Identifying the best practices for the integration of refugee students into the German national school system

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Abstract

Integration is a complex and widely discussed concept, central to the refugee crisis that Europe is currently experiencing. With the large number of minors and young adults entering European countries, the inclusion of refugees (and of other migrants) into national education systems is an important topic to be understood and discussed. Germany is the European country which has taken in the largest number of refugees. Yet, the practices for refugee education and inclusion into the German national school system are still very diverse and are not based on the needs and suggestions of the parties involved, i.e. refugee students, German students and teachers. This research seeks to better understand the concept of integration and to outline the best practices of inclusion of refugee students into the national school system. To this end, in this research, two teachers (one from a vocational school and one from a primary school), six German students (from a vocational school inclusive of refugees) and six refugee students (from various German schools) share their reflections on current practices and make suggestions about how educational practices could be improved. The findings illustrate the deliberations of the participants about the concept of integration - as well as about prejudiced, racist and nationalist ideologies, and their considerations on the role of schools in relation to these ideologies and integration. The participants unanimously share support for the inclusion of refugees in the German national school system, in spite of some negative outcomes of inclusive education. The findings highlight the importance of additional teaching, and especially of extra language support being available to refugee students throughout their education. School psychologists and teaching assistants are also key in assisting teachers with class management and coping with the increased incidences of mental health problems related to trauma within the refugee student population. Finally, the results highlight the issues within the German school system in relation to providing all students with equal opportunities to develop skills and to meeting the needs of all students in light of an increasingly diverse student community. These insights could be valuable for future policies regarding integration processes of young refugees globally.

Résumé

L'intégration est un concept complexe et est l'objet d'un vaste débat, au cœur de la crise des réfugiés que nous connaissons actuellement en Europe. Avec un grand nombre de mineurs et de jeunes adultes entrant dans les pays européens, l'inclusion des réfugiés (et d'autres migrants) dans les systèmes éducatifs nationaux est un sujet important à comprendre et à débattre. L'Allemagne est le pays européen qui a accueilli le plus grand nombre de réfugiés. Mais pourtant, l'éducation des réfugiés et leur inclusion dans le système scolaire national allemand sont encore très diverses et ne sont pas basées sur les besoins et suggestions des parties concernées, à savoir les étudiants réfugiés, les étudiants allemands et les enseignants. Ce document de recherche vise à mieux comprendre le concept d'intégration et vise à souligner les meilleures pratiques d'inclusion des élèves réfugiés dans le système scolaire national. Avec ce but, dans ce document de recherche, deux enseignants (l'un d'une école professionnelle et l'autre d'une école primaire), six étudiants allemands (d'une école professionnelle incluant des réfugiés) et six réfugiés (de différentes écoles allemandes) partagent leurs réflexions sur les pratiques actuelles et proposent des suggestions sur la manière d'améliorer les pratiques éducatives. Les résultats illustrent les délibérations des participants sur le concept d'intégration — ainsi que sur les idéologies préjugées, racistes et nationalistes, et leurs contreparties sur le rôle des écoles par rapport à ces idéologies et à l'intégration. Les participants partagent à l'unanimité leur soutien pour l'inclusion des réfugiés dans le système scolaire national allemand, en dépit de certains résultats négatifs de l'éducation inclusive. Les résultats mettent en évidence l'importance de l'enseignement supplémentaire, et particulièrement l'importance d'un soutien linguistique supplémentaire disponible pour les étudiants réfugiés tout au long de leur scolarité. Les psychologues scolaires et les aides-enseignants sont également une aide essentielle aux enseignants pour non seulement gérer les classes mais aussi l'accroissement du nombre de problèmes de santé mentale liés aux traumatismes au sein de la population étudiante réfugiée. Enfin, les résultats mettent en évidence les problèmes liés à la structure du système scolaire allemand par rapport à l'égalité des chances permettant à chaque élève de développer un niveau de compétences égal a celui des autres, afin de répondre aux besoins de tous les étudiants dans une communauté étudiante de plus en plus diversifiée. Ces réflexions pourraient être bénéfiques pour les futures politiques concernant les processus d'intégration des jeunes réfugiés dans le monde entier.

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Contents:

Chapter 1: Introduction, key terms and context

A personal introduction

Growing up in a bilingual (English-Italian) household in a foreign country (Germany) meant that everything I saw and talked about always had three names in my head, and that every concept or idiom had three different ways of expression. It also meant that I did not really have a home, or maybe that I had three homes: Germany, Italy and the UK. To this day I find it very difficult to answer the question 'where are you from?' 'Where is home?' I cannot answer these questions and the only certainty I have is that I feel European (from a pre-Brexit perspective clearly). Being a student at the European School in Munich consolidated this feeling, made me appreciate the values behind the European Union (EU) and exposed me to people who shared my jigsaw European identity. It also made me accustomed to being around and finding ways of communicating with people whose mother tongue was different from mine. This interpretation of my own identity expanded during my experiences living in the UK and Montreal, Canada. There, I interacted with people coming from many different continents around the world and learned about how this jigsaw identity is shared by many people from all around the world.

Consequently, I felt very drawn to and concerned about the realities of the numerous refugees arriving by train to Europe. It was the initial welcome shown by the German citizens in September 2015 towards the Syrian refugees that stood out to me as an inspiring sign of humanity, solidarity and empathy. Sadly, this sign is, more often than not, overpowered by negative and sometimes violent attitudes towards migrants. This enhanced my awareness of the contrast between my migrant experience in Germany, the UK and Canada — an extremely enriching one and most importantly voluntary —and that lived by most migrants seeking safety and a better life in Europe. My migrant experience has been a very positive one and I wish all migrants could say the same. Instead many face instability, distrust and unwelcome.

The highest degree of unwelcome that I have ever experienced was in 2016 when Brexit was voted for in the UK as I was living there. But, here again, I had the choice to move away from a now unwelcoming country and decided to pursue my postgraduate studies in Canada, a country that I imagined to be inclusive and welcoming. The reality of non-European migrants seeking asylum and a better life is that they cannot move away from unwelcoming attitudes and instead are expected to show gratitude that they can be in Europe in the first place. When I now cross the border from Austria into Germany travelling from Italy (the same route taken

by many migrants) I know I will not be stopped at the border control and my passport will not be asked for despite me not being a German national just because of my European looks. The fear that dominates the approach to non-European immigrants entering Germany has meant that the Schengen agreement[1], which permits free movement across borders within the EU, has to some degree been transgressed for "security" reasons, which may or may not represent a new covert form of racism.

In 2015 I began voluntarily tutoring a young refugee girl from Syria in Munich. As time passed our relationship developed into friendship, with which came a fascinating exchange of culture, language and values. I learned about her experiences at the German school, about what she found difficult, about the obstacles she had to overcome to achieve her dream of becoming a doctor. Consequently, I wished her feelings and views could be heard at a decision-making level, because they are important and possibly shared by most young and ambitious refugees. This experience inspired me for this research. At the same time, I was exposed to the juxtaposed point of view by some European friends of mine who expressed their fear and discomfort at the increased numbers of Middle Eastern refugees now circulating in the city. I felt that these were also valid feelings and that it was important to find a common ground between the two perspectives.

Reflecting on how, in my experience, the European School had been a platform where all nationalities with their individual cultural and linguistic differences came together, I directed my focus onto schools, a feature common to the lives of us all. They are a site for potential social transformation, for cultural exchange and for the building of a multicultural outlook. In a globalised world, the crossing of borders, being foreign in a new country, meeting a foreigner, are all inherent aspects of the current and future social reality. When I read about refugee migrants being left at sea and their entrance being rejected because they are not European I cannot comprehend how this can be happening, as it does not coincide with the values and principles of Europe. I strongly believe the way forward is inclusion, open borders and more compassion. Classrooms are a strategic starting point, because they influence the development of each and every one of us.

[1] The Schengen agreement was introduced in 1985 by the European Union member states. It foresees the abolishment of national border controls with the goal of creating a Europe without national borders which allows free movement of people and belongings between the countries which have adhered to the treaty.

This research project addresses the challenging aspects of cultural difference, inclusion and integration specifically within classrooms in Germany. The aim is to bring together the perspectives of students (refugees and non-refugees) and teachers about the inclusion of refugees into schools and on how this process could be improved. Many projects are being launched and suggestions are being made to facilitate the inclusion and integration of refugees. Nonetheless, it is important to listen to the feelings and ideas of those who in the classroom face cultural difference every day, and especially those towards whom the policies are directed. Malala Yousafzai (January, 2019) highlighted how "we hear *about* refugees, but we never hear *from* refugees". It is true, especially as far as the integration of refugees into classrooms is concerned — many new regulations are being formulated and revised, but the refugee students are never consulted prior to the implementation of these new regulations. The following research seeks to hear from all parties involved in the issue of integration within classrooms: refugee students, non-refugee students and teachers. Their insights offer valuable information for future policies and integration processes.

Understanding key terminologies: refugee, asylum seekers and integration

'Refugee' is a commonly used term but one which is often used mistakenly. The term originates from the Latin "refugio", which translates into the English "refuge". Taking into consideration the etymology of the word 'refugee' enables us to realize the natural and instinctive nature of the term, almost a reminder that seeking safety from perceived danger is one of the most basic instincts and one of our most human traits. The lack of clarity which comes with the term is generally caused by the fact that it is associated with the concept of migration and that migration itself takes a number of different forms. In 1951, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) outlined a definition for the term 'refugee' which was later revised in the 1967 Protocol. The convention sought to specify to whom the status of refugee would apply. This understanding of the word 'refugee' is adopted throughout this thesis. The definition is as follows:

> A refugee, according to the Convention, is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. (UNHCR, 1967 Protocol, p.3)

Although this definition is generally widely accepted and considered official, it must be acknowledged that the meaning of 'refugee' is one that has also broadened over time as a

consequence of new challenges faced by the human population. For example, in recent years there has been a rise in the number of 'environmental refugees' who, rather than fleeing persecution, are escaping a hostile environment produced by climate change which has transformed (or is transforming) their ancestral homes into inhospitable places (Cooper, 1997).

The term 'refugee' is often used in connection to the term 'asylum seeker'. For purpose of clarity, I will specify that an asylum seeker is a person who has applied for refugee status in a new country and is waiting for the application to be processed. Once the status has been granted, the person is classified as a refugee (UNHCR, 2005). The two terms are therefore close in meaning and use.

Another key concept in this research is that of 'integration'. Central to the experience of all refugees, it is often deemed a common policy goal to have refugees integrated in the host society (Robinson, 1998). However, the concept of integration is used widely to mean different things (Ager & Strang, 2008). Because integration is a goal for most policies and projects involving refugees, and because understanding how to achieve a successful integration process is the general aim of this study, it is crucial to first explore the concept and establish a well-defined interpretation. As stated by Robinson (1998), integration changes over time and according to context. Consequently, it cannot be described with a unified definition. Nonetheless, several attempts have been made to reach a definition. Ager and Strang (2008) illustrate how the idea of nationhood of a country determines the way integration is viewed and thus its meaning. For instance, in Germany the sense of belonging to the nation is established through blood ties and accordingly it is difficult for outsiders to achieve this feeling. Here the concept of integration is often viewed as 'assimilation', whereby immigrants are expected to adapt to the host community and merge completely with the host population (Kuhlman, 1991). In countries like the UK the concept of multiculturalism is present. This allows different ethno-cultural groups to retain their own traditions and leads to the co-existence of different cultures, also referred to as ethnic pluralism (Kuhlman, 1991). Similarly, in Canada multicultural policy encourages immigrants and refugees to keep their identities and they can become permanent citizens after a few years (Ghosh et al., 2019). These examples emphasize how nationhood can play a key role in determining the understanding of the concept of integration, calling into question whether in some cases the acquisition of citizenship represents the final culmination of the integration process (UNHCR, 2019). Another interpretation of 'integration' coincides with the concept of 'adaptation'. This is defined as "the mutual interaction of individuals and collectivities and their response to particular physical and social environments" (Goldlust & Richmond, 1974, p.195), suggesting that contact between two or more cultures would lead to

an interaction which causes the cultures to mix. The definition is however unspecific and does not clarify the features of the mixing. The outcome of interaction between groups is a key element within the concept of integration and therefore I do not consider adaptation to be a potential synonym. Acculturation is another term that has been used in reference to integration. Kuhlman (1991) describes acculturation to be the development and change of culture resulting from "continuous, first-hand contact between two distinct cultural groups" (p. 4). Arguably, acculturation is inevitably part of any integration process, since contact between cultures is inherent to immigration and therefore some sort of change is unavoidable. However, the outcomes of such interaction can vary considerably. This becomes clear through Berry's (1997) acculturation model, whereby Berry identifies four possible outcomes of acculturation, only one of which he describes as 'integration', i.e. when a group can interact with the host society, whilst maintaining its identity. Other possible outcomes of acculturation are assimilation (when the newly arrived group adopts the culture of the dominant society); separation (when there is no interaction between the group and the host community); and marginalization (when the group neither becomes part of the host community nor is able to maintain their own culture) (Kuhlman, 1991). Bulcha (1988) develops these concepts further by considering marginalization to be the opposite of integration. Considering the varied forms that social interaction between different cultural groups can take, Kuhlman (1991) defines integration based on the specific outcomes and conditions experienced by refugees and the host community:

> If refugees are able to participate in the host economy in ways commensurate with their skills and compatible with their cultural values; if they attain a standard of living which satisfies culturally determined minimum requirements; if the socio-cultural change they undergo permits them to maintain an identity of their own and to adjust psychologically to their new situation; if standards of living and economic opportunities for members of the host society have not deteriorated due to the influx of refugees; if friction between host population and refugees is not worse than within the host population itself; and if the refugees do not encounter more discrimination than exists between groups previously settled within the host society: then refugees are truly integrated. (p. 8)

Kuhlman's interpretation highlights not only how integration is defined by the outcome of social interaction between groups described, but also how it involves the host community just as much as the newly arrived groups. This links with the fact that integration concerns both refugees and nationals, and it is described as a 'two-way process' by several researchers including Ager & Strang (2010, p. 600) and de Wal Pastoor (2015). Similarly, Berry (1997;

1991) speaks of a necessary "mutual accommodation" in order to achieve integration. Berry describes integration as a choice for both the dominant and non-dominant group, stating that openness and orientation towards cultural diversity are required for integration to be an option. Likewise, one of the aspects covered in this research is the correlation between cultural interaction and the development of openness towards cultural diversity. In fact, this study is concerned with understanding both the points of view of refugee students as well as those of students and teachers from the German host community, consistently with Kuhlman's description above. In addition, it seeks to understand how the experience of the integration process can be improved for the refugee and the host communities, similarly to how Kuhlman draws his definition from an analysis of the best possible outcome of cultural interaction and co-existence. For these reasons, I will adopt his understanding of the concept for this study, as well as envisaging Berry's view of integration being a choice in terms of attitude and policies implemented in regards to refugees and immigrants more generally.

It is also important to briefly consider some of the reasons why countries accept refugees. Aside from the admirable humanitarian and moral imperative to do so, which has led to very well-developed policies, there are of course, several important reasons why Western countries have opened their borders to give refuge to people fleeing war and other types of trauma. One of the main reasons is that Western countries have a declining population due to a lower birth-rate and the improvement of medical knowledge and technology which, in turn, lead to longer life-expectancy and to greying populations. Consequently, young labour is needed in Western countries to pay taxes to care for their older populations and to fill the gap in labour which forms as a result of the lower birth-rate and population decline. Some countries, such as the U.S., have been able to attract immigrant talent from all over the world. Other countries, like France and the UK, have people from their former colonies. Countries, such as Canada, have welcomed Syrian refugees. Yet their policies towards refugees (and immigrants more generally) have stark differences due largely to their policies towards racial composition of their populations. Refugees tend to be from non-white poor countries of the Global South, and lately, of Islamic faith resulting from wars, several of which were started by countries of the Global North. Integration is a necessity rather than an option, but the policies implanted towards refugees and the attitude adopted in regards to refugees is ultimately a choice that needs to be made if societal conflict and economic uncertainty (which result from inequities in many forms) are to be avoided. It is crucial that people in host societies recognize the potential long-term benefits of refugees and immigrants.

In their paper "Understanding Integration," Ager and Strang (2008) provide a useful outline of the process of integration, how it is achieved and the areas in which it features. The rights granted to refugees by a host nation as well as the idea of citizenship and values upheld by the same country provide the foundations for what type of integration it is aiming for. The outcomes of the process of integration features in the following four sectors:

a. Employment is key in allowing a person to feel part of society. Refugees often face under-employment due to unrecognized qualifications, language barriers and lack of recognition of previous work experience. Therefore, education and vocational training is important to help refugees find employment and thus feel better integrated.
b. Housing plays a substantial role in enabling refugees to feel at home, which contributes to achieving integration.
c. Education provides skills necessary for future employment and thus for becoming active members of the host society. In addition, schools consist of an important site for contact with local host communities for refugee children and young adults.
d. Health is crucial in enabling interaction with the new society and access to reliable mainstream healthcare is an asset in making refugees feel part of the new community.

Furthermore, Ager and Strang (2008) identify three facilitators for achieving integration by connecting the foundational principles of citizenship and rights and the outcomes in the sectors of employment, housing, education and health: (i) social connection, because relationships between groups lead to a sense of belonging which for some is "the ultimate mark of living in an integrated community" (p. 178); (ii) language, because the ability to speak the language of the host community is central to the process of integration and without knowledge of the lingua franca, it would be almost impossible to fully interact and participate with the community; and, (iii) safety and stability are a concern for both refugees and non-refugees in terms of the place they are in being safe and the arrival of refugees not disrupting the stability of their neighbourhood.

Some social activists and researchers are somewhat opposed to the use of the word 'integration', because it implies an expectation on the part of the dominant group for the minority or newcomers to adapt to their society, almost exempting the dominant group from any effort or responsibility (UNESCO, 2001). The term 'inclusion' has been employed as a more idealistic and correct description of the goal. Although I also believe that the term 'inclusion' would be a preferable aim, I will also continue to discuss the concept of integration and how it can be achieved, because it is regarded mostly as a policy goal and because it is a realistic component of refugee experiences. However, it is important to me to underline my

understanding of integration as a two-way process, i.e. as a process which puts the onus to adapt equally on the refugee newcomers as much as on the host community.

The refugee crisis in the European Union (EU)

Immigration and asylum have always been part of the history of the EU. However, since 2014 Europe has been confronted with a major refugee crisis. With the ongoing war in Syria, a large number of civilians have fled their home country hoping for safety and security in a different country. It continues to be the largest refugee crisis in the world (European Commission, 2019d). According to the UNHCR (2018), Syria has the largest population of forcibly displaced people: 12 million by the end of 2016, therefore more than half of the total Syrian population. Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey are the countries hosting the largest numbers of Syrian refugees, and most of them are below the poverty line, as recorded by the UNHCR in 2018. Many of the refugees hope for safety and for a better life in Europe and therefore seek refuge in European countries. The statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat) has registered 650,000 asylum applications in 2017, with Syrian being the main citizenship of people seeking asylum in the EU (16% of all the applications), immediately followed by Iraqi and Afghan citizenship (March 2018). The EU member states have each responded differently, and although there have been many generous and supportive gestures and policies, the reactions and policies from some countries have been negative and discriminatory (UNHCR, 2019). In an increasing number of cases, the large number of refugees arriving in Europe has sparked feelings of fear, xenophobia, islamophobia and instability among many European populations. Evidence for this is the rise in right-wing extremist groups throughout the continent. It is but a symptom of the trending feelings of distrust in Europe towards Islam, and towards those who are seen as being culturally very distant. This xenophobia has ignited extremist violent right-wing reactions in most European countries, posing a threat to the European Union's integrity. As a firm believer in the ideals of the EU, I decided to contextualize my research within the current situation in the EU, in the hope that my research may be a small but useful contribution into ways of integrating multiculturalism, inclusion and acceptance of non-European cultures into the EU ideology and practice.

EU ideology and asylum

Founded in 1950 to put an end to the many years of conflict that had pervaded Europe in the first half of the 20th century, the EU promotes peace, freedom, diversity, justice and equality

(European Union, 2019). Importantly, a large part of the EU values — "based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law" (2019) — touch upon immigration and diversity. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU states asylum to be a right guaranteed within the EU member states in accordance with the rules of the Geneva Convention in 1951, of the Protocol in 1967 and of the Treaty on European Union (European Union, 2016). This is taken further in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whereby "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" (United Nations, 2015). In regards to freedom the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU advocates freedom of thought and religion in Article 10. This is important for EU citizens and temporary residents to know, as it enables them to practice their own culture and faith regardless of what it is. Another important value deeply affecting the lives of refugees and immigrants is equality. Article 21 states that:

> Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.

Moreover, article 22 demands respect for diversity in culture, religion and language. Finally, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU also addresses the importance of solidarity, with Article 34 offering social security and assistance (European Union, 2019).

All of these points affect the quality of life of all citizens, but particularly that of immigrants within the EU. Refugees greatly depend on state social assistance for food, a home, job seeking assistance and language learning. Moreover, since the majority of asylum applications are from the Middle East or Africa, discrimination on the basis of colour, language, race, religion among other already existing discrimination, poses a real threat to the wellbeing of newly arrived citizens, a threat that is likely to persist independently from the length of their residence in the host country. Therefore, an atmosphere of freedom and equality can hugely transform the reality for these people.

The European Union's commitment to its values and solidarity towards asylum seekers is evident not only from a theoretical perspective within the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (2016), but also on a financial and decision-making level. To better manage migration, address root causes of displacement and protect migrants and refugees, the EU has given €23.3 billion to EU member states, neighbouring and third world countries (European Commission, 2019d). The funding needed to address migration within the EU is obtained through two EU funds supporting migration: the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for support to member states in managing migration flows; and the Internal Security Fund (ISF)

responsible for security and the management of external borders (European Commission, 2019b). For the five-year period succeeding the first major wave of asylum applications in 2014, the EU has provided €8.6 billion in total for asylum procedures, such as reception, healthcare, accommodation and food (European Commission, 2019c).

Similarly, resettlement defined by the EU as "the admission of non-EU nationals in need of international protection from a non-EU country to a member state where they are granted protection" (European Commission, 2019a), demonstrates the EU's support of migrants and refugees on a decision-making level. EU resettlement schemes have been implemented to successfully resettle 63,000 asylum seekers since 2015 with 30,000 more foreseen for 2020 in view of resettlement needs remaining high in the near future (2019a). In particular the Union Resettlement Framework Regulation focuses on ensuring migration happens in safe and legal ways, guarantees resettlement is given to persons in genuine need for protection, and allows member states to agree on which regions to resettle people from (European Commission, 2018b).

In addition to these humanitarian measures that aim to make the process just and fair, the EU asylum procedure is also very complex. Crossing a large number of sectors, the asylum applicant's journey can be summarised as follows: first, the Reception Conditions Directive is responsible for assistance upon arrival. After an asylum application is made, fingerprints are taken and stored with the EURODAC database. Subsequently the Dublin Unit decides which EU country is responsible for processing the application — usually the first country of arrival. The Qualification Directive and the Asylum Procedures Directive are then responsible for conducting a personal interview with the asylum applicant to determine whether asylum can be granted to them. The Common European Asylum System aims at having an equal distribution and regulation for migration throughout EU member states and at ensuring that an answer to asylum applications is given within six months (European Commission, 2014; European Parliament, 2019). In accordance with the Reception Conditions Directive, asylum seekers will have the right to work within six months after their registration and minors will receive education within two months after registration (European Commission, 2018a). This summary shows the complex and often inaccessible nature of the current asylum procedure in the EU.

It proves to be difficult to harmonize refugee practices within the EU, and policies vary greatly between member states, meaning that the experience of newly arrived refugees will be different depending on which country they finally arrive in (Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002). Racism is unfortunately common throughout Europe often in a covert fashion (Mestheneos &

Ioannidi, 2002) and, in many cases, public debates and solutions fail to comply with the values of solidarity and responsibility of the EU, which result in a state of fragility for refugees and a growing atmosphere of distrust and fear (UNHCR, 2019). In fact, immigrants are often perceived as a threat to the European culture and values (Kowalczyk, 2014), as the rise in support for the far right throughout the EU demonstrates. Additionally, the survey conducted by Sides and Citrin (2007) found that the opinion of the general public on immigrants, rather than being based on demographic and economic conditions, is greatly influenced by attitudinal and psychological factors, such as economic anxiety, membership to certain social groups and networks, cultural and national identities, and by the information supplied by the media and through the messages of politicians. Nonetheless, consequent to the enlargement of the EU borders, the EU is making changes to render the attainment of citizenship more accessible (Ager & Strang, 2010).

Refugee situation and reception in Germany

Germany has a relatively long history of immigration and a large Turkish demographic. It is currently the EU country receiving the largest number of asylum applications (31%) – with almost half of the total asylum applications to the EU from Syrians (102,400) being directed to Germany in 2017, followed by Italy (20%), France (14%) and Greece (9%) (Eurostat, March 2018). Germany also had the largest number of pending asylum applications in the EU in December 2017 (48% of all applications in the EU), followed by Italy (16%), Austria (6%) and Sweden (6%) (Eurostat, March 2018). For the current six-year period 2014–2020, Germany received over €828 million from the AMIF and the ISF to manage the influx of asylum seekers (European Commission, 2019b).

The peak of refugee arrivals in the EU was in the summer of 2015. On September 12th 2015 alone more than 10,000 Syrian refugees arrived in Munich central station (Süddeutsche Zeitung, September 2015). By the end of 2015, Germany had more than 360,000 asylum applications in total (BAMF, 2016). In 2018, 32.2% of the asylum applications were positively evaluated, the majority concerning Syrian citizenship (BAMF, 2016, 2018; Eurostat, 2018).
Aside from Germany's pivotal position within the context of asylum applications to the EU, I focus particularly on the German context for the following reasons. First of all, Germany is one of the leading economies in the EU with a strong need for immigration in order to maintain its economic success: with a declining population Germany continues to rely more and more on immigrated skilled workers to fill the growing gap in its workforce. A failure to fulfil this

need for workers would result in a considerable reduction of the national wealth. Independently from the current refugee crisis, as noted above the German economy is in need of immigrants and the challenging task of integration is vital. In fact, refugees are often considerably more educated and skilled in comparison to other groups of immigrants (Muus, 1997; Ager & Strang, 2008) and the Syrian refugee crisis could be an immense opportunity for the country, as also noted by the Süddeutsche Zeitung (August 2017, February 2019). With immigrants from other countries bringing diversity to Germany, an inclusive and multicultural society is necessary both for peacekeeping and to sustain a successful economy. Secondly, Germany has an important history linked to nationalism in the years leading to the First and Second World Wars, which presents several similarities with the rise in nationalism in the last few years (Hofmann, 2017). The current political situation in Germany has been reported as seeing the "most violent far-right protests in decades" (The Guardian, September 2018) and in October 2019 the far-right party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) surged to second place in the regional elections of Thuringia with 24% of the votes (The Guardian, October 2019). In view of its xenophobic and anti-Semitic history, I would like my research to contribute towards avoiding a cyclic reproduction of history. Lastly, on a more practical note, German is a language I am familiar with and therefore, I can access first-hand data without major linguistic obstacles. Furthermore, as a resident in Munich, national schools in the city of Munich and nearby are easily accessible for me.

Why focus on education?

Education is a fundamental human right and it applies to all children worldwide (Delors et al., 1996; Pinnock & Hodgkin, 2010; INEE, 2009; UNESCO, 2001; Dryden-Peterson, 2011; UNHCR, 2011). Since the Second World War, the importance of education and the dedication to making it a priority on a political level have progressively been recognized internationally, such as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights first proclaimed in 1948 (Article 26 of the new edition, United Nations, 2015), the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959, the Declaration on the Recognition of the Right to Learn in 1985, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. Today, it is the aim of Sustainable Development Goal number 4, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, to make sure that all children are receiving quality education at both primary and secondary level by 2030 (UNDP, 2020). However, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics shows that indeed 263 million children are out of school, more than half of whom are adolescents and youth missing out on secondary education (2018; OECD, 2019), with poverty

and conflict being two of the main factors causing this considerable gap. Notably, refugee children and youth fleeing violence and war have one of the lowest enrolment rates, with 63% of the children in primary education and only 24% in secondary education, compared to the global percentage of 91% and 84% enrolled in primary and secondary school respectively (Grandi, 2020). Difficulty in accessing education, disrupted educational backgrounds and feelings of marginalisation, inadequacy and hopelessness are among the major reasons why there is such a high percentage of young refugees not receiving an education (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Stewart, 2017; Ghosh et al., 2019). Education also has a protective role: children who go to school are less likely to be victims of child labour, early marriage and forced into criminal activities (Grandi, 2020).

Schooling, especially higher education, leads to greater employment opportunities, higher wages and greater social engagement (OECD, 2019). However, once again refugees face considerable difficulties accessing higher education, due to lack of proficiency in language, disrupted schooling, unrecognized qualifications and financial constraints (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Streitweiser et al., 2018; Ghosh et al., 2019). In fact, refugee enrolment is only 3%, a significant increase from the long-standing 1% (Grandi, 2020). This increase is due to a growing effort being put into rendering higher education more accessible to refugee youth, a lot of which has been catalysed by the Syrian refugee crisis (Streitweiser et al., 2018). In 2018, the UN member states affirmed their commitment to improving the access of refugees to primary, secondary and especially to tertiary education through the Global Compact on Refugees, a response framework affirmed by the UNHCR in December 2018 (United Nations, 2018). Examples of this commitment in practice are the DAFI programme (the German Albert Einstein Academic Scholarship Programme for Refugees) run by the UNHCR and the German government, and initiatives by the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdiesnt, DAAD). Both of these initiatives address the main barriers for refugees to higher education with the aim of making university more accessible to them, by providing scholarships and language training (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; UNHCR, 2019b; DAAD, 2019). Tertiary education is a path to self-reliance for refugees, as well as an exit route from social and psychological dependency (UNHCR, 2019b); it is “the surest way of recovering a sense of purpose and dignity after the trauma of displacement” (Grandi, 2020, p. 5). Moreover, schools are one of the primary learning and interaction platforms for all children, alongside family and friends (UNESCO, 2001). Not receiving access to or quality education can therefore cause serious social and economic disadvantages, and refugees are particularly at risk due to their vulnerable socio-economic situation.

Education is not just important at an individual level, but it contributes greatly to society. In the words of Delors et al. (1996), it is: "at heart of both the personal and community development" (p. 17). The links between the society and the type of education implemented become especially clear when observed within conflict settings. Bush & Saltarelli (2000) demonstrate how education can both prevent or mitigate conflict and increase the risk of one: if the education received instigates prejudice and marginalization, these feelings will grow amongst the society, inciting violence and conflict between groups. On the other hand, an education that encourages values of tolerance, inclusiveness and cultural or religious sensitivity will reduce the risk of conflict. This contrast is very powerful in exemplifying how the values transmitted within educational settings can reinforce atmospheres of either peace or conflict and in underlining the power that education has on society. Indeed, education has a transformative potential, given how the content of the teaching really shapes the knowledge and opinions of the children and how they think about the future for both themselves and the society (Dryden-Peterson, 2011, p. 63).

The impact of education on society is not just limited to transforming the mentality and attitudes of the students and thus to building a future society, but it is also closely linked to the development and economy of countries (Delors et al., 1996; Münz et al., 2006; Collett, 2011). Dryden-Peterson describes education as a "long-term investment for society" (2011, p. 9) and the correlation between successful learning and the economic prosperity of a country has been highlighted by numerous data (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985; De Meulemeester & Rochat, 1995; Ozturk, 2001; Lin, 2004; Grant, 2017). In particular, as indicated by Slee (2010) and by Ghosh et al. (2019), schools mirror the wider society, reflecting and refracting social inequalities. Thus, the lack of access and participation for certain groups, such as those with disabilities, language barriers or with refugee backgrounds, leads to a reinforcement of social inequalities and disparity. Therefore, particular focus on educational systems and on the inclusion of students who are perceived to be different because of religion, ethnicity, disability, etc., is also in the interest of the society as a whole.

Finally, education is a form of caring, an "expression of affection for children and young people" who need to feel part of society, and to do so need to unreservedly be offered a place in the education system, as well as in the family, local community and nation, for it is a place that all children are born with a right to (Delors et al., 1996, pp. 11-12). As Nel Noddings (1984) writes, caring is at the basis of all relationships and inherent to the profession of teaching, of the organization of schools and of education more generally.

To sum up, the focus on education in this research stems from the potential of education to develop students into individuals free of prejudiced, xenophobic, racist and nationalist views, by inculcating values of inclusion, equality and a global outlook into the world. Its development and inclusiveness affect the whole society and the prosperity of a nation. Given this potential of education and the major role it plays in the economy and society, I believe that schools are a good starting point to achieve the successful integration of refugees and for the creation of a more multicultural society by building inclusive and multicultural classrooms.

Summary

This chapter has provided a general outline about my background and motivation for this research. It has introduced and clarified the understanding of key terminologies in the study, i.e. refugee, asylum seeker, and integration. A brief outline of the EU ideology was included, to highlight the fact that inclusion and respect for diversity are key concepts within the EU. This is important in relation to the current refugee crisis in Europe and the response shown by the member states towards it, which have been also summarized in the above paragraphs. Finally, the chapter details the procedure of resettlement which is currently implemented in the EU, and in particular it describes the situation in Germany. It explains the reasons why the research focuses on Germany and on education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Particularly since the Syrian refugee crisis, there has been growing interest and research into refugee integration and education. As a result, there are now new insights into the refugee experience, a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by refugees and educators and an idea of what the best practices and policies to improve the educational experience of both refugees and nationals might be. The importance of improving the educational experience for refugees is stressed by many (e.g. Wrigley, 2007; Fozdar & Hartley, 2013; Brewer, 2016; Thommessen & Todd, 2018).

Challenges

Research in the field of refugee integration has been successful in identifying several challenges commonly faced by young refugee and migrant students. There is general agreement amongst researchers about language being one of the major barriers for refugee students (Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002; Stewart et al., 2008; INEE, 2010; Stewart, 2017; Wilkinson et al., 2017; Streitweiser et al., 2018; Ghosh et al. 2019). Ager & Strang (2008) describe it as "a barrier to social interaction, economic integration and full participation" (p. 182), underlining the central role played by language in facilitating the process of integration. Furthermore, language is an obstacle for teachers as well, since teaching content proves to be very difficult when the level of proficiency of the language is inadequate (Ghosh et al., 2019). Moreover, as pointed out by Dryden-Peterson (2011), the choice of language of instruction affects the quality of education that the refugee students are able to access.

The challenge is also considerable when it comes to accessing secondary school and even greater for tertiary education, where opportunities for refugees to enter university are very limited (UNHCR, 2017b; Streitweiser et al., 2018, UNHCR, 2019a). Expensive education fees, limited school options and a distant location from the school can all contribute to making it difficult for the refugee student to access a school. Additionally, disrupted educational backgrounds, low levels of literacy, having to work to help support their family, language barriers and difficulty recognizing previous qualifications hinder the admission process, culminating in a high chance of exclusion from higher education.

Other common barriers commonly encountered by young refugees include sudden contact with a new environment, navigating new school systems, administrative challenges, unrelatable textbook content, financial and housing concerns, distress from disrupted schooling

and trauma (Stewart et al., 2008; INEE, 2010; Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Stewart, 2017; Ghosh et al., 2019). All of these obstacles may result in academic difficulties.

Best practices for refugee inclusion in education

Inclusive education

There is explicit general agreement amongst educators and researchers about general education being preferable to segregated education (Davies, 2005; Jong & Howard, 2009; Forlin, 2010; Dryden-Peterson, 2011; UNHCR, 2011; Wagner et al., 2018; INEE, 2020). The challenges mentioned above, in particular language proficiency, have raised the question on whether refugee adults and children should have special separate education. Including refugees in the national education system is often considered an example of best practice (Ghosh et al., 2019) and there are many benefits that come with this to the individual refugees and to the community. In the first instance, schools reflect the society together with social inequalities (Ghosh et al., 2019). Therefore, excluding members of the population from the education system will only perpetuate and worsen any pre-existing social inequalities (UNESCO, 2018). In particular, Jong & Howard (2009) point out that education systems which segregate students on the basis of language proficiency lead to the students receiving an unequal education through learning from different textbooks, curricula etc. Moreover, education is vital in giving young refugees a future both in the host country and in their country of origin upon their return (UNESCO, 2018). About half of the forcibly displaced population worldwide are minors and seeking to re-enter education (UNHCR, 2019c); it is therefore crucial for their futures that they are granted access to quality education wherever they finally arrive. Nonetheless, unauthorized and illegal schools have emerged as a result of restrictions on internal migration and residence permits, which further reinforces the discrimination and disadvantages that most young refugees are already confronted with (UNESCO, 2018). In addition, access to and participation in school activities and learning have been proven to help refugee and migrant children or youths to develop a sense of belonging to the host community, a vital component of their wellbeing (Hek, 2005; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; UNESCO, 2018) and a key indicator of successful integration (Ager & Strang, 2004).

Another reason to adopt an inclusive approach to the national school system is that inequality within the education system is associated with slower economic growth and prosperity (UNESCO, 2018). A study by the World Bank demonstrates that an equal distribution of education opportunities among the population allows for better welfare and is

in the interest of each individual as well as that of the country's economy (Thomas et al., 1999). This is reinforced by the findings of Nomura (2007), according to whom the contribution of education to the economic growth of a country is greater when there is investment into equal access to and quality of education. Research conducted by Klasen & Lamanna (2009), shows that gender gaps in education and consequently in employment have a considerable negative impact on the economy. This serves as a concrete example of how an inclusive approach benefits the economy and is in fact more sustainable (UNHCR, 2011).

Furthermore, inclusive learning environments benefit both the newcomers and the nationals: education provides refugee youths with opportunities for the future whilst the nationals learn to respect and value difference, becoming more patient and tolerant through interaction (UNESCO, 2015). In fact, Delors et al. (1996) advocate that one of the four pillars of education is to learn to live together, alongside learning to be, learning to do and learning to know. This pillar alludes to the responsibility of schools to instil respect and value for diversity, which are achieved by "developing an understanding of others, their history, traditions, and spiritual values" (p. 20).

All these reasons point towards an education system that thrives in diversity as best practice. Recent literature widely refers to this kind of approach as 'inclusive education', which, in the words of the INEE (2010) means removing barriers to participation in learning and ensuring "the presence, participation and achievement of all learners in learner opportunities" (p. 1). It is a strategic process that leads to social transformation, overcoming discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes (Save the Children, 2008; INEE, 2009; INEE, 2010; Slee, 2010; INEE, 2020). As indicated by Booth & Ainscow (2002), it involves change and "a painful process of [people] challenging their own discriminatory practices and attitudes" (p. 7). Although this may occasionally seem or be portrayed as difficult or unattainable, it is a practice that can be achieved in any setting with the means that are available to teachers in any part of the world, even where financial barriers are seen as an obstacle to realising it (UNESCO, 2001; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Save the Children, 2008, Pinnock & Hodgkin, 2010). It is a long-term solution and it has been proven to be "most effective in combating discriminatory attitudes" (UNESCO, 2001, p. 30) and working towards "democratic schooling" (Slee, 2010, p. 21). Effectively integrating refugees into the national school system has been deemed a priority by Dryden-Peterson (2011), whether the refugee is in the host country on a temporary or permanent basis (UNHCR, 2019). Equally, providing funding for those who face barriers to receiving and accessing quality education should be a priority for government policy (Plan International, 2017).

However, inclusive education does not come without challenges. These include educators not knowing how to make education inclusive for all, lack of appropriate resources, and the necessity for the learning system to fundamentally change approach towards those students who are different (INEE, 2010). These will be discussed further in the following paragraphs.

Giving equal educational opportunities does not mean giving equal treatment. This is because children are not the same in many ways — their socio-economic class, ethnicity, knowledge of languages, religion, gender, and dis/abilities. Teachers must give fair treatment to children and meet their varied and specific needs, especially to refugee children who most likely face disadvantages, such as trauma. Giving fair treatment and meeting the needs of all students means providing extra resources where they are needed. This is the case for language, as illustrated in the following section.

Language

Several suggestions have been made on how to overcome language barriers, some of which are already being implemented. One solution is to offer language support through intensive language courses and/or language support teachers. In Quebec (Canada), for instance, special French language classes are given to newcomers (Ghosh et al., 2019), whilst many German universities have started offering free language courses to all Syrian refugee students, alongside additional content-specific preparatory programs to which more than 6,500 refugees have enrolled (Streitweiser et al., 2018). Moreover, making language courses available to teachers, students and adults (UNHCR, 2011), as well as providing teachers with training about how to confront lack of language proficiency in the classroom (Ghosh et al., 2019), are helpful ways of bridging the language gap between students and teachers, thus improving the quality of education that the students receive.

Teacher training

Teachers are considered “the central aspect of refugee education” (Dryden-Peterson, 2011, p. 54) and have a responsibility in ensuring that “all children participate fully in society and that they have equality of opportunity in education” (UNESCO, 2001, p. 10). Educators can hugely affect the learning experience of the refugee student by encouraging interaction between all pupils, transforming negative attitudes towards refugees into positive ones, and identifying the strengths and potential in all students (Stewart & Martin, 2018). However, a lack of training and competency in coping with diversity in classrooms, lack of knowledge of the language and

traumatized students makes it difficult for many teachers to fulfil this responsibility. Including a diverse range of backgrounds and abilities, especially when the class size is already large, is challenging and often entails additional work (UNESCO, 2015). In six European countries, 52% of the teachers expressed dissatisfaction in the support and preparation they received for dealing with increasingly diverse classrooms (UNESCO, 2018). There is an imperative need for specific training and professional development for teachers (INEE, 2010; Dryden-Peterson, 2011; de Wal Pastoor, 2015; Saklan & Erginer, 2017; Stewart, 2017; Thommessen & Todd, 2018; UNESCO, 2018; INEE, 2020), with UNESCO (2018) stating in the 'Global Education Monitoring Report' of 2019 that the expectations of teachers are higher than the training they receive. In fact, a case study conducted in Turkey by Saklan & Erginer (2017) found that the experiences of most teachers working in classrooms inclusive of Syrian refugees were negative and that there was a lack of teacher training. Due et al. (2016) emphasize the positive outcomes that result from teachers being competent and having experience teaching refugee students. Training must provide teachers with resources and methods on how to meet the needs of all children in the classroom. In particular, Save the Children (2008) state that training should motivate teachers to work with a diverse range of children and flexibility of teaching approaches. Training is also vital for teachers to become more aware and knowledgeable about the effects of war on children and youth and about how to recognize the signs of mental health problems so as to best support the wellbeing of all the students in their classroom (de Wal Pastoor, 2015). The presence of refugee students in the classroom, requires the teacher to fulfil additional roles in order to address the extra needs and problems of students from conflict backgrounds (Stewart & Martin, 2018). However, teachers cannot be expected to take on roles such as counsellors or parental substitutes; instead this shift highlights the importance of an effective support network composed of teachers, school psychologists, mental health professionals and school directors aimed at best meeting the needs of refugee students (de Wal Pastoor, 2015; Stewart, 2017).

Teacher training for diversity and specifically for refugee education can take various forms. An interesting way of preparing teachers for diverse classrooms is to make learning about teaching refugees a compulsory component of teacher training within university programs and institutions (Forlin, 2010). With diversity being an increasingly common aspect in classrooms as a result of migration and globalization, this seems a valid solution. Nonetheless, it applies to the future more than to the present, as it addresses the competency in dealing with diversity of teachers now receiving training and does not resolve the lack of preparation of teachers already at work. Accelerated learning processes through short intensive courses with a duration

of 1–3 weeks would instead provide current teachers with the necessary training to tackle the novel challenges that come with increased student diversity. These have been shown to be effective in shifting the teaching techniques towards a more child-centred approach, but they remain expensive for the government (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). Also useful are the tools and guidelines for teachers dealing with diverse classrooms available as online resources and practical documents, such as the INEE pocket guide to inclusive education (2009) which outlines practical ideas and advice for ensuring inclusive education, the UNESCO document 'Embracing Diversity' (2015) which presents useful tools to make classrooms a welcoming and positive learning environment, or the Index for Inclusion by Booth and Ainscow (2002). These resources emphasize the importance of flexibility and of individual lesson plans for those students who need more help alongside the whole class lesson plan. Similarly, the guide by UNESCO (2001) is specifically written for teachers who have students with 'special needs' in their classroom and who have limited experience with such students and want to learn more. The document lists nine golden rules to dealing with diversity that can be applied by teachers. Interesting is also the self-assessment questionnaire for teachers created by INEE (2012) to help educators reflect on the environment of their classroom and to realize which changes need to be made in view of creating a positive and welcoming atmosphere. The curriculum guide by Stewart & Martin (2018) also contains advice on how to support refugee youth in the classroom by addressing what teachers can and must do in regards to specific aspects, such as conflict awareness, peace, and trauma sensitivity. It includes useful classroom activities and lesson plans that promote interaction with refugees and understanding of what it means to be a refugee. Ontario is an example of a Canadian province which has been successful in creating this inclusive environment: one of its practices is to provide teachers with resources for adopting useful strategies and information whilst teaching refugee students (Ghosh et al., 2019).

Aside from practical guides available online, another inexpensive way for educators to expand their knowledge and resources is simply for them to work together by sharing issues, advice and their experiences from the classrooms. This is effective and helpful for finding solutions and strategies to overcome the difficulties faced by them or the student (Save the Children, 2008). Teachers working together is also one of the nine golden rules for dealing with diversity advocated by UNESCO (2001), according to which teachers are not expected to work on their own and instead should work together. For instance, those teachers who received training could then present what they learned to the other teachers and share their new knowledge. This could also be a solution for reducing the expense of sending all teachers on

professional development courses. Furthermore, it is important for educators to learn about the conflict experienced by the refugee newcomers and the policies that concern them in the host country, as it will help them to establish a positive and supportive relationship with the students, meet their needs, and protect them from prejudice and injustice (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Stewart & Martin, 2018). By not knowing the pre- and trans-migration experience of their refugee students, educators may inadvertently contribute to their persisting difficulties (Stewart, 2017). Finally, a suggestion by Dryden-Peterson (2011) involves on-going training in the form of observations to improve the professional development of educators and reiterates the need for incentives to retain teachers, for instance through adequate compensation and certification, to upkeep their motivation and thus the quality of instruction.

The 'asset perspective'

It is also crucial for teachers to become fully aware of potential unconscious biases or prejudices that they may have themselves (Stewart, 2017; Stewart & Martin, 2018), as they might strongly and negatively impact on the refugee student's wellbeing and educational attainment (Hek, 2005; Forlin, 2010). In fact, negative attitudes from teachers, peers, adults and the school board in general pose one of — if not the greatest — barrier to inclusion (UNESCO, 2001). A report by Save the Children (2008) states that negative attitudes towards diversity are a greater barrier for the children deemed 'different' than the barriers caused by material resources, and highlights the necessity for school systems to be welcoming towards everybody and not turn away those are 'different'.

'Different' is a comparative term. Religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual identity, language and other characteristics make people different. But the question arises: different from whom? The majority in a population is considered 'normal' and any divergence from the 'normal' traits makes one 'different'. In Western countries the 'normal' characteristics tend to be White, Christian, able, heterosexual and male. Those who are by comparison considered 'different' are subject to discrimination and often to hate (Ghosh & Galezynski, 2014).

Attitude is central to UNESCO's (2001) definition of the term 'inclusion', according to which 'inclusion' means changing the attitudes and practices of individuals, organisations and associations so that those who are perceived to be 'different' can fully and equally contribute to the life of their community and culture. This is in accordance with the results of the qualitative study by Hek (2005), in which all refugee student participants reported that a positive whole-school attitude towards refugees helped them feel comfortable with their

identity as refugees and like positive assets to the school community. Similarly, the findings by Uptin et al. (2013) highlight the importance of the school's attitude towards refugees by concluding that the educational attainment of refugee students is more or less successful depending on the school's approach and how much they feel discriminated against.

As mentioned above, inclusive education involves an essential shift in the approach and expectations of the learning system: it needs to adapt to the new learner community rather than the learners having to adapt to the existing system (INEE, 2010). Consequently, the focus needs to be on the schools and other educational institutions striving to meet the needs of all the children and youth, which may require making changes to the curricula and system. For example, schools could use modern textbooks that do not portray refugees negatively and ones which have content that all children can relate to, and be sensitive to political factors that could impact on the educational experience of refugee children in terms of how they can participate (UNESCO, 2001; Dryden-Peterson, 2011; UNESCO, 2018). As education is a right that every child has, educational systems should be implemented and designed to meet the needs of all children, considering the diversity of their needs and characteristics (UNESCO, 2001). In the words of Save the Children (2008): "education cannot be considered good quality unless it meets the needs of all learners" (p. 10).

The shift in approaches needs to happen primarily in the way that refugees are perceived. Structured contact between refugees and nationals is effective in accomplishing a positive attitudinal shift (Phillimore, 2012). Viewing refugees as an asset to the school and class, rather than as problematic and challenging is crucial. As Ghosh et al. (2019), write: "refugee students should not be seen merely as victims but rather seen from the point of view of their strengths and resilience" (p. 6). Brewer (2016) refers to an 'asset perspective' being necessary to avoid further marginalization of refugees and emphasizes the importance for educators and policy makers to adopt this same perspective.

Moreover, where funding is scarce, Phillimore (2012) points out that focusing activity on the host rather than on the refugee by educating the host/dominant community about the refugee experience can be very beneficial in rendering communities more welcoming and helpful at a local level. In fact, it has been commonly agreed upon that using refugee stories in classrooms is very effective in changing the perception that national students and teachers have of refugees from a negative one towards a more positive one (Gagné et al., 2017; Ghosh et al., 2019). In fact, Ghosh et al. (2019) describe how a school in Manitoba (Canada) used refugee narratives to highlight the strengths of refugee students and educated the school community about past experiences and contexts of the refugee students, as well as about the history and

culture of each country. This procedure is regarded as an example for best practice concerning the education and integration of young refugees. It confirms how refugee narrative and inclusion help to achieve the attitudinal shift necessary to overcome prejudice, make refugee students feel welcome and develop a sense of belonging to the classroom, and to feel comfortable within their identity as refugees.

My contribution to the current literature

Although research within the field of integration and inclusion is growing, there is currently little representation of the voices of refugee students. Since integration and inclusion are two-way processes, it is crucial to have the perceptions of the host nationals. In fact, there is even less depiction of the points of view of national students and of teachers in regards to integrating refugees into the national education system. Policies and regulations of host countries concerning refugee students in education are currently mostly shaped by a theoretical perspective and framed by economic restrictions and priorities. Due to the increasing number of refugees arriving in Germany and needing education, it is crucial to achieve a good and comprehensive understanding of the best practices. Listening to the suggestions and comments of those who are already experiencing the current practices would be very effective in learning about how the present system could be improved, about the expectations and needs of the students and teachers, and would thus help to determine what is a successful practice and what needs to change. With the topics discussed above in mind, this study will attempt to answer the following two research questions:

1) What are the best practices for the integration and education of refugee students according to refugee students, German national students and teachers?
2) How does an inclusive approach to education impact on the perception and attitude of all parties involved towards diversity?

Summary

In this section previous research on refugee education has been revised. The paragraphs above have outlined the challenges commonly faced by refugee students and young migrants upon their arrival in the host country which have been consistently identified by past studies. This chapter has highlighted that previous literature points towards the need for improvement of refugee education. The section described some of the best practices which past studies have shown to be positive and important for refugee education and why they are helpful not only for

refugee students, but also for the members of the host community involved, e.g. other students and teachers. These include the practice of inclusive education, the removal of language barriers, the current lack of adequate teacher training in regards to increasingly diverse classrooms, and Brewer's (2016) concept of 'asset perspective'. Finally, the above paragraph outlined the goals of this research in relation to previous research. This study seeks to give voice to the insights and perspectives of German students, refugee students and teachers on the integration of young refugees into the German national school system, and to share their ideas on current practices and policies, as well as their suggestions on how these can be improved. This research also aims to understand how an inclusive approach to education impacts on the perspectives of students and teachers on diversity.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

This chapter will describe the theoretical perspectives used in this thesis. It will also detail the research methods used to select participants and obtain the data, as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

Methodology: Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a way of expanding knowledge. The technique was originally employed by philosophers in ancient Greek civilization to learn about nature by observing and reading detailed descriptions, and to learn about people and their cultures by questioning travellers about their own experiences and journeys (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Nowadays, it is a methodology used in various fields of research and it is concerned with all of the questions that cannot be answered through the analysis of statistics, i.e. quantitative research (Hoepfl, 1997). It focuses on people's experiences and the meaning that is attributed by them to these experiences (Hoepfl, 1997; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). In other words, qualitative research is about understanding "how social experience is created and given meaning" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 8). To do so, it typically features richness in details and context (Libarkin & Kurdziel, 2002; Silverman, 2015), studying "settings as they are" (Eisenor, 1998, p. 33). This serves to paint a picture of the situation and experiences described, so as to make them as relatable as possible to the reader. In fact, the in-depth description of the context allows for a better understanding of the dynamic relationships in that setting and enables outsiders "to view a situation from the perspective of the individuals involved" (Libarkin & Kurdziel, 2002, p. 80). This leads to a manifestation of empathy on the part of the researcher and of the readers which is crucial for the acquisition of new perspectives on the subject of research and enables further human understanding (Eisenor, 1998). The reliability of the data depends effectively on the ability of the researcher to express sensitivity and empathy towards the participants of his/her study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Hoepfl, 1997). The aim of this study is to identify a variety of points of view about the integration of refugees in education to be expressed and reported. Therefore, it is vital to use a methodology that allows for different perspectives to emerge. This would not be possible without employing a methodology that encourages empathy in the researcher, in the readers, and in the participants, listening to points of view different from their own. Consequently, qualitative research enables me, as the researcher, to gain a deeper understanding of experiences of the German education system different from my

own, and a broadening of perspectives amongst myself, the readers and the participants, all of which are necessary in view of improving the integration processes of refugees into the national education systems.

Qualitative research is very much a path of discovery and a methodology to better understand little-known phenomena (Hoepfl, 1997). Therefore, it suits the topic of this research, because the points of view of refugees themselves about their own experiences in national education systems, as well as those of teachers and national students, have not yet been sufficiently explored and reported.

In qualitative research, the researcher him-/herself becomes the instrument of data extraction and of data interpretation (Eisenor, 1998; Libarkin & Kurdziel, 2002). The fact that the results effectively consist of interpretations carried out by the researcher poses two questions: the first concerns the reliability of the conclusions; the second regards the objectivity of the interpretations made and thus indirectly the validity of the results. Libarking & Kurdziel (2002) offer an answer to the first question, whereby the reliability of the research is founded on the logic of study interpretations. Consequently, it is the responsibility of the researcher to explain his/her interpretations through an outline of logical thought processes in order to establish reliability and validity in the results. As for the subjective element being inherent to qualitative research, Patton (1990) specifies that within qualitative research subjectivity does not necessarily discredit the results, rather neutrality means the researcher does not express judgement and instead seeks to report his/her findings in a neutral and balanced way. As a result, even though the conclusions drawn from qualitative research are subjective to the researcher's own background, experience, knowledge and personal involvement (Libarkin & Kurdziel, 2002), a neutral presentation of data as it was obtained as far as possible, provides the results of the study with validity. As Eisenor (2002) writes, "qualitative research becomes believable because of its coherence, insight and instrumental utility" (p. 38).

However, because the conclusions drawn through qualitative research apply to very narrow circumstances (Libarkin & Kurdziel, 2002), it is very difficult to generalize the results from a qualitative research to the wider population (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). Nonetheless, although the researcher cannot determine what Hoepfl (1997) refers to as "transferability of the findings" (p. 59), if enough detail is provided within the study, the readers will then be able to identify other contexts in which the findings are applicable.

Finally, there are three different approaches to qualitative research. The interpretive approach is about extracting meaning from the subjective accounts of the participants and their small-scale interactions. The post-positivist approach is based upon evidence and deduction

proving or disproving a said theory. Finally, the critical approach starts from the stance that power is unequally distributed in our society and is oriented towards social justice (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). Given the disadvantageous position refugees, especially young refugees, find themselves in as they try to rebuild their life in a new country, I have adopted this last approach to this study, as illustrated below.

Theoretical Framework

Race is a "socially constructed category" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p.8) and as such it has a history and is constantly changing (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Calmore, 1992; Ledesma & Caldéron, 2015). Even more powerful is the notion that racism is normal (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2013; Ledesma & Caldéron, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Yosso et al., 2009). Delgado (1990) writes that "racism plays a strange and powerful role in our history, taking different forms at different times" (p. 104). In light of Delgado's statement and of the complex and mutating concepts of race and racism, it is important to consider the forms of institutionalised racism that are taking place in European societies in relation to the increasing rate of immigration, specifically the influx of refugees in the last five years. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is therefore a valuable tool for gaining awareness of the different ways racism may manifest itself culturally, legally, socially, and for questioning the current approaches (such as assimilation and multiculturalism) that are currently being implicated, especially in relation to education.

Critical Race Theory

CRT developed amongst law scholars in the US in the 1970s to challenge white supremacy within the legal and cultural spheres of American society (Khalifa et al., 2013; Ledesma & Caldéron, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso et al, 2009). It recognises that racism plays a major role in the lived experiences of everyone, and in particular of people of colour (Ledesma & Caldéron, 2015). Its objective is to understand the way in which racism is constructed, institutionalised, maintained and perpetuated (Hernàndez, 2016; Khalifa et al., 2013). The five core beliefs of CRT can be explained as follows: (i) racism is an undeniable and permanent component of the American (and Western more generally) society; (ii) it is interconnected with other forms of inequality such as classism, ableism and sexism; (iii) the voice and experience of social minorities are necessary and central in understanding racism and its impact; (iv) ideologies such as meritocracy and colour blindness function as distractors or masks of

institutionalised racism; and, finally, (v) the motivation for civil rights legislations generally comes from what the founding father of CRT Derrick Bell (1980) calls "interest convergence" (explained below) for both victims of racism and white supremacists (Khalifa et al., 2013; Ledesma & Caldéron, 2015; Yosso et al., 2009). Although CRT was first developed in America and is largely focused on racism within US society, law and culture, racist ideologies are also a component of European history. For example, Europeans would not have been able to conquer and exploit people during colonialism without racial ideology as a justification of their action and power (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Khalifa et al. (2013) write that "an inclusive worldview [of race is necessary] for true social justice" (p. 491), implying that white supremacy and racism are structural components not only of American culture and society, and there is need for worldwide awareness against it. This strengthens the role of CRT within research about migrant integration in Europe, as an explanatory theory for inequality concerning migrant and refugee populations.

Moreover, from its initial focus on American legislation, CRT has since been applied within other research fields, such as education. Educational institutions are reproducers of society and, accordingly, racism is embedded in the structure and continues to dictate policies (Lynn & Adams, 2002; Ledesma & Caldéron, 2015; Parker, 2015). Lynn & Adams (2002) state that "education continues to be one of the key arenas where the impact of racism is felt the most" (p. 87). CRT is therefore necessary to help recognise the role of racism within education through identifying and understanding inequality of opportunity among newly arrived immigrants and refugees. For these reasons, as well as the following, I place my research within the theoretical frame of CRT.

As well as raising awareness of racism, CRT challenges dominant ideologies, such as meritocracy and colour blindness (Lynn & Adams, 2002; Ledesma & Caldéron, 2015), and thus encourages us to rethink the ideological structures behind the current educational integration system implemented. Additionally, it permits the identification of false claims of neutrality and objectivity within these ideologies. Bonilla-Silva (2015) writes that ideology matters because it is connected to domination. Moreover, CRT's key belief that "racism is normal" as highlighted by Ladson-Billings (2013) strengthens the necessity to rethink ideologies in use, for the exact reason that racism is normal to the point that most white members of the community may not even recognise it (because it has been normalized). Both meritocracy and colour blindness are ideologies that were elaborated within white communities with the aim of clearing themselves of the "racist" tag and of guaranteeing an illusionary equality amongst all communities — they serve as a disguise for the continued and concealed

white supremacy (Ledesma & Caldéron, 2015). Bell (2003) portrays diversity as "a shield" which protects college admission policies that are convenient for wealthy and privileged children (p. 1632). Bonilla-Silva (2006) used the same word to describe colour blindness, an ideology used by white communities against racism and explains that it hides the fact that people of colour still "remain appreciably behind whites in many important areas of life" because of continued racism and discrimination (p. 27). Ledesma & Caldéron (2015) also write that the "prevalence of Whiteness and White supremacy, frequently in the guise of colour blindness, covertly and overtly shapes the culture of higher education" (p. 214). Equally, meritocracy seeks to explain racial inequality by ignoring discrimination as a reason why people who "merit" are predominantly white (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This shows that it is important to maintain a critical eye towards newly developed ideologies that may claim to be free of racism.

Furthermore, CRT scholar Derrick Bell (1980, 2004) developed the concept of "interest convergence" to explain the phenomenon by which in predominantly white communities, race-conscious remedies are only carried out when such remedies are also beneficial to the majority of the population (Ledesma & Caldèron, 2015). Within the field of education in particular, "interest convergence" is of great importance as it exposes how people of colour are allowed access to the benefits of predominantly white institutions only when and if it is advantageous for the white students too: for instance, because of cultural enrichment, for marketing purposes of the institution, or if advocating a diverse student community poses the institution in a positive light that attracts a higher number of enrolments. It is important to consider this in the data analysis of this research to understand the extent to which structural racism defines the current methods and motivations of integrating refugee students into German classrooms and their lived experiences.

Another reason why CRT applies to this research is its recognition of oppression in terms of its intersectionality. One of the five tenets of CRT is the fact that race is not disconnected from other forms of discrimination, e.g. gender, or class. (Khalifa et al., 2013; Ledesma & Caldéron, 2015; Yosso et al., 2009). As explained by Ladson-Billings (2013), globalisation makes the world increasingly difficult to categorise because forms of social discrimination are often interlinked. CRT is committed to understanding the complexity of oppression in all its forms and raises the questions "do all oppressed people have the same thing in common?" (Ladson-Billings, 2013) and "how are identities of racially diverse students co-constructed?" (Matias, 2013). Migration, asylum and integration represent the complexity of a globalised world and therefore incorporate inequality and often oppression in many forms. It is important

to consider the intersectionality of discrimination when listening to the points of view of the participants.

Finally, the purpose of this research shares CRT's commitment to hearing the voices of social minorities. Narrative and storytelling are a major component of CRT and function in overthrowing a dominant reality and in giving voice to historically marginalised people deprived of power (Khalifa et al., 2013; Ledesma & Caldéron, 2015). The point of narrative is to communicate and depict a different perspective which is not normally considered (Calmore, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2013) and allow for the suffering, in all its forms, of minorities to be uncovered and for systemic injustices to be corrected (Delgado, 1990). This research seeks to outline the perspectives of refugee students, German students and teachers, on the topic of refugee integration into the German education system. By sharing these perspectives, the study will attempt to uncover the perceptions with the aim of identifying potential injustices in the current system which need to be corrected, and provide suggestions for improvement. Within education, and for the betterment of the educational system, giving voice to marginalised minorities has proven to be very important and a core function of CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Teranishi (2002) writes that "CRT was instrumental in providing a voice for students who are otherwise not heard, thus allowing students to provide their own perspectives on their educational experiences" (p. 152). The value of allowing for unheard voices to be heard through narrative and storytelling within education is underlined by many (Khalifa et al., 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ledesma & Caldéron, 2015; Lynn & Adams, 2002) and it is the reason for sharing students' voices in this research.

However, there are two aspects of CRT that are in discordance with this study. Firstly, there is the fact that CRT identifies racism and challenges white supremacist ideologies but does not offer solutions (Su, 2005). This differs from one of the purposes of this research: that of identifying potential solutions for problems raised during the data collection/analysis and suggestions for the improvement of the integration of refugees (and immigrants) into the national educational system. Secondly, I disagree with the belief of CRT that racism is permanent, which is inherent in CRT (Yosso et al., 2009). Rather, I believe that with enough awareness-raising of the injustices of racism and its forms (even the ones masked behind ideologies such as diversity and multiculturalism) and through a thorough conscious-raising education about racism, its history, and its institutionalisation, racism as a social construct can one day be de-constructed and lead to an inclusive world. I hope that this research will be a tiny step in that direction.

The research participants and methods

To best explore refugee integration within the German school system, this study covers three different perspectives on the topic: that of refugee students, that of German students, and the point of view of teachers.

The research involved fourteen participants in total: six German students, six refugee students and two German teachers. Two types of research methods were employed: focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The six German students were grouped together for the first focus group. The refugee students were split into two focus groups because of availability issues, whilst the teachers each participated in individual interviews. A representation of the grouping of the participants, as well as information about their nationality, gender and type of school attended is illustrated in the table below.

Focus groups/Interviews	**Participants (country of origin, gender and type of school)**
Interview 1	German male teacher at a vocational school (gastronomy)
Interview 2	German female teacher at a primary school
Focus group 1	6 German students (4 female, 2 male) at a vocational school
Focus group 2	4 refugee students (1 male from Syria, 2 males from Afghanistan, one female from Thailand) at a vocational school
Focus group 3	2 female refugee students from Syria, from two different schools (Gymnasium and vocational school)

The criteria for finding participants were as follows: all participants had to be over 18 years of age and have attended (or, in the case of the teacher participants, worked at) German schools which were inclusive of refugees and immigrant students. Thus, all participants had previously experienced interaction with classmates/students or teachers from cultures very different from their own. There should ideally be a gender balance amongst the participants, so as to have both gender experiences and points of view in the discussion. The participants did not necessarily have to know each other, although the ones recruited from the same school did. The school attended by most participants was contacted via email, then the class, from which most of the student participants were, was approached based on their timetable as it was one

of the few classes not to be preparing for a close exam date. The participants from focus groups 1 and 2 were selected within the same classroom on the basis of the criteria for participation in the study and asked by the teacher to participate on the day of the scheduled visit. The male German teacher was also approached on the same day and asked if he had time and would be willing to take part. The female German teacher expressed the wish to participate when told about the study by word of mouth. The two participants in focus group 3 were asked separately to participate and a date and place that worked for both was then arranged.

Interviews

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted, each with one teacher participant. The first interview was conducted with a teacher of gastronomy at a vocational school and the second with a primary school teacher. Involving teachers from two different educational institutions and who taught different age groups allowed me to get perspectives both on post-secondary education and on primary education.

The semi-structured nature of the interview meant that, although I had a pre-prepared list of questions, this was used as a rough guideline and the interview encouraged an open response from the interviewee, enabling the conversation to unfold more naturally (Longhurst, 2010). This allowed for flexibility within the conversation: the interviewee could choose to explore certain aspects of the topic and avoid others depending on their preference and comfort (Hoepfl, 1997). It enabled me to steer the conversation according to the points raised by the interviewee, and to discuss in depth certain aspects if the interviewee was so inclined. Not using a fixed list of interview questions allowed more space for new perspectives to emerge and to be discussed. The general guideline of the questions prepared for the semi-structured interviews can be viewed in Appendix I.

Each interview lasted for about 45 minutes. The interviewees were also asked to state their language preference between German and English. Consequently, one interview was conducted in German and the other in English with the insertion of a few German phrases.

Focus groups

Three focus groups were conducted: one was composed of six German student participants and the other two of refugee student participants. The focus groups with refugee students had to be split into two groups for availability reasons, one with four refugee students and one with two. Arguably, this means that more data was collected for refugee students than for German

students; however, as the language was not that of the mother tongue of any of the refugee participants, combined with the delicate nature of the topic for the refugees, the conversation flowed more slowly. Therefore, there is no considerable disparity in the quantity of data collected for the different groups.

Focus groups were chosen as a research method for the student participants for two reasons. Firstly, compared to individual interviews, focus groups are less intimidating for the participants: as it involves multiple people, this research method helps to put the participants at ease and reduces the pressure of sharing personal stories. This was particularly important to reduce the risk of distress and unease for the refugee participants. As Kitzinger (1995) explains, focus groups can encourage participation from those who are reluctant to be interviewed on their own and provides an easier access to sensitive topics, such as those potentially covered in this study for the refugee participants. Secondly, focus groups generate a guided group discussion that enlightens people's beliefs and experiences, and allows for new and diverse perspectives to emerge (Yosso et al., 2009). This would enable the gathering of a variety of reflections and opinions about different refugee integration practices, as well as to witness an exchange of ideas and new suggestions for future practices. Homogeneity within the groups allowed for shared experiences to be revealed (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan, 1997).

The focus groups lasted 40–45 minutes and were conducted primarily in German. In the second focus group, two refugee participants expressed the wish to speak in English whilst two preferred talking in German. As German and English were understood by everyone in the room, the participants were told they could each choose to speak in either language. This resulted in a mixed conversation in English and German, which in turn sought to achieve linguistic ease for everyone. The general guideline of questions prepared for the focus group with the German students can be viewed in Appendix II, whilst Appendix III illustrates the guidelines for the focus group with the refugee student participants.

All focus groups and interviews were recorded on two devices and subsequently transcribed. All participants signed a consent form in which the aim and procedure of the study were described. At the beginning of every focus group and interview, the participants were assured of anonymity and reminded that they could choose not to answer a question if they did not want to and that they could leave the conversation at any time if they so wished. In case of withdrawal from the study before or during the focus group or interview, the data would be eliminated and destroyed. However, withdrawal would no longer be possible after the focus group or interview was finished.

Limitations of the study

As acknowledged by Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2010), qualitative research methodology draws its data from a very small sample of participants and, thus, implies that the results and conclusions cannot be generalized on a wider scale. Moreover, the regional focus of the study, the variety in experiences and personalities of the participants, as well as the fact that the rules adopted by German schools in regards to the integration of refugee youth vary from school to school, further reduce the possibility of generalizing the findings.

Nonetheless, the choice to approach the topic of this research from multiple perspectives seeks to provide a comprehensive picture on the topic. As a result, the findings present detailed and diverse perspectives, which hopefully enable the reader to sympathize with the participants and gain a deeper understanding of the situation as experienced by all the parties involved. This in turn will provide the awareness necessary to conduct future research on the subject and influence change in the right direction.

Ethics

Data collection presents ethical dilemmas, which result in the need for consent to be expressed by all participants (Silverman, 2016). To this end, all participants signed a consent form in which the aim and procedure of the study were described. For the purpose of confidentiality, which means researchers "are obliged to protect each participant's identity, places and the location of the research" (Silverman, 2016, p. 33), the form stated that no identifying data would be described and the data would be completely anonymised through the use of pseudonym replacements for names of people or locations.

Furthermore, in compliance with the McGill Tri-Council Research Ethics Board (REB) ethics approval (approved in February 2019), measures were taken to minimize all risks that taking part in the interviews/focus groups could present. This consisted of the following measures. All participants were over 18 years of age. The consent form outlined potential risks and discomforts, as well as potential benefits of participation. Focus groups were conducted with the students in place of individual interviews to make the conversation less personal and to give freedom to the participant to contribute when and as much as they wanted to the discussion. A group conversation meant that the participants could have a general conversation about the topic and choose how much of their own personal experiences (if any) they wanted to share. Both the focus groups and the interviews had no rigid structure, meaning that the participants' conversation was able to flow following some guiding questions, and no

contribution had to be made about an aspect that the participant felt uncomfortable talking about.

All participants were also informed that they could leave the conversation or interview at any point, in which case all their data would be deleted. Withdrawal was, however, no longer possible after the interview or focus group was finished. A final measure taken to reduce discomfort was the choice of location for the data collection: two focus groups and one interview took place at the school of the participants, the last focus group took place in a group room at the public library and the second interview took place via Skype. All locations were chosen with the aim of making the participant(s) feel at ease in a place familiar to them or at least in a neutral, public and comfortable place such as the public library. Permission for the use of the location on school or library premises was prearranged in accordance with the REB regulations.

Summary

This chapter illustrated the methodology of this study (qualitative research) and the reasons why it lends itself to this research. It also describes the theoretical framework, critical race theory, used in this study and the reasons why it was chosen. This section also presented the research participants, the criteria for participating in the study, and the methods used, i.e. two semi-structured interviews (one with each teacher participant) and three focus groups (one with the German student participants and two with the refugee student participants). The limitations of the study and the ethical measures taken throughout this study were also described.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion

This chapter will present the data thematically and analyse the themes discussed in the interviews and focus groups. This includes reflections on current policies, as well as suggestions discussed in the interviews for future policies concerning integration within the national school system of Germany. The themes discussed below feature interview data on topics that are important to integration, such as prejudice and racism, the role of schools in dispelling support for nationalist ideologies, inclusive classrooms, teaching in relation to the impact of integration, language and policy in the school system relating to integration.
The participants involved in this research will be referred to following the scheme below:

Interview with the gastronomy instructor	I1
Interview with the primary school teacher	I2
Focus group with German students	FG1
Focus groups with refugee students	FG2 and FG3

In I2, the primary school teacher talks about the refugee student present in her class. The refugee student is not one of the refugee participants and will be referred to in this thesis with the pseudonym Idris.

Integration

Integration for refugees is different from that of immigrants, because refugees are not voluntarily moving out of their country and going to other countries. In addition to the trauma many of them have undergone, they are faced with a language of communication, religion and culture which are often very different from their own.

In this research, integration is a central concept in the experience of every refugee and, as discussed in Chapter 1, it features a variety of understandings. With this in mind, 'what does integration mean to you?' was the opening question to all of the conversations with the participants. Each answer is interesting, original and points at different aspects of the concept. A common element in the participants' answers is the ability to find work, be successful, and be accepted in the new society (FG1). Employment is in fact one of the four sectors in which the outcomes of integration feature, according to Ager & Strang (2008).
From the point of view of the refugee participants, integration is very much a learning process:

> "Integration means getting to know the people, the culture and so on. I did an integration course for 6 months. I learned a lot about the culture, like what to do with women, what to do with old people, what to do with young people." (FG2)

Similarly another refugee confirms the above approach to integration being a learning process and a responsibility:

> "For me integration is to live in a society, to respect the values and the traditions of this society, to know the language well and to be familiar with the habits of the people and to behave according to the norms and rules of this society. This to me means integration." (FG3)

This coincides with the idea by one of the participants of FG1 that refugees are "being weaved into society". The joint responsibility within the integration process emerges in the refugees' expectations of the German society to accept and respect the cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of the 'other' in general:

> "I expected that the German society would first of all accept me with my religion, with my language, with my traditions. I expected to receive help with the language, that people would correct me and not laugh at me when I make a mistake, but support me and so on. I expected to live in freedom and to have the opportunity to go to school and to study and to be able to express my views." (FG3)

Both participants of FG3, however, have the impression that Ramadan is an aspect of their culture which is not accepted by some of the Germans they have interacted with:

> "-I fast for a month. […] And some people…
>
> -They don't accept this.
>
> -And they need to accept it. Just like I accept Christmas and so on. We've got to accept the other cultures and traditions, yes. We must be open-minded."

These examples highlight the equally important role that the host society needs to play in the integration process. It is a viewpoint that adheres to Ager & Strang's (2010) interpretation of integration as a 'two-way process' involving refugees and nationals equally. However, this understanding of integration is not generally expressed by the German student participants. Instead, many of their sentences feature 'refugees' as the subject and thus suggest that the responsibility for successful integration rests mainly in the hands of the refugees. The German participants say: refugees need "to be guided into our culture" (FG1), and "I think they need to fit in better, because when one goes to a different country, we adapt to it" (FG1). Similarly, the following definition of integration by the high-school teacher shows an interpretation of integration which focuses on the efforts made by refugees:

> "For me integration is when [refugees] take part in lessons, when they actively take part, […] when they're really present and not sitting in a corner, when they also try to talk with us so that their German gets better, … and when they show things from their countries." (I1)

This approach is in line with the concept of assimilation outlined by Kuhlman (1991), the understanding of integration most commonly adopted throughout Germany, because it clearly demonstrates the expectation that refugees fit in and 'become' German.

Moreover, one German participant describes integration as a choice that the refugees have to make upon arrival:

> "It's two different worlds which are colliding together. And some [refugees] are able to decide to integrate and say 'I want to feel at home here in Germany somehow', or they say 'I want to go back to my country, Germany doesn't interest me' and they also live in small groups." (FG1)

This example is supported by sentiments expressed in FG1 that older refugees do not want to integrate: "I think that many of the older refugees don't want to be here at all", and: "With the older [refugees] you always have the impression that they don't want to take on our culture at all. They don't care how things work here. They don't want to adapt."

This relates to Berry's (1991, 1997) concept of "mutual accommodation", whereby integration is a choice for both the refugees and the host community. However, some of the German participants seem to view this to be a responsibility only for the refugees, rather than one which also includes themselves, the German community, in the equation. The refugees' expectations described above show that integration is far more complex than a one-sided choice and that it does require the host community to make an effort towards accepting and including refugees and their culture (Berry, 1991, 1997). In fact, Phillimore (2012) stresses the importance of focusing responsibility on the host society in order to create a more welcoming and helpful community.

Indeed, the coexistence of cultural differences is a major component of integration and one which is often considered challenging. One of the refugee participants in FG2 describes the way he experiences this cultural diversity:

> "I keep my culture here and I like the German culture. I have a lot of German friends, I invite them always to my house, I cook some Arabic food and they cook some German food… and we work in a typical Bavarian hotel. There we don't have at all something from our culture, it's just Bavarian culture, [especially] with the clothes and the

> Lederhosen and Weißwurst or then the beer… and of course it's completely different for us but we like it."

This contribution exemplifies how cultures can be shared with those from other cultures and coincides with Kuhlman's (1991) concept of acculturation, according to which contact between cultures, such as that described above, is an integral component of integration. At the same time, acculturation foresees the merging of cultures, which does not feature in the statement above. In fact, it is evident that in the workplace there is no designated space for non-Bavarian cultures. In turn, this confirms that refugees and immigrants are generally expected to adopt the host culture, as per the process of assimilation.

An example of how cultural difference can be perceived as a problem is given by the high-school teacher in regards to punctuality:

> "Time keeping is a very big problem sometimes. [For example] the school starts at 8.10 am and they turn up at some point in the morning. […] They don't have this European rhythm, this sense of duty is often missing. Instead they are happier, more enthusiastic and relaxed sometimes." (I1)

Another cultural aspect discussed widely, especially in FG1, is the role of women in society. It is described as a major cultural difference by one of the refugee participants: "In our culture a man cannot talk to women, but in Germany I've already learnt it's a different culture" (FG2). Most of the German participants repeatedly describe this difference as an issue. In particular, one girl expresses her concerns over women's freedom to dress and the responsibility that people entering a foreign country have to respect and to adhere to cultural norms of that country:

> "What I really see as a problem is that men are not used to women walking around normally without a headscarf and dressed in normal clothes, and especially now in the summer in shorts or maybe some with a low-cut top, and that they then think they can have us so to say. They can simply stare after us, they can make stupid remarks because they haven't really learnt this in their country. So I think they need to adapt better, because I find that when you go to a different country you adapt to it. For instance, if I'm in a different country and I want to visit a church I have to cover my knees and I can't go in with a low-cut top and shorts. And we adapt to the culture there. But I sometimes have the feeling, just moving around Munich or Salzburg or just generally, that they somehow don't feel the need to fit in. I find that a shame." (FG1)

Likewise, the primary school teacher said: "[refugees] often live their culture and I think that's nice, but I think that one should adapt to specific things, for example the role of women" (I2).

These remarks indicate a general concern amongst German women about losing their recently acquired freedoms and increasing respect in society through the inclusion of non-feminist cultures. This fear borders on the trending prejudice that the refugees' culture is a threat to women's wellbeing and safety. This will be discussed further in the next section.

Moreover, in the discussions about what integration is and means, there surfaced an attempt by the German participants to define refugees categorically: "not all of them are war refugees" (FG1) and "those are economic refugees: if over there you can't find work and can't feed your children I can well understand that they come here and hope to construct a better future for their children" (FG1). Interestingly, for some of the German participants the 'refugee' label does not apply to their refugee student peers: "I have to say that honestly I don't see any of the [refugees] in our classrooms as refugees. It's a completely different type of refugees." (FG1). This coincides with the perception of the refugee peers themselves:

> "Actually for us here in this school I never feel like different between refugees and Germans. No one gives us this feeling. We are one, really. Nobody says to me hey you refugee go away or something, never." (FG2)

However, one participant from FG2 proudly recognizes his identity as a refugee, which instead was not how the German students viewed them: "we are very proud to be refugees and to be in the same class as [the Germans]".

Prejudice and racism

As in the understanding of the process of integration of refugees examined above, during the discussion about including refugees in the society, there seemed to be differentiated perceptions among the German student participants between the refugees present in their classrooms and those they see on the streets or hear about on the news. This is especially evident when talking about cultural difference: "they're used to other things and know other things from their own country, and I have the impression that it's difficult for them to find themselves or to integrate in our society" (FG1). These examples highlight a 'them' versus 'us' rhetoric employed by the German student participants in reference to refugees as a homogenous category, but not those who they know from their class. It is a rhetoric which, as the researcher, I find very related to their concepts of integration and their prejudices. Firstly, the wording indicates a substantial division between refugees and nationals, excluding the refugees in their classroom who are not seen as refugees (FG1). Secondly, it suggests that the refugees in the classrooms are considered 'integrated', whereas the rest is not because they are unknown,

unfamiliar and, therefore, fit into this distant category of 'them'. The same language fuels the prejudiced ideas circulating amongst the host population.

The question about why the refugees are here is linked to the attempt at defining refugees discussed in the previous section and was one of the topics discussed at length by the participants in FG1. It uncovered the existing prejudice that most refugees are lazy and take money from the state. For example, in the following conversation between three German participants, one participant (underlined) is convinced by this prejudgement and considers most of the refugees to be "poisonous for the economy" (FG1):

> "-It's clear that they go to school and search for a job so as to take part in the German society.
>
> -I think that is a very very small part of them. Most come here to have a better life, not to work. You see them everywhere on the streets. They don't work. Look at how many walk around outside.
>
> -How do you know that they don't want to do anything?
>
> -Because they openly drink and smoke pot.
>
> -Yeah so what? Germans do that too." (FG1)

The same participant also reinforces the differentiation between the refugees in their classroom and the rest, stating that those in the classroom are nice and keen to work: "the ones in our class are very nice, they are very interested in working" (FG1), whereas the majority is not: "we have a couple who want to work and the majority does not want to work" (FG1). This exemplifies the widespread negative perception of refugees which, according to Brewer (2016) and Ghosh et al. (2019), needs to change if the process of integration is to be successful. It also highlights once again the centrality of employment in the process of integration, as specified by Ager & Strang (2008): the data above indicates that employment is a goal for refugees who want to become part of the community and a point of reference for the community to determine whether they support and accept refugees or not.

However, the following statement by another German participant in regards to the unemployment benefits scheme (known in Germany as Hartz 4) contrasts this prejudice:

> "There are Germans who receive Hartz 4 and if you watch some programs and so many Germans say they can't be bothered to work and say 'we've got Hartz 4 anyway, so why should we work?' And one can live well off that in Germany. And I'm sure there are more refugees trying to find work and who want to work than there are Germans." (FG1)

Similarly, one of the refugee participants in FG3 states that in Syria the benefits scheme does not exist and that she "never imagined [she]'d be getting help from the state". She also adds that her father started working soon after they had arrived in Germany and that "this shows that not all refugees just want to stay at home and get money from the state". In the following quotes, the same participant also describes the Syrian population as hardworking and open-minded:

- "As a population we are very educated. We were a very good population and almost half of our population went to university. We're not lazy, but a hard-working population. All the members of my family, the second generation, are at university – boys and girls. […] We're not a bad population, it's just what happened to us. In Syria there was war and we fled. We didn't leave because of economic problems." (FG3)
- "-Syria was occupied by Turkey, by England, by France and they've left many cultures in us. […] We are more open: we have many religions.
  -and cultures." (FG3)

These statements counter the prejudice raised by one of the German participants, especially in regards to Syrian and other war refugees, but do not eradicate the existing prejudice towards economic migrants and refugees. Muus (1997) and Ager & Strang (2008) expand the refugee's claim by stating that often refugee immigrants (not just from Syria) come with lots of skills and with a good education, and should therefore be viewed positively and welcomed by the host population. It is also in line with the recognition by the Süddeutsche Zeitung (August 2017, February 2019) that the influx of Syrian refugees should be viewed as a great opportunity for Germany, given its growing gap of skilled labourers.

Prejudice towards refugees also emerges in regards to cultural norms, particularly women's role in society, as addressed briefly in the section above. The fear expressed by German women participants is exemplified by the personal anecdote told by a girl during FG1:

> "I have an example: as I was going to class, a refugee held the door open and let me go first and I have to say I don't know if he did it to be polite or if he had some other thought in his head. And I think it will really take a long time for them to lose this reputation that they have here in Germany."

Her anecdote was followed by a discussion between the other focus group members, who effectively downplayed her assumption:

> "-Maybe in his culture it's nice to hold the door open for someone.
> -You don't know that. I don't know his culture.

-Yeah I don't see any difference with the Germans. Because if someone in Germany holds open the door for me, also if it's a refugee, I say thank you and find it friendly of them to do so, whatever their thoughts are. I don't think Germans have thoughts that are any different from those of a refugee." (FG1)

This example, as well as the statements in the section above about the wish for refugee newcomers to adopt a German approach to women and their position in society, highlights an existing conflict between the need to respect religious diversity and the perception that Islamic religion poses a threat to the recently acquired freedoms of women and their progress towards gender equality in the Western society. This sentiment is echoed in the following words of another German participant:

"They are countries that are simply backwards and we're ahead of them. Syria and the countries where the refugees are from don't have the same knowledge level as us, I find. You can see it in how they treat women, what rights women have." (FG1)

The perceived conflict, specifically in regards to the way in which women are viewed in society, leads to the presumption that Germany is socially and morally ahead of the home countries of the refugees.

Prejudice in the form of xenophobia was discussed in FG1. Some participants admit to having felt scared when the influx of refugees peaked in 2015: "when the wave of refugees happened, I also felt a bit scared". Another participant says: "I was afraid to go in the refugee camp alone, because I had heard stories about what was happening in there", confirming the existence of prejudices circulating about the refugee camps. Another statement about refugee camps by the same participant suggests that this fear also stems from the preconception that refugees do not adhere to the laws: "they don't know the laws very well or they don't respect the laws very much".

Moreover, reflections by FG1 lead to the assumption that prejudice and hate towards refugees is stronger amongst the older population and in villages compared to cities. For instance two participants said:

"-I find that Germany is also a bit old-fashioned. When you think of how many people in my village have a bit of hatred towards asylum seekers: they say 'get all these people out.' I think it's probably stronger in villages than in the city.

-It's much worse in the villages."

However, the following example given by the high-school teacher contradicts the above claim:

"In our village it's like this: the carpenter has the [refugee] apprentice living with him in his house. There's also the grandma, she cooks with him, she talks with him in

> German, they go swimming with him, they go with him to the movies… so he's really part of the family. And I find this works really really well." (I1)

This portrays a very positive reality where a refugee becomes part of a village inhabitant's family and contrasts with the idea that open-mindedness and acceptance of refugees is found mainly in cities, although this may also just be an exception.

In regards to elderly people being more prone to prejudice towards refugees, one participant in FG1 says: "I also think that it's more the older people who tend to have those opinions that refugees only come here to relax". This opinion is upheld by a refugee participant in FG3 who puts it bluntly: "old people tend to be racist".

An important factor acknowledged during most of the conversations is that the media is greatly responsible for encouraging a lot of the negative prejudices circulating within the German population. FG1 participants generally are in agreement in stating that the media focuses on reporting the negative actions carried out by refugees. For example, "in the news you actually only hear the bad things about asylum seekers"; and:

> "You never hear that they're now working or that they're becoming integrated. You only hear that one of them has… I don't know… stabbed another, a woman has been assaulted. And it's always the refugees at the end. So this really fuels these prejudices."

An Afghani participant in FG2 shares his own experience of the prejudice instilled by the media about Afghanis being dangerous people:

> "The German people, they only watch the news. […] They think all Afghanis are the same. For example, one puts a bomb… but no, they are not all the same. Only a couple are bad, but they think… for example if I say I'm from Afghanistan they are all afraid! Hey people I'm also a person! […] But they are afraid because they've only heard what's on the news and TV. They don't fly to Afghanistan. They don't see what it's like in Afghanistan. In Germany not everyone is good. This is also racism. People think so [simplistically]. […] But not everyone is the same. Everyone is a person, but they are not all the same! It's like my five fingers, they are all my fingers, but they are not all the same: one is small, the other is medium small, one is big, and one… like this. But people are really like this in the end."

The metaphor of the fingers is, in my view, very powerful in exposing the flawed and inconsistent nature of prejudice.

One of the participants in FG3 explains the way she deals with people who are prejudiced towards her and refugees in general: "I would act normally. […] I behave neutrally with him, I'm not completely uneducated and they see that I'm nice and not like how they had imagined".

The same participant also underlines that it is wrong to generalize negatively or positively towards a population or social or religious group:

> "We can't say that all people are bad or that all people are good, because it doesn't make sense. People have different characters and you find people who are sometimes nice sometimes not."

As the Afghani participant mentions in the above comment, racism is very much present in Germany and Europe more generally, in accordance with Delgado (1990). Evidence from the other participants confirms this. One of the participants in FG2 describes his own perception of racism in Germany:

> "In Germany there are some racists. For example, when we talk and mispronounce a word, they just tell us to go and learn German. And that's also a bit difficult for us. […] I think Germany is a country of freedom, but not like England, Canada and America. […] It's still a bit racist I have to say." (FG2)

In the US, racism has a long history due to colonization of the indigenous people (as in Canada), but also because of the legacy of slavery. England has a history of colonialism which resulted from immigrants from former colonies and provoked several multicultural and anti-racist programs in the educational system to manage the diversity of the population. The current Black Lives Matter movement in the U.S. has provoked the consciousness of people towards structural racism in many countries around the world, but America and Canada have been built by immigrants and Canada has a Multicultural Policy and Act while the U.S. has affirmative action. Yet racism towards the 'other', whether at the individual or societal level, overt or covert, lingers on. So, although racism in America, England and Canada is still present, the multicultural approach can be perceived as more tolerant than the assimilation approach in Germany, since it foresees the coexistence between different cultures in the form of ethnic pluralism (Kuhlman, 1991). The conversations with the research participants identified racism towards non-white ethnicities more generally, as opposed to refugees specifically:

> "-The problem is also that dark-skinned people who have lived here forever get insulted as asylum seekers. Even those who have grown up here or were born here, only because they have a different skin colour or look different.
>
> -They're just Germans." (FG1)

This is in accordance with the analysis by Ager & Strang (2008) that the sense of belonging to German culture is established through blood ties rather than through one's birthplace.

Nonetheless, the conversations, especially in FG2 and in FG3, highlight many positive accounts of Germany's efforts towards refugees. The refugee participant from Thailand describes how her situation has improved since she left Thailand: "I like Germany because there is so much respect. It's very different from Thailand. Here it's not so loud and I have my own space and I find it better than my country" (FG2). Another refugee compares the treatment received by refugees in Germany with what he witnessed happening in other countries during his journey from Afghanistan to Germany: "Germany does everything from what I have seen […] in Italy, in France… I really like Germany [and] what it does for refugees. In Italy they are completely homeless" (FG2). These statements show appreciation for the current policies issued by Germany on welcoming refugees and acknowledge the efforts made by the country towards refugee intake. They suggest that the Union Resettlement Framework Regulation (European Commission, 2018b) described in the first chapter is indeed successful from the point of view of refugees as well. The comments are also in line with the statement by the UNHCR (2019), according to which responses to the refugee crisis vary greatly across Europe and, therefore, the experiences of refugees across the member states will be different depending on which country they arrive in, as stated by Mestheneos & Ioannidi (2002).

Moreover, another account defines Germany to be a country with equality of chances for all: "here in Germany there is equality, equality of chances and most importantly simply the freedom of opinion" (FG3). The same participant describes her experience of coming to Germany after fleeing from Syria in the following conversation:

> "-It's really like a dream. […] I never thought that I would come here to Germany and study, work… everything.
>
> -A good dream or a bad dream?
>
> -No it's a good dream. Yes exactly. Here there are so many opportunities. There's so much you can do here." (FG3)

Two participants also describe the German society as open-minded and diverse: "today the society is much more open-minded. […] For example atheists are accepted, but 20 or 30 years ago they weren't accepted" (FG3); and: "the German culture is a mixed culture: some children have a parent from Spain, one from Germany or Italy,…" (FG3). Another participant says that the new generation in Germany is increasingly international and it will continue to be so in the coming years:

> "Now Germany has really a lot of international people, more than 5 million. And of course these people will get married, […] they will bring new children, they will bring a new generation here to this country." (FG2)

This adheres to the EU's commitment to diversity outlined in Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (2016).

At the same time, most of the focus groups and interviews also expressed their concern about the rising support for the right-wing extremist party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) within Germany. Again, this is evidence that, as claimed by Delgado (1990), racism and prejudice remain widespread in spite of the positive accounts of the refugee participants on Germany's welcome and commitment towards refugees. The following comment suggests that conservative ideology is extensive throughout the region of Bavaria: "Bavaria especially is very conservative. Most are not openly extremist, but they also don't want everyone to come to Germany" (FG1). In the following conversation it is also mentioned that support for AfD is extensive in the Eastern regions of the country:

> "-Almost the whole of Eastern Germany has voted for AfD.
>
> -I find that really scary. How stupid can we be? We've come such a long way.
>
> -And now we're going backwards." (FG1)

This exchange demonstrates strong criticism towards right-wing extremism, in spite of the fact that the same participants had also admitted to feeling some of the xenophobia and prejudice towards refugees instigated by the media and others. It shows that prejudice does not necessarily lead to the support for right-wing extremism. However, one participant asks: "have you asked why they're voting for AfD? Or what's happening there? Have you read the papers?" His questions confirm the responsibility of the media in creating and fuelling prejudice and racism towards refugees. This coincides with the explanation for the rise in right-wing extremism offered by Sides and Citrin (2007), whereby the general public opinion in Europe about immigrants is influenced greatly by the media and politicians' messages. The participants' statement in fact allows understanding for the increasing support for this extremist ideology. Two participants answer the question by tracing parallels between the rise in support for AfD with the rise in support for the Nationalist Socialist party in the 1930s:

> "-They're people who panic and the AfD tells some idiots exactly what they want to hear and it's exactly what happened with Hitler. They put the blame onto someone because things weren't working and it's exactly like with the Jews. Things aren't working great right now, let's blame the Jews and get rid of them.
>
> -And now we're blaming the asylum seekers." (FG1)

On the same line, the gastronomy instructor shares his reflection about this rise in right-wing extremism being the result of a prolonged state of prosperity, which has made the general population less aware of the danger that nationalist ideologies present to national and

international peace. He also underlines the importance for politicians to look into the future and think about the potential consequences that current decisions have:

> "We've had no war for 70 years and things are going really well for us. Many people forget this. Just try asking Grandma or Grandpa — if they're still alive — how bad the war was! We've been in this state of prosperity too long — thank God! And it could change overnight. It just takes one person to play with electricity and it will all be over. […] The mistake of politics is not to look into the future — what will happen in 20 or 30 years? Now the Greens are slowly coming. They're all about climate politics with these Friday for Future demonstrations. They're the first ones to look into the future. From what I see of the local politics, they get elected as mayors for 4 years and they only think about those 4 years. What will we do in 10 years? What will we do in 20 years?" (I1)

The primary school teacher explains the rise in popularity for AfD with failed efforts on the part of the German government to protect the national and local cultures, e.g. the Bavarian dialect and culture:

> "Because of globalisation, a lot of people from North Germany moved to Bavaria and there is lots of immigration, but there is not so much for saving our own culture. It is okay to go to a Volksfest and to wear the Dirndl, but they aren't able to speak their language. For example, in Bavaria for 1500 years Bavarian was the language, but now most children can't speak it anymore. And I think this is one of the reasons why some people vote for AfD, because they are afraid of their own [culture disappearing]. The politicians don't care about their own culture and they do a lot for integration, but a lot of people are sad because they say 'we speak Bavarian but our grandchildren can't speak this language'. I think it's so nice that Munich is so international, it's such an enrichment. But it's such a shame if in 50 years no one can speak Bavarian. I mean if the culture is diverse, we also have to do something to save our culture more." (I2)

Her words highlight a perceived threat of loss of culture in light of increasing immigration, a fear that, in the participant's view, contributes to the explanation of the recent increasing popularity of AfD.

On a broader scale, the interviews and focus groups covered discussions on whether the inclusion into the EU of populations with traditionally non-EU cultures was possible in the foreseeable future. The opinions in regards to this question turned out to be quite differentiated. In FG2 the answer was very hopeful: "Yes – like the Turkish people. The culture in Syria or Afghanistan is the same." This is in line with the commitment of the EU to asylum seekers

outlined by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (2016). However, the response of the high-school teacher is less optimistic:

> "One hopes so, but in principle it's very very difficult, because I see it [for example] in France there really are African towns. Some of the politicians don't want them to come in. […] So you really get the feeling… at least I have the feeling that the EU… that Brussels does not want it. It would be much better if everything was the same, because we do say we're an EU – why is everything not equal? [The EU] is like a family [and] if someone is having a bad time, the others help! So, EU, we're all together, we have a big bank, if one of the children is sick then we have to help him. Why aren't we a unity?" (I1)

The metaphor employed by the participant of the EU as a big family that helps each other out summarizes its core values, but also hints at a divided and individualistic attitude, which is not conducive to an even more diverse European society and which does not feature in the literature outlining the EU principles, e.g. the Charter of fundamental rights of the EU (2016) and European Union (2019).

Nevertheless, the participant remains hopeful thanks to the good will and cooperation between the workers at the base of the pyramid:

> "Politics leaves us completely high and dry. But in the meantime the wheel keeps turning. We're completely inside the wheel and everyone is making the best of it. […] We help each other very well and that's why it works at the base too. And that's also why Mrs Merkel says 'we can do this', because we can." (I1)

Role of schools against prejudice and nationalist ideologies

A major theme covered during the focus groups and interviews is the role that schools play in preventing prejudice and nationalist ideologies. The participants were asked whether they thought the school had this responsibility and, if yes, how the schools can fulfil this role.

The participants agree that schools play an important role in inculcating open-mindedness and overcoming prejudices. This adheres to the transformative role attributed to schools by Dryden-Peterson (2011) because of their potential to influence the knowledge and views of the pupils. One German participant in FG1 says that schools are important "so that we don't have the possibility to develop bad impressions of [the refugees], […] It's easier to get bad prejudices out of the heads of the Germans".

Another participant explains that schools are a place where every young person spends a lot of time and therefore it has a great responsibility in shaping their views and characters:

> "Of course the school plays a role, because a student spends between 9 and 12 years in school. And the school builds the character of the students, because you go to school almost 7 hours a day and you get taught by various teachers. For example if the school is racist, then all the students are racist. And it was like this in the [Nazi] times: the teaching staff was Nazi and all the students were too. The whole population… But now if everyone is open-minded and the schools are open-minded, then I would say there are no people who are so racist." (FG3)

The same participant also describes the role of schools in preventing prejudice, racist and nationalist ideologies from developing:

> "You can see that a part of it is education. It has the task now to stop nationalism from rising again and from existing in Germany in the future. The education system is making an effort to raise children not to be racist and not to repeat what the National Socialists did." (FG3)

To confirm the official role of schools in inculcating open-minded values in students, the primary school teacher cites the following section (translated) of paragraph 131 of the Bavarian Constitution:

> "The schools should not only transmit knowledge and abilities, but they should also develop the heart and the personality. The main educational goals are: faith in God, caution in front of religious persuasion, and in front of the bad side of humans, self-control, sense of responsibility, willingness to accept responsibility, readiness to help others, open-mindedness for everything which is true, good and beautiful, and a sense of responsibility towards nature and the environment. The pupils should be educated in the spirit of democracy, in the love of the Bavarian homeland and of the German people, and in appreciation of the people's conciliation." (I2)

This section of the Bavarian Constitution describes the role of schools and emphasizes the importance of shaping children's characters. This is very relevant to the present situation and supports the above statements of the other participants. The primary school teacher then adds: "definitely the school is a very important place to instil values and tolerance" (I2), showing her personal support for recognizing this responsibility of educational institutions.

A participant in FG3 outlines another reason why schools play this role:

> "Sometimes [prejudice] comes from the household. Sometimes these people have parents who are against refugees and push this view into the school, others have a neutral opinion about them or they're from a foreign family and they're open-minded."

She later states that "children are influenced by their parents, but the school also helps". The fact that prejudice is often formed in the household is in fact another reason why it is important for schools to take on the responsibility of dismantling any xenophobic, or, in the case of Middle-eastern refugees, Islamophobic prejudice.

This is echoed by the primary school teacher who links the influence of households with the mandate of schools described in the Bavarian constitution: "the school is very important for that, because families have very different opinions and the school has an education mandate: paragraph 131 of the Bavarian constitution." (I2)

Furthermore, in the words of the gastronomy instructor schools "can serve as a positive example" (I1), as claimed also by Dryden-Peterson (2011): they can influence the values of their students and of the society more generally, because they have a number of multiplicators. By sharing reflections and ideas about diversity and open-mindedness within one class, these may be then repeated and talked about at home, in a different classroom and/or in other contexts by a small number of listeners:

> "In school you can spread [ideas]. We have 20–30 people and if I say my opinion, then already 3-4 people listen to it. […] If I tell someone something, then they go home, then they go to work and if it's just 3–4 people who will talk about it at home, it's already enough." (I1)

Having agreed that schools can play a significant role in preventing the development and spreading of prejudice and racism, we will now look at how this role can be fulfilled.

Organizing discussions in school about politics and current events involving refugees seems to be effective in stimulating reflections and awareness amongst the German students of current nationalist trends and their consequences. The gastronomy instructor asserts that current political issues are often themes of discussion during his cooking classes and in other subjects:

> "We often discuss politics in ethics class, for example, or in other quiet subjects, in German class sometimes. Also in practical classes sometimes while I cook with them, we often discuss stuff." (I1)

Similarly, the primary school teacher said that current affairs are often discussed during ethics or religion classes: "[in ethics or religion class] very often we talk about living together and in

the ethics class there are a lot of refugees " (I2). She describes her lesson about the Syrian war and culture in preparation of the inclusion of the refugee student as interesting and helpful for her students:

> "I made one lesson and I had a projector and I showed the map of the world and I asked 'what do you think? Where is the country where he is from?' And we talked about the war and it was very interesting to learn about the culture and they were all very interested." (I2)

Likewise, a refugee participant described how, in her experience at the German Gymnasium, discussing current affairs was informative and awareness raising:

> "Germany has had difficulties, because it has taken in so many refugees. And in this European election the AfD has gained more votes. And now all this is discussed [in school], because some children don't know about refugees, then they become racist or Nazi. […] And, for this reason, it gets explained in school that of course Germany now has a few problems, but that in the next years it will have many advantages, for example there will be more job places and the part across generations won't be completely disestablished. […] But now, if refugees come here and in 5 years' time integrate and work, then the society will work." (FG3)

She also outlined an activity she did as part of a project involving German schools, which consisted of a mock election. The results of the election show that support for right-wing extremist parties are almost non-existent amongst the young generation:

> "We did an election exercise at school where everyone voted and those who voted AfD were 0.1%. And many were for the Greens. […] It shows that young people are more for the Greens and less for the AfD." (FG3)

This may also suggest that schools are already effective in discouraging the development of xenophobic and racist sentiments.

Another useful method of stimulating understanding and reflections on current issues and on the danger posed by the support for right-wing extremist parties is that of organizing talks and educational school trips, as in the examples below. The examples below are described by one of the refugee students and target the nationalist ideology specifically:

> "I think that nowadays education tries hard to talk about nationalism every year to avoid it. […] We're taught not to have prejudice towards people based on their origin. […] We go on excursions with the school to the Dachau memorial or to the National Socialism documentation centre. We see what happened to those people, how terrible it is to be a nationalist. And I'd say that education really plays a very big role." (FG3)

The next examples are given by the gastronomy instructor and refer to talks given by Holocaust survivors and police officers:

> "We also often have speakers. Last year we had a Holocaust survivor come in and hold a presentation. The police also [sometimes] come in. So we do many things in this direction and it works really really well." (I1)

He also added that school trips can be very enriching for the students, as it confronts them with realities different from their own: "we also like to visit things, so that they see a different reality" (I1).

Nonetheless, it must also be recognized that schools do not automatically have a positive impact on society, but that they can in fact contribute to reinforcing fear and prejudice. This is exemplified by the following personal anecdote of one of the German students in FG1 about fear-inducing letters received by parents from the school board in relation to the opening of a refugee camp in the vicinity:

> "Next to our school there was a big field and they built two big refugee centres with a thin fence between. And then at home we received letters [from the schoolboard] addressed to our parents, saying we shouldn't go near them, we shouldn't wear short clothes, we shouldn't walk past there […] and you do get a bit scared [reading all that]."

The other FG1 participants describe it as "scaremongering" and highlight that consequently "the parents first of all get scared". As a result, "the prejudices are basically laid out for you already" (FG1). This example illustrates how the school's approach can also instil prejudice in the school community. This is linked to Bush & Saltarelli's (2000) cautioning about education having the potential to both prevent and perpetrate conflict by encouraging prejudice and distrust. Although the comments do not go as far as addressing the possibility of conflict, they illustrate a scenario that promotes fear, prejudice and distrust towards refugees.

Another function of the schools that emerged during the conversations is that schools help to prepare refugees for wider society:

> "I think that refugees also learn a lot in school that prepares them for the [outside world]. It's probably easier to react to stuff here than in the working world. […] This way the work life will one day be easier." (FG1)

This is true for the German students too, because education provides the knowledge and foundations that are necessary to participate in wider society. However, it is especially true for newly arrived refugees, who need to discover a new culture, language and way of living — all of which effectively happens in school. In fact, one participant expresses his theory that

refugees who have been to school integrate better: “I think that if they’ve been to school first like here at the vocational school and they’ve received some support before starting their work life it’s a good thing” (FG1).

In fact, the gastronomy instructor mentions that the school can become a safe space that protects the refugee students from the outside world, where prejudice and racism are more present:

> “If they see that here [at school] nothing bad happens, they go home calmly and they’re happy to come to school too. They say ‘I can be who I want to be here, nothing bad happens to me here’. Here no one says ‘you nigger, or foreigner, or something’. This doesn’t happen here at all. It’s a bit of a safe bubble. Here they can come in without anything bad happening to them. When they’re on the streets through Munich, it may well happen that someone says ‘hey you nigger’. I’ve seen it happen. I was speaking to an elderly man and a group of asylum seekers walked past us and he completely flipped: ‘look at those blacks, they’re taking our jobs away’. ‘Shut up are you crazy?!’ So it’s very different. […] And here it works well. Here that would be unacceptable. If something like that happens, we’re immediately against it.” (I1)

This stands by Grandi’s (2020) observation that education has a protective role: in this case it creates a prejudice- and racist-free environment.

Nonetheless, two statements by two refugee students suggested the opposite, i.e. that they encountered more challenges in school than outside of school: "the problems are actually in the school, but outside in my private life none” (FG2); and:

> “I don’t work yet, but I did an internship and I would say that in the work environment people are nicer and more open, but in school not everyone is. I was in the 9th and 10th grade in a Gymnasium and I was almost completely excluded by my classmates.” (FG3)

Although the above comments suggest that school is a challenge for refugee students both mentally and socially, it remains clear that schools are regarded by the participants as pathways to integration. Reports such as the ones by UNESCO (2018), UNHCR (2019b) and Grandi (2020), as well as studies by Hek (2005), Kia-Keating & Ellis (2007) and UNESCO (2018), highlight that education, especially tertiary, helps refugees to become self-reliant, escape social and psychological dependency, recover from trauma and establish a sense of belonging to the community. Similarly, the OECD report in 2019 confirms that schooling leads to better employment opportunities and conditions, as well as to greater social engagement. All these aspects facilitate the integration process for refugees and the host community, as is stated by

Ager & Strang (2004, 2008). One of the participants supports this evidence and describes his own observation:

> "I think that the older refugees who don't go to school integrate completely differently. Because those who go to school are together with younger people, which I think is better than with older Germans, [because] they're not as open-minded. Whereas I think that the younger generation is more open-minded — not everyone, but more so. And I believe that refugees who don't go to school find it more difficult, simply because they don't have this direct compulsory contact." (FG1)

That education leads to integration seems to be truer for some subjects (such as gastronomy and the crafts) than for others, according to the following comment by the gastronomy instructor about the vocational school he works at:

> "Of course the school openly took everyone in. We didn't exclude anyone. Of course here we have the advantage that they have a job, that they already go to a workplace […] and there they obviously have contact with a lot of people. And, most importantly, there are also many nationalities. This is an advantage of the gastronomy sector. As a German I have always had to work with foreigners. I went abroad to France, or Switzerland, or Austria… I was a foreigner myself. And for this reason I think that the gastronomy sector is a bit more open-minded towards [the refugees], because we've always worked with foreigners." (I1)

He also stated that in the gastronomy sector (and in the manufacturing industry) chances are more equal for refugee students:

> "In the gastronomy sector definitely. Because gastronomy needs a lot of staff, since we had a very big breakthrough 5-6-7 years ago. […] Since gastronomy needs so many people, it's a great opportunity. If they say they work hard these three years, pass the exam […] and they have a German vocational qualification in their pocket, then they have good chances. In the manufacturing industry and in the gastronomy sector they really have big chances […] and they are very well looked after. […] They do well and they mostly get a good final grade and go on doing well after. It works well." (I1)

Based on these reflections, it is safe to say that education generally helps with the integration process, but that some practical subjects such as gastronomy and manufacturing are more effective in promoting a diverse and interactive environment which is straightforward in terms of employment. This in turn is more conducive to effective integration between refugees and nationals.

Inclusive classrooms

One of the main outcomes of the conversations with the participants is the unanimous support for inclusive classrooms: they are considered a positive alternative to segregated classrooms between German nationals and refugees or other immigrants. Examples of this support are the following quotes from FG1 participants:

- "It's definitely better when they're together with nationals."
- "It would be a bad idea to open a school just for refugees."
- "I also think that it's a good thing that we're together in classes."

This support on the part of German student participants is significant, because it shows a preference for inclusion from the perspective of population members who could effectively be negatively affected.

The opinion of the German students is echoed by their refugee peers in FG2: one says "in my opinion mixed is better" and another says that "together is better". Likewise, the gastronomy instructor shares the same view with enthusiasm: "I find mixed much much better, I have to say. It's a give and take — much better" (I1). These comments support the literature, which claims that inclusive education is the better alternative to segregated education (Davies, 2005; Forlin, 2010; Dryden-Peterson, 2011; UNHCR, 2011; Wagner et al., 2018; INEE, 2020) and depicts inclusive approaches to education to be an example of best practice (Ghosh et al., 2019).

The first reason, as for why inclusive learning environments are positive, that surfaced in the conversations is that with an inclusive approach towards refugees within educational institutions, schools become a site for cultural exchange. This explanation was outlined in FG1:

> "It's good to have these mixed classes where foreigners and Germans are together, because we learn a bit about their culture when we talk together and they learn a lot about our culture."

The cultural exchange that comes with inclusive education is also described by one of the refugee participants, who shared the way her friends' cultures have become part of her own:

> "You also gain something from the other cultures. […] For example, I have so many friends from Italy, Romania and so on, and now I have gained a bit from the other cultures. I think that it's really nice." (FG3)

Moreover, cultural exchange leads to a greater understanding of social diversity and groups. UNESCO (2015, 2016) supports this in stating that inclusive learning environments facilitate the achievement of the fourth goal of education (to inculcate respect for diversity) in the Sustainable Development Goals through interaction between different cultures. This is

evident in the observation below by a refugee participant and the description of his experience in a school that embraces the inclusive approach to refugees in education. He underlines the mutual benefits that come with inclusive education:

> "My idea is that the schools always have to mix the refugees with the Germans in one class. It will be better for both: so they will understand us better and we will understand them better. Then we will have no problem at all. Actually here in this school it has happened. They always mix. We have no problem at all." (FG2)

Similarly, another participant in the same focus group also underlined how inclusion education allows for nationals and refugees to understand each other better:

> "I like it better when the Germans and the refugees or the foreigners are always together in one class, because it really helps us. And I think it really helps other students who have bad ideas about refugees or something. So they know us better, we know them better. We mix our culture, the food, we talk about something in common, ideas together, then we understand each other better." (FG2)

This statement directly addresses an important aspect in favour of inclusive education: the link with prejudice. All conversations revealed that mixed classrooms lead to a shift in perspectives towards open-mindedness and away from prejudice, which concords with UNESCO's (2001) assurance that it is the best practice for "combating discriminatory attitudes" (p. 30). Similarly, Booth & Ainscow's (2002) stance that inclusive education leads to a shift from prejudice through self-reflection on one's own discriminatory attitudes and tendencies. Speaking of inclusive classrooms one participant says that "they do change perspectives" (FG1). Another participant in the same focus group also agrees: "I think that having these mixed classrooms is very helpful in getting these prejudices out of the heads of our generation" (FG1).

Furthermore, the following personal account by a refugee participant and her shift in prejudice about Africans suggests that contact with the 'prejudice-target' helps against prejudice:

> "If I live with people […] and get to know them, then I know how they live, that they are people too, that they have their own values too, that they also have traditions. […] For example, now I know a couple of people from Africa or from Russia and I say 'ok not bad'. At first, I thought that people from Africa are very aggressive, then after being around them and speaking with them, I know that some are really so intelligent and so respectful [and] educated. One must not look at these clichés." (FG3)

This positive effect of contact between different ethnic, religious or cultural groups in dismantling negative preconceptions is also illustrated below in the example by the gastronomy instructor:

> "I think mixed is better, because [the refugees] see what level they need to reach which the Germans have, what they can do, and the Germans become more open-minded through this… so that they say 'yeah we have so many foreigners in the country, we need to live with them, we need to work with them.' They meet them in the street and in the classroom it works quite well. For example now it's Ramadan and the student said, 'I'm not eating anything today.' Then I said, 'what's wrong?' 'Well it's Ramadan, I'm not allowed to.' Then he explained and I said, 'Explain to the others that you're only allowed to eat between sunset and sunrise.' And then they learn alongside. And they said, 'ok you don't have to eat this, you don't have to try this.' Or we wrapped it up and he took it home and had it in the evening… I think it's great." (I1)

Likewise, the primary school teacher confirms this for her own students: "For the pupils it was an enrichment to have Idris in the class. It was good for their open-mindedness. […] I think that it made them more tolerant, yes." (I2)

However, a couple of participants in FG1 instead state that their viewpoint has not changed as a result of being in class with refugees. One of them says their opinion is "not worse not better", and another says:

> "I didn't have a totally negative picture of refugees before. And since we now have contact with them on a daily basis, I wouldn't say I think better or worse of them. I find that my opinion has stayed the same."

Nonetheless, even if the experience of some of the German students does not correspond, all participants agreed it was positive for the views of the general public on refugees. A participant in FG3, provides a good summary of the point in question:

> "I think it's better for the integration of children. If we leave the children just with foreigners, then they don't learn the language, they don't get to know the norms and values of the society and in the end they will be excluded in their own culture. They don't practice any other or they don't understand any other culture. Therefore if we simply mix all the children together then we have a really nice society. It's open-mindedness. And I would say that separating is like segregation between whites and blacks, between foreigners and nationals. I don't think it's very good, mixed is better."

Consequently, the data in this study supports the observations made by numerous research studies which recognize the potential of inclusive education to transform society and overcome discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes (Save the Children, 2008; INEE, 2009; INEE, 2010; Slee, 2010; INEE, 2020).

Another positive aspect about inclusive classrooms that emerged both in FG1 and FG2, and which was briefly acknowledged in the comments above, is that having mixed classrooms is very helpful for refugees, specifically for the improvement of their language skills. This is asserted by a participant in FG1: "they are forced to speak German and therefore have to learn it"; and by a participant in FG2: "I think it's good if we are together with the Germans, so that our language improves". The same is explained by another participant in FG2:

> "In the second year we are Germans and of course all foreign people together in one class and that also helped us as refugees. Then we understand better if the teacher she was so fast and […] we miss something and other colleague he explained to me what does this mean… it's really helpful."

However, a few negative aspects about inclusive education emerged during the conversations. Firstly, most of the German participants had noticed a reduction in the speed of the lessons. The students in FG1 say, "sometimes it's difficult in the lesson, because it's slower"; and, "I find you do notice that the lesson goes slower […], we could go faster". Similarly, the gastronomy instructor states: "the speed of the lesson has gone down quite a bit, I have to say" (I1) and, on a more personal note, he says: "I have to talk slower. I always talk so fast. I have to talk more slowly, more clearly" (I1). The teacher also explains that the gaps in basic skills such as reading and writing considerably slow down the lesson, as in his comment as follows:

> Some of the refugee students "take photos on their phones and say 'I'll learn it at home', because otherwise it takes too long. In a 45-minute lesson sometimes we do nothing. One says 'Wait I'm not done copying that', then everyone waits and some get bored while he finishes writing." (I1)

At the same time, this does not seem to always be due to the presence of non-German students: in fact the participant cited below states that the teacher occasionally re-explains topics because also not all of the German students have understood: "sometimes the teacher explains things 3–4 times, but she does it with us too" (FG1). This is confirmed by one of the teachers themselves:

> "-Do you need to spend more time with the refugee students?
>
> -Yes and no. Difficult… because we also have very bad German students. We also have students who are very bad at maths or reading. […] I have some refugees who are much better, because of course they learn German well and they want to succeed. I've often told the German students 'if you don't work hard, they'll overtake you and sometime they'll take your workplaces away. […] You now have to fight for your jobs.'" (I1)

This statement suggests that refugee students do not necessarily slow down the pace of the lesson very significantly and that, on the contrary, they have the potential to exceed their German students in their academic outcomes.

Another less favourable aspect about inclusive education highlighted by some of the participants is the incongruence between the behaviour in class of German students, who have been taught the school rules since a young age, and refugee students, who instead are used to different rules. Some of the German participants say that this discordance sometimes disturbs the lesson. For example, one student tells how one refugee student in her class was not used to putting their hand up before speaking and how she found that disruptive: "we have someone in our class who seems not to be used to putting their hand up when they have a question and yells in the lesson really loudly" (FG1). One student replies to her saying it is not so bad, to which she answers: "yes, but we're not used to that — there are some things that they don't know from their culture or mentality" (FG1). Another German student also states more generally: "I feel like you notice in lessons that they have different views on things or that they're used to behaving differently in classrooms in their own country" (FG1).

Philimore's (2012) affirmation that there is need for a positive attitudinal shift within the school community from viewing refugees as problematic to viewing them as an enrichment can be linked to the above comments: these highlight a sentiment shared amongst some of the German students that refugee students can provoke disturbances in the lesson and bring attention to the need for an attitudinal shift in the way the refugee peers are viewed. Similarly, Brewer (2016) underlines the importance of this shift towards an 'asset perspective', emphasizing the presence of refugee students as an asset rather than as a problem.

Moreover, one German student also notes that in mixed classrooms some refugee students might participate less for fear of saying something wrong. She bases her statement on her observation of a couple of refugee students in her class: "we have one or two refugees in our class who barely put their hand up, maybe because they think they'll say something wrong or mispronounce something" (FG1). The participant thus highlights another issue that comes with inclusive education, namely that refugee students may not be keen to contribute very much to the lesson for fear of making mistakes, which in turn may result in lower grades and appreciation on the part of teachers and peers.

Some of the German participants express their criticism towards refugee-only classes. They outlined the problem that in refugee-only classrooms the students mostly speak their own languages amongst themselves: "in refugee classes you can see that in the corridor they only speak their language amongst themselves" (FG1). In their opinion this is not helpful for the

refugees, as they do not practice German and "don't learn about our culture" (FG1). On the contrary, the primary school teacher highlights a number of positive aspects in relation to refugee-only classes being compulsory before entering the German system. In her opinion, in refugee-only classes the teacher would have time to address topics with no rush and fill in gaps. In regards to the language problem brought up by the German student participants, the teacher claims that the refugee students would be obliged to speak German amongst themselves, because they would all come from different countries:

> "In some schools there are special classes for refugees and this is a good concept I think. Because when [refugees] come, only in the first year they are in the special class. And it is a mixed class, so there are people from the first class there, there are people from the fourth class… everyone is together. But I think there are only about 12 people and one teacher looks after them […] They fill the gaps and they get prepared to come into a German class. On one hand I find this good because they first learn everything upon arrival. On the other hand it's expensive. And this teacher has more time, because they are only 12. And everyone has similar problems, but they aren't from the same country so they must speak German together." (I2)

She also adds that inclusive education would only be preferable to separate classes if classes were smaller:

> "I think the priority for refugees is to learn German and so on, so it's very good to be mixed. But the Bavarian school system is very demanding, so I think it would be very hard for teachers to mix it together. Perhaps it would be possible if the classes were smaller. In primary schools there is a very huge range: some can read and write and count to 1000, and there are others who can't speak one word of German. There are advantages for mixed classes but I think the classes must be smaller or with two teachers." (I2)

Her words lead on to a reflection on the challenges of mixed classrooms from the point of view of teaching professionals, which in fact leads us onto the next section covering aspects of teaching concerned with inclusive education.

Teaching

Both teacher participants highlighted that an increasing range of diversity in the classroom resulted in the necessity for them to make changes to their teaching methods and resources, as well as in presenting them with new challenges and situations that are unfamiliar to them. Many

recent reports, such as those by UNESCO (2015, 2018), acknowledge the novel challenges faced by teachers with increasingly diverse classrooms and stress the need for new resources, training and ongoing professional development to be available for current and future teachers, if they are to meet the needs of all their pupils.

The teacher participants stated that it had become necessary for them to prepare differentiated tasks to deal with language and educational gaps due to increasingly diverse classrooms. The gastronomy instructor describes the following challenge, speaking for himself and for teachers in general:

> "We have to differentiate. […] We have to separate them a bit and partly organize the lesson twice: once with easier tasks and once with slightly more difficult ones. For us teachers it's a big problem." (I1)

One way of differentiating the tasks for the gastronomy instructor is to hand out the answers to the refugee students at the beginning of the task:

> "I've started handing out the solutions to the refugee students, so that they have the correct answers on paper. Many sit at home and write them out again […] otherwise it takes too long. […] Now I make sure he already has the answer - he can sit at home and go over it with a helper, so that it works better." (I1)

He also highlights the difficulty of teaching a class when some of the students are missing basic literacy and numeracy:

> "Maybe I also have to reduce the learning material, because I can't go through it as fast — I have to start more slowly, use different methods… Because you can see how much is missing: the 16 years of basic education in Germany are missing. They don't know anything about Germany. In cooking it's a bit easier, because they like to eat and they're familiar with what eating is. But with the theory? The humanities? Business management? They don't know any political structure, they don't know what the laws are, what an apprenticeship agreement looks like, etc. So one really has to start from zero. We have refugees who have never been to school and they come here to school for the first time. They can't write, they can't do maths. So it's very very bad. Then we have to work together with the work place to get them additional teaching as soon as possible, and I give them maths exercises from the first or second grade so that they can gradually learn on their own. This is a very new situation for us." (I1)

In the following statement, the primary school teacher explains that, even though she had other foreign students in her class, having a refugee student meant that the gaps in the level of education and skills between him and the other students were greater:

> "I also had [other] foreigners in the class, but he was the only refugee. And yes, it was different, because he wasn't able to read. And all the others knew more so it was a very big gap, there was a difference between them." (I2)

She describes how she too had to set differentiated tasks by giving Idris extra homework targeted at coping with his lack of reading skills: "sometimes in German Idris had problems in reading and he got some special homework in reading with books that are called 'Lies mal' [Let's read]" (I2).

Both teachers outlined the peer mentoring system, i.e. pairing a refugee student with a mother-tongue German student for class activities, as an effective way of dealing with gaps in language and education. The gastronomy instructor says the following:

> "We sometimes take the good [German] students to one side and ask them if they would like to work together with [the refugee students] or to support them. And then they help each other, like in a mentoring system." (I1)

Similarly, the primary school teacher illustrates the 'helper system' she has established in her class:

> "I have [organized] a helper system in the class, so everyone has a name tag and I have a board with 'I need help' written on it and when someone needs help they can put their nametag there and Idris put his there and the other children helped him." (I2)

She also added that helping each other was a role the children really enjoyed:

> "There were a lot of situations when Idris went to the room next door with another pupil of mine, because I had a lot of very clever pupils and sometimes they went to the group rooms and did the activity together. Children like to be the teacher and to help others." (I2)

This, however, differs from the reaction of the German students described by the gastronomy instructor:

> "We already tried 3–4 years ago, when the problem first came, to put a German and a foreign student next to each other. The first few weeks it went well. Then the Germans said 'we're in school to learn something too and not only to teach them'." (I1)

Furthermore, the interview with the gastronomy instructor reveals that using refugee narratives in class can be very useful in helping the other students to learn about a different reality and to promote open-mindedness. In fact, Ghosh et al. (2019) describe the positive effect of sharing refugee stories in the classroom in a school in Manitoba on the perspectives of non-refugee students and the sense of belonging of the refugees in the school. The gastronomy instructor shares the way he did it and the impact the narrative had on the German students:

> "At first when the wave of refugees was at its peak and new ones kept arriving, I often asked them 'now tell us, how did you get here?', so that they would tell how they had swam, or gotten here by boat or lorry. And at first it was very impressive for the Germans. They'd say 'wow he had to take his money, then he had to flee through Europe for 4–5 weeks in the most terrible ways… in the back of a lorry down in a box for three days without light without water without bread…' and all the Germans stare and think 'oh everything is so good for us, I go out, get something to eat…' So at first the atmosphere was very peaceful. The German students were very very open-minded and really opened up a lot." (I1)

He also details how, although the German students had been prepared prior to the arrival of refugee peers, they were still very shocked when they learned about their story:

> "The German students were a bit prepared, although nowadays you learn a lot through the media. But it's worse when you have a real case sitting right in front of you. […] A girl stood there and told her story and then she started to cry and we took her outside of the classroom and [the German students] were really shocked. So now you see how well it's going for you – you go home and mum and dad are sitting at home. She's all alone in a new country. She was also accepted and she immediately felt comfortable." (I1)

These examples illustrate how refugee narratives help to highlight the extraordinary resilience and strength of refugees, contributing to shifting their image from negative into a positive one, as affirmed by Gagné et al. (2017), Stewart & Martin (2018) and Ghosh et al. (2019). This is also linked to the importance of teachers knowing about the pre- and trans-migration experience of their refugee pupils highlighted by Dryden-Peterson (2011), Stewart (2017) and Stewart & Martin (2018): this is necessary if the teachers want to establish a positive and supportive relationship with refugee students and meet their needs.

In terms of class management, both teachers acknowledge an increase in the challenge due to the trauma experienced by many of the refugee students and the often overwhelming situations they find themselves in. This coincides with the results of the case study by Saklan & Eringer (2017), which found that the inclusion of refugees into classrooms impacted negatively on the experiences of the teachers in regards to class management. The gastronomy instructor illustrates the reasons why, especially at the beginning, it is difficult to make sure all the students, including the newly arrived refugees, are engaged and attentive in class:

> "-Does it happen that refugee students don't participate in the lesson?

-Yes it happens, at the start more often. The problem is also partly that they have to work a lot in the workplace and they're then very tired and also that they have a lot of other stuff going on on the side. We have one now who is getting his driving licence, the German one, and he has to study so much for it, it's so difficult and so he had no time to study for school and he just sat there and looked and one knew exactly that his thoughts were somewhere else. Or they have problems with their families, who are maybe still in their home country. We have one student whose wife is still down there and has no chance to come up here… she already flew once and they caught her and put her in prison and he has very different problems from whatever I'm teaching or from some ingredients I'm talking about. And then we often take them to one side. We now have a school psychologist and they speak with him and then they open up, they tell us something and it becomes clear that the problem lies somewhere very different. It has nothing to do with the school and so little by little we get them back on the saddle." (I1)

The citation surfaces the new challenges faced by teachers in managing a class with students who are victims of war and involved in traumatic situations, such as the one described above. These difficulties are addressed by UNESCO (2015), whilst de Wal Pastoor (2015) underlines the growing need for teachers to be trained to recognize signs of mental health problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Indeed, in his comment, the gastronomy instructor introduces the importance of school psychologists, in accordance with de Wal Pastoor (2015) and Stewart (2017) who both advocate the inclusion of school psychologist in the support network between school boards, teachers and parents.

The gastronomy instructor underlines the benefits gained from school psychologists being available to students and to help teachers:

"We need more school psychologists. Now we have someone and it works well: if something happens, we call her, and then there's two of us in the classroom. Or she takes him outside and talks with him in person and the lesson carries on. Because if I'm on my own and I take him outside then the class is on its own again." (I1)

He also states that aggressive behaviour resulting from poor mental health in students can be very difficult for teachers to handle: "if they have emotional problems they flip out, they become very different, they say they're calm and instead become aggressive" (I1).

The primary school teacher also supports the call and describes how, in the previous school she used to teach at, the students really benefitted from the school psychologist employed there:

> "I was also at another school where I had the 5th year class and there I had a child from Afghanistan. We also had an excellent school social psychologist and he was golden, he was excellent. He had his office in the school and he always had space for the needs and desires of the children." (I2)

With a background in school psychology herself, she adds that a school psychologist in the current school she teaches at would be of great help: "I think it would be very good to have a counsellor, a place where a teacher [who is having problems] with refugees can phone or talk. That would help." (I2).

The primary school teacher shares a section of Idris' school report at the previous school he attended before joining her class. The report presented him as a nightmare student:

> "Idris poses a problem with his behaviour. He is often unreliable and reacts in unreasonable ways. […] He does not show interest towards the contributions of his peers and rarely talks about his own results. He provokes conflicts inside and outside the classroom. During the lesson he is reserved and disengaged. His few contributions almost never made sense, his work was rarely sufficient. He has an insufficient range of vocabulary and he rarely takes part in the discussion. He didn't develop his reading abilities. His textbooks were messy. He summarized texts with incomplete sentences. […] In class he was very distracted and disrupted the lesson with nonsense, fidgeting and not keeping to the rules." (I2)

Compared to the comment by the gastronomy instructor, in this report Idris' previous teacher demonstrates much less awareness and understanding of the refugee student and his situation. This teacher's attitude seems to contrast that of the gastronomy instructor who, instead, recognizes that German students can be difficult as well: "we also have very bad German students" (I1). Instead Idris is presented as a very difficult pupil to manage in class. This could exemplify the importance of teachers learning about their pupils migratory past, as raised by Dryden-Peterson (2011), Stewart (2017) and Stewart & Martin (2018).

At the same time, the gastronomy instructor mentions that in classrooms that are inclusive of refugees, female teachers face a greater challenge due to the cultural difference in terms of how women are treated and respected. He says: "many women colleagues in other schools have already become sick, I've seen it. Many women colleagues say 'I can't do this, it's not working.'" (I1). This issue reconnects to the theme of gender roles and culture and to the threat perceived by German women to their freedoms and respect from non-feminist cultures.

Moreover, the need for additional teaching was addressed by all participants. The refugee students expressed appreciation for the extra help they had received, e.g. "at school they helped

us with the grammar and so on.. and where I'm in training now, they also try to help" (FG3), but also desire for more support, e.g. "of course there's additional teaching, but it's only once a week" (FG2).

The German students support additional teaching for the refugees, suggesting it also be a solution for the perceived slower lesson pace:

> "Since we only have a few weeks and have to get through a lot in a short time, maybe it would be good for them to have 1 or 2 more hours in the afternoon where they go over the learning materials more slowly." (FG1)

The gastronomy instructor describes the additional teaching that the refugee students at his vocational school receive both in school and in their training workplace:

> "They often have people at hand at work who help them to learn German. We've also hired German teachers in the workplaces, hotels for instance. The students have to go there in the mornings for an hour and learn German and then they go to work. There are different ways." (I1)

Likewise, in his previous school report Idris had been told he "urgently needs regular practice and support" (I2) and the primary school teacher also talked about the benefits of additional support that had been organized for Idris:

> "We asked a woman at the Helferkreis [refugee support network] to come to the school two times a week for two hours to take Idris and learn German with him and to look after him and to help him and to answer his questions and it was very good." (I2)

The benefits of additional support for refugees were thus recognized by all of the participants. This agreement is in line with the philosophy outlined by UNESCO (2001), according to which the educational system should be rethought to meet the needs of all students, one of the needs expressed by the refugees themselves being additional teaching and support.

Furthermore, the gastronomy instructor addresses the lack of training that teachers receive in preparation for tackling classrooms that are increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity, skills, background and religion:

> "…we've had no training, we're just following our gut feelings. We've never had training about what to do. […] So the base is pretty much left on its own. But we help each other very well and that's why it works at the base too." (I1)

This is a problem recognized widely within the current literature, such as (INEE, 2010; Dryden-Peterson, 2011; de Wal Pastoor, 2015; Stewart, 2017; UNESCO, 2018; INEE, 2020). At the end of his statement, the teacher mentions the importance of establishing a good network between himself, other teachers, the school community and other sources for support, such as

voluntary helpers. Save the Children (2008) and UNESCO (2001) confirm this to be an effective way for teachers to support each other and broaden their knowledge and skills when there is a lack of training. Indeed, the primary school teacher explains how it was very important for her to establish effective communication between herself, the refugee students, the parents of Idris, and the person in charge of giving him extra support:

> "[When I was told I was going to have a refugee student in my class] I thought 'no I have 27 pupils and this is the 27th, no! I don't need him. But I have him now and I must do my best!' I made a meeting one day before the first day of the second class. It was a round table with me, and the wife of the mayor [who looks after refugees in the village], and with the boy and his parents. And I said 'Hello, I'm your new teacher. Welcome, it's very nice that you are in the class now, but we have special rules and it is very very important from the beginning that you know the rules. I can explain you everything and I can show you everything and also your parents. […] I read your report and I really think you can make it better. You are a very nice boy and I'm really sure that we will get on well. I will try but you have to work together with me.'" (I2)

This network proved to be very important and beneficial for all parties involved and is a type of communication considered an example of best practice by Stewart (2017). Good communication was also established with the other pupils, with whom the teacher discussed the inclusion of a refugee student prior to Idris' arrival:

> "On the first day, I said to Idris: 'please come to the third lesson, please come a bit later'. And then I talked to all the pupils and said 'we have a new pupil, it is a boy and he is here since 1.5 years in Germany and he is as old as you and has had a very very hard life until now and we must help him to get on and some things he doesn't know. And we also spoke about what happens when he makes jokes, when he plays the clown. How should we behave? And then we made an agreement not to laugh when he makes the clown, because this is his strategy. But he has new strategies now and it was perfect. It worked very well." (I2)

Additionally, the gastronomy instructor outlines another suggestion to help teachers promote integration and collaboration between students: that of having all the students make a presentation about an aspect of their country or hometown. He shares the way he did it:

> "In cooking it's very easy: we do a project with the first years and everyone has to cook something from their country. We have a big buffet […] and let's say there are eight different nationalities I say 'ok we have five different Germans — one from Hamburg, one Bavarian, one from Köln, one from Berlin… I say 'now cook something! Either a

> recipe of your grandma's, or of your mum's, or a national dish. You have two weeks to think about something.' And then they all started off. And then the Afghanis arrived in their traditional costumes, and the African had his turban on and everything… really great!" (I1)

This could be indeed considered an effective example of how students' stories can be used in classrooms to overcome cultural barriers and promote inclusion and integration between the students, as per the statements by Gagné et al. (2017) and Ghosh et al. (2019).

One aspect in regards to teaching that emerged mainly from the focus groups with the refugee students, is that teachers can be responsible for making the school experience more challenging for refugees. This is a concern raised by Hek (2005), Forlin (2010), Stewart (2017), and Stewart & Martin (2018). In fact reports by Save the Children (2008) and UNESCO (2001) underline that negative attitudes in general within the school community constitute the biggest barrier to integration for refugees. Similarly, studies by Hel (2005) and Uptin et al. (2013) found that supportive and positive attitudes within the school community enabled the refugee students to attain greater school results and feel part of the community.

Moreover, UNESCO (2001), Dryden-Peterson (2011) and Stewart & Martin (2018) all highlight the central role and responsibility of teachers in influencing the school experience of refugee students, and therefore, indirectly, their sense of belonging to the host community. In FG3, one refugee student shares her experience of having a xenophobic teacher and how it affected her: "at one point I had a teacher who was against foreigners and she didn't help me at all and she always insulted me. [...] But with time she understood me and she helped me."

The other refugee student in FG3 also reported having had a similar experience:

> "In my case I would say that 95% of the teachers were nice, except for one who... I'd say was racist. She hates foreigners. She's known to be racist in the school. We say she's Hitler 2."

These examples confirm the literature stating that teachers can both help and hinder refugee students. As one refugee in FG3 said, "teachers behave differently, it depends on the type of teacher". In fact one of the students in FG2 said: "we have no problem with the teacher or with the lesson", indicating how, depending on the teacher, the refugee students have better or worse experiences.

One of the German students also thought that some teachers do not make the lives of the refugees any easier:

> "I have the impression that [some of] the teachers overwhelm [the refugees]. They talk so fast and I have to really concentrate to understand anything. I can imagine what it must be like in a foreign language." (FG1)

Language

Much of the present literature in refugee studies shows that language presents a considerable obstacle for refugees and their integration within the host community (Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002; Ager & Strang, 2008; Stewart et al., 2008; INEE, 2010; Stewart, 2017; Wilkinson et al., 2017; Streitweiser et al., 2018; Ghosh et al. 2019). All of the interviews and focus groups reveal that language is a major challenge for refugee students. One of the refugee participants in FG2 says: "the problem in school is that we're not using our mother tongue". Another participant adds: "in our mother tongue we always write from the right side to the left side, but here it's left to right. This is also a big problem" (FG2). In FG3, one of the refugees describes language as "the biggest challenge". However, another refugee in FG2 claims that "it's not the biggest problem". The gastronomy instructor also acknowledges the challenge posed by language incompetency from the perspective of teaching: "it becomes difficult when they can't speak any German — then they can't even copy from the board when I write something" (I1).

In particular, the refugee student participants underline the difference between learning in one's mother tongue and in a foreign language. The following comment explains how much more difficult the learning process is in a foreign language:

> "When it's not in your mother tongue [everything comes with challenges]. And German is the most difficult language for us. It's also hard to imagine you come from a different country and have to learn everything from a different country and have to learn everything from A to Z. It takes a long time." (FG2)

One of the participants in FG3 says the same: "when you study in your mother tongue, everything is easy. It's not like when you study in a foreign language".

Refugee participants address the fact that having to translate and understand phrases and texts takes a long time and creates an imbalance between them and the German students. A participant in FG2 states the following:

> "The problem here in school is that the language is not our mother tongue. […] The German colleagues in our class simply read through, but me or him or others we go home and have to translate everything. Then we understand what it means in German,

what this system is. Sometimes I have to translate into English or French or into my mother tongue Arabic, then I understand what it means and that really takes a long time."

Similarly, another refugee in FG3 says: "you need to read [the question] 2–3 times before you understand it". This raises the issue of unfairness in class and in exams. This will be discussed further in the section on policy.

Furthermore, another issue raised in regards to language proficiency is that subject-specific terminology forms an obstacle, in spite of previous language courses and achieved diplomas. The gastronomy instructor explains:

> "Sometimes when we have a new class, [it may be] that they can't speak German very well. They know the basics, they have passed the B2. But now in the subject classes, of course words come up that they don't know at all, they've never learnt them. In the kitchen we use words for some specific vegetable or some French expression, and then they soon feel overwhelmed." (I1)

Likewise, a refugee participant describes how she experiences the problem: "when I speak German I understand, but when the assignments are written in such complicated and difficult terms I don't understand it at all" (FG3). The German participants also perceive the struggle undergone by the refugees. One of them notes that some subjects present more linguistic challenges than others:

> "For example social sciences where they talk about specific laws that apply to Germany must be more difficult for them with all these specific terms, which we also find difficult to understand or to remember what they mean." (FG1)

In fact, language is responsible for highlighting the disparity between the situations in which refugee students and German students find themselves. Generally, most German students will have help from their parents or siblings available at home, whereas refugees mostly arrive to Germany on their own or, when their family does come with them, the language proficiency of the family members is often much lower and cannot be of any help to them. One of the refugee participants in FG2 describes the disparity from his point of view:

> "Sometimes also the Germans, who are mother tongue, don't understand and they say 'ok I'll go home and my dad or my mum will explain everything to me.' But we are alone. We don't have anyone at home who can explain. We have to translate everything and sometimes there are so many complicated things — legal stuff in Germany — and often the Germans don't understand it either. And for us it's always more difficult. The problem is only the language."

Furthermore, language can be an obstacle for establishing good communication between the parents of the refugee students and the school. Both teachers communicate how, in their experience, it is very difficult for teachers to talk to the parents of their refugee students due to the language issue. The gastronomy instructor describes this challenge:

> "Of course this is difficult for the teacher, if they want to speak with the family: maybe mum and dad are there, [but] they don't know any German. That has often happened here too. […] If they can't speak any German how am I, as the teacher, supposed to say that their child is doing badly?" (I1)

Similarly, the primary school teacher stresses the difficulty encountered by Idris' parents in helping their son navigate the new school system due to the fact that they could not understand the language: "the parents were very overwhelmed [by my meeting in German and by] all the books and they didn't understand what they needed to buy" (I2). The previous school report of Idris revealed the expectation that the parents participate and get involved with the school duties of their child:

> "At the end of the school year many assignments were missing. Letters for the parents had not been signed. The parents didn't turn up for various meetings. Idris urgently needs the help of his parents to check his homework and to pack his school bag. He urgently needs language support and practice." (I2)

This highlights the difficulties that both the school board, the refugee student, and his family face in the absence of language proficiency. It also underlines a certain degree of insensitivity and lack of awareness about how families of refugees are often not able to be as involved and supportive of their child as German families are expected to be. In most cases, in a family of refugees, the children will be the most proficient in German, whilst the parents often rely on the children for interpreting and navigating the German language. As stated by the primary school teacher, it is easier to learn a language when you are a child:

> "It's a good thing that he came to Germany when we came into the first class, because everyone was learning to read, everyone was learning to write. Now he is in the third class and he can speak German almost perfectly really. So yeah the older the pupils the more difficult it is for them to learn German." (I2)

The reliance on help from parents and guardians is especially evident in Gymnasiums and leads onto a reflection about the fairness of the German school system in terms of its accessibility and background homogeneity. When the children are nine years old, primary school teachers decide whether each child is intelligent enough to go to a Gymnasium or whether they should go to the Realschule, Hauptschule or Gesamtschule (which comprises both

the Realschule and the Hauptschule). The Gymnasium is more academic and leads to more opportunities and employment options. The Realschule, Hauptschule and Gesamtschule are regarded as less prestigious and only go up to the 10th grade. From there most students have to do another access exam to get into the Gymnasium and get the Gymnasium diploma (Abitur). The Abitur is necessary to access tertiary education. The other option for most is to go to a vocational school, and consequently their options are fewer. A general overview of the German national school system can be viewed in Appendix IV.

The primary school teacher states that her daughter, who attends a Gymnasium, regularly needs her assistance with homework and studying and underlines the very demanding nature of the Gymnasium:

> "This is a general issue with the school system in Germany, because [whether you go to a Gymnasium] depends a lot on your family. My daughter goes to the Gymnasium now in the 5th grade — it's very hard. She wouldn't have a chance by herself and she is very clever. This is a big problem. But the advantage of the German school system is that it's very permeable. So they have a chance but the direct way [to tertiary education] is very hard for them." (I2)

One of the refugee students in FG3 also goes to the Gymnasium. It is interesting to note that out of all of the refugee participants she is the only one to be attending a Gymnasium — the others are all at a vocational school. She shares her criticism of the system:

> "Here in Germany, what I don't like is the school system […] A child in the 4th grade should be able to choose his own future! […] My cousin was very bad in school until the 9th grade, but after the 9th grade he had a new mindset and studied and in the end he studied medicine and now he is a doctor. […] The [German] school system has given children this image that they're not good. There are no stupid children in my opinion. […] You just need to tell your child that he can do it, he only needs a bit of courage. […] If I tell my sister 'yes! You can do it! You can do it!' She will do it. If I say 'no you don't think very much, so you shouldn't do this' then she won't do it." (FG3)

Most children and young adults with migrant backgrounds are sent to the Realschule and to the Hauptschule, often because of German being their second or third language. This unveils a number of social inequalities which result in a form of discrimination towards non-German youths: children with migratory backgrounds have less of an opportunity to visit German Gymnasiums and consequently to access tertiary education, because of how the school system is structured. This results in a cyclic reproduction of inequality of opportunities and supports studies which demonstrate that refugees have a very low enrolment rate in universities due to

a lack of access to tertiary education, such as the results of studies by Dryden-Peterson (2011), Streitweiser et al. (2018), Ghosh et al., (2019) and Grandi (2020).

All of the above aspects point towards language being a powerful barrier to integration. One of the refugee participants shows this by stating: "I need the B1 level for the visa, for everything" (FG2). Similarly the primary school teacher makes the following comment, highlighting the fact that language is essential for integration:

> "[With so many foreign children in one class], they can't get integrated because most of them can't speak German. How can they learn to speak German when most of them can't speak German? It is very hard, it is impossible to achieve integration." (I2)

In fact, as well as being a barrier to integration, language is also an effective help towards integration. As stated in the introduction, language is one of the three facilitators of integration identified by Ager & Strang (2008). The authors describe language to be central in the process of integration, because language proficiency enables interaction and participation with the host society. This is confirmed by the words of a Syrian refugee in FG2: "I've integrated well here, because I did a German course in my homeland and I didn't find the culture part that difficult here. It was easy, really".

Policies

The conversations resulted in a number of reflections on current policies employed in schools in regards to inclusive education and highlighted a number of aspects that need to be addressed at a policy level. As stated by the gastronomy instructor, the people in charge of making the policies need to learn more about what the situation is like at the bottom of the pyramid by listening to people like him who face the situation every day. He says:

> "Politicians need to come further down [in the society]. They always discuss everything from above and at the base is the real work so to say. […] They don't know themselves what they should do. That's the problem. They are too far away, they hear of things. My opinion is they can't make decisions for the base, because they don't know what's going on here." (I1)

This section, therefore, attempts to address aspects that require changes that can be made at a policy level, based on the experiences and opinions of the participants.

In accordance with UNESCO's (2001) philosophy concerning the importance of school systems to meet the needs of all students, all three perspectives considered in this study showed support for adopting an inclusive approach to education and agreed that it is important that

additional teaching and support should be available for all refugee students throughout their schooling. One of the German students asserts: “we really should help and support those who really try hard and want to work” (FG1). The gastronomy teacher was asked how long refugee students needed extra support in his opinion, and he answered the following:

> “Almost always, I think until after education. When they get the certificate of apprenticeship they already have a high level, then they often can be left on their own. But now in school they really need a lot of help.” (I1)

The primary school teacher also notices progress in Idris since he started having regular additional support:

> “It was good that two times a week, so all together four lessons a week, there was a woman and she studied with him. That was very necessary, because he didn’t understand everything.” (I2)

Nonetheless, she also claims that refugee students already get a lot of support: “I think refugees get more support than students with disabilities.” (I2)

In particular, all parties involved in the study agreed that specifically refugee students need additional language support. Recent studies by UNHCR, (2011), Streitweiser et al. (2018), and Ghosh et al. (2019), as well as initiatives such as the DAFI programme (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; UNHCR, 2019b) and the language training offered by DAAD (2019), reveal the positive outcomes of additional language courses for refugee students. Similarly, the previous section on language already highlighted some of the reasons why language proficiency is key when it comes to tackling integration and gaps between students — as stated by the gastronomy instructor: “[the refugee students] need to learn German faster” (I1). The comment below by one of the refugee students shows that the lack of additional language support is a problem for him:

> “I’m having a few difficulties in my training, because it’s not my first language. At work it’s fine, but in school I have a few problems with the reading and speaking and unfortunately I don’t have any additional teaching. I haven’t found any.” (FG2)

Analogously, a refugee student in FG3 describes how the extra language support she receives at school is very beneficial to her:

> “My school offers me a consolidation course, where a teacher explains the grammar to me […] I had to learn [the language] myself, but the school helped me. In the school assignments there are questions that I didn’t understand at all and they’re explained to me or just reformulated. I think this is good.”

The two comments above address another problem that needs to be tackled at a policy level, i.e. that not all schools offer the same level of support and refugee-supportive resources. Similarly to the comments above, one refugee student says: "[in this school] I didn't find the additional German course for non-Germans" (FG2). Whereas, another refugee in the same focus group compared the lack of language support offered to her currently with the language support available in the previous school she attended in Germany:

> "The other school had a German course after school. For example, we had school until 1pm or 4pm and after we did a German course in the school. Every Monday or Friday. And if I hadn't understood something in school, I could also ask the teacher." (FG2)

In terms of language support, some of the participants reflected on the possibility of having compulsory intensive language classes specifically for refugees and immigrants before entering school. According to one of the German students this measure is already in place: "in principle it's already like this at our school" (FG1). In fact, one of the refugee students says she had attended one of these courses:

> "I went there for three months. At first, I was in a class where you just learn the language and [the students] come from different cultures, because they're also learning German. Then I went to the Gymnasium and there it was mainly Germans." (FG3)

UNESCO (2015) recognizes that the challenges faced by teachers who have to include students with an increasingly wide range of abilities and backgrounds can be very big and can entail a lot more work. In fact, the primary school teacher reiterates the importance of second teachers or teaching assistants in the future and of smaller class sizes, if an inclusive approach to classrooms is to be implemented:

> "Most mothers go to work and the children have so many needs. And when you are by yourself and have 27 children you haven't got a chance to see everyone and this would be a problem. So it would be very good to have two teachers more often. I think in the future it will be necessary. And in some schools in the problematic neighbourhoods this is very very important." (I2)

The benefit of a second teacher in the classroom is also expressed by the gastronomy instructor: "now we have a big circle of helpers and they work with the youngsters or with families with small children too, and that's very good" (I1).

Additionally, the primary school teacher thinks that having a second teacher would be a good alternative to expensive teacher training:

> "Special [teaching] training wouldn't be bad, but the problem is that we would have to do it all in our free time. I think it would be better to have more staff in schools and to

have mostly small groups and the refugees are often in these groups and you can learn special topics with them." (I2)

During the interview, the gastronomy instructor was asked what the situation was like for refugee students during exams. His answer clearly states that no allowances were made for refugee students:

> "No help, no not at all. We have German exams, you have to do everything in German. There are no easy exams, no help. There's only help if you're sick, dyslexic or can't count. But for foreigners there's no help at all. They really have to try and pass." (I1)

Whether refugees and immigrants more generally should be allowed more time in exams and class assignments was discussed at length during the focus groups. The answers were quite conflicted and there is a clear difference of opinion between the refugee participants and the German participants. The refugee participants all claim that it is unfair that they should not be granted the same extra time as students with speech problems, given the fact that they are also struggling with language comprehension and sentence formulation:

> "I find it unfair. I'm in the 11th grade. I wrote the content of the home assignment well just like the teacher wanted, but the language was bad and I had to take the same time as everyone else. And for example in the exams there were no teachers to help me, I had to do it alone, read through everything on my own and so on. And I find this unfair, because the people with speech difficulties had more time and us foreigners, who also don't know the language, we have to read a sentence 3–4 times. We don't get any additional time." (FG3)

The same feeling of unfairness is expressed by another refugee participant in regards to her performance during an exam:

> "In the midterm exam we had 60 questions and one hour of time. And the questions are a bit complicated — you have to read them 3–4 times and you have one minute per question and I didn't manage to do them all. In one hour you have to manage. I knew the answers to the other questions, but I didn't have time to answer them. It's really a catastrophe." (FG3)

One of the refugee participants also suggests that foreign students be allowed to use bilingual dictionaries during exams, as a way of compensating for the imbalance in language proficiency:

> "I would say that the foreigners should get the same additional time as those with speech problems and maybe also use a bilingual dictionary, German-Arabic for instance, or German-English, German-French." (FG3)

A German student participant does express appreciation and understanding for the unfairness of the situation:

> "I think it's a bit of a shame that when we're doing an exam or some assignment and you can tell that they're trying hard, but just because they don't master our language perfectly, they can't do some of it as well as they'd like to. I think it's a shame that they should fail the exam because of this." (FG1)

However, most German participants prove to be against allowing extra time for refugee students. In the following citation, two German students discuss the issue, one of whom strongly believes it would be unfair to grant additional time to refugee students in exams. A third student then joins in agreement with this opinion:

> "-Teachers could give the refugees, or those who don't speak German very well, more time to do the assignment. […] But I have to say I find that almost unfair, because there are many Germans who have problems reading and they don't necessarily get more time… In the final exam I also sometimes need five minutes longer, but I don't get given them. So I don't think this is right either.
>
> -We definitely have an advantage.
>
> -Yes, but in a final exam no one explains us things or gives us more time.
>
> -It needs to be clear that in the final exams no one gets extra time." (FG1)

Another German student believes that it would be better not to give refugees additional time in any assignment if in the exams they will not have it:

> "They might get used to having more time and then in the final exam they're not used to the pressure, so I think it's right to do so from the start." (FG1)

Furthermore, the conversation between the German students shows that they do not know the refugees' perspective and assume that their refugee peers do not actually need the additional time:

> "-I don't think they take much longer than us. For example, you don't know they need more time. Of course they're a bit slower, but not to the point where we're waiting around for 10 minutes staring into space.
>
> -Yes, and I think they always manage well in the given time." (FG1)

The discrepancy between the situation described by the refugee students and what the German students perceive it to be like shows the importance of sharing the points of view of different parties.

The gastronomy instructor agrees with the statement by the German students because, given that the refugees are in Germany, they really need to demonstrate good knowledge of the language:

> "On one hand it's right [not to give them extra support in exams], why should we? They wanted to be in Germany and they also want to reach the level of the Germans. I see if for example in the driving test: you can now do the driving licence in any language. In Germany there are 48 languages in which you can do your driving licence. And now he doesn't know anything if he answered the question right in Afghani and he can't read the writing on the road signs. There it says 'bypass' and he can't read it. What does he do now? And this is why I don't think it's a good idea. And I tell them right away 'you have to do the exam in German' and it's worked well so far. Translating? […] In the exam it's not allowed, here they need to know German." (I1)

Once again this links up with the importance of rethinking the school systems so as to meet the needs of all the students, highlighted by UNESCO (2001). It relates to INEE's (2010) perspective that the learning system should be adapting to the new learner community rather than vice versa. In fact, the participants' perspectives on whether refugees should be granted extra time raise questions about how the needs of refugees can and should be met under exam conditions.

One of the refugee students mentions one policy, currently in action in Germany, which foresees that the German grade does not count for the first two years for refugee students: "when you arrive in Germany for the first two years you don't have a grade in German" (FG3). It is unclear whether this is a national or regional policy (given that in Germany some education policies can be issued by the individual federal states) or whether it is a regulation implemented by the individual schools. However, the refugee student who described this expresses appreciation for this rule.

In addition, the primary school teacher refers to the Swedish policy, whereby refugees are distributed more evenly throughout various schools and neighbourhoods:

> "I read that in Sweden there is a concept according to which when there are too many foreigners in one class — more than 50% or something like that — they drive the pupils of this district to other schools in the countryside and there they can go to Swedish classes in the village and they can get more integration." (I2)

Given her experience with Idris, she finds it is easier for refugees to integrate when the classroom has a majority of nationals amongst the students:

> "Idris was here since 1.5 years before he was in my class and the first year he was in a school in a big town of about 50,000 inhabitants and it was a neighbourhood where there are a lot of foreigners. It was a 'problematic neighbourhood'.[…] When he came to my school in the second class this was a village and I think this is much better for him. The thing is in my class there aren't a lot of foreigners and there aren't a lot of problematic children, so it was good to integrate him." (I2)

Based on her experience, the primary school teacher suggests it could be beneficial for schools and refugee students to introduce a policy which foresees a more even distribution of refugees and immigrants in general between neighbourhoods and schools.

Finally, the primary school teacher also indicates that more funding for schools and education more generally is essential in order to meet the needs of diverse students and teaching skills:

> "It's very important to get more money in the school system, because it's becoming more challenging. The differences between children are growing every year and there are still many German children with problems." (I2)

Summary

This chapter has presented, analysed and discussed the findings of this study categorized according to the following six themes: integration, prejudice and racism, the role of schools in providing or dispelling support for nationalist ideologies, teaching, language, and policies concerning the integration of refugees in national education systems (specifically the German one). The findings reveal the overall benefits for an inclusive education for refugees, contrasting with the negative consequences of failing to do so. The data addresses practices and solutions for these negative consequences. This section also details the possible implications of the findings on policy-making concerning the refugees and nationals in education, as well as on teachers.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

This research addresses aspects of the integration of refugee students into the German national school system and attempts to outline what a few German national students, refugee students, and teachers perceive as best practices for the integration and education of refugee students. It seeks to understand how an inclusive approach to education impacts on the stake-holders involved.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has guided my findings through its commitment to giving a voice to minorities, especially within the field of education, with the aim of uncovering potential inequalities and injustices which have been normalized or not listened to. The theory has also helped me to maintain a critical approach towards the practices currently implemented in Germany discussed during the data collection, and towards suggestions for future practices by questioning their fairness towards all stake-holders. In fact, CRT provided me with the awareness that racism is present worldwide and that ideologies, such as meritocracy and assimilation, which claim to be free of racism, rather advertently or inadvertently perpetuate inequalities towards minorities and those who are perceived 'different' from the dominant component of the Western communities.

The conversations with the research participants about 'integration' reveal a variety of interpretations and understandings of the concept. The importance of mutual cultural respect and acceptance, especially from the perspective of the refugee participants, and employment, from the perspective of the German participants, are identified as indicators of successful integration. In light of the existing prejudice and racism within Germany, the participants unanimously highlight the crucial role played by schools in dispelling prejudice and nationalist ideologies from the wider society and emphasize that adopting an inclusive approach to education is key for educational institutions to fulfil this role.

The findings provide an evaluation of some of the practices implemented for the integration of refugee students into the German national education system according to the participants. Those considered examples of best practices by the participants unanimously comprise: inclusive education, providing teachers and students with a good support network, establishing good communication between teachers, students and parents, offering students from migrant backgrounds language support throughout their education, the presence of school psychologists, discussing current affairs in class, organizing educational trips and talks, using refugee narratives in classrooms and not counting the German grade for refugee students for

the first two years of enrolment at a school. Moreover, with an increasingly diverse student community and needs, class sizes need to be small and teacher support needs to be available in the form of teaching assistants for teachers to successfully carry out the lesson and simultaneously meet the needs of all students. For teachers, planning lessons more adequately (for instance including differentiated tasks), and organizing a peer mentoring system are practices that have proven to be helpful and successful in dealing with large gaps in skills amongst the students and with other barriers such as language. For all these procedures to be put into practice, and consequently to meet the needs of all the students and enable the task of successfully teaching a diverse student community, it is crucial that more funding be made available to schoolboards.

The participants have divergent opinions about the best practices concerning exams and timed assignments. According to the German participants the examination conditions should be equal for all, whilst according to the refugees reading and writing in a foreign language inevitably take more time and they should therefore be given additional time to have the chance to perform fairly. The refugee students state that being given the same additional time as students with speech disabilities and/or bilingual dictionaries during exams would be fairer.

What emerges to be an unjust practice is the fact that support for refugees (and migrant students in general) is not offered equally at all German schools, rather it is up to each school board to decide if and what kind of support is available for non-German students. Additionally, the unequal distribution of non-German students amongst schools results in some teachers finding themselves overwhelmed with language barriers and educational gaps and unable to provide support or meet the needs of all students. Moreover, the students are unable to practice the German language as effectively. This, in turn, leads to the integration process for the non-German students being unsuccessful or limited and, consequently, their opportunities for the future are reduced.

In regards to the impact of inclusive education on students and teachers, the findings show that in spite of a number of negative aspects (such as slower learning pace and class management issues) inclusive classrooms are overall beneficial to both German nationals and refugees. The presence of refugees in the classroom stimulates German peers to develop open-mindedness, and reduces the likelihood that they will develop prejudiced or racist ideologies because they are confronted with the reality of their presence and cultures different from their own. For the refugee students, being included in the national school system exposes them to the German language and culture, thus helping them with their language proficiency, provides

them with a sense of belonging, and enables them to develop the skills necessary to find employment and become part of the wider society.

Finally, the results from this study bring attention to the fact that the German school system is currently unprepared for the fair inclusion of refugee students for two reasons. Firstly, the entry to the post-primary schools (Gymnasium, Realschule, Mittelschule, Hauptschule), which is traditionally determined by the primary school teacher at the end of the 4th grade, leads to a prevalence of non-German, mostly migrant student community in the Realschule, Mittelschule and Hauptschule. These are institutions which generally lead to vocational qualifications rather than to tertiary education. This is due to their lack of language proficiency and often less privileged background. Thus, accessibility of students with a migrant background to tertiary education is cut off and this in turn imposes a limited range of choices on them in regards to their future. Secondly, statements by the participants reveal that much of the German schooling system relies on families and guardians, who are expected to help their children with homework and exam preparation. This is, however, often not possible for students with a migrant background, who in most cases find themselves in Germany on their own or are the only member of their family who is proficient in German. Moreover, their refugee parents are themselves struggling to survive and often either busy establishing themselves or juggling jobs to be able to live. In order to make German schools a fair and equal environment for all students these two aspects of the national school system need to be modified.

To conclude, the findings of this thesis provide insights which could have substantial implications for policies concerning refugee integration into education. They show that inclusive classrooms help national students to develop open-mindedness and respect for diversity, facilitate the integration process of young refugees and broaden their opportunities for the future. This leads to a number of challenges, such as class management and how to implement fair treatment of all students considering their diversity of skills and needs. These challenges can be overcome (or at least reduced) with the following practices: providing schools with school psychologists, teaching assistants, and the availability of language support; planning lessons with differentiated tasks; organizing a peer mentoring system; establishing good communication between students and teachers (if needed with the help of interpreters) and a good support network amongst teachers, the school board and school psychologists; using refugee narratives in classrooms; arranging educational trips and talks that help students confront themselves with realities different from their own; organizing student presentations about elements from the countries they are from; discussing current affairs critically in

classrooms, and not counting the German grade of refugees for the first two-years of their school enrolment. Furthermore, considering the additional time component that comes with reading and writing in a foreign language, to grant refugee students with additional time during exams and timed assignments would be an exemplar practice of accommodating the needs of all students in light of their diverse backgrounds, skills and needs. Finally, support for non-German students should be more uniformly available and equal at all schools in Germany and the national education system needs to be modified to provide all students from all backgrounds with fair opportunity to develop skills. For all these practices to be put in place, more funding for school boards and educational institutions is crucial.

In the future, it would be worth exploring the insights of more refugee students, German national students and teachers to evaluate the practices mentioned in this study on a broader scale so as to obtain data that could be generalized. Further research could also compare and contrast the current policies regarding the inclusion of refugees in the national school system throughout the EU, in the hope of establishing fairness and equity in inclusive environments within the national school systems of all of the member states.

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Appendix I

Prepared questions for interviews with teacher participants (I1, I2) used as guidelines:

1) Brief introduction: How long have you been teaching? What subjects do you teach?
2) What does integration mean to you?
3) Are there refugee students in the classes you teach? How many?
4) Do the refugees seem integrated in the classroom?
5) If they seem excluded, do you do anything to improve their situation in the classroom?
6) How does the presence of refugee students differ from having only German students? Is it more challenging?
7) Do you find that the refugee students are given equal chances and opportunities as the other students?
8) What do you think could be done at an organizational and policy-level to improve the situation?
9) Do you attempt to discuss the political circumstances that bring refugees in the classroom? Do you think it should be the teacher's role to do so?
10) Training: Do you think teachers would need more specialized training to tackle sensitive subjects and cultural difference in the classroom?
11) What can a teacher do to minimize phenomena such as labelling and bullying towards refugees in the classroom?
12) To what extent do you think language is the main obstacle faced by the refugees upon their arrival in the school?
13) Do you believe refugee students should be incorporated in classrooms? Or do you think they should be in separate schools?
14) Do you think cultural interaction in the classroom is positive overall?
15) How can cultural interaction impact the mindset of individuals towards refugees and more in general people from different countries/cultures in the future?
16) Do you think education should influence the perspectives of the students towards refugees and in general people from different countries/cultures?
17) Should education specifically play a role in reducing and eliminating nationalism? If yes, in what ways?
18) Are there any experiences or concerns you wish to share in relation to this topic?

Appendix II

Prepared questions for focus group with German students (FG1) used as guidelines:

1) What does integration mean to you?
2) What expectations do you have of refugees?
3) What expectations do you think refugees of the German society?
4) Do you think that including refugees in the classroom is a good idea? Would you prefer them to have separate education?
5) Has including refugees in your classroom impacted on the lessons at all? If yes, in what ways?
6) How has having refugees in your classroom affected your opinion on refugees and immigrants?
7) Are there any cultural differences that you perceive as a problem?
8) How does it work when there are cultural differences in the classroom?
9) What difficulties do you think refugee students encounter in German schools?
10) Do you have any ideas/suggestions about what could be done to help refugees overcome these difficulties?
11) What could be done to solve the problems posed by language barriers?
12) What sort of support should schools offer refugee students?
13) Should refugee students be given additional time during exams and timed assignments?
14) What do you think teachers could do to help the refugees, but at the same time to make sure the pace of the lesson doesn't get behind?
15) Do you think the situation outside of schools is inclusive and refugee-friendly?
16) How can the outside world be transformed into a similarly inclusive environment?
17) Do you think that schools should actively play a role in reducing and eliminating prejudiced, racist and nationalist ideologies? If yes, in what ways?
18) Do you think that it is possible for the EU ideology to expand and become inclusive of traditionally non-European cultures?

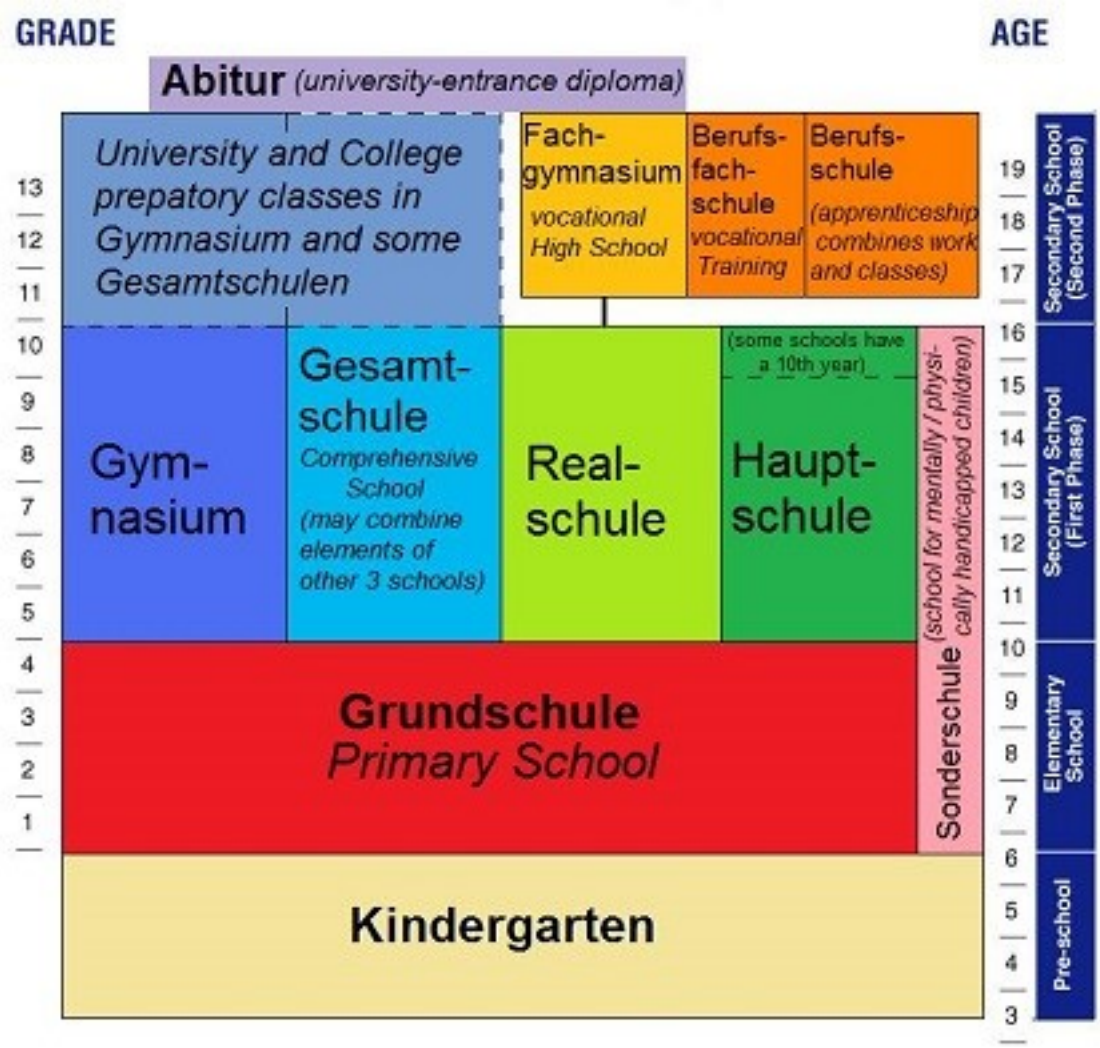
Appendix III

Prepared questions for focus group with refugee students (FG2, FG3) used as guidelines:

1) What does integration mean to you?
2) What expectations did you have of the German society? How is it different from your expectations? How could they have been met?
3) What expectations do you think Germans have of refugees?
4) Do you feel like you can maintain and practice your own culture here in Germany?
5) Do you think that inclusive classrooms are a good idea? Would you prefer to have separate education?
6) What are the difficulties that refugees encounter in schools here in Germany?
7) What sort of difficulties does language pose in school?
8) Do you have any ideas/suggestions about what could be done to help refugees overcome these difficulties?
9) What solutions can you think of to the problems posed by language barriers?
10) What do you think teachers could do to help the refugees, but at the same time to make sure the pace of the lesson doesn't get behind?
11) Do you think that including refugees in the German school system impacts on the opinion of German nationals on refugees and immigrants?
12) Do you think that contact between different cultures is a good way of overcoming prejudice?
13) Are there any cultural differences that you perceive as a problem?
14) How does it work when there are cultural differences in the classroom?
15) Do you think the situation outside of schools is inclusive and refugee-friendly?
16) How can the outside world be transformed into a similarly inclusive environment?
17) Do you think that schools should actively play a role in reducing and eliminating prejudiced, racist or nationalist ideologies? If yes, in what ways?
18) Do you think that it is possible for the EU ideology to expand and become inclusive of traditionally non-European cultures?

Appendix IV

Diagram explaining the way the German national school system is organized:



Source: https://germanculture.com.ua/germany-facts/elementary-education-germany/