact between among preparatory/regular class students need to be reflected upon to avoid them becoming awkward one-time events. Arenas for regular contact where good Norwegian language levels are of less importance may be a better way forward.

7.4 Language

Language acquisition in the new country of residence is important for learning as well as for mental health/resilience (cf. Section 4.2.) and for belonging and integration processes. Language competence is an obvious benefit for developing social relationships, cultural knowledge, labour market access, entry and completion of higher education, and for understanding the institutions and practical matters in the new country of residence (see also Hynie, 2018; Kartal et al., 2019; Omata, Habash, & Abdo, 2019; Peterson et al., 2017).

Language challenges is a central topic in the interviews, with reference to both educational and psychosocial transitions.

Learning school subjects in a new language.

Several students underline that learning Norwegian is crucial for them and some disclose that language learning is what they appreciate most about going to school.

Both teacher and student interviewees talk about challenges connected to learning school subjects in a new language. Some students, including some of those who have a lot of previous schooling, comment on the extra time they put into homework because of language challenges. Several students who have a lot of previous education from the country of origin state that they find the educational content is on the same level as, or easier than in, the country of origin, and that the Norwegian language is the main challenge. An example is Zahra, a 21-year-old student who attends the first year of a vocational track, who comments:

The school subjects aren't as difficult as in my home country. [...] But [the Norwegian] language is difficult. I maybe use two or three hours to understand the chapter we are going to have a test in. (Zahra, 21, first grade student)

Dealing with Norwegian language challenges

Students vary in their reports on how they emotionally relate to language challenges. The variation may reflect differences in resources (e.g. prior schooling, access to school support) and individual differences in

one's ability to acquire new languages as well as personality differences. From a resilience perspective, researchers (Sleijpen et al., 2015) have underlined a need for considering changes over time and individual differences. They highlight that, for example, 'some young refugees [in the studies in the meta-ethnography] were positively challenged to succeed in education despite adverse circumstances, while others became discouraged when adversity accumulated over time' (Sleijpen et al., 2015, p. 172). In addition, such variations may reflect changes over time in motivation levels.

The 21-year-old second year student Aisha seems to approach language challenges in a pragmatic, matter-of-fact way. Aisha came to Norway three years earlier as a quota refugee and lives with her family. Because of the need to work hard at school, Aisha has cut out some of her previous hobbies and prefers to recharge her batteries in her spare time by relaxing and spending time with her family. She generally does not experience schoolwork as too difficult because of her prior schooling, but learning subjects in the new language means that she has to put in extra effort:

Now I'm very busy with school and suchlike, because school and schoolwork is maybe not *that* difficult; well, it is difficult, but to me it becomes twice as hard because first there is the language and then the task itself. (Aisha, 21)

Aisha adds in a matter-of-fact accepting manner 'that is the way it is' about having to drop some hobbies for the time being. Meanwhile, Bahati, a preparatory class student who arrived in Norway through family reunification three years ago, explains that he felt 'irritated' in the beginning when he was struggling with the language and describes how nervous he had felt in the classroom because he feared that the teacher would ask him questions he could not understand because of his language levels.

The 20-year-old preparatory class student Lilah, who came to Norway as an asylum seeker with her family two years ago, talks about how tired she sometimes gets from Norwegian language learning. This can make everyday conversation challenging. Lilah is intent on learning the new language. She also talks about enjoying a previous apprenticeship because she could practise and improve her Norwegian language and learn about Norwegian society. At school, she enjoys being around her classmates during breaks but prefers to take the role of an observer and to not get very involved. She comments that for the time being, she prefers to be more socially withdrawn among peers than she had been in her country of origin. Though she doesn't explicitly say so, her current withdrawal may relate to the demanding effort and concentration she expends on learning and communicating in Norwegian, a topic she comments on elsewhere during the interview.

Interviewer: And how are the classes going? Are you able to concentrate on what is being taught?

Lilah: Yes, but when [name of teacher] talks a lot, a lot, I, I forget all Norwegian. [...] When the teacher talks, I concentrate...[looks for words], I get full, I don't understand anything.

Interviewer: Get full?

Lilah: When she talks a lot about stuff I concentrate in her class, afterwards [...] I don't understand.

Interviewer: Is it because it gets too much?

Lilah: Yes, yes, yes. [...] I manage [to concentrate]. Just for an hour or so. I don't manage [to concentrate] all day.

Interviewer: Ok. So the whole day is too much?

Lilah: Yes.

Interviewer: You get tired? Why?

Lilah: For example, now I can't concentrate! [laughs] [...], when I talk and make pronunciation and language mistakes, and say the verbs completely wrong, I make many, many mistakes; therefore I get tired [laughs].

The statement indicates how overwhelmed Lilah sometimes feels in everyday conversation, in this case in the conversation with the interviewer.

Language-related challenges in social interactions

We previously referred to some teacher reflections on how language

challenges may contribute to awkward interactions with majority Norwegians (Section 7.3).

Other interviewees also detail how language challenges can get in the way in refugee students' contact with majority Norwegians. The 20-year-old preparatory student Karza finds that a combination of his language levels and majority Norwegians' mannerisms makes it difficult to approach them. Karza has been in Norway for one year and lives with his family. He and his family have close contact with a neighbour from another country, and Karza also joins his father to meet his father's friends in his spare time. He says that he is generally quite content in Norway but that he regrets not knowing the Norwegian language better and misses having friends. Karza enjoys going to school since it keeps him busy with activities. He misses his country of origin and describes a feeling of alienation in public space, stating that when he looks around he thinks 'these are not my people'. When Karza is asked whether he sometimes feels on the outside, he responds: 'Yes yes, [...] of course. I often feel on the outside. Often [laughs], not sometimes.'

Karza describes his preparatory class peers as easy to be around but calls them 'colleagues', explaining that he wants close friends. He finds it difficult to approach majority Norwegians:

Interviewer: What was it like meeting new people here? [...]

Karza: In the preparatory class it is...very easy. But it's very difficult to meet those who attend [regular] Norwegian class. Because they think it's strange if a person they don't know approaches them and stands beside them. It's a bit difficult for them, a bit strange for them. [...]

Interviewer: But do you want to get to know them..or..?

Karza: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Yes. But it's a bit difficult?

Karza: *Very* difficult. [...]

Interviewer: Hm. What do you think you can do to get to know more...?

Karza: I must have...very good pronunciation. [...] I must talk like them. [...] I want to be fluent.

When Karza talks about his desire to become fluent in Norwegian, he exemplifies it with not knowing a slang word for greeting others. However, he thinks the main reason for the little contact is that majority Norwegians 'don't like to meet new people', commenting with a laugh that the conversation topics would not require much sophistication:

If we met here, we would just talk about football or suchlike [...]. We wouldn't talk about natural science and suchlike [laughs].

Frida, a teacher, is another interviewee who comments on language-related challenges in social interactions. Frida thinks it can be difficult for

majority Norwegian youth to be patient enough with non-fluent peers because of their life stage and the fast, contemporary society:

Interviewer: What is your impression when it comes to refugees getting friends? How do they get friends?

Frida: My impression is that it's a bit difficult in the beginning, because of the language barrier, right. [...] I experience that [...] the other students are inclusive, but it can be more demanding. And, I've sometimes thought that today [...] we want to access information so quickly, right? With a quick key-stroke, you can check the news because something happened on the other side of the world, [...], what's on TV, or check your mail or... you want the information quite quickly. And I think that can be a bit challenging sometimes, if you have a language barrier and need a bit more time to explain yourself and maybe spend a little longer in understanding what is being said. So it can be something to do with patience, because youth are very impatient, they want answers immediately. And that can influence negatively [...whether they] spend time on including [newly arrived] in group work, right [...]. Time is something youth have less of.

Lilah's and Frida's statements point to how it can try one's patience to communicate with low language levels, for both parts in the conversation.

Prior knowledge of English

English is a mandatory subject in the first year of Norwegian upper secondary school. Some GOR school staff comment that it can be very difficult for newly arrived students with no prior English knowledge to learn two completely new languages at the same time.

Several students in the GOR sample had English as a school subject or language of instruction in the country of origin. School staff and refugee students refer to several benefits of this prior English knowledge besides the obvious benefits this gives for continuity in English classes. One benefit is that students can occasionally have interpreted/explained Norwegian words they do not understand in English. This translation sometimes transpires through the use of a downloadable language program. Another benefit, reported by a preparatory class teacher, is that knowledge of English grammar (or another second language) can help newly arrived students to learn Norwegian. This teacher states that prior second language learning experience is beneficial because it enables students' language learning strategies, as has also been found in research (Bigelow, Schwarz, & National Institute for, 2010). Finally, a student with good English language levels says that he received information about the different educational study programmes at school in English, which assisted him in making a choice.

Language assessment in one of the schools

In one of the SEN schools, young refugees express strong dismay about an expectation that their language will be assessed in the second year. In the year that preceded the TURIN interviews, the assessment had resulted in some students having to retake the first year. Interviews and participant observation in two of the classes show that several of the newly arrived students refuse to participate in the language assessment at the start of their second year and express frustration and anger with the assessment practice. Students describe the assessment as an 'intellectual attack' and feel stigmatised and devalued. Their statements include 'it makes me feel like an idiot' and 'they [the school] think we are stupid'.

A feeling of stigma and feeling intellectually inadequate seems to be fuelled by the type of test and the way these tests are administered, as the assessment is designed for students with Norwegian as a first language. Students who have taken the test highlight that the language test was stressful and that they need to be prepared and practise before conducting the test. They fear that the consequences of the language assessment will be an extra year in upper secondary school or being placed in a preparatory class. One student says: '[T]his irritated me a lot, and then I lost motivation for school.' She thinks that being in a class with only minority students is a hin-

drance to learning Norwegian, and repeatedly says: 'I thought, if we don't learn Norwegian, how we can integrate, right? That's how I think.' Another student has the same concerns and feels discriminated against. She says: '[I]t makes me very angry and I thought, not everyone has to take the first year of upper secondary school over two years, right?'

Applying a critical socio-linguistic framework (Duchêne, Moyer, & Roberts, 2013; Shohamy, 2001) in the analysis, the findings show that there is a gap between students' and teachers' perceptions of the language assessment practice and that the school has not made efforts to exchange these different views. Students' concerns involve the assessment itself, the type of test and the way the tests are administered (*internal factors*). The teachers, however, highlight *assessment external factors*, mainly related to students' lack of understanding of the Norwegian school system, the language skills required for succeeding in upper secondary school and the good intentions of the school system.

The library and language support

One of the case schools provides additional language support through the library. They have hired two librarians, which is significant since upper secondary schools usually have only one. The library is intended as a meeting place where it is easy to ask for help. The librarians have numerous functions. Throughout almost the whole school day, the library offers help with homework and with finding

literature for school projects. To further strengthen educational support, the school's IT support staff are also located in the library so that it is easy for students to ask them questions if needed. In addition, a voluntary organisation organises weekly homework help in the library one afternoon per week. The school arranges regular talks with guest speakers, international days and other events that are intended to 'open the door to the students to the world out there'.

The school emphasises additional educational support through the library because 40 per cent of the students are language minority students. School staff explain that the provision can be important for language minority students who struggle with the Norwegian language and who can get limited help from their parents. Many students also work after school, and it can therefore be useful that the librarians are available for school support throughout the day. The library also has other psychosocial functions, as we return to in Section 8.5.

7.5 Schools' diversity/refugee competence and experience

As already mentioned, the findings suggest that, broadly speaking, there is a contrast between the GOR schools and the SEN schools in terms of whether school staff have enough educational qualifications and experience to work with refugees and other language minority students.

In the SEN schools, school staff report that generally their systems are too poorly developed to accommodate newly arrived students and that they have too few teachers with competence in multilingualism and teaching Norwegian as a second language. Some school staff describe their approach as learning about the field as they go along. An SEN school interviewee says that one consequence of a lack of school qualifications is that a system problem is erroneously made into individual student problems.

A few GOR interviewees comment on a certain level of uncertainty when meeting refugees, which is in line with some statements made by SEN school staff. However, such GOR statements are uncommon, and these interviewees also underline the competence the school *does* have. A more general pattern in the GOR findings is that school staff tend to express confidence in their ability to provide refugee students with high-quality education. In two of the schools, this confidence seems partly to relate to the schools' long experience in providing education to language minority students, as exemplified by the teacher Linda, who comments:

Interviewer: How do you find the school's educational provision for young refugees?

Linda: Well, we have been used to receiving many, so they are well taken care of. We have school social workers who have been an important conversational partner for several [young refugees]. And then we have a school nurse

working full-time and the teachers are used to having students from different minorities in their class. We have had that for so many years that it's kind of part of everyday life. I think they are well taken care of. In the same way as others [other students]. And of course, their language level is assessed in the autumn when they start [school]. Those who follow the adapted Norwegian lessons also get their language assessed in the second and third grades, before it is decided whether they will need adapted Norwegian education anymore.

GOR school staff point out several challenges and dilemmas regarding refugee students'/language minority students' education. However, GOR school staff members' motivation for increasing their competence generally seems to be driven by a desire to improve *even* more – as one interviewee puts it – and not because of a frustration over insufficient relevant competence and experience. School staff mostly comment on a need for more competence/knowledge in psychosocial rather than educational issues. The GOR school staff who *do* comment on challenges in providing sufficient educational provision tend to address topics other than school staff competence. For instance, in one of the GOR schools, some school staff members say that the school administration should have a stronger systematic focus on language minority student teaching. Another example is a GOR school staff member who reports that

it is challenging to organise five hours of extra Norwegian training for language minority students without students missing out on other classes. This is an additional provision to what newly arrived students are entitled to. Thus, these comments relate to how to further strengthen the provision and do not concern uncertainty over how to provide newly arrived students with educational measures they are entitled to.

In the TURIN study, the GOR and SEN data collection and main analysis stages were carried out by two different research teams without detailed exchanges between the teams on emerging themes for further follow-up during the fieldwork. Hence, comparing these findings should be done with caution. Nevertheless, some reflections can be made. First, the findings underscore the need for school

staff members' formal competence in second language teaching. The school staff statements on competence appear to be mirrored in the educational contentment/discontentment expressed by preparatory class students in the USN and GOR schools (Section 7.3). Relatedly, students in one of the SEN schools expressed strong discontent and a sense of stigma with reference to their language being assessed and the way this test was administered (Section 7.4).

Second, the findings on GOR school staff statements regarding previous experience with school diversity align with a study on asylum seeker and refugee children in the UK (Arnot & Pinson, 2005), which focused on six schools in the UK. In Arnot and Pinson's analysis, schools with long experience with school diversity (in terms of country backgrounds) drew on and benefitted from this experience.

8. Psychosocial transitions

We now proceed to psychosocial transitions, addressing social relations, psychological well-being and the psychosocial role of teachers and other school staff. In the final part, we address teacher views on promoting young refugees' mental health and touch on school-level challenges and strengths.

8.1 Refugee students' social relations

Studies show the importance of interpersonal relations for young people's mental health, and that mental health also influences educational achievements (see Mælan et al., 2018). Students who thrive socially tend to do well educationally. Likewise, loneliness can lead to concentration problems and school avoidance (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2016b). Moreover, a lack of a good social school environment can mean there is a risk of 'poor identity development and low self-esteem' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2016b, our translation). Furthermore, it is pointed out that students who struggle socially with peers have a greater need for a positive relationship with teachers.

In this section, we outline central findings on students' social relations. We start with family before proceeding to peer relations and finally touch on relations with majority Norwegians beyond school.

Family

A few school staff interviewees comment on cultural differences between majority Norwegians and many immigrant youths' backgrounds concerning the extent to which one should prioritise school commitments or family commitments. The school social worker Jahn comments that some refugee youth have been absent from school due to family matters, e.g. because of having to help with tasks such as looking after younger siblings. In the same school, the school advisors Bente and Stine talk about similar issues. In their opinion, situations that can occur in all families (e.g. accompanying family members to public offices) can be seen as necessary to prioritise above school for some country backgrounds. The school advisors have found that absence rates have decreased for these students after having talked to them about absence rules in Norwegian schools. If the students were under 18, their parents were also part of these conversations. They comment that it can be a challenge to reach students with such information before their absence rates are so high that they will fail classes. They try to be highly visible at school by informing about their work in all school classes, but since the school is large and the advisors are already very busy with students they are following up individually, they still express doubts about whether they are generally able to reach students who

struggle at an early enough stage.

Studies have found that for some young refugees, a major challenge in the new country is that they have a heavy responsibility as cultural brokers and language interpreters for family members (e.g. Shakya et al., 2010, p. 70). In addition, refugee children/youth can be affected by parents who have trauma-related psychological distress in a process of secondary traumatisation (Leth, Niclasen, Ryding, Baroud, & Esbjorn, 2014). However, the recurring theme reported by the 14 GOR students who live with their families is detailed reports on how much they enjoy living with family and the supportive, constructive role individual family members play in their schoolwork and goals. One example is Aisha, who comments:

I have decided to focus 100 per cent on school. [...] Because I have big, well, I have many plans for my future. So to achieve it I just have to work. Work hard. That's what my mum always says.

Other students talk about the supportive role of certain family members in the country of origin with whom they are in regular contact. Supportive family members in Norway and abroad can thus be a source of self-efficacy (cf. Bandura, 1994), i.e. they contribute to their sense of ability to influence future outcomes through their performances (Bandura, 1994).

Only one interviewee, Alaia, reports that she struggles with being 'a broker' for other family members. She experiences this role as a heavy burden. Alaia is 22 years old and came to Norway as an unaccompanied minor. Later, family members came on family reunification. She attends regular upper secondary school. The pressures Alaia has felt while she lived with her family became so demanding that she chose to move from her family. Currently, she shares an apartment with another young woman.

Interviewer: What was better about living on your own? Or what made you move?

Alaia: I became more independent and think more about myself because when I lived with my mum I always thought most about them. But now I get some time to think about myself too.

Interviewer: Mm. Did you have to help your family a lot when you lived at home?

Alaia: Yes, of course, because I am the oldest.

Interviewer: And maybe you knew most, or kind of knew the system.

Alaia: Yes, because I was the oldest and came first to Norway of course. And my siblings are young. And my mum doesn't know the language. And the grown-ups in the house are me and my mum. And my mum doesn't know the language and not much about the system. And I know a bit more and speak the language better than her. So there

are a few more responsibilities for me.

Alaia says that she had to help her siblings with, for example, schoolwork and meetings. She says she got tired and sometimes could 'forget everything'. Her responsibilities also led to her struggling with concentration at school, having 'thoughts all the time about what is going to happen, and about what is not going to happen'. It does not seem as if it is her greater knowledge of Norwegian and the Norwegian system compared to her mother *as such* that feels burdensome for Alaia. Rather, the challenge interacts with and is intensified by being the first family member who migrated to Norway, by having lived in a single-parent household and by expectations specific to being the oldest sibling. In addition, she had a very difficult flight and time as an asylum seeker in Norway (not detailed here for anonymity reasons), which affects her.

Alaia says it is sometimes difficult to live 'alone' too, as no one can help her with schoolwork. It does not help her psychological well-being that she works several times a week as well as going to school. She has little spare time to connect with others and feels overwhelmed by how to manage schoolwork. Alaia sounds depressed and despondent; in this respect, she stands out among the refugee students in the sample in terms of the extremely high levels of *current* psychological distress she reports. In addition, in contrast to other interviewees, Alaia also seems to be motivated at

school by feeling indebted to her mother, who strongly wants her to have an education that she did not have herself (cf. S. Fekjær & Leirvik, 2011). Many aspects of Alaia's life and struggles support the ecological model on resilience and previous research on protective and risk factors and their potentially cumulative impact on mental health. Current risk factors for Alaia's psychological well-being include a lack of school support (in combination with experiencing strong pressure from her mother to use her educational opportunities), and difficult experiences in her distant and close past. In addition to harsh experiences during her flight and as a young asylum seeker in Norway, her pre-migration experiences include difficult experiences in her country of origin that were both family related and structural.

Alaia and other students report that they feel lonely and miss friends and family in the country of origin. Alaia reflects thus on her first period in Norway as an unaccompanied minor:

Young people who are alone in Norway have a very hard time. I have lived both alone and with the family. When you are alone, you always feel on the outside because when you start school all the children have parents and in [school] meetings it is always the parents who come. But for you, the employees in the reception centre come. You get sick and go to hospital, and an employee comes with you. It's not your parents who come with you. [...] I think they

[unaccompanied refugees] need more attention, more warmth... [...]

[Those employees] give more. They just say 'OK, that's the time you should be home, that's the time you should be at school', and you are like, 'OK'. You go to school and then you come home. Nobody cares about what happens to you in the meantime.

The preparatory class student Tefsaye also shares his experience of loneliness as an unaccompanied minor:

Interviewer: Do you want to find a job?

Tefsaye: Of course, why not? [...] I have a lot of time off, I could work then. [...]

Interviewer: Why is it good to work?

Tefsaye: Eh, because I think [...] My head can get a break.

Interviewer: If you work, your head can relax?

Tefsaye: You don't think as much. If you sit at home, you can think about many things.

Interviewer: What do you think about then?

Tefsaye: You think about many things, you don't have family in Norway, right. Feel, like, lonely. Right. If you have family around you, you talk all [the time], right. Your friends can't always be with you.

A third example of expressing an acute sense of loss of daily contact with family comes from Henok, who has a lot of school absence. Henok currently lives alone. When the interviewer asks what the most difficult thing about attending school is, he wells up and responds:

What is difficult for me is to wake up in the morning. It was my family who woke me up, made food, I ate and went to school. [...] Often when one doesn't have a family, something is missing and sometimes you can't sleep at night. So yeah, it's difficult.

Another recurring topic regarding family among students and school staff is worrying about family members in the country of origin. The worries, grief and sense of loss referred to in this section can all be risk factors in mental health. In accordance with previous resilience research, supportive relations inside and outside school can act as protective factors (Section 4.2).

Peer relations

Studies on young refugees have identified peers as important sources of resilience and well-being (Eide et al., 2018; Jørgensen, 2017; Sleijpen et al., 2015). We have already referred to findings on the preparatory class and social relations. Furthermore, we saw that a desire to take upper secondary at a regular pace can partly be due to a need for continuity in social bonds, as well as feelings of shame connected to falling behind (often younger) classmates. Here, we elaborate further on

findings on peer relations.

Some students report that they miss having good friends while many others report that they have good peer relations and friendships, usually with students from different country backgrounds. Sometimes these friends include majority Norwegians. However, a more recurring theme is that interviewees report better contact with other language minority students than with majority Norwegians. In several of the schools, school staff interviews point in the same direction. It is said that language minority students (in both regular and preparatory classes) often have good social bonds with other language minority students from different countries. Because of this empirical division by interviewees, the two next sections address, first, relations with other language minority students at school, and the following section concerns social relations with majority Norwegians inside and outside school. However, the two themes are partly interrelated, as we will show.

School diversity and peer relations

According to school staff and student accounts, social bonds across different country backgrounds do *not* seem to be based on migration reasons, for example that refugees tend to form particularly close social bonds. On the contrary, these bonds often seem to cross-cut both country backgrounds and migration categories. One interviewee comments that a student with, for example a Somali background can

feel more drawn to, and at ease with, a student with a Russian rather than a majority Norwegian background.

On a group level, minority youth can have a shared 'migration experience' and often encounter many similar experiences and challenges related to, for example, re-establishing social networks, language challenges, cultural integration, discrimination, and missing family and friends in the country of origin (cf. Kao, 1999; D. Ryan, Dooley, & Benson, 2008). A sense of identification with other language minority students may partly be based on such shared experiences. Interviewees do not tend to explicitly mention such reasons, except for a few comments about Norwegian-born students who have known each other for a long time before upper secondary school; by extension, newly arrived students may seek out each other. Also, some school staff explain the often good connections between language minority students by indicating that they identify with each other (especially as they have similar language skills) and because they often have difficulties with accessing social milieus with mainly majority Norwegians. Some school staff who themselves have emigrated to Norway comment that they have good connections with language minority students and often experience trust among these stu-

dents because of their own background.²⁷ For example, the teacher Helena states:

[T]hey [language minority students] maybe open up more easily than others when I talk to them. They kind of get trust [towards me] like 'you are one of us'.

Though it would require further research to substantiate, such an initial trust/sense of affinity based on a shared migration experience may also play a role as a starting point in language minority peer relations that criss-cross different national backgrounds.

In two GOR schools, school staff think that school diversity can be a source of belonging for language minority students and report that some students apply to or return to the school because of the diversity. For example, the preparatory class teacher Birte states:

I have often experienced language minority students who tried to attend a different school after the first year here and then they return to this school and the main reason is always the social milieu. That they notice that there is a more, sort of, ethnic Norwe-

gian environment in the neighbouring schools where it is more difficult for them [...] to get a nice social thing. Whilst here [in this school], there are more [students] in their category so it's easier [for them] to identify [with them].

Such notions concur with the statements of the third year student Jamiila. Jamiila has attended several schools in Norway at lower secondary level and different upper secondary schools. She says that she likes her current school because of its diversity and reflects further as follows:

Interviewer: What was it like socially when you changed from lower to upper secondary school? Did you get more friends, get to know more people?

Jamiila: It's a bit different because in lower secondary, most were foreigners, right. And I think they were more open than Norwegians. And I got many friends and suchlike there [...], they were sociable [...]. After that, I went to another school where [...] eh, I was the only African in class, I was the only Muslim, I was the only foreigner; so it was a very large transition for me. And then I started at [another upper secondary school] in the second year, right, so it was a bit difficult because the students

²⁷ The potential impact of teacher ethnicity on student/pupil relations has been researched in other national contexts (e.g. Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Driessen, 2015; Janta & Harte, 2016, p. 25) but has – to the best of our knowledge – received little attention in Norwegian educational research.

knew each other from before from the first year [...], but I got some friends from the last year. A few Norwegians and a few foreigners. [...] But after that I moved to this school and I think there is a big difference between this school and the last one.

Interviewer: You felt more on the outside in [previous school]?

Jamiila: Yes.

Interviewer: But not here?

Jamiila: Not here.

The diversity Jamiila seeks has to do with ethnicity, religion and national backgrounds. Some school staff members point to other aspects of school diversity that can make the school attractive to students. Two interviewees point out that lower levels of pressure to conform in terms of how to dress can make it easier to attend the school (as, for example, there is less pressure to wear certain labels or a certain clothing style).

Contact with majority Norwegians

Social and cultural distance

Several interviewees talk about close social bonds with individual majority Norwegians. Some of these are peers. For others, their contacts come through channels that directly relate to having recently arrived. For example, one student who attends the first year regularly meets one of her former Adult Education teachers and his wife. Some unaccompanied minors still have good contact with their guardian also after they have turned 18. Another student talks about two girls her

age who are refugee guides (a Red Cross initiative that matches refugees to volunteer individuals, with the aim of introducing refugee individuals to the local community and thus leisure activities together).

A recurring pattern is difficulty with getting to know majority Norwegians in the first place. There are hardly any reports among refugee students on experiencing a strong sense of exclusion at school (e.g. experiencing harassment and racism). But many state that – for various other reasons – they can struggle with getting to know majority Norwegians inside and outside school. Many want more contact with majority Norwegians to build friendships, for language training reasons (cf. Section 7.3) and/or in order to learn more about Norwegian society.

Most students explain social distance to majority Norwegians by cultural differences in how to socialize. For example, Henok comments:

It is best [if one could mix with Norwegians] but I think it's very difficult to be with Norwegians. The Norwegians have a distance, they don't get friends immediately. [...] It's very difficult to become friends with a Norwegian. [...] It would be best if one becomes friends, but it's not so easy. I haven't seen Norwegians who are very bad or anything – they are very positive and very good people. But they just have a culture that makes them keep a distance from others and suchlike.

And it doesn't help for a refugee like me to learn the language. But among themselves they are very good people.

Another example is 19-year-old Hassan, who spends his time with language minority students from other countries. When he is asked about his experiences of social life in Norway compared to in his country of origin, he responds:

I think Norwegians are very cold. They aren't sociable. [...] For example, if we play football one day we don't greet when we meet the next day. That's the way it is. That is what the culture is like here. So we just have to get used to it. [...]

In my home country, we became friends on the first school day. Once, I think it was in fifth grade, we got a new pupil. So the first day everyone wanted to become friends with him. So the next day I told him we can go and play football. So we went and played football. Whilst here, if we play football one day we don't greet the next. [...] The culture is like that here, one has to get used to it. [...] But we have contact with the other students who are not Norwegian. [...] We almost have the same culture. Spend a lot of time with them. Usually, we talk Norwegian together.

Hassan and some other students explicitly contrast the socialisation patterns of majority Norwegians with

language minority students from various country backgrounds (cf. InterNations; Søholt & Lynnebakke, 2015).

In student comments on social relations outside school, there are overlapping statements. On their own initiative, several make the point that they experience public space and/or neighbourhoods in Norway as impersonal, cold and challenging. These statements often come after broad questions on how they experience life in Norway. For example, Tahir, a 25-year-old second year student, reflects:

I have lived in Norway for several years. The problem with Norway is that one doesn't have good opportunities for getting in touch with people because [...] it's a bit difficult to get in touch, right. Even when I lived for five years in [Norwegian town] and when I saw many of those I knew from, for example, school or work on the bus, you just say 'hi' and that's it, right. You can't get in touch and talk, right. Language is something one learns through [...] having a lot of contact, right. I see it at school, right. [...] One needs to be in touch with people for [developing one's] language knowledge, right. One has to talk, right. If one learns a new word one has to use it. If one doesn't use it, one forgets, right.

Interviewees seem to vary in terms of the extent to which the little contact in neighbourhoods and public space negatively affects them. Some comment on the topic in a matter-of-fact

manner. For others, it seems to be a greater source of discontent and distress.

At first sight, experiences of impersonal mannerisms in public space may seem like a trivial issue, compared to, for example, structural discrimination and racism. However, Ager and Strang (2008) found in research among refugees in the UK that small gestures such as being greeted by others can be important for feeling welcome. Hence, such gestures may contribute to building a sense of belonging. From both a resilience and a belonging perspective, it is relevant whether perceived impersonal mannerisms are experienced as expressions of racism and hostility or as cultural mannerisms. Nevertheless, some students who interpret such mannerisms as cultural expressions still say that the experiences increase their feelings of loss and missing the country of origin.

Age differences and disparate life experiences

In the SEN schools, newly arrived students have challenges with social relations in regular classes because many majority students have often known each other and attended school together since childhood. These challenges seem to be exacerbated by the fact that refugee students are often older than their classmates. In the GOR data, interviewees touch on such issues to a lesser extent than perceived cultural differences in socialising patterns. This SEN/GOR difference in the findings on this issue probably reflects the fact that the GOR schools

are located in a metropolitan area where students can choose from more upper secondary schools.

A few GOR students comment on an age gap between themselves and their classmates and that they therefore do not have much in common. These students express varying degrees of concern and acceptance about this. For some, it does not seem to be a large source of distress. One interviewee, for example, comments on his younger classmates in a humorous, overbearing manner.

Two students say that they experience social distance from Norwegian-born students due to different life experiences. One of them is 19-year-old preparatory class student Tefsaye, who came to Norway as an unaccompanied minor after a long and dramatic flight. Tefsaye says that he has friends and that his class is 'fine', but he also talks about distance from Norwegian-born students, as they don't know and would not be able to understand what he has been through, such as 'seeing dead people in the desert'.

Summing up, experienced cultural differences, age differences and different life experience can lead to feeling social distance from majority Norwegian peers.

8.2 Student accounts on psychological well-being and distress

Mental health is a sensitive issue that is not always easy to gain knowledge about through conversational, non-clinical interviews. When approaching

the topic of mental health, TURIN interviewers asked students specific questions about their lives and well-being that could indicate mental health challenges, such as sleep problems and concentration problems, at times during the interview when the interviewer deemed it a natural topic to address. Interviewees who reported sleep or concentration problems were asked follow-up questions about the reasons for these problems.

As previously noted, few interviewees report psychological distress to the extent of disrupting their schoolwork and other aspects of everyday functioning at the time of the interview. More students report past than present strong psychological distress. Several report that they experienced a high level of distress before being granted a residence permit. Several interviewees say that their mental health improved because they received help from psychologists or other health professionals. However, as we have shown, some also report current strong psychological distress, e.g. related to living alone.

8.3 School absence and mental health

According to the GOR school staff interviewed, the overall dropout rates in their schools are low. GOR school staff comment that those who *do* drop out often have high absence rates before they finally drop out (SEN school staff did not elaborate on this issue). School staff do not describe refugee students' absence rates as being higher than those of other students. Some GOR

school staff comment on the connection between school absence and psychological distress, referring to the whole school population.

8.4 Teacher perspectives on promoting mental health

As previously noted, mental health is crucial for educational outcomes (Mælan, Tjomsland, Baklien, & Thurston, 2019, p. 2). Research has found that '[s]upportive teacher relationships have been shown to have a moderating effect on negative life events, and reduce the risk of depressive symptoms among adolescents' (Mælan et al., 2019, p. 2).

According to Mælan et al., Norwegian schools have a 'tradition of a strong emphasis on pupils' well-being' (2018, p. 25). According to Norwegian law, schools are required to work for students' psychosocial well-being. The Norwegian Education Act states:

The school must make active and systematic efforts to promote a good psychosocial environment, where individual pupils can experience security and social belonging. (The Norwegian Education Act Section 9a–3)

As regards promoting mental health, the Norwegian law is less explicit. According to Ekornes (2017), the law does not explicitly describe schools' role in promoting mental health and preventing mental illness, and in legal documents, mental health is only mentioned in a White Paper (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2011)

that addresses lower secondary schools. However, mental health in the educational context has been increasingly put on the agenda by both the health and education authorities (Helsedirektoratet & Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2016c). A recent revision of Norwegian curricula includes 'life mastery' (*livsmestring*), as an interdisciplinary and cross-cutting theme in several school subjects as well as teaching students about mental health.²⁸ The new curricula will be gradually introduced from Autumn 2020.

School staff who were asked general questions about refugee students and their challenges more commonly raised the issue of language-related than psychosocial challenges (though they had many reflections on such issues when prompted). Moreover, many school staff members refer to the whole student population when talking about mental health, which seems to reflect the increase in mental health challenges among the whole youth population in Norway in recent years (I. M. Eriksen & Bakken, 2018).

When GOR school staff are asked about the school's role in promoting and following up mental health problems, many teachers are clear that it is an integral part of their job to facilitate a good learning environment and inclusion, recognise symptoms and refer students to health-care professionals. These statements are usually framed

as a general responsibility they have towards *all* students in the school, regardless of background.

Some teachers comment that the school setting and social bonds students form at school can be potentially therapeutic. But many underline where their responsibilities towards students with mental health distress stop. A frequent topic in school staff interviews is a variation of the statement that 'the school's role is not to provide treatment'. Several interviewees also underscore that they are not psychologists. One example comes from Thor, who comments that 'work [and] school, as far as I can see, is often an extremely important component in providing treatment', exemplifying this with a newly arrived student at his school who has been invited by classmates to join activities inside and outside school. Thor comments on how this support will make the student stronger in the face of psychological distress. However, just after commenting on treatment, Thor corrects himself by underscoring that the school can *enable* students to deal with psychological challenges but does not give treatment per se.

Another example comes from the preparatory class teacher Fredrik. He underlines that it is necessary for schools to have clear boundaries when it comes to following up students' well-being and psychosocial needs:

²⁸ <https://www.linktillivet.no/om.php>

Interviewer: Do you feel that you or the school should have more competence when meeting refugee students?

Fredrik: If I should have that?

Interviewer: Yes, not only [competence] concerning teaching subjects but also with reference to psychosocial or psychological...

Fredrik: No, you know, I almost said both yes and no. Because it's actually a kind of situation..well, where shall the boundaries be set here? Should the school be school [...], a school that works with education, or should a school be a care institution? [...] Like, it's fine to contribute when I'm in meetings with the child welfare authorities, but I try to make it clear that we are a school. I also tell a student 'you can tell me how you feel; I want to listen, but I can't help you with that, this is school'. [...] I can't attend to their housing situation unless I have to, [I] kind of demarcate.

According to Ekornes (2017, p. 335), 'teachers experience much professional uncertainty regarding the content and limits of their responsibilities in student mental health' (2017, p. 335). Our findings align closely with the findings from a survey of teachers in Norwegian schools (Holen & Waagene, 2014). In that study, most of the teachers who were asked confirmed that they 'thought that school plays an important role in preventing mental health problems and helping those who struggle' (2014, p. 38) and

most teachers acknowledged that systematic work with students' mental health facilitated learning. However, almost half (47 per cent) of the upper secondary teachers in the survey agreed with the statement: 'Systematic work to help students with mental health problems can take away focus from school subjects' (2014, p. 38). Relatedly, almost one-third of the teachers agreed/agreed somewhat that '[w]orking to help students with mental health problems is not the school's task, the school should focus on learning' (2014, p. 38; cf. Mælan et al., 2018). Our study and Holen and Waagene's findings suggest considerable ambivalence among teachers concerning the role the school and teachers should play in young people's mental health challenges. A reluctance to systematically attend to students with mental health problems could relate both to a general sense of inadequate knowledge of promoting mental health and the fact that such work may be experienced as 'an additional burden to an already heavy workload, giving rise to role-related pressures' (cf. Ekornes, 2017; Mælan et al., 2018, p. 17).

In the SEN schools, the lower relative emphasis school staff interviewees put on psychosocial issues seems partly to reflect that teachers are ambivalent about their psychosocial role. Similarly to the GOR schools, the findings show that some SEN teachers want to set boundaries, emphasising that the school does not provide treatment. In addition, the SEN findings

show that many are afraid of retraumatizing students if they get 'too close'. SEN school teachers express an uncertainty about the psychological 'baggage' that refugee students may carry. They are uncertain about how to deal with this and several take a 'wait and see' approach. For example, a preparatory class teacher called Lisbeth states:

We experience some of them [refugee students] as a bit distant, not much present although they are here. We're uncertain as to what really is..., what thoughts they have these students that are not fully able to concentrate. And we know very little about their flight, about their backgrounds. So we have to, in a way, just give them space so they can also be in that world, and that... it's a good thing they come to school.

In this quote, school is seen as a form of rehabilitation in itself, but in a way where the teacher takes a passive role, hoping that ordinary school attendance will help with healing.

Although teachers across the sample describe it as an inherent part of their job to build good relations with individual students and be responsible for a good psychosocial learning environment, teachers differ in the degree of intensity when they talk about these issues. Their comments also show different approaches to how they interpret the psychosocial and relational parts of their role. Many talk about these topics with great engagement

and extensive elaboration, whilst others state matter-of-factly that psychosocial aspects are of course part of their job. At one end of the spectre is Kjell, who acknowledges his role in psychosocial work – especially as a form teacher – whilst underscoring that his main task is to convey knowledge.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on your own role in your meetings with refugee students?

Kjell: Eerm, no... I... First and foremost, I am a Norwegian language teacher. A history teacher. It is of course my role to advance their language skills – writing skills and oral skills – and make them feel safer in the classroom and better at expressing themselves and suchlike. Additionally, I am a form teacher, which means that I have a certain psychosocial responsibility to follow up and find out whether they are content in school and suchlike. I feel that it is important, because for some students it has been very important to get practical legal assistance and suchlike. So it depends a bit on the person. For some students I am maybe not so important, it doesn't matter so much who I am.

In Kjell's statement on his role as a language teacher, he reflects that by equipping students with the necessary education he indirectly also contributes to student well-being. Kjell also seems to be observant regarding psy-

chosocial needs related to some students' situation, referring to legal assistance. However, he comments that he does not always need to know the details of what refugees have experienced. Whilst he underlines that it is hard to generalise about refugee students, Kjell has found refugee students to be somewhat more difficult to understand than other students. He comments that he knows that refugees have often experienced trauma and '[t]hat one must spend some extra time getting to know them'. In Kjell's experience, refugee students can sometimes hold back and not open up very easily (cf. Kohli, 2006; cf. Wernesjö, 2012). His experience is that refugee students 'can't always say things directly. [...] That they can't tell the whole truth'. He adds that it is perhaps not part of his role to have all the details either:

Interviewer: So you think it is difficult getting to know them [refugees] better?

Kjell: Yes, but I don't know how important it is that I as a Norwegian teacher and form teacher kind of know about everything; I'm not a psychologist. I'm not close family, I feel my job is getting everyday life to function as well as possible, that they get through school in the best way possible and suchlike. And I don't necessarily want to know more than I have to know either. Sometimes I get to know quite, well, private things and suchlike.

Kjell's statement on his role as a Norwegian language teacher concurs with a view that acknowledges how language acquisition – together with new acquisition of new cultural knowledge – in a new country can be empowering (Hayward, 2017, p. 170). In this respect, psychosocial and educational aspects are not always easy to disentangle. Nevertheless, it seems clear that it is his personality to not be highly personal with everyone. This is especially evident when one contrasts Kjell's approach to that of the preparatory class teacher Anna:

Interviewer: Is there anything you especially enjoy as a language minority teacher?

Anna: Eh, well, one is an important contact person for these students because they have come to a new country, new culture, new codes. And then one gets questions about everything. So one becomes a social teacher and advisor and mother and psychologist and all kinds of things. [...]. [laughs].

Interviewer: Is there anything you find particularly challenging?

Anna: Eh, it's great fun! It's very meaningful. M-m. I don't think it is particularly challenging, I think it is particularly meaningful, actually. [...]. [laughs]. I think it's very positive.

In our findings, Anna and Kjell stand at the opposite ends of a spectrum in terms of teacher approaches to psychosocial aspects of their role. Whereas both take their responsibility

to promote psychosocial well-being as a given, their statements illustrate the room for interpretation of what this means in practice. Here, teachers' personality and professional interests also play a role

8.5 The psychosocial role of non-teacher professions

Psychosocial follow-up may not only be influenced by individual differences among teachers in how they interpret their psychosocial role and the extent to which they feel comfortable with forming a close personal relationship with students. In addition, during their workday, teachers have limited time and availability for psychosocial work (cf. Ekornes, 2017).

The school social worker Jahn states how important it is in his job to be available to students. He has found that the threshold for knocking on his door can be high for students. Many students who need to talk to someone approach him in informal arenas inside and outside school that he regularly attends. In Jahn's opinion, teachers should be available during breaks. Other interviewees in the same school share a concern that cutting back on school social workers (*miljøarbeidere*) is unfortunate.

In Section 7.4, we referred to the educational role of the library in one of the schools. The same library also has important psychosocial functions, which are facilitated further by the localisation of several staff functions. The offices of the school social worker and school nurse have entry doors

from the library. The intention is that different support functions at the school are closely connected and that it is easy for students to ask for help and have conversations with these members of staff. The library's psychosocial role has also been institutionalised through one of the librarians' participation in regular meetings in a school staff group that works against dropout. Moreover, because of the good staffing of the library, the librarians have accepted responsibility for various school events in cooperation with other staff such as the school social worker, teachers and the school nurse. The librarians' active role in supporting students in schoolwork also means that they have a complementary psychosocial role to form teachers. Due to the librarians' increased presence and contact with students, they can pick up challenges some students encounter. The librarians have referred students to other school staff in 'Elevtjenesten' (an app where students can anonymously ask questions) for educational, mental health and psychosocial challenges.

Some school staff comment on a need to strengthen the follow-up of refugees' well-being outside school. For example, one school social worker remarks that form teachers and school advisors do not have time to follow up students with, for example, issues related to housing and economy, even though this can influence refugees' educational performance. She deems it necessary to have a school social worker who can assist in challenges outside school related to, for example,

housing, leisure activities, economy and contact with the welfare services, accompanying students to offices if needed. Relatedly, the preparatory class teacher Birte argues that student refugees' needs should be more closely followed up by a coordinating person who is employed in a provision outside school. She comments that whereas unaccompanied minors are systematically followed up, refugee students aged over 18 have no right to individual follow-up. She states that one person following up would entail a holistic overview over the same young refugee's economy, housing, family situation, educational needs, etc.

8.6 Seeing the individual and expressing a need for more refugee competence

In the GOR school staff sample, many interviewees express two seemingly contradictory views. On the one hand, when they are asked whether they see a need for more knowledge and competence regarding refugees in the school, they answer firmly yes. For example, it is commented that the school should have more knowledge about trauma. Some staff members also provide practical suggestions on how to increase relevant school competence regarding refugees. These suggestions include that the school should be assigned a resource person who visits the school three to four times a year so that school staff can consult them and learn more about refugee-related issues, including how to build a good relation with refugee students. Another

suggests that here should be a systematic focus on language minority students in the school administration. A third suggestion is that the school should have one permanent staff member with relevant competence regarding language minority students and that external expertise should be easily available when needed.

However, many of the same interviewees who express a need for increased knowledge on refugees also underline the heterogeneity within the refugee category and de-emphasize the difference between refugee students and other students. Interviewees especially highlight that there are large individual differences (e.g. in terms of persistence, intrinsic motivation, psychological resilience and competence at school). Teachers underscore that it is important to see and relate to each individual and not pigeon-hole. For example, one school staff member says that she once observed two siblings who shared the same difficult background but one did well while the other struggled. Relatedly, several school staff members talk about individual refugee students who have done well despite hardships, which the teachers put down to a strong inner drive. Such comments are particularly prevalent in one of the case schools. The prevalence of these comments seems to be intertwined with the school's pedagogical approach, which has roots in existentialism, and an emphasis on the present and the future of each individual. In explaining this approach, school staff state that they should emphasise treating each student as an individual

and that an important part of their role is to make clear to individual students the different options and consequences of each option while the student is responsible for the choice itself.

Another way school staff de-emphasise refugees as a distinct category is by pointing out that many students can experience psychological distress. Such comments should be seen in light of the large increase in psychological distress (such as burnout and anxiety) among all youths in Norway in recent years (I. M. Eriksen & Bakken, 2018). Based on her own experience, one preparatory class teacher thinks that refugee students display fewer signs of psychological distress than others. Other school staff stress that other students may also have experienced trauma, e.g. because of violence at home or losing close family members in a dramatic and sudden way.

Often GOR school staff de-emphasise refugees as a category by underlining the large heterogeneity within the refugee category in terms of migration trajectories, the extent of trauma individuals have experienced, and cultural and religious diversity within and between countries (cf. e.g. Bakken & Hyggen, 2018 on country background differences and school motivation). Furthermore, in line with resilience research (Section 4.2), many point out that the effects of traumatic experiences on psychological functioning can be diminished/mediated by numerous other factors such as social support, family background and individual traits. Finally, many

school staff emphasise how previous schooling affects school functioning.

Some interviewees explicitly reflect on balancing the need to both see the individual and be aware of potential differences on a group level, such as the school social worker Rune:

It would be good to have someone from the outside of the school who could explain about different aspects of being a refugee, [and about] having a short period of residency in Norway. How that influences them as students. Without us being predisposed. We should also meet them with open arms and an open mind and all that. But I think that if we had more general knowledge in the school one could accommodate students with a refugee background even more.

For some school staff members, their emphasis on individual differences and parallels between refugee students and other school students (either language minority students in general or all students) seems to be based on their own observations and experiences. In other cases, their statements (also) appear to reflect an ethical stance, as for the teacher Aslak:

Interviewer: Do you feel that you, or the school, have enough competence for working with students with a refugee background, or does the school need more competence?

Aslak: It's a difficult question because ehh.. ehh. No, I think that

it is good for them, ehh.. [to be] treated as much as possible as an ordinary student. Because if one thought 'poor refugees, they have been through so many horrible things', blalabla, I think that, at least for a boy, it is very stigmatising and emasculating. I think. Eeh. And that's why I think that they should get the measures they are entitled to but they can't, I think they would have reacted strongly against being treated differently from the other Norwegian students. Even if it had been to their own benefit.

Aslak, furthermore, thinks that it is important not to place too much emphasis on the refugee and cultural

background. He stresses that there are large variations within each cultural background, and that other students may also have had traumatic experiences. Nevertheless, Aslak's statement that it could have been to refugee students' benefit to be treated differently, even though he doesn't think it is the right thing to do, shows a duality. Similar tensions are found in research on the education of asylum seekers and refugees in English schools, where Arnot and Pinson comment on a tension 'found on all levels of the educational system' concerning whether one should use universalistic or targeted policies (2005, p. 60). We return to this duality and dilemma in the discussion.

9. General discussion

This report discusses how refugee students' educational, psychological and social challenges can affect their school functioning as well as how schools and teachers can support and promote students' psychosocial well-being, development and adaptation during the process of resettlement.

Newcomer refugee students can have a number of educational and psychosocial challenges that may make their schooling situation vulnerable – due to the following:

- Short period of residency in the country of settlement
- Lacking/little knowledge about the country of settlement and culture, incl. school culture
- Interrupted and/or little formal education
- Being new in a country without established social and/or family networks
- Traumatic pre-migration and flight experiences as well as exile-related stress.
- 'Age at arrival' as a crucial factor concerning educational outcomes.

One student group that has received more attention recently is 'late arrivals', i.e. young people who arrive in Norway late in their teens and who often have limited or interrupted formal education (Rambøll, 2013; Svendsen et al., 2018). The transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education is challenging for all students, but especially for refugee students who

come to Norway late in their teens. As previously outlined, young refugees in the 15–17-year-old age group tend to have lower scores than those who arrive at younger ages (Huddleston & Wolffhardt, 2016; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017). In order to be able to overcome the educational challenges and to reach their fullest potential, these 'late arriving' refugee students need additional support.

The support refugee students receive from teachers and other school staff is crucial for learning to cope with the various challenges they meet upon entering a new school system. In what follows, we first discuss the challenges and opportunities of schools, school staff and refugee students in the TURIN findings. After this, we outline three central dilemmas that school staff can experience, drawn from the findings. The empirical focus of the TURIN study has been on the micro level. However, as a crucial aspect of Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach, macro-level influences on the micro level cannot be ignored (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The everyday lives of school staff and students in schools are influenced by national educational policies and local school approaches. In our findings, the school staff interviews in particular implicitly or explicitly point back to macro-level issues that frame how they negotiate and interpret their professional role and how they perceive the role of the school in supporting young refugees'

educational and psychosocial transitions.

9.1 Challenges, resources and opportunities

Time- and age-related challenges

Several of the findings point to educational and social challenges related to being late arrivals and/or a sense of urgency to move through upper secondary school at a regular pace. We have noted the conflicting views between, on the one hand, the fact that teachers sometimes advise students to spend longer at upper secondary school (e.g. by taking the first year over two years) and, on the other hand, some students' aversion to such tracks for motivational, social and/or economic reasons. Social reasons can include both disrupted peer relations and feelings of shame due to spending a longer time at school. Shame can be influenced by not having enough knowledge on individually adapted education in Norwegian schools. Challenges related to social aspects may exasperate when young refugees are older than their classmates, which can mean that one already feels out of place with one's classmates even before spending an additional school year.

Previous research has also found that young refugees, for various reasons, can be 'impatient' to proceed with their education. A study by

Chatty (2010) on protracted refugee status for Palestinian youth living in UNRWA²⁹ camps in the Middle East found that in some camps, youths were torn between their aims in terms of educational achievements and a desire to have an income in the more immediate future to provide for their families. Relatedly, studies on unaccompanied minors in Norway found that they could opt for vocational tracks because they were impatient to complete their education and wanted to start earning money soon. This can relate to wanting to provide economic assistance to family members abroad (Bovollen, 2016; Oppedal et al., 2017) or move forward family reunification (Bovollen, 2016). Moreover, Oppedal et al. (2017) found that unaccompanied minors could feel time constraints because they were older than their classmates, whom they found to be immature since their education was delayed due to their flight and/or for economic reasons.

Occasionally, newcomer students can benefit from spending more than the regular time at upper secondary school. For students who want to complete school as soon as possible, it is limited how much can be done with a sense of already being late (due to often being older than classmates) and there are also natural limits concerning how to mitigate students' need to start contributing economically to their families in Norway or abroad. However, the findings suggest that school can at least contribute to mitigating a sense of defeat and shame

²⁹ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

that some experience. This can, for example, be done by providing explicit knowledge and guidance on what the various provision entail and the reasons for these to all students in a shared setting in combination with individual guidance when needed. In addition, schools can consider presenting them to 'peer role models'. Schools can, for instance, invite young adults with a refugee background who have spent more time in the school systems but 'made it' to share their reflections, thoughts and experiences on the school system/language acquisition process etc.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that it is relevant to ask whether there are other possible measures besides extending the educational pathways that could support students who struggle with the language and/or have little prior education. For example, can an alternative measure be that these students are allocated increased individual follow-up whilst attending school at a regular pace

Supporting and sustaining motivation

The often high motivation to succeed shown by the newly arrived young refugees (and language minority students more broadly) is a central feature of our findings that concurs with other research on language minority youth in Norway and other countries (Bakken & Hyggen, 2018; Salikutluk, 2016; Tjaden & Hunkler, 2017). Teachers and other school staff members often report that they appreciate

interacting with and teaching language minority/refugee students due to their high motivation levels and what school staff experience as their high appreciation. For some refugees, this appreciation might be expressions of not taking educational opportunities for granted, because of flight and/or pre-migration experiences where education has been disrupted and/or inadequate due to upheaval and unstable conditions in the country of origin (see also Shakya et al., 2010, p. 70; Naidoo et al., 2015, p. 44 on young refugees; and Salikutluk, 2016 on the aspirations of young immigrants more broadly). In Chapter 4, we argued that whilst the resettlement phase can be very challenging, it can also be marked by renewed optimism, hope and experiencing agency due to the more stable life situation and a focus on making choices about one's future vocation in upper secondary school. The challenges for teachers and students alike concern how to sustain this motivation. High motivation is a strong resource in a new country while learning a new language. Studies have found that a sense of mastery and future hope are among the numerous factors that can positively predict school achievements (Bahram, Javad, Naeimeh, & Hayat, 2014; Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010; Lewin-Epstein, Salikutluk, Kogan, Kalter, & Kogan, 2014; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). To some extent, working hard and high motivation likely decrease the gap in majority/language minority students' educational inequity (Bakken & Hyggen, 2018, p. 11).

This is not to say that educational outcomes should be left to the responsibility of student motivation. Within resilience research, Walsh (2012) underlines that a combination of a positive outlook and a supportive environment enables individuals to deal with life's challenges. Furthermore, educational policies that work against inequalities have been identified as being decisive for school outcomes (Huddleston & Wolffhardt, 2016, p. 31).

Teachers' formal competence

The findings underscore a need for qualified school staff in assessment, follow-up of assessment and teaching Norwegian as a second language, as well as having adequate guidelines and support systems for second language teachers (Koehler & Schneider, 2019; Rambøll, 2018). The staff members who experienced a need for more qualifications in second language teaching and assessment told that the schools had an approach of learning about the field as they went along. This can obviously lead to inadequate educational progress for newly arrived students, as reported by some preparatory class students at the SEN schools. In addition, one school staff member pointed out that school-level challenges can be made into individual

problems for students. Clearly, this entails a risk of stigma for newly arrived students. A sense of stigma was also reported by the students who reacted strongly to being language assessed in the second year, and the way this test was administered.

It is important that schools are 'refugee-competent' (Pastoor, 2015, 2016a), i.e. that schools take into consideration refugees' educational and psychosocial needs and develop the necessary expertise. Competence in teaching minority language students gives teachers clear guidelines to work under, which again can result in students receiving satisfactory, effective instruction in Norwegian and other school subjects. Students' educational progression is also important for sustaining motivation, for example through experiencing the preparatory class as worthwhile. If needed, schools should ensure that preparatory class teachers receive further education/in-service training³⁰.

Diversity and refugee competence

In addition to formal competence, the findings suggest that it can be a school asset to have (long) experience with school diversity (in terms of country and language backgrounds as well as migrant category), and that they can draw on and benefit from this

³⁰ The aim of an ongoing EU-funded research project, *RefugeesWellSchool*, is to test and provide knowledge about the impact of preventive school-based interventions. Newcomer students in secondary schools are the target group for the interventions. One of the interventions, In-Service Teacher Training (INSETT), aims at increasing teachers' competence in supporting refugee students' mental health, psychosocial well-being and school functioning: <https://refugeeswellschool.org/intervention/intervention-test/>

experience, supporting the conclusions of a UK study (Arnot & Pinson, 2005). The diversity experience can potentially enable a professional practical competence and can contribute to that school staff members perceive language minority students as commonplace, thereby reducing social distance. By extension, this familiarity and experience may contribute to an ability to relate to the dilemma of difference.

These findings indicate how refugee competent schools (Pastoor, 2015, 2016a) can rely on both the professional knowledge of school staff and experience-based know-how. These are interesting topics to explore in further research.

The findings on school diversity also suggest that for young refugees, schools with ethnic and other forms of student diversity can contribute to a sense of belonging. The findings also demonstrate that newly arrived students can benefit from relations with others in a similar situation. The latter benefit must, of course, also be seen within the context of the extent to which newly arrived young students feel at ease with, and are included by, majority students.

The preparatory class, social and cultural integration

Based on observations as well as school staff and student interviews, the main pattern in our findings is that there are many benefits of attending the preparatory class. In several of the schools, the preparatory class has an important function in providing a

sense of belonging upon resettlement. Hence, the class can potentially be both a supportive learning environment in the transition to Norwegian upper secondary school and a source of social bonds whilst learning the Norwegian language. Positive social bonds are often crucial for healing after trauma (Schultz & Langballe, 2016). One teacher proposed that the bonds can be strengthened by having similar language challenges, as it can entail a feeling of being in 'the same boat'. Furthermore, some of the school staff statements suggest that the class has a potential as an arena for extended vocational guidance in a new country and a new language. The class may also be an arena for cultural integration, particularly for conveying knowledge on the Norwegian school system and Norwegian school culture. In terms of the latter, one could argue that most cultural learning takes place implicitly through interaction and shared contexts, and that it therefore may be more beneficial for newly arrived students to be immediately placed in regular classes, as this also entails implicit learning from peers. However, explicit learning may be seen as a targeted measure, particularly in the initial phase of resettlement.

In using a preparatory class the pros and cons need to be carefully weighed up in the shorter and longer term, as has indeed been done when developing the provision (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2010). Fewer peer relations and less contact with majority students is one potentially negative issue.

The few students who reacted strongly against the preparatory class provision due to the separation from majority Norwegians in the classroom point in this direction: they wanted more contact and knowledge through majority Norwegians in the classroom. If school has a normalising function in the post-flight situation, one can object that being placed in separate classes prolongs the migration process and can mean exaggerating difference in the shorter term, as these student accounts also suggest. On the other hand, asymmetrical relations can prevail despite being part of a regular class (Hilt, 2017, p. 659). More broadly speaking, sharing the same space is no guarantee of interaction and close social bonds (Pastoor, 2017); studies in many different settings demonstrate that micro-segregation can evolve if there already exists a perception of strong group differences (Bettencourt, Dixon, & Castro, 2019). Of course, the teacher has an important role in promoting social bonds across different backgrounds. However, we also saw in the findings that there can be distinct challenges in teacher-coordinated attempts to facilitate social interaction between students with different language levels, and that such attempts can feel forced and polite. This finding on such awkward facilitated contact supports spending a year in the preparatory class, where newly arrived students get the opportunity to become more proficient in the Norwegian language. The lack of shared contact arenas with majority students (during this year) can to some extent be remedied by

creating arenas for contact for preparatory/regular students outside the classroom in settings where differences in language levels are less crucial, as we detail below.

With regard to the preparatory class as a potential arena for cultural integration, it can be objected that this conception overly emphasises difference, homogenising newly arrived students and constructing them as outside the mainstream (cf. Hilt, 2017). Nevertheless, school staff statements suggest that relying solely on implicitly learning the school culture, e.g. about teacher expectations and student-teacher roles, in the worst case can have an impact on the educational outcomes of newly arrived students and school absence rates. The preparatory class can be an arena where teacher/school expectations can be implicitly and explicitly conveyed. We argue that this potential should be intentionally and systematically utilised. Conveying such knowledge does not need to be done in a paternalising, unidirectional manner from teachers to students that implies stereotyping of culturally and individually diverse students in the class. Rather, such conveying of Norwegian school culture can, for example, be organised through classroom conversations where students are encouraged to share how their previous school culture experiences differ from their current experiences, creating an arena of mutual exchange and reflection.

Promoting social relationships with majority students

The findings show that many young refugees in different classes miss having more contact with majority Norwegian peers for the sake of friendships, practising Norwegian language and cultural integration.

The SEN findings show that social distance between newly arrived refugees and majority Norwegians can be due to a combination of age differences and not having been part of peer networks that have been developed over many years. These mechanisms can especially be relevant in smaller places, as in the SEN locations, where most students in the upper secondary school live in close geographical vicinity and know each other from before.

The group interview with teachers shows how it is not straightforward to facilitate social interactions between preparatory class and regular students, which may especially relate to different Norwegian language levels. Language is learnt and developed through social practice, but social encounters before obtaining certain language levels can also easily become strained and asymmetrical. Schools can emphasise creating arenas for regular contact that may allow mutual familiarity and potentially increase social networks (Duff, 2011, p. 153) that can ease preparatory class students' later start in regular classes and lay the foundation for informal bonds that can develop spontaneously over time. As part of this, the preparatory classes should not be placed in remote areas

of the schools offering this provision (cf. also Rambøll, 2018, p. 7). Schools can also strengthen the role of shared arenas such as the library in one of the schools. The findings suggest that the library in that school was central due to its physical central location in the school, the co-presence of numerous school staff in/close to the library and by strengthening the library staff (though further research, including detailed student accounts on the topic, would be needed on how/whether this plays out in practice).

For young refugees who are in the first stages of learning the Norwegian language it may be ideal to ensure arenas that entail regular encounters where Norwegian fluency is not crucial. For example, students can have midday activities and activity rooms where students can, for example, have access to chess and other board games, table tennis, arts and music (see also Rambøll, 2018). Shared classes with regular and preparatory class students in, for example, physical education and arts could also be considered.

Educational heterogeneity in preparatory classes

The interviewed teachers report an educational need for preparatory classes, and in several schools, the student interviewees are content not only with the preparatory class's social aspects but also with its educational content. However, it is often a huge challenge for teachers to accommodate students' educational needs due to the different educational backgrounds

and Norwegian language levels in the preparatory classes. In addition, we saw that many students are eager to move forward in the Norwegian educational system and that a few also call for more contact with majority students in the classroom. Considered together, these findings suggest that it seems fruitful that (some) preparatory class students get the option to participate more in regular classes, as is done in the combination class provision. Combination classes (like preparatory classes, these are located in upper secondary schools) have been tried out in recent years and entail newly arrived students combining Norwegian language training and compulsory school education with attending regular upper secondary classes (as regular students or as a secondment).³¹ In 2018, the provision existed in all counties in Norway, comprising 41 upper secondary schools in total. A recent evaluation (Rambøll, 2018) found that overall, schools' experiences with the provision have been positive. Further research could also look into student experiences. It can be especially beneficial with research designs that enable systematic comparisons between the accounts of preparatory class and combination class students.

The TURIN findings support combination classes as a constructive way forward. First, such classes may decrease challenges related to preparatory class heterogeneity by allowing students who are strong in a certain

school subject/school subjects to move forward. It may also be motivating for many late arrivals who experience a sense of urgency to start regular upper secondary school, often after an interrupted education. Furthermore, participation in regular classes may contribute to getting embodied knowledge on the expectations in regular upper secondary school, thereby contributing to implicit cultural learning of the Norwegian school system and what is expected of them in relation to subject knowledge in Vg1/upper secondary school.

Also, with the combination classes, there are challenges with the large heterogeneity within the classes (where compulsory school subjects are taught with an emphasis on Norwegian). The evaluation therefore argues for increased differentiation in Norwegian and other subjects (Jortveit, 2014, p. 7). Our findings support this recommendation.

9.2 Dilemmas

The findings and discussion above show several dilemmas that school staff navigate when they aim to attend to young refugee students' educational and psychosocial needs. Some of these dilemmas are relevant for working with all students, whereas other dilemmas relate to young refugees and late arrivals in particular.

A dilemma is something other than a challenge or problem, both of which often imply solutions. While solutions

³¹ See also <https://nyweb.vfk.no/skoler/thor-heyerdahl-vgs/meny/utdanningstilbud/kombinasjonsklassen>

to challenges can be straightforward or entail complex measures, dilemmas need to be addressed by continuously remaining aware of and balancing conflicting demands. Dilemmas entail questions and situations that cannot be responded to through a one-size-fits-all formula (Jortveit, 2014). There is not a standard way of solving a dilemma that can be applicable in all situations (Michailakis & Reich, 2009, p. 42; Robinson & Segrott, 2002). This does not mean that dilemmas cannot be met through concrete measures, but that measures need to be implemented whilst considering both the individual and the situational context. We now address three dilemmas that school staff can encounter, drawn from the TURIN findings.

Dilemma 1: Seeing the individual and group-level challenges

This dilemma is shared by both school staff and researchers. Whilst it is important to be sensitive to the potential relevance of 'the refugee experience' for educational and psychosocial transitions, this awareness needs to be accompanied by some precautions. First, it is important to not only emphasise many young refugees' extraordinary experiences but also to acknowledge that they are 'ordinary people driven by ordinary desires' (Robinson and Segrott 2002, p. 64, quoted in Kohli 2006, p. 708; see also Chase, Otto, Belloni, Lems, & Wernesjö, 2019). Second, it is crucial that researchers and school staff are aware of the large heterogeneity within the refugee category in terms

of pre-migration and flight experiences, language backgrounds, cultural backgrounds and prior educational experiences (cf. Cerna, 2019; Jortveit, 2014; J. McBrien et al., 2017, p. 105; Mupenzi, 2018, p. 46). Third, there are individual differences in whether one wants one's country or refugee background to be acknowledged and highlighted or not (cf. Terzi, 2005, p. 76).

In Section 8.6., we reviewed the seemingly inconsistent views expressed by some school staff members where the same individuals on the one hand de-emphasise difference and are wary of stereotyping refugees whilst on the other hand they say that they want more knowledge on refugees. This seeming inconsistency can be seen as a way of actively relating to what has been referred to as 'the dilemma of difference' within the field of inclusive education:

The dilemma of difference consists in the seemingly unavoidable choice between, on the one hand, identifying children's differences in order to provide for them differentially, with the risk of labelling and dividing, and, on the other hand, accentuating 'sameness' and offering common provision, with the risk of not making available what is relevant to, and needed by, individual children. (Norwich, 2010, p. 44)

Recognising and emphasising difference can come with a risk of stigma if one is not adequately focused on the individual student. The school staff

statements referred to above show a dual awareness where group-level knowledge about refugees is combined with a strong focus on individuality and heterogeneity. This dual awareness can be deemed a competence in itself as it allows sensitivity to each situation and individual refugee. The dual awareness is necessary to meet individual needs. The risk of stereotyping is lower. In addition, the impact of 'the refugee experience' does not play out in a uniform way in different individuals. Obtaining knowledge on how 'the refugee experience' affects and is dealt with by a particular individual can only be done through getting to know the student.

It is important that teachers can set aside time for talks with individual students about their needs and resources (Ferede, 2010; Pastoor, 2015, 2016a; Schultz & Langballe, 2016). School classes with newly resettled refugee students should not be too large to make it possible for teachers to get to know students individually. This can reduce the risk of stereotyping, as well as helping teachers to provide adequate support and guide students during the initial phases of resettlement. 'Individual student' knowledge is of decisive importance for teachers in order to be able to optimally support recently resettled students' educational and psychosocial transitions.

Within research on refugee education, there seems to often be a similar duality of both emphasising heterogeneity and individuality vs seeing refugees' needs on the group level. On the

one hand, researchers urge the acknowledgement of refugee students' distinct challenges (e.g. Stevenson & Willott, 2007). On the other hand, it has been underlined that people can find being called a refugee reductionist and stigmatising, or that individuals may not wish to not be identified as a refugee because they want to 'move on from their past traumas' (T. H. Eriksen, 2009, p. 684). Within a lot of migration research a parallel tension exists, where researchers often oscillate between acknowledging and focusing on groups to emphasise heterogeneity within groups/categories and relativising cultural and religious differences (T. H. Eriksen, 2009). Eriksen argues for a need to retain this dual gaze, commenting that '[g]roups exist from a certain point of view, but from another point of view they vanish. From a perspective of accepting the complexity in social life, both descriptions might in fact be true, but should not be allowed to stand alone' (Huddleston & Wolffhardt, 2016, pp. 20-21). It is crucial from a (school) policy perspective to focus on group needs in order to ensure adequate educational and psychosocial provisions that level out educational inequities for late arrivals through targeted measures (cf. Naidoo et al., 2015, p. 31). For practitioners and researchers, the dual gaze should be present in order to avoid stereotyping and one-dimensional approaches.

Seeing the individual vs group-level challenges is partly a different challenge to acknowledging subcategories within the 'young refugees' category

(e.g. in terms of language and country backgrounds, age of arrival and flight experiences). Despite the large heterogeneity within the category, there can often be shared experiences on a group level, related to pre-flight, flight and post-migration experiences (cf. e.g. Bogic et al., 2015, pp. 37-38), and focusing on refugee youth on the basis of migration category can be a step in the right direction towards understanding the potential influence of 'the refugee experience' on educational experiences and outcomes. However, research findings on refugees could become more precise by addressing and comparing subcategories (cf. Sleijpen et al., 2015, pp. 35-36 for a discussion on diverging findings in research on refugees' mental health). Moving forward, research on young refugees will benefit further from a fine-grained analysis of different subcategories, thereby addressing, for example, the impact of previous education, experienced trauma, length of residency and intersectionality on post-migration education experiences and outcomes.

Dilemma 2: Sustaining motivation vs preparing for future demands

In the findings section we saw, for example, that teachers may find it difficult to give negative assessments and low grades³² over a longer time period because they don't want students to

become demotivated. There is a challenge for teachers between sustaining motivation in the shorter term and longer term. In the longer term, students can become demotivated if they experience a large discrepancy between demands they face later on in school and working life compared to the picture they have previously had. It is crucial to see the individual and the particular situation when dealing with this dilemma, as some individuals can become more motivated by educational challenges whereas others over time can become demotivated (cf. Sleijpen et al., 2017, p. 172).

In Norwegian schools, the challenges inherent in this dilemma may take on a particular dynamic due to a contradiction in the school's mandate. On the one hand, schools and teachers are increasingly 'subject to accountability regimes where [they] are held responsible for students' achievements' (Smette, 2017, p. 318, our translation; see also Gjefsen & Gunnes, 2015). On the other hand, teachers and other school staff must follow a Norwegian policy mandate that entails lessening and compensating for inequalities in different students' starting points (Reisel et al., 2019; see also Holen & Waagene, 2014, on the historical rationale for the policy).

Although this dilemma cannot be resolved once and for all, there are some

³² There is more academic pressure on students in the combination class as it ends with a final compulsory school exam. In the preparatory class there is no grading and no final exam. But as soon as students start attending regular classes (Vg1—Vg3), they will get grades like everyone else.

measures that schools and school policy can consider. First, preparatory class teachers can give oral or written feedback on assignments that are meant to both encourage and point out areas for improvement in a pedagogical way. This can be a way to provide correct feedback whilst aiming to maintain motivation.

Furthermore, we suggest that systematic efforts should be made to provide newly arrived students with knowledge on Norwegian school culture and the Norwegian school system. As can be seen in the findings section, school staff and students often report differences between the school culture in Norway and the school culture in students' countries of origin. Such differences, for example related to absence rules and expectations that students should demonstrate a high level of independence concerning carrying out school tasks, should be explicitly conveyed, especially for preparatory class students. As noted above, this can be done through classroom conversations that allow for mutual exchange. It is also crucial that preparatory teachers explicitly convey how the preparatory class differs from regular upper secondary school. It is also important that schools have systematic plans for conveying educational and vocational guidance to newly arrived students with low Norwegian language proficiency. Making uninformed educational choices can negatively affect school motivation and performance. The systematic transfer of knowledge of the Norwegian school system should include

knowledge on newly arrived students' right to individually adapted education as a means to decrease a sense of shame and stigma if students are offered individually targeted measures based on their progress, Norwegian language levels and previous education.

Conveying this knowledge on the Norwegian school system and extended vocational guidance should be a mandatory part of admission conversations with new students in order to lessen the risk of high absence and by extension dropout, and in order to enable refugee students to make well-informed education and career decisions. Such conversations can, for example, be conducted by the form teachers and/or school advisors. We previously also highlighted the preparatory class as an arena where such information can be systematically conveyed. For students who struggle with the Norwegian language, the use of interpreters can also be considered for individuals or groups of students with the same language backgrounds. Schools can also benefit from a policy that ensures that school staff inform newly arrived students about vilbli.no, a website that provides information on different upper secondary tracks in numerous languages.

Dilemma 3: Balancing educational and psychosocial demands

From one perspective, educational and psychosocial demands may *not* seem like two opposing demands at all since psychosocial aspects are crucial

for learning. In their accounts, teachers in the TURIN study take for granted the psychosocial/educational link and their responsibility in providing a good psychosocial learning environment, as also seen in other studies (Holen & Waagene, 2014; Smette, 2017). When teachers present these topics as conflicting demands, it is with respect to a need to demarcate clearly the psychosocial aspects of their role (cf. Hayward, 2017). To some extent, the school can be therapeutic through its role of creating good learning environments, providing stability and facilitating new social relationships (cf. Pastoor, 2012/forthcoming 2020; Pastoor, 2015; Smette, 2017). What teachers underline, however, is that psychosocial preventive measures within the school can only *to some extent* attend to the needs of students who undergo severe distress. It is these students that need more follow-up and/or treatment, which teachers refer to when they stress that the school is not a care institution and that teachers are not therapists.

The school staff comment that the school does not provide treatment should be considered in light of two trends that have contradictory implications. Both trends have increased in recent years. First, teachers in Norway and other countries 'are subject to accountability regimes where schools and teachers are held responsible for students' achievements' (Smette, 2017, p. 318, our translation) as part

of a school mandate to fulfil the government aim of doing well 'in the international competition on good student results' (Smette, 2017, p. 319, our translation).³³ Second, the teacher role is increasingly conceived as a caring profession too, and Norwegian policy documents' descriptions of the teacher role include an emphasis on not only their educational but also their psychosocial and social role (Ekornes, 2017, p. 319). Summarising previous research, Ekornes states that teachers have growing concerns that 'their increased parental function towards the students will encroach upon their pedagogical role' (2017, p. 335). Due to time and capacity limits, some teachers fear burnout (Ekornes, 2017), which may explain a need to put up clear boundaries.

Teacher statements in the TURIN study and previous research can thus be seen as dealing with actual tensions in their mandate. The findings point to a need to address how these demands can be balanced. While we acknowledge this tension and dilemma, we will consider some ways in which schools may address these conflicting demands. Whilst the psychosocial aspects of the teacher role are crucial, (refugee) students' psychosocial needs should be attended to by also strengthening/maintaining the presence of other occupations at the schools who have regular and sometimes less formal contact with students. School health nurses can play

³³ Cf. Norway's participation in OECD's Program for International Student assessment (PISA).

an important role in promoting students' mental health and well-being. In addition, school social workers who often are more easily accessible seem to play an important role. It can be easier for some students who experience distress and challenges to share their concerns in a less formal setting than in the classroom. Such informal contact can also make it possible for school staff to notice individuals' challenges that otherwise can be overlooked (Fazel et al., 2012). Finally, it is important to underline the importance of enhanced interdisciplinary collaboration between the various members of the school staff, concerning students' educational and psychosocial challenges.

In addition, innovative solutions can be sought that are aimed at maximising and strengthening current school professions, as suggested by the central educational role of the library in one of the schools studied in TURIN. One finding was that the librarians also contributed to the psychosocial follow-up of students and referred them to other school staff is required.

Furthermore, much primary prevention work concerning psychosocial challenges can be done in the school context (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Pastoor, 2015; Ryding & Leth, 2014). Schools can offer students psychoeducation, so they can learn to deal with the mental and emotional problems they are experiencing. Preventive school-based group interventions with a less individual focus (see e.g. RefugeesWellSchool³⁴) may be a good option too, since not all refugees appreciate personal talks with a school nurse or a psychologist (Pastoor, 2015). For example, joint activities such as creative expression workshops have been shown to enhance young refugees' sense of belonging and connection to school, which in turn has a positive effect on their mental health and psychosocial adaptation (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). Students who identify with and are engaged in the school they attend are also more likely to complete schooling (Markussen, Frøseth, & Sandberg, 2011).

34 <https://refugeeswellschool.org/>

10. Concluding remarks

The TURIN study's findings demonstrate what kind of educational and psychosocial challenges young refugees may encounter upon resettlement in Norway, and how these can manifest themselves in their school life and consequently may affect their pathways in(to) education. Furthermore, it becomes clear that refugee students' educational and psychosocial challenges often have an impact on each other. The findings also point to that the time of resettlement can be marked not only by substantial challenges but also by optimism and high levels of school motivation – given that young refugees experience supportive relations inside and/or outside school.

Young refugees' accounts point to a strong desire for more contact with majority language students and others who have grown up in Norway. Schools may facilitate such contact and carefully consider how both formal and informal arenas can be created where language is less decisive for interactions. In further research, it could be interesting to look into majority students' perceptions and experiences of their contact/lack of contact with young refugees in their school to get a broader picture of the social dynamics at play.

The school staff interviews point to several challenges, dilemmas and resources that schools have in their work with young refugees. It seems

fundamental to weigh up and relate to the dilemma of difference both for the purpose of good individual teacher-student relations and for providing the best-suited school provisions that support newly arrived students' education and psychosocial well-being in the long and short term. Furthermore, the findings show that sometimes teachers have to deal with conflicting demands between attending to educational outcomes and psychosocial needs. Also, school staff experience a dilemma concerning how to sustain young resettled refugees' often high school motivation over time. The challenge of how to relate to this dilemma can be increased by the fact that late arrivals are often 'impatient'/eager to move through the educational system at a regular pace for economic, social and/or cultural reasons.

In today's world, with large numbers of young people and children on the move, schools may expect highly diverse groups of students and, among these, many from refugee backgrounds. As the present study shows, newly arrived refugee students are confronted with a number of educational and psychosocial challenges, which schools not always know how to relate appropriately to. Especially late arrivals are a distinct challenge for schools because of everything they need to catch up on and accomplish during their years of upper secondary

schooling. Completing upper secondary education and training is of decisive importance as it increases refugee young people's future opportunities for labour market participation. In Norway, a stable association with the labour market requires adequate educational/professional qualifications (CAGE, forthcoming; Gauffin & Lyytinen, 2017).

Teaching refugee students is already part of many Norwegian teachers' everyday reality in the classroom. Schools

should be allocated the necessary resources to strengthen teachers' and other staff members' refugee competence and their availability for newly arrived students. Refugee-competent schools and teachers (Pastoor, 2015, 2016a) can make a decisive difference to young refugees who need to find their way in(to) Norwegian schools and the wider society – to the benefit of both Norwegian society and young refugees themselves.

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Appendix: Absolute numbers for figure 2.1. and Figure 2.2.**Figure 2.1.****Young asylum seekers by year of arrival, citizenship and age**

Year	Country	0-5 Y/O	6-10 Y/O	11-17 Y/O	Total
2015	Afghanistan	400	330	3605	4335
	Eritrea	93	24	696	813
	Ethiopia	40	8	128	176
	Iraq	288	243	249	780
	Somalia	38	4	115	157
	Syria	1062	556	961	2579
2016	Afghanistan	69	14	124	207
	Eritrea	55	7	54	116
	Ethiopia	38	2	19	59
	Iraq	55	8	15	78
	Somalia	40	1	18	59
	Syria	230	19	37	286
2017	Afghanistan	22	10	47	79
	Eritrea	96	21	60	177
	Ethiopia	27	1	2	30
	Iraq	43	7	15	65
	Somalia	23	1	6	30
	Syria	168	111	97	376
2018	Afghanistan	10	7	39	56
	Eritrea	35	0	33	68
	Ethiopia	11	0	3	14
	Iraq	13	9	16	38
	Somalia	19	0	3	22
	Syria	42	19	48	109

Figure 2.2.

Young refugee arrivals <18 Y/O

	2015		2016		2017		2018	
	UNMIN	ACCMIN	UN-MIN	ACCMIN	UN-MIN	ACCMIN	UN-MIN	ACCMIN
Afghanistan	3537	798	128	79	44	35	37	19
Eritrea	735	78	47	69	51	126	34	34
Ethiopia	145	31	21	38	3	27	3	11
Iraq	80	700	12	66	11	54	2	36
Somalia	144	13	16	43	7	23	3	19
Syria	574	2005	25	261	39	337	40	69
Total arrivals	5215	3625	249	556	155	602	119	188

Sources

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), data retrieved from the following webpages:

Asylum applications lodged in Norway by citizenship, sex and age (2015)
<https://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/statistics/asylum-applications-lodged-in-norway-by-citizenship-sex-and-age/>

Asylum applications of unaccompanied minors lodged in Norway by nationality and month (2015)
<https://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/statistics/asylsoknader-enslige-mindrearige-asylokere-etter-statsborgerskap-og-maned-2015/>

Asylum applications lodged in Norway by Citizenship, Sex and Age (2016)
<https://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/statistics/asylum-applications-lodged-in-norway-by-citizenship-sex-and-age-2016/>

[applications-lodged-in-norway-by-citizenship-sex-and-age-2016/](https://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/statistics/asylum-applications-lodged-in-norway-by-citizenship-sex-and-age-2016/)

Asylum applications of unaccompanied minors lodged in Norway by nationality and month (2016)
<https://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/statistics/asylum-applications-of-unaccompanied-minors-lodged-in-norway-by-nationality-and-month-2016/>

Asylum applications lodged in Norway by Citizenship, Sex and Age (2017)
<https://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/statistics/asylum-applications-lodged-in-norway-by-citizenship-sex-and-age-2017/>

Asylum applications of unaccompanied minors lodged in Norway by nationality and month (2017)
<https://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/statistics/asylum-applications-of-unaccompanied-minors-lodged-in-norway-by-nationality-and-month-2017/>

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Asylsøknader etter statsborgerskap,
aldersgruppe og kjønn (2018)
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Asylum applications of
unaccompanied minors lodged in
Norway by nationality and month
(2018)
<https://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/statistics/asylum-applications-of-unaccompanied-minors-lodged-in-norway-by-nationality-and-month-2018/>

About the project Coming of Age in Exile (CAGE)

CAGE is a research project based on collaboration between five leading research institutions in the Nordic countries; the Danish Research Centre for Migration, Ethnicity and Health, University of Copenhagen, Denmark; Migration Institute of Finland, Finland; Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies and University College of Southeast Norway, Norway; and Centre for Health Equity Studies, Stockholm University and University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

CAGE brings together a pan-Nordic, multidisciplinary team of leading scholars and research students to shed light on some of our time's most pressing social challenges related to the societal integration of young refugees. CAGE will provide analyses and insights to inform policy and practice related to health, education and employment among young refugees arriving in the Nordic countries and beyond. CAGE is funded by the Nordic Research Council (NordForsk).

CAGE was developed within the "Nordic Network for Research Cooperation on Unaccompanied Refugee Minors" and its sister network "Nordic Network for Research on Refugee Children".

You can read more about CAGE at www.cage.ku.dk



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