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'The subjects are just means to an end'

A qualitative study of teachers' adaptation to meet refugee students' needs

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Abstract

In this thesis, I explore how teachers adapt their education to best meet the needs of refugee students. The analysis is based on interviews with seven teachers who work with refugee students either as teachers in introductory classes, or as class or contact teachers in regular classes. The focus of the research design was initially on what happens in the classroom – the educational methods and tools used by teachers who taught refugee students. I found that the teachers interviewed adapted their education in much the same way, through methods of concretization and visualization, through reducing concepts and simplifying content and language. However, I also found that the teachers, when asked what aspects of refugee students' education they found challenging, pointed to surrounding conditions such as organization, ways of sharing information, and students' psychosocial needs as equally or even more influential than the ways in which teachers adapted their educational practices. The main challenge however, agreed upon by all the teachers interviewed, was how to adapt to students' Norwegian language skills.

Sammendrag

I denne oppgaven utforsker jeg hvordan lærere tilpasser undervisningen sin for å møte behovene til elever med flyktningebakgrunn i best mulig grad. Analysen er basert på intervjuer med syv lærere som jobber med flyktningeelever, enten som lærere i introduksjonsklasser eller som klasse- eller kontaktlærere i ordinære klasser. Hovedfokuset i forskningsprosjektet er på det som skjer i klasserommet – undervisningsmetodene og verktøyene som blir brukt av lærere i undervisningen av elever med flyktningebakgrunn. Jeg fant store likhetstrekk i hvordan lærerne som ble intervjuet tilpasset undervisningen sin, gjennom bruk av konkretisering og visualisering, redusering av konsepter og forenkling av innhold og språk. I analysen av datamaterialet fant jeg også at lærerne ga uttrykk for at visse rammebetingelser hadde en like stor, om ikke større, påvirkning på utdanningstilbudet til flyktningeelever som lærernes tilpasningsmetoder. Disse rammebetingelsene inkluderte organiseringen av introduksjonstilbudet og undervisningen, rammer for deling av informasjon, og elevers psykososiale behov. Men den største utfordringen var likevel, i følge lærerne, hvordan å tilpasse undervisningen til elevenes språkferdigheter.

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1 Introduction

Over the last couple of years there has been a lot of debate regarding immigration, refugees and integration in Norway, much of it sparked by the so-called "refugee crisis" of 2015, when a record high number of over 31 000 people applied for asylum in Norway (UDI, n.d.). Of these one third were children under the age of 18, representing around 10 000 children of school age, and leading to a sudden increase in the number of refugee students attending school in Norway. The arrival of a large number of refugee children places demands on Norwegian educational system, related to the introduction of these children in Norwegian schools. Not only do refugee students need to learn a new language, they need to adapt to a new culture both outside of school and in the classroom, some coping with traumatic experiences prior to seeking asylum in Norway.

This thesis will look at how refugee students are received in Norwegian schools, through qualitative research carried out in a middle school in Trondheim. The thesis aims to look into how teachers adapt their practice to meet the needs of refugee students, focusing particularly on educational and didactic approaches in the classroom. This chapter will present the background for the choice of this research area by putting the education of refugee children into context with recent trends in immigration to Norway, and present the research questions that form the basis of this thesis. Finally, I will present the structure of the thesis in its entirety.

1.1 Background and relevance

Norway is facing a need to adapt to new circumstances related to social integration of a growing refugee population. Historically the country's population has been relatively homogenous, both ethnically and culturally, but the composition of the Norwegian population has changed markedly and rapidly in later years, with the number of immigrants in the country tripling since the beginning of the millennium (NOU 2017:2, 2017). Equality and trust has been an important premise for the legitimacy of the state and for the cohesion of the Norwegian society since the early days of the welfare state, and the rising heterogeneity of the population has caused many to question the possible impact of immigration on the Norwegian society (NOU 2017:2, 2017). In the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis, the

Norwegian government implemented a range of measures regarding immigration, among them the appointment of a committee to explore and report on long-term consequences of high immigration (NOU 2017:2, 2017). Part of the committee's advise was that reducing barriers in the educational system and using education to advance the inclusion of immigrants would likely have positive outcomes both socioeconomically and on the societal cohesion in the country (NOU 2017:2, 2017). In light of this, challenges faced in the Norwegian educational system by immigrants who arrive as children are problematic, and refugee children in particular seem to be at a disadvantage, performing less well in school than both Norwegian-born students and other groups of immigrants (NOU 2017:2, 2017). I chose to explore the education of refugee students who begin their Norwegian education in middle schools for several reasons, one being the major differences that are found in the results or native-born and refugee students at the end of obligatory schooling, and because learning a new language and keeping up with academic content at a higher level can be especially problematic for students who arrive late in their educational careers (see section 2.3.1).

Refugee students have the right and duty to attend school if they are deemed likely to stay in Norway for three months or longer (Education Act, 1998) and for many refugee children, school is consequently one of the first arenas where they are introduced to the Norwegian society. School is an important arena for integration and socialization, for refugee children and other children alike. Children spend a large part of their day at school, and it is an important arena for helping immigrant children to become 'contributing members of society', as per the stated goal of Norwegian immigration policy (Meld. St. 30 (2015-2016), 2016).

Not all people who apply for asylum gain the status of refugee, but regardless of their asylum status, all children between the ages of 6-16 are of mandatory school age in Norway and are required to attend school (Pastor, Eide & Mekonen, 2010). While the number of asylum seekers coming to Norway has dropped drastically since 2015, thousands of asylum seekers have arrived since then (UDI n.d.-d), and the number of refugees worldwide continues to increase "significantly and consistently" (UNHCR, 2016, p.5). There is consequently no reason to believe that the need for Norwegian schools to accommodate new refugee students will stop any time soon, and it seems that exploring how best to manage the transition of refugee students into the Norwegian educational system will continue to be relevant not only for the well being of the children in question, but also for Norwegian schools and the society in general.

1.2 Studying the refugee-specific

While working on the research design for this thesis, it was necessary to narrow the scope of the project so that it was feasible within the framework of the 30 points masters program. The starting point of the process was the decision to focus on issues related to refugees in Norway. A fundamental concept relating to the topic of this thesis is consequently the notion of *refugee status*. Its definition can be traced back to the United Nations' 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, where people falling under the category of refugee status are defined as all people who:

> owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (Collinson, 2009, p.23).

Refugees as a group are a mix of people of all ages, nationalities, genders and religions. As can be seen in the definition above, what they have in common is having fled their country of nationality in hopes of getting protection somewhere else.

Choosing refugees as the group of interest in this study comes with some issues of concern. One of these issues is the relevance of categorizing refugees as a group to research at all – some researchers have pointed to issues with using this categorization to do research on a group that is heterogeneous, and discuss the possibility of such studies reinforcing the image of refugees as victims and contributing to marginalization (Berg & Valenta, 2008). However, while refugees may share certain experiences with other groups of migrants there are others that set them apart, and the fact that many actors such as governments and the media do define them as a separate group has consequences for the experiences and actions of refugees – consequently making it a relevant group to delineate (Berg & Valenta, 2008). Another challenge is the fact that there is little previous research looking at refugee children as a group (Bjerkan, 2009). Most of previous research relevant for the subject of this thesis focuses on the groups of *immigrant students* or *minority language students* rather than at the subcategory of refugee students. Many studies also look at the category of *unaccompanied minor asylum seekers* rather than the broader group of refugee children. This feature was also found by Berg and Valenta in their review of refugee research, where they found that most of

the research did not "discuss or problematize the refugee-specific" (2008, p. 22), but treated all immigrants as one group, or chose other categorization criteria than 'reason for migration'. This is not necessarily problematic, but may go to show that exploring what is particular for refugees is a topic that still warrants looking into.

Approximately 4 % of the Norwegian population has a refugee background, and Trondheim is the city with the third largest population of those with refugee backgrounds (SSB 2016). Along with practical factors related to access, time and economy, this led me to choose Trondheim as the area in which to conduct the study. The choice to look into the reception of refugees in the Norwegian educational system was informed by background research and discussions with my supervisor, but it is also an area of special interest to me personally, as a student at the teacher-training program in Geography at NTNU.

In preparing for writing my thesis I have come across research on the subject of refugees, education and integration, and while much has been written about issues related to language barriers, cultural differences and related areas, I have not found a lot of research looking into how students handle the adaptation to school-specific culture, practicalities and working methods. Research into this area could be helpful for the teachers who are responsible for educating the children every day, and uncovering common transitional difficulties might help ease the transition for future students and teachers.

1.3 Problem statement and research questions

The issues I wished to explore in this thesis revolve around how Norwegian teachers and schools receive refugee students, and how teachers adapt their educational practice to meet the needs of these students. The original design and research questions ended up having to be changed during the process, as it proved very difficult to gain access to schools and informants, and I ended up not being able to conduct interviews with refugee students as I had initially wanted. In addition to the goals stated above, the original research design aimed to look into how students who arrived in the country as refugees looked back on their integration into the Norwegian school system, what they experienced as positive, and what might have been done differently, but I was unable to pursue this line of research (see section 3.2.1).

The final research questions this thesis sets out to answer consequently consist of the following questions:

- How do teachers working with newly arrived refugee students adapt their practice to best meet these students' needs?
- What challenges do teachers experience in the period of refugee students' introduction into the school system in Norway?
- What improvements to the introduction of refugee students into a new school do the teachers recommend?

The main research method chosen was that of qualitative interviews, and interviews were carried out with 7 respondents who had experience teaching refugee children in Norwegian middle schools. The transcribed and analyzed material from these interviews forms the basis of this project's discussion.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of 6 chapters. The following chapter 2 provides the theoretical background for the thesis, presenting theory on integration, pedagogy for minority students and recommendations for how best to welcome and care for the needs of refugee students in the Norwegian educational system.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology of the thesis. It outlines the research design, explains and accounts for choices made related to methodology, describes the analysis and coding of the material, and discusses ethical and analytical issues of the thesis.

The next two chapters deal with the analysis and discussion of the material gathered in this research project. Chapter 4 looks at the educational aspects of refugee students' introduction to Norwegian schools, while chapter 5 provides a discussion of framework conditions that affect refugee students' education.

The final chapter 6 summarizes the findings of the project, and presents the thesis conclusion before looking at suggestions for further research.

2 Theoretical foundation

Part 1 of the following chapter will present some basic theory of integration and the Norwegian framework for integration, before looking at the Norwegian approach to integration of refugee children through the educational system. Part 2 of this chapter will look at theory related to another aspect of integration of refugee children into Norwegian schools - what happens in the classroom. How can teachers practice their profession in a way that attends to the needs of refugee students? To address this topic, I will present theory within the subject area of multicultural pedagogy, looking at some ways in which teachers can support refugee students who speak Norwegian as a second language, as well as presenting some theory relating to refugee students psychosocial needs.

The theory presented in this chapter will be used in the analysis chapters to put the opinions and experiences of the interviewed teachers into context with current thinking and recommendations within the area of education of refugee and language minority students. In choosing to explore the practices, experiences and opinions of teachers working with refugee students, I chose a topic and an approach that is less theory-dependent and more empirically based. Rather than using a specific theory as a starting point and exploring whether teachers act in accordance with the recommendations of that theory, I have chosen to use a wider array of theories connected to caring for refugee students' needs, intended to serve as a frame of reference and a contextualization of the teachers' experiences and practices. I included the theories presented below in order to have a backdrop against which to discuss the practices of the teachers. This choice was taken so I would be able to connect the approaches and challenges discussed by the teachers to existing thinking and recommendations within the field, and to be able to assess and discuss their practice against a theoretically informed viewpoint. The hope is that through having a main focus on the empirical data gathered and connecting it to the theory in this way, I will be able to present my findings in a way that reflects the teachers reported experiences as best as possible, while still allowing me to make certain theoretically informed recommendations based on the results of my analysis.

In the following section 2.1 I will present how the concept of integration is conceptualized and operationalized in the Norwegian context, looking at the framework and policies regulating the reception and inclusion of refugee children in Norwegian schools

2.1 Integration

Refugee students who attend school in a new country have to adapt to a new learning environment, both socially and in educational or pedagogical terms. At the same time, teachers need to adapt their practice when receiving refugee students into their classrooms, both in terms of educational approaches and cultural and social understanding. The educational system and the policies governing it also might need to adjust and adapt to the increasing heterogeneity of the students attending school, in order to fulfill its mandate to give all students the same possibilities. These processes of adaptation and adjustment can be linked to the process of *integration*. Integration as a concept is subject to much debate, both in academia and in politics. It is the goal of varying policies, and is defined and operationalized differently by different states (Isaakyan, 2016). The following sections will look at how we understand the concept of integration, and present the interpretation and operationalization of integration in the Norwegian context.

2.1.1 Understanding the concept of integration

The concept of integration is central in how countries approach immigrants' arrival in host communities, and existing migration discourses emphasize that "immigrants *must be integrated* into their new societies" (Isaakyan, 2016, p. 169). The concept is a contested one, however. In social sciences and theories of social integration the concept is understood as referring to the cohesion of a society, and integration is applied to the interactions and processes that impact the relations between actors in a society (Zeuner, Bunnage, Ottosen, & Christoffersen, 1998). In the context of this thesis however, what is relevant is looking at integration in the context of immigration. Looking at how integration is used within the field of migration, a common view is one that sees the concept as referring to "social, political, cultural and economic processes that occur when migrants arrive in a new society" (Martiniello, 2006, p. 4).

Still, even within the area of migration studies, a standard definition of integration is still difficult to pin down. Part of the difficulty in defining what integration is could be the fact that the concept itself is applied on different levels, or to describe different things. As in the Martiniello quote above, integration is used in a broad sense, as a category encompassing all processes connected to how immigrants adjust to a new society. At the same time, the concept is used in a more specific sense, to describe a *type* of process under the broader

integration concept, which differs from other processes of immigrants' inclusion in host societies such as assimilation and marginalization. If one imagines a "continuum along which individuals adjust to the host country" (Segal, 2010, p. 11) with complete assimilation at one end and marginalization and rejection at the other, integration is this latter sense could be placed somewhere close to the middle of this adjustment continuum (Segal, 2010). This second interpretation of integration views it as a process of adjustment where immigrants keep major aspects of their own culture while accepting new ones as well (Segal, 2010). In research this duality of the concept of integration is often emphasized, portraying integration as a two-way process that places demands both on the immigrants and on the receiving society (Isaakyan, 2016; Martiniello, 2006; Meld. St. 30 (2015-2016), 2016; OECD, 2015). This latter, more specific, interpretation of immigration is one that resonates with the definition of the concept as it is conceptualized in the Norwegian context, and as such it is the interpretation I will base view of integration on in this thesis.

Due to its unclear definition, what is considered 'successful' integration differs from country to country. However there are some areas, or what Ager and Strang (2008) call 'domains', in society that are commonly considered to indicate the level of integration in a community, and that are often used to measure integration. Ager and Strang (2008) have explored varying approaches, definitions and operationalizations of the concept, attempting to find a definition that reflects "commonalities in perceptions of what constitutes 'successful' integration in a range of relevant stakeholders" (Ager & Strang, 2008, p.167). Their resulting framework proposes ten core domains of integration, which include, but are not limited to, markers such as employment, housing, health and education, immigrants' social connections, language and cultural knowledge and the rights and citizenship status of immigrants (Ager & Strang). Several of the domains proposed by Ager and Strang are also emphasized by the Norwegian government as indicating integration levels, as will be shown in the following section.

2.1.2 Integration policy in Norway

The Norwegian government provides slightly varying operationalizations of integration in different communications. The Directorate of Integration and Diversity defines the goal of the country's integration policy to be "that everyone who lives in Norway, should get to use their resources and contribute to the community" (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet, 2017, p. 10, my translation). At the same time, the 2016 Report No. 30 to the Storting

regarding integration states that the goal for Norwegian integration policy is that all those who live and reside in Norway should "get jobs, become tax payers and participating citizens" (Meld. St. 30 (2015-2016), 2016, p. 10, my translation). The second definition is more explicitly focused on immigrants' participation in the country's economy while the former definition is less concrete in describing *how* citizens are meant to contribute to the community. While there is no disagreement between these two definitions, there is a difference in emphasis that illustrates the complexity of trying to define and measure integration. A similarity among the different communications regarding the goal of Norwegian integration efforts is an emphasis on the importance of immigrants' participation in the working life, and in this way what is seen as indicating successful integration in Norway is closely connected to the domain of *employment,* among the domains proposed by Ager and Strang (2008). Government statements also describe it as a 'matter of course' that there are demands placed on immigrant concerning knowledge of the Norwegian language and the Norwegian society, stating that education in these subjects is among "the most important measures to contribute to refugees entry and continued participation in the working life" (Meld. St. 30 (2015-2016), 2016, p. 51, my translation). Education is also referred to as one of the most important tools to reduce social and economical differences in a society, and an important arena to promote integration of refugees and their participation in society (Meld. St. 30 (2015-2016), 2016). Integration is also described in government documents as an interaction between many parties, where all immigrants should be met with a demand to participate and contribute, and where the state should arrange for this to be possible (Meld. St. 30 (2015-2016), 2016). In this way, the official stance reflects that of the previously presented immigration theory in that there is an emphasis both on the obligations of the immigrants and on the responsibilities of the host society. Summarized, the official Norwegian stance on integration stresses the importance of immigrants' duties and their rights, and while the key to integration is stated to be participation in the working life, education is also emphasized as vital for immigrants' integration (Meld. St. 30 [2015-2016], 2016).

Looking at the Norwegian state's integration policy for refugee children, we find that refugee children can be both indirectly and directly affected by integration policies. Children are integrated indirectly through their family and parents, through integration efforts aimed at adult refugees, and through welfare services provided to all members of society.

Additionally, refugee children are directly affected by integration efforts directed at the group of immigrant children. Integration efforts for refugee children are rarely aimed exclusively at the group 'refugee children', with the exception of subsidies given to municipalities who settle refugee children (Bjerkan, 2009).

2.2 The framework for refugee students in Norwegian schools

The following section 2.2.1 will present the mandate of the Norwegian educational system, in order to put the education of refugee students into context with the overarching goals of the Norwegian educational system. In section 2.2.2 I will present the main policies that govern refugee students' education in Norway.

2.2.1 The mandate of the Norwegian school system

The Norwegian school system's mandate is not limited to teaching children subject matter but encompasses many areas of life, a topic that will be explored in this section. As Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2013) amongst others suggest, education fills more than one purpose in a given society. Three main functions of the educational system can be proposed, in no particular order:

a. *Reproduction*: providing an introduction into the society's cultural heritage in order to preserve it for future generations.
b. *Production*: supplying the competence and qualifications needed in society's different sectors, in order for governing agencies, institutions and the business sector to continue functioning well.
c. *Identity construction*: providing the individual student with knowledge and skills that can be useful and enjoyable and contributing to personal growth. (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013, p. 119).

These three main functions in large part coincide with main principles of the Norwegian educational system that are set down in the Education act (1998). The section concerning the "objectives of education and training" in the Education act (1998, § 1-1) indicates some important principles for Norwegian schools, and looking at these show how functions such as those proposed by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2013) are expressed in Norwegian law. The paragraph highlights the school's diverse purposes; not only should education impart knowledge and skills as per the function *b* above, but also "help increase the knowledge and

understanding of the national cultural heritage and our common international cultural traditions" (Education Act, 1998, § 1-1), passing on the society's values and cultural heritage as expressed in function *a* above. Education should also prepare the students to "master their lives and […] take part in working life and society", giving students the opportunity to "be creative, committed and inquisitive" (The Education Act, 1998, § 1-1), objectives that agree with functions *b* and *c* proposed by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2013). In addition to the functions presented above, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2013) propose an additional purpose of the Norwegian educational system, not explicitly expressed in the objective paragraph of the Education Act, but grounded in Norwegian integration policy (Meld. St. 30 (2015-2016), 2016): that the school system should contribute to even out social differences and to create more equality for the members of the society. Given that this is a goal, the fact that refugee students do not perform as well in school as other immigrants, and perform far below native-born students is a problematic trend. When graduating from secondary schooling, the group of refugee students possesses over 5 points from compulsory education less than the non-immigrant students (these points are calculated by adding all of a student's grades together and dividing the sum by the number of grades achieved) (NOU 2017:2, 2017). Immigrants performing worse at school is a trend found in most countries, but the gap is slightly bigger in Norway than the average for OECD countries, even when adjusted for differences in the socioeconomic composition of immigrant groups between different countries (NOU 2017:2, 2017).

2.2.2 Policies of introductory schooling for refugee students

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, all children of mandatory school age have the right and the obligation to attend school if they are likely to stay in Norway for more than three months (Opplæringsloven, 1998, § 2-1). All students in Norwegian schools also have the right to an adapted and differentiated education according to the Norwegian Education Act (Education Act, 1998). The Education Act does not specifically mention the group of refugee students, and most official guidelines are aimed at such groups as immigrants or minority language students, rather than specifically targeting the group of refugee students (Pastor, Eide, & Mekonen, 2010). Education for minority language students is part of the national educational system, and grounded in law through the Education Act, where students who have another native tongue than Norwegian or Sami have the right to "særskilt språkopplæring" or special language education, until they are "sufficiently proficient in

Norwegian to follow the normal instruction of the school" (Education Act, 1998, §2-8 and §3-12). Students can also have the right to native tongue education, bilingual subject training or both (Education Act, 1998).

To maintain students' needs, special introductory education can be organized in separate groups, classes or schools (Opplæringsloven, 1998, §3-12). A review of the education of language minority students in Norway (NOU 2010:7, 2010) found that the approaches to providing education to newly arrived students could be divided into the following 4 'models':

a) Newly arrived students are taught in ordinary classes at their local schools

b) Newly arrived students are taught in special introductory classes ("innføringsklasser") at their local schools.

c) Newly arrived students are taught in introductory classes where a chosen school is responsible for certain grades. In a municipality one school might be responsible for grades 1. -7. and another for grades 8. -10.

d) Newly arrived students are taught in introductory classes at a special introductory school.

The type of introductory education offered varies from school to school, and municipalities' size often correlates to the type of education they offer, as smaller municipalities often use a partly integrated organization like model c) above, and larger municipalities often use introductory classes such as those in model b) (Meld. St. 30 [2015-2016], 2016). There is no research available on the effect of separate introductory education of recently arrived students (ibid.), however the OECD recommendation is that schools combine language and content learning "as soon as it becomes feasible" (OECD, 2015, p. 9), adding that language assistance should be given in addition to rather than instead of regular instruction.

There are quite strict rules when it comes to introductory schooling, where students are allowed to attend introductory classes for a maximum of two years (Education Act, 1998) In addition, there is the option to offer students who need it an extra year of middle school education, but this depends on the municipalities' policies and is not a right set down in the Education Act (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2015).

2.3 Refugee students in school

Though refugee students are a varied group, there are some commonalities in these students' background that can affect their experience in school, both when it comes to their performance at school as well as their inclusion and well-being. For schools to fulfill their mandate, some adaptation and special attention to the needs of refugee students may be necessary. In this thesis I explore some of the *didactic* choices teachers make when trying to adapt their education to meet refugee students' needs, and a central concept that necessitates definition is consequently that of *didactics.* Didactics can, according to Gunn Imsen, be summarized by the three main questions which this area of study focuses on; "the *what, how* and *why* of education" (2009, p. 40). This is to say that didactics involves reflection regarding *what* content the education should include, *how* to teach this content, and lastly *why* you choose to approach things in a certain way. There are no blueprints for teachers, no definite truths about how people learn, and though there are widely acknowledged theories about learning that explore different aspects of learning situations, these are tools for teachers to draw on and use in different contexts rather than solutions to how teaching should always be done (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013). As there is no one approach that a teacher can use in all situations to teach all students, similarly there is no one approach to teaching refugee students. However, in a learning situation, though the category of refugee students is a group as diverse as others, there are some ways in which refugee students differ from most other students. The following section will present theory on some ways in which refugee students can differ from other students, and present theory concerning recommendations for how teachers and schools can meet the needs of refugee students.

Two areas in particular can have a big impact on the education of refugee students, and it is theory on how to adapt to needs in these areas are what will be presented in the following two sections. The first aspect where refugee students may require special attention is *language.* There is a clear cut need for teachers to adapt their practice when teaching students with limited target language skills in other ways than when they teach students who have the target language as their first language. Theory on teaching students who learn Norwegian as a second language is what will be discussed in 2.3.1. The second area that may affect refugee students' education is that of students' background and psychosocial needs, which will be discussed in 2.3.2.

2.3.1 When Norwegian is a second language

As mentioned, all students who attend school in Norway have the right to an adapted education, adapted to the "abilities and aptitudes of the individual pupil" (The Education Act, 1998, pp. § 1-3). For refugee students who have recently been introduced to the Norwegian school system, this entails adapting the education to their level of Norwegian language proficiency. When talking about language education for language minorities, an important term is that of *morsmål* or *native tongue/language,* which refers to the language spoken in a child's home, by one or both parents. In the context of refugee students' education in Norwegian schools, they learn Norwegian as a *second language* – a language learnt in an environment where it is the prevalent language (Aasen, 2003) rather than a *foreign language* – a language learnt outside of an environment where it is the prevalent language (Aasen, 2003).

In many ways, students learn a second language in a predictable manner. The progress goes from simple to more complex comprehension through an active process; the learner explores, hypothesizes and tests the phonology and grammar of the target language (Hauge, 2014). To aid the student in this process it is important to give them the opportunity to use the language through dialogue in pairs, small groups and class conversations (Hauge, 2014). However, research shows that it takes between 5-7 years to become proficient enough in a second language for it to be a satisfactory teaching language (Cummins, 2000). It can be difficult for students who arrive in Norway in the middle of their school career to be expected to learn a new language and at the same time follow the instruction at their grade level (NOU 2010:7, 2010). Even though we know that fully developing a second language as a satisfactory learning language takes time, in the Norwegian school system special language education and bilingual education is provided on the premise that these are special offers that are meant to be temporary, and students may attend special introductory education for a maximum of two years (Education Act, 1998, § 2-8). Students with other native language than Norwegian and Sami are to receive special language education until they are "sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to follow the normal instruction of the school" (Education Act, 1998, §2-8 and §3-12). Students who receive special language education can follow the curriculum in "Basic Norwegian for language minorities" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2007). To assess whether or not a student has achieved sufficient skills to transition to ordinary Norwegian education, teachers can use mapping tools developed for use alongside this curriculum.

Despite the existence of mapping tools for assessing students' Norwegian skills, a challenge in the education of students who learn Norwegian as a second language can be the fact that students who seem to have mastered the basic skills of a language and done well in beginners education, often start having problems in school subjects later on (Cummins, 2000; Hauge, 2014; Aasen, 2003). To explore why students who seem to be doing well in their language learning start having problems, I will use the theory of Jim Cummins regarding language proficiency.

Cummins differentiates between *basic interpersonal communicative skills* (BICS) or surface proficiency; a person's fluency in conversational and everyday language, and *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP) or academic proficiency; "the degree to which an individual has access to and expertise in understanding and using the specific kind of language that is employed in educational contexts and is required to complete academic tasks" (Cummins, 2000, p. 66). CALP or academic proficiency encompasses many types of language 'know-how', such as familiarity with writing conventions, or skills related to logic, reasoning and problem solving (Cummins, 2000; Hauge, 2014). Cummins uses the distinction between these types of language proficiency to warn against moving students from bilingual to target language-only education based on students' "surface level fluency" (Cummins, 2000, p. 58), claiming that conflating these two aspects of proficiency, and moving students to target-language only classes before they are ready, can be a big part of the development of academic difficulties for bilingual students.

Cummins further explores the interaction of cognitive and contextual demands in language tasks and activities, and has created a framework for exploring the degree of *contextual support* and *cognitive demands* in tasks and activities (see figure 1, p. 17). Contextual support refers to the degree of support that the situation or context provides for the students to understand text or oral communication or solve a task. *Context embedded communication* is less demanding, as it is supported by interpersonal or situational cues, such as concretes, practical tasks, demonstrations or visual aids, in addition to the teachers body language and intonation (Cummins, 2000; Aasen, 2003). *Context reduced communication* relies primarily or exclusively on linguistic meaning, making knowledge of the language itself vital for interpreting the message correctly (Cummins, 2000).

The other axis of Cummins framework is that of cognitive demands, where *cognitively undemanding* tasks do not require much active cognitive involvement from the students for them to perform the task, such as everyday conversation or copying notes from the blackboard (Cummins, 2000; Aasen, 2003). *Cognitively demanding* tasks on the other hand are activities where linguistic skills have not been automatized, and where active cognitive involvement consequently is needed, such as tasks where students need to analyze academic thinking or writing academic texts (Cummins, 2000; Aasen, 2003).

	Cognitively Undemanding	Cognitively demanding
Context embedded	A	B
Context reduced	C	D

Figure 1: Cummins framework of cognitive and contextual demands.
(Based on Cummins, 2000; Aasen 2003)

Cummins ties the framework to the concepts of conversational and academic proficiency (BICS and CALP) through looking at the two extremes of the four possible combinations of factors, these two extremes can be found in quadrant A and D as seen in figure 1. Quadrant A represents *context embedded* and *cognitively undemanding* abilities such as casual conversational skills (Cummins, 2000). In a learning context this can entail conversations and explanations of simple relations, using everyday vocabulary and available concrete or visual aids (Aasen, 2003). Quadrant D represents tasks and activities that are *context reduced* and *cognitively demanding* (Cummins, 2000). Cummins links skills in this quadrant to academic proficiency, and in a learning situation this can involve working with abstract concepts, more complex texts without visual support, critical reading, writing reports or give a talk about a more demanding academic subject (Cummins, 2000; Aasen, 2003).

The framework suggests that students will acquire language and subject content most successfully when they are challenged cognitively, but at the same time provided with necessary contextual and linguistic supports in order to successfully complete tasks.

Cummins suggests that optimal instruction will move "move from Quadrant A, to B, and from Quadrant B to D" (Cummins, 2000, p. 71). In other words from the familiar to the unfamiliar, and from the context embedded to the context reduced, an approach that is recommended by pedagogic thinking such as that found in *socio-cultural* learning theory (Hauge, 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013). A central idea in socio-cultural learning theory is the concept of the "zone of proximal development" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013, p. 64), inspired by the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. This idea differentiates between what the student already knows, what the student can achieve with adequate support (the zone of proximal development), and what is currently unattainable for the student (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013). The recommendation is that education should be concentrated on providing students with education on a level that is within their current zone of proximal development in order to facilitate learning, suggesting that "what the student can do with help today, they can do alone tomorrow" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013, p. 64). It is recommended to adapt education so students learn by building on what they already know or can understand.

A common approach to teaching students with limited target language skills is to simplify the content, to give the minority language students tasks that are 'simpler' than those their target language native peers are working on, and to teach them at a slower pace (Hauge, 2014). This, argues Hauge (2014) and Cummins (2000), is an approach that does not adapt education to the students' needs in a good way, but rather an approach that can cause the academic gap between the minority language students and other students to increase. Hauge (2014) and Cummins (2000) suggest that a more appropriate adaptation of the learning situation would be to either use the prior experiences and knowledge of minority students as a support on which to introduce and build the new knowledge, or to use more native tongue education for minority language children, letting them learn the same content as other students in a language they comprehend. There is widespread agreement that students who receive native tongue education throughout their education perform better in school, and the use of students' native tongue in learning situations comes highly recommended (Cummins, 2000; Hauge, 2014; NOU 2010:7, 2010; Aasen, 2003). Arguments for providing students with native tongue education draws on research which has found that students who are proficient in their native tongue find it easier to learn a second language (Aasen, 2003). The benefits of native tongue education can also be related to Jim Cummins' theory of communicative skills and academic proficiency, where he postulates that academic proficiency is transferrable between first and second languages (Cummins, 2000).

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Consequently, native language education can contribute to a greater academic proficiency also in target language contexts, as skills in other areas of academic proficiency such as reading strategies can be transferrable between languages, and as learning new concepts is easier when you can build on pre-existing knowledge, concepts and vocabulary will have a positive effect on target language proficiency (Cummins, 2000; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013)

2.3.2 Cultural, Social and Psychological factors

There are many ways in which refugee students' background can have a bearing upon their experiences in the Norwegian educational system. This section will quickly look at some such aspects, the first being possible cultural differences between the refugee student's native countries and the Norwegian society.

According to Geert Hofstede (1986), cross-cultural learning situations can be problematic for all parties involved, as there might be cultural differences in areas such as the social positions of teachers and students, or differences in expected patterns of classroom interaction. Hofstede describes a "four-dimensional model of cultural differences" (1986, p. 306), using international differences between countries valuation of these four dimensions to explore and begin to explain cultural differences between countries. The four dichotomies of Hofstedes research are:

- Degree of Individualism versus Collectivism
- Power distance
- Uncertainty Avoidance
- Degree of Masculinity versus Femininity (Hofstede, 1986, pp. 307-308).

The past two years, asylum seekers in Norway mainly originated from countries in Asia and Africa, most of them from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Iraq (Utlendingsdirektoratet, 2016a, 2016b). Looking at the countries' scores in the dimensions of Hofstedes' model, Arab and East African countries differ in the largest degree from Norway when it comes to the degree of *power distance*. Hofstede (1986) proposes that such differences can have an effect on the way people from these two cultures expect interactions in the classroom to unfold. In Norway there is a small power distance between teachers and students, while in Arab and African countries there tends to be a bigger power distance (Hofstede, 1986). Hofstede goes on to outline some possible differences that may be found between countries of smaller or

larger power distance: *Student-centered education* in small power distance societies differ from *teacher-centered education* in large power distance societies. Large power distance societies stress respect for teachers, and there is a premium on order rather than on initiative. Students are expected to follow the instructions of the teachers, and to not contradict teachers or speak out of turn. In countries of less power distance, teachers should respect students' independence. Teachers expect students to initiate communication, students may speak up spontaneously in class, and there is a premium on initiative (Hofstede, 1986). As set down in the Education Act, it is a value in the Norwegian educational system that "the pupils shall be actively involved in the learning situation" (1998, § 2-3), and the law further states that students should have "joint responsibility and the right to participate" (Education Act, 1998, § 1-1). In this aspect the values presented in Norwegian education policy agree with Hofstedes' theory, as there does seem to be what he calls a premium on initiative and an expectation that students can initiate communication and actively participate in educational situations.

Caring for students' psychosocial needs

All students are entitled to a school environment that is "conducive to health, well-being and learning" (Education Act, 1998, § 9a-1), and it is stated in the Education Act that schools should "make active and systematic efforts to promote a good psychosocial environment, where individual pupils can experience security and social belonging" (Education Act, 1998, § 9a-3). While it is important to draw a line as to which tasks schools should be expected to perform, mental health and social needs can have a big impact not only on students' well-being, but also on their academic activities (Bru, Idsøe, & Øverland, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013). Without a focus on promoting students' social and psychological health, it is difficult to achieve good learning outcomes, and in order to promote a good psychosocial environment it is necessary for schools and teachers to have competency in how to promote mental health and social inclusion, and how to relate to and provide help to students who struggle with issues within these areas (Bru et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013).

As stated in the Education Act, schools are obliged to make efforts to promote an environment where students can feel secure, a duty that can be even more important when it comes to meeting the needs of refugee students who come from uncertain and possibly unsafe circumstances. Discussing health concerns in relation to refugee children and their

families, the Norwegian Directorate of Health's *Guide for the health care of asylum seekers, refugees and family reunified* states that refugee children need special attention, and that schools and kindergartens are "important arenas in children's' upbringing which should be included in cooperation with health and welfare services" (Helsedirektoratet, 2017, p. 24, my translation). Refugee students differ from other immigrant students in the aspect that they arrive in the country and gain asylum because they themselves and/or members of their family have a "well founded fear of being persecuted" (Collinson, 2009, p. 23). Though there is little reliable research on the extensiveness of mental health issues among refugee children in particular, we know that refugees in general have a higher risk of mental health problems than others (Helsedirektoratet, 2017). Refugee children can have experiences in their past that are traumatic such as experiencing violence or war, or losing family or friends. Even if they arrive without such traumatic events in their past, many live for a long time with lasting uncertainty, even staying in reception centers can be experienced as stressful in itself (Helsedirektoratet, 2017).

Schools are a place where all children and youth in Norway spend a large part of their day, and are as such in a unique position to identify and provide help to students with mental health problems (Bru et al., 2016). However, this presupposes that the school and teachers have the competency to recognize symptoms of mental health issues and how they might be expressed in a school setting, as well as knowledge about how to proceed and who to contact if a student seems to be struggling with mental health issues (Bru et al., 2016). Such knowledge, and sharing advice and guidance regarding the special needs of refugee children among instances of care can also be important in preventing problems and promoting integration (Helsedirektoratet, 2017). It is important that schools and the support system for refugee children manage to see when children are struggling with mental health issues, however studies show that teachers report less mental health needs than caregivers do, and that both groups report less needs than the children themselves (Bean, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Mooijaart, & Spinhoven, 2006; Selle, Neumayer, Borchgrevink, & Mathiesen, 2006).

Immigrants' social connections is one of the core domains proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) as being indicative of successful integration, and schools are an important arena for refugee children's socialization and consequently integration. In addition to being a place for education and learning, schools are an important arena in children and youths' childhood environment, a place where students interact with others of the same age, and where they

look for belonging, friendship and acceptance (Bru et al., 2016). Schools are obliged under the Education Act (1998) to promote a good psychosocial environment where students can experience *social belonging*. Good, stable and inclusive social environments can have a positive effect not only on the well being of students in a class, but also on their academic interest and involvement, because students whose social needs are fulfilled are free to focus more on the tasks at hand, and to make use of the learning potential of cooperating with fellow students (Bru et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013). Skaalvik and Skaalvik describe good and inclusive learning environments as ones where there is mutual respect between the actors in the class, and positive teacher-student and student-students relations (2013). They also tie good social environments to students' experience of being treated fairly and equally to other students, stating that being treated as different - for example through consistently being given tasks which are different from those of other students - in an environment that is otherwise quite homogeneous, can be experienced as intimidating for the students in question (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013).

3 Methodology

This chapter deals with the methodology of this research project. The choice of methods and the use of these in the research process will be discussed, and some of the choices taken during the research period will be deliberated upon. Firstly I will present a brief account of interview as a research method, then the application of the method and reasoning behind the choices made is presented, before I discuss the challenges and possible weaknesses of the chosen research design.

3.1 Interview as a research method

The aim of this study was to explore how teachers of students with refugee backgrounds adapt to the inclusion of these students in their classrooms, and how to best accommodate them and meet their needs. To gain insights into the experiences of teachers, I chose to use *interviews* as the main method of data generation. Interviewing is a qualitative method, where the aim is to gather insight into the informant's thoughts, experiences and attitudes, and to gather more in-depth information concerning people's experiences (Dunn, 2010; Thagaard, 2009). This is done through "a spoken exchange of information" (Dunn, 2010, p.101), in this case a face-to-face conversation. The material generated when using interviews as a research method can be said to portray a "deeper picture" than for example a questionnaire would (Valentine, 2005, p. 111). It allows informants to elaborate on their experiences and opinions, and gives the researcher the opportunity to ask follow-up questions and to gain insight into the reasoning of the informants. This is connected to another reason why I chose interview as this research project's main method – the opportunity for informants to raise issues that the interviewer had not anticipated (Valentine, 2005, p. 111). As there is sparse existing research on certain of the subject areas I wished to look into, the opportunity for teachers to address topics that were not part of the original research design presented an opportunity to get valuable insight into the subject.

3.2 Access and participant sampling

3.2.1 Gaining access

The main time frame for this thesis stretches from January 2017 – May 2017, with some preliminary reading and the choice of the research topic having been made in November 2016. I began the data gathering in February 2017. After conducting preliminary literature research, and having decided to do the research in "ungdomsskoler" or middle schools in Trondheim, focusing on students in the age range from 12-16 years in grades 8. -10., the process of gaining access to schools started. The first step in this process was to contact Trondheim municipality in order to get my research proposal approved, and to hopefully get a referral from the municipality to potential schools. After a process spanning several weeks, my application was reviewed and approved, and I was referred to a school in the Trondheim area where refugee students are received and introduced to the Norwegian school system through special "introductory" or "reception" classes, in Norwegian called "mottaksklasser". The school in question quickly contacted me to confirm they had received the referral and to set up a meeting to discuss what my research entailed, what I hoped to accomplish and how they could be of help.

The first meeting with the school took place in February 2017 at the school's premises, where I met with my main contact at the school, whom I from now on will refer to as MC. After having discussed the aims of my research MC agreed to contact potential teachers and students for participation in the project. I sent a letter of introduction as well as a list of interview topics to my contact, to be forwarded to possible informants. The letter of introduction outlined the basics of the study, the practicalities of the interview such as the expected time frame and use of an audio recorder, and addressed confidentiality concerns. In this project, my contact at the school can be said to have functioned as a sort of *gatekeeper* (Valentine, 2005, p. 116) or key informant, aiding me in gaining access and recruiting informants who fit the criteria of my research design. The way participants were selected can be described as using what Bradshaw and Stratford (2010, p. 75) call *criterion sampling*, where all participants meet certain criteria. The informants in this project all met the following criteria:

- The informants needed to work at a middle school in Trondheim.

- The informants needed to have experience teaching refugee students, either as a contact or subject teacher in regular or introductory classes or as an assistant working with refugee students.

I also expressed a wish to talk to a mix of informants including both teachers working in ordinary classes as well as teachers working in reception classes.

In qualitative research, the sample is not intended to be *representative* (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010, p. 76) but rather *illustrative*, as qualitative studies are based on *strategic sampling* (Thagaard, 2009, p. 55) where informants are chosen based on relevant criteria like the ones mentioned above. This often leads to smaller samples than those one might find in a lot of quantitative research, but the sample size is also connected to another important factor when selecting a sample in qualitative research: that the sample should not be too big for it to be possible to conduct a thorough analysis of the data gathered (Thagaard, 2009, p. 60). These concerns, the restrictions influencing the possible scope of the thesis, as well as the fact that I was still planning on conducting a group interview with refugee students in addition to the interviews with the teachers, led me to set the cap for the number of teacher informants at 10, with a minimum of 5. In the end, I conducted interviews with 7 teachers. The gender distribution was quite uneven, with 6 women and 1 man in the sample group. Due to the issues of time and access I chose to work with this sample, though it would have been desirable to have a more even distribution of genders. The teachers had varied backgrounds. Some were teachers by training while others were educated in beginner language education studies or had studied "Norwegian as a second language". The teachers interviewed had worked at the school for varying lengths of time, some having been there less than one year and others for over 10 years. This range of experience allowed for interesting insights both from the perspective of informants quite new to the job as well others who had been working with refugee students for a long time. This also allowed me to gain insight into the views of teachers with long experience in the area and at the particular school, who might know of long-term trends and of the history of how the work with refugee students had changed or progressed over time, as well as teachers who were new to the school and the job and who had fresh eyes on the way the school worked with these students.

The original research design aimed to look at both the experiences of the teachers of refugee students as well as refugee students' own opinions and experiences, and to compare the two. I attempted to recruit students with a refugee background to participate in a group interview in

order to explore the students' own experiences and whether or not these corresponded with those of the teachers, but was unfortunately not able to arrange such an interview. Students participating in such an interview would need to consent to participating themselves, as would their parents. The ethical restrictions and considerations necessary in such a context made the process of recruiting student informants challenging and time-consuming, as I could not reach out personally, and school staff is not allowed to divulge contact information of the sort that would allow me to speak directly to the parents and students in question. With the help of my contact at the school I attempted to recruit informants to a group interview, and potential students and parents received letters of introduction adapted to each group. Still I was not able to arrange such an interview and had to change the research design to explore only the teachers' experiences.

3.3 Interview design and application

3.3.1 Semi-structured interview design

There are three main types of interviews: *structured*, *semi-structured* and *unstructured*. These types can be described as respectively question-focused, content-focused and informant-focused (Dunn, 2010). While structured interviews follow a "predetermined and standardized list of questions" (Dunn, 2010, p. 102), unstructured interviews on the other hand are just that – unstructured, adapted to and dependent on the informant. Semi-structured interviews have some pre-determined order, but there is still some flexibility (Dunn, 2010), and it is this type of interview structure I chose to use in this research project. I chose to use a semi-structured interview form due to the type of information I wished to obtain, and an interview structure that is focused on content and allows for some flexibility in discussing the issues and areas of the research topics seemed best suited to the aims of my research.

The interviews were based on an interview guide (see appendix 8.2) that mixed some of the characteristics of what Dunn (2010) calls *interview guides* and *interview schedules*. While an interview guide contains a list of topics or key terms and is meant to remind the researcher of discussion points, an interview schedule contains fully worded questions with additional detailed questions or *prompts* (Dunn, 2010). The interview guide used in this project contained fully worded questions, some with additional prompts, but was meant to serve as a guide rather than to be followed strictly, and it was used to a lesser or fuller extent depending on the interview setting and the informant. The questions were articulated to require more

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than yes/no answers, so as to encourage the informants to give in-depth answers, and the themes covered by the guide were drawn from reading and research prior to the data gathering.

I started each interview with what might be called a "warm-up period" (Dunn, 2010, p. 115), where I rather than diving straight into the interview started by giving a brief description of my research project and why I had chosen to study this particular topic, before repeating to the informants the details concerning confidentiality and their informed consent that they had received via e-mail prior to the interview. After getting permission to audio record the interview, I started each interview with general or neutral questions, in order to further "warm up" and develop a rapport (Valentine, 2005, p. 119). These questions concerned the informants' background, education and experience with teaching in general and teaching refugee students in particular. When conducting an interview it is recommended to start off with neutral questions, to save the more sensitive or emotional questions for the middle part of the interview, and to again return to more neutral questions at the end of the interview in order to ease in to more sensitive topics and to not end the interview on a very emotional note (Thagaard, 2009). The interviews with the teachers did not include any particularly invasive questions, but because the subject area can be said to be sensitive (see 3.4.2), I chose to follow an interview 'dramaturgy' such as the one described above.

3.3.2 Recording the interviews

When recording interviews the two main techniques used are audio recording and note-taking, and there are advantages and disadvantages to using either (Dunn, 2010). While note-taking might be less intimidating to the informant, it demands a lot of the interviewers attention and might impede the natural flow of the conversation (Dunn, 2010, p. 119). Audio recording on the other hand frees up the interviewer to be more attentive to the informant, but might cause the interviewee to feel uncomfortable and serve as a reminder of the formality of the situation (Dunn, 2010). The choice fell on a combination of audio recording and note-taking during the interviews conducted in this project. The interviews were all recorded as audio files, but I still took some notes on paper. I chose to take notes for several reasons: to write down what I felt were the main points of the informant's answers in the moment, to be able to look over the notes between the interviews to see if there was something not on the interview guide that might be interesting to talk about in the next interview as well, and to

have some sort of a backup in case the recorded audio was warped, deleted or inaudible. As mentioned above, I started recording the interviews after the informants were informed how confidentiality would be upheld with regards to storage and use of the audio recordings, and asked for consent to the interview being recorded.

3.3.3 Location

The interviews were all held in conference rooms at the school where the teachers worked. This location was chosen for several reasons, one of them being convenience and minimal inconvenience for the participants: the informants would not need to go out of their way to get to the location, and the interviews could be held during the school day during the informants' free periods. Choosing a familiar location may also "facilitate a more relaxed conversation" (Valentine, 2005, p. 119), as participants are more relaxed in a familiar setting. The only issue with using these conference rooms to conduct the interviews occurred on the second day of interviewing, when the room had been double-booked and I needed to move to another room. This was a minor inconvenience, but did cause some confusion.

3.3.4 Transcription and analysis

The last stage of the data gathering and handling process was transcribing and analyzing the interview material. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the informants, and were transcribed in the week following the interviews. The analysis of the interview material was conducted using topic themes based on topic areas discussed in the interviews. The first step of the analysis process was to read through the transcripts and give coherent sections 'text based' or empirically based codes, generated from the actual statements and wordings of the informant, as recommended by Tjora (2012). This entailed that a section in which an informant discussed their educational background might get the code "I studied at the teacher training program at NTNU". Rather than assigning sections of the text theoretically based codes such as "educational background", coding the transcribed interview material this way gave me a concise and descriptive summary of what the informant was talking about in each section, but left me with a lot of different codes. The next step was to sort through and categorize relevant codes into categories based on relevant topics for my research questions, moving from a firm focus on the empirical data on its own to a more analytical and theoretically based approach. The final step in the analysis process was to explore the now

categorized data using relevant theory and to discuss what information the data gave me, something that has been done in chapters 4 and 5.

3.4 Methodological and ethical concerns

When conducting a research project there are some potential ethical challenges to be aware of, and there are more or less official ethical guidelines and principles in place that researchers are expected to follow (Thagaard, 2009). This section will discuss some of the ethical considerations that have come up over the course of the research process, as well as some methodological challenges and considerations.

3.4.1 Interacting with informants

A key part of recruiting participants is the principle of *informed consent* (Thagaard, 2009). This principle demands that the informants are oriented as to what participation in the project entails, and that they agree to participate without any outer pressure (Thagaard, 2009). To make sure the informants were able to give me their informed consent, I sent them a letter of introduction outlining the details of what their participation in the project would entail, and I also discussed this with them at the beginning of each interview. None of the teachers seemed reluctant to talk to me, though some did seem impatient to finish the interview when they first arrived, and emphasized their need to keep within the allotted time because of a busy schedule. All of the teachers expressed interest in hearing the conclusions of the thesis, and several of them expressed at the end of the interview that they agreed to participate in part because they felt that being interviewed gave them something, allowing them to reflect on the issues in question, thinking about and putting word to their experiences and thoughts in a way that didn´t come naturally in their day to day lives.

A second aspect of qualitative research that necessitates some ethical and methodological consideration is that of confidentiality and informants' anonymity. Informants have the right to expect that all information that they provide is handled confidentially, and that no information is used in a way that may cause harm to them or people around them (Thagaard, 2009). Because the topic of this research project is sensitive to a certain degree (see section 3.4.2), I chose to maintain full anonymity for all the people who helped me. I stated this to the informants before all the interviews started, while I reviewed the letter of introduction with them.

Another issue with using interview as the method for gathering of data is the fact that the relationship between interviewer and interviewee often is asymmetrical, with the researcher often seen as having more power or influence over the situation (Thagaard, 2009). The researcher controls the basis of the conversation in having chosen discussion points and guiding the conversation during the interview by asking questions or using other means of directing the conversation as wanted. The informant is also in a position where they are sharing personal experiences and opinions and thus being vulnerable (Thagaard, 2009). On the other hand, the relationship between the researcher and the informant can be influenced by other factors such as age, gender and social status, causing the interviewee to be in a more powerful position than the interviewer (Valentine, 2005). As I am a young woman and still a student, I did not expect my personal appearance and characteristics to be intimidating to the informants, and this did not seem to be the case either. Before each interview I discussed the project and the background for my wanting to explore this particular topic, and I explained that me studying to become a teacher influenced the choice. This might have aided in facilitating a rapport between the teachers and myself, as it implied we had some shared experience and interests.

3.4.2 Doing research on a sensitive subject

The research project can be said to deal with a sensitive subject, or sensitive information, in two ways. The first is that the subject of the research is students in middle schools, between the ages of 12 and 16. In addition to being children, the students in questions have come to this country as refugees, making them a vulnerable group in more than one way. Even thought I was not able to conduct such an interview, the research design for this project included a group interview with refugee students, and as such it was necessary to be more wary of how the research might cause harm, for example by addressing sensitive topics or reminding the students of difficult situations or experiences connected to their beginning in the Norwegian school system. In addition to the project being focused on refugee students, I conducted interviews with teachers. As teachers are a group with confidentiality clauses, interviewing them can cause some friction with regards to confidentiality. I attempted to avoid this by not asking for details regarding specific students or events, but rather focusing on the teachers' experiences, methods or patterns that they experienced when working with refugee students. Because of the subject of the thesis, and to make sure that my plans for how

to carry out the research and how to handle potential sensitive information were adequate, I applied to the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD), the Data Protection Official for Research for all Norwegian universities (Norsk senter for forskningsdata, n.d.). This application concerned the handling of personal information during the research project, and was approved given that the handling of personal data was done according to the application.

3.4.3 Validity and reliability: the impact of the researcher

The concepts of *validity* and *reliability* are two important aspects to keep in mind when conducting a qualitative research study. Reliability in qualitative research differs from how the concept is applied in quantitative research, where it refers to whether or not a researcher using the same methods as those in the original study would reach the same conclusions (Thagaard, 2009). In qualitative research however, where there is a close proximity between researcher and informants, the researcher will inevitably affect the informants and have an impact on the data that is gathered, and reliability in the sense of replicating a result is not possible (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010; Thagaard, 2009). The concept of reliability in qualitative research is therefore more closely connected to the ideas of *transparency* and *trustworthiness*, and involves that the researcher should give a thorough account of the research process, reflecting on the choices that are made and how these might have influenced the end result (Thagaard, 2009), which is what I have attempted to do in this chapter. *Validity* in qualitative research is connected to the interpretation of data, and whether or not the results of a research project reflect the reality of what has been studied (Thagaard, 2009). In qualitative research projects it is again important to be transparent and reflective as to what the analysis results and discussions are based on, in order to show as best as possible how and why the researcher has reached the conclusions they have reached (Thagaard, 2009).

4 Teachers' practice and adaptation

The following chapter will explore and discuss the material gathered from the interviews with the teachers. The focus of this thesis is on the way teachers adapt their practice to accommodate refugee students' needs, and it is the self-reported ways in which teachers do this that will form the basis for the discussion in this chapter. I will discuss how the teachers talked about their methods for adapting their educational approaches to meet refugee students needs, their opinions on the process of refugee students transition into their classes, and use the theory presented in chapter 2 to put the teachers' practices into context. Some aspects of refugee students' introduction to the school were proposed by the teachers as having as great, if not greater, impact on the students' progress in school than the teachers' didactic and pedagogical approaches, and it is these framework conditions affecting refugee students' transition into the Norwegian school system that will form the basis for the discussion in chapter 5.

To maintain the teachers' anonymity each teacher has been assigned a code beginning with T for *teacher* followed by a random number from 1-7. The teachers are always referred to using the same code, so as an example T1 is always the same person throughout the thesis. A factor that impacts the validity of this research is that the data gathered from the interviews likely does not give a complete picture of how teachers work to meet refugee students' needs. For example, while all of the interviews were conducted based on the same interview guide, as the interviews were semi-structured there were themes that were brought up by only some of the teachers, or elaborated on to a greater degree by some teachers. In places where I state for example that 'three of the teachers agreed on this', this should be kept in mind, as the remaining teachers might agree, but the subject might not have come up in the other interviews.

Section 4.1 will present the teachers' opinions on concrete educational tools and methods they use to adapt their education to the needs of refugee students, before I in 4.2 will look at the teachers' experience of the language-related challenges the teachers report when working with refugee students who speak Norwegian as a second language. Before the analysis, I will briefly present the way the introductory education of refugee students is organized at the school where the interviews took place, and give a small introduction to the teachers' educational background and position at the school.

School framework for the introduction of refugee students

The introductory education at the school in question is organized according to *model b* as described in section 2.1.3, where newly arrived students are taught in special introductory classes at a local school. This is in accordance with previous findings that show that larger municipalities often use this type of model rather than others (Pastor et al., 2010). The students stay in introductory classes for up to two years, where they are meant to learn Norwegian language and about Norwegian society and the school system at the same time. Though students in Norwegian schools are admitted to school based on their biological age, the classes in the introductory program are often age-mixed, with students between the ages of 12-16 in the same classes. The teachers explain that the students are connected to a regular class immediately, where they get a contact teacher and a "fadder" or helpmate to show them around and guide them when they attend regular classes. Soon after the students arrive at the school, teachers in the introductory program conduct a mapping session together with a bilingual teacher, trying to assess the student's academic level. There is a separate group for illiterate students, where they learn to read and write. As soon as possible, the refugee students start attending lessons in practical and aesthetic subjects such as physical education and arts and crafts, being slowly transferred into more and more classes as their Norwegian skills are thought to be adequate to follow the lessons in those subjects. The full length of time from students starting at school to them being fully transferred to regular classes consequently varies according to each student's need and the assessment of their skills, but no students stay in the introductory classes for more than two years, and according to the teachers, most students stay fully or partly in the introductory program for somewhere between 1-1,5 years.

Teachers' training and positions

Prior to exploring the teachers' educational approaches, I find it relevant to recount their relevant qualifications and training in the area of teaching refugee students. Of the teachers interviewed, only one teacher had qualifications in teaching Norwegian as a second language, while two other teachers were currently taking further training in this subject. One had a degree in their native language as a foreign language. These teachers all worked in introductory classes or with refugee students in the transitional process, while the teachers who worked in regular classes - and some of those teaching introductory classes or following students in the transitional process - had no qualifications in this subject area outside of

regular teaching training education. When asked if there were any areas they wish they had more competence in, or more knowledge about, the teachers all answered positively. A point addressed by teachers T1-T6 was the fact that when teaching refugee students you have to use didactic and pedagogical approaches linked to teaching Norwegian as a second language, beginners' education and subject matter education all at the same time. The teachers talked of three areas in particular where they wanted, or saw a need in the school for, more input:

- Teaching Norwegian as a second language (T4, T5, T6, T7)
- Caring for refugee students' psychological and social needs (T1, T2, T3, T4, T6)
- Basic knowledge of refugee students' cultural background (T1, T2, T3, T4)

The teachers who were interviewed in this project included two teachers responsible for education of students in introductory classes, two teachers who for varying lengths of time followed the students in the period of their transition to ordinary classes full-time, while the rest were class or subject teachers in ordinary classes. This allowed me to see if there was any difference in the educational approaches of the teachers who worked exclusively with minority language students and teachers who had a smaller number of minority language students in ordinary classes. Based on the interviews, it seemed the teachers who worked exclusively with introductory education were more focused on teaching the students language skills, which is no surprise as this is the main goal of introductory education. The teachers in the introductory classes also had more formal competency in areas of language and beginner education, and when discussing their adaptation they grounded it in theory and knowledge to a greater degree, showing what I interpreted as more confidence in their adaptation methods, perhaps because they have indeed been trained to teach students with Norwegian as a second language. An interesting difference in the opinions of the teachers who worked in regular classes and the teachers who worked in introductory education was their experience of the relevance of differentiating between refugees and other minority language students. The teachers all agreed that there is a difference between the needs of refugee students and other immigrants, but I saw a tendency for the introductory teachers to emphasize the differences between the various groups of immigrants more, pointing out differences between their experiences with unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, refugees, children of immigrant workers or others. The teachers who worked in regular classes explained that the forms of adaptations they needed to make were mostly language-related, and more often pointed out

that what they talked about applied to all minority language students, not refugee students exclusively.

4.1: Didactic approaches

One of the questions I wished to look into in this project was that of how teachers adapt their practice to accommodate the needs of newly transferred refugee students. When asked in what ways they adapted their educational approaches to better accommodate the needs of refugee students, there were areas in which all or most of the teachers agreed, and other areas where the teachers implemented different approaches. The self-reported didactic and pedagogical approaches of the teachers will be presented and discussed in the following sections.

4.1.1 Visualization and concretization

> "Visual aids are good. I bring a children's newspaper to school, with short texts and a lot of pictures and captions and stuff. So if the other stuff is too difficult you can say 'read an article and underline difficult words'. Or make simple questions, where is the headline, title, those words. If you have something visual and use you body language, pointing and stuff, that is good (T3)."

One educational tool mentioned by many of the teachers was that of *visualization*. T1, T2, T3 and T6 emphasized how helpful visual aids can be, both when teaching language, to allow students to follow teachers' presentations, and to help students in doing tasks. They report using images or animation, as well as using body language to aid understanding. Teacher T1 added to the importance of visualization by linking it to making the subject matter more concrete, saying that everything that could help to make the subject matter concrete are helpful tools, whether it is using visual aids, body language or practical tasks. Teachers T3, T4, T5 and T6 also talk of concretization as well as giving support to refugee students through assigning short activities and giving clear and concrete instructions that are easy to follow.

This approach of using concrete tools and visual aids echoes the recommendations of Cummins' theory and framework, which suggests that providing contextual support will help students to succeed in linguistic tasks and activities (Cummins, 2000). The teachers'

experiences agree with what Cummins proposes, that the more academic the language is the more difficult it is for the students to understand it, and that when teaching refugee students it is necessary to be concrete and to use cognitively simpler tasks at first. A teacher working with students who have just arrived talks about how they work in this manner, using the objects and people in the school area to start teaching students language, and that they then go on to teach the students more abstract things as time passes.

As an interesting addition to the teachers' recommendation of visualization, T1 pointed out how the use of visual aids can have unexpected pitfalls, as the students' varying cultural background will mean that an image may have different connotations for students of different backgrounds. This teacher recounts an example where they were teaching the students about food, and used a visualization of what they defined as "regular Norwegian cheese". However, when they showed the picture to refugee students who came from African countries the students did not understand what it was meant to portray:

> "and they looked at the picture and they didn't understand what I was talking about, because cheese to them it is like our cottage cheese. They don't identify the picture with what I´m saying at all. (…) So I think cultural codes are really important. I think that we who work with people from other countries we need to know a little bit, not a lot, but a little bit about those countries (T1)."

This cultural clash when it came to using visual or concrete aids had also happened with other subject areas, such as drawing the seasons of the year in arts and crafts. Students who came from countries nearer the equator did not have the same references to the changing of the seasons as Norwegian-born students do, because the seasonal changes are not the same in all areas of the world. This goes to show how there are many factors at play when teachers try to adapt their education to refugee students' needs, and that challenges with teaching students with limited target language skills is not separate from differences and challenges connected to social or cultural differences.

4.1.2 Classroom activity

On the subject of classroom activity and the interaction between students and teachers, there was more variation between the opinions and experiences of the teachers. T1, T4 and T5 stated that they saw a need for the teacher's role to be an active one, where the students have

to be guided to eventually be able to be active themselves. All of the teachers said that individual activity seemed demanding, other than in short bursts, and that social activities with the entire class worked better when teaching refugee students. Activities that demand that students create content themselves by looking through books, finding sources or writing their own sentences or non-factual texts were described as more demanding than less cognitively challenging activities where the students can copy or fill in the answers.

As was presented in chapter 2, it is recommended that teachers help students use the target language so they can test and develop their language skills in dialogue with others (Hauge, 2014), through using activities that require oral communication and dialogue. Most of the teachers (T1, T2, T3, T5, T6, T7) said they use oral communication extensively, both when explaining things themselves and in student tasks. However, these teachers did not explain the use of oral communication as intended to help the students use the language themselves, they explain it as intended to help the students understand more easily, because they already were more proficient orally than in writing. Of all the teachers, only T4 says they have a stronger focus on using the written language, because the students hear and use the language orally so much already that the teacher believes there is a bigger need for them to learn how to write it properly. Three teachers state that they work predominantly with oral exercises and methods (T5, T6, T7), while the remaining teachers (T1, T2, T3) did not explicitly declare a preference for using either oral or written activities, though they talked about using the language orally when asked about these two types of language use.

The teachers point out that language is not the only area of knowledge that refugee students need to catch up with the Norwegian-born students in. They also need to learn the subject matter, and how to do the work that is expected of a student in Norwegian schools. T5 says this latter issue is the biggest differentiator between immigrant children and refugee children:

> "In many ways it's easier to teach those who come as children of immigrant workers because even if they don't speak Norwegian they know how to go to school. While with a lot of those who come as refugees, we have to teach them that as well. (…) For example work habits, that you can study, you have established some routines for doing homework, just practical things really, like how to organize your exercise book (T5)."

T5 goes on to talk about how the format and work methods used in Norwegian schools are a big challenge for many refugee students in ordinary classes, a sentiment echoed by T2 and T4. The teachers discuss how it can be difficult for students to convey the knowledge they have acquired not only because they struggle with the academic language, but also because they do not know how to structure for example an oral presentation or an essay. Again, the teachers (T2, T4, T5) say that in this aspect they adapt their educational practice to refugee students' needs by providing them with simple, straightforward directions.

Despite all the teachers agreeing that they see a tendency in the group of refugee students as a whole where individual work seems to be the most challenging, they did address that not all students learn in the same way, and that just like all students, the preferred methods and activities for the refugee students in their classes vary from person to person:

> "I know it is a bit of a cliché, but the most important thing is variation (T3)."

4.2 Language

> "even if I am a social science teacher it's language I´m teaching them. That is what our goal is in all school subjects, whether it's mathematics or physical education or… it is to teach them Norwegian. So the subjects are just means to an end (T5)."

The view expressed by T5 in the above quote seemed to be agreed upon by all of the teachers I interviewed, that their main goal whether they worked in introductory classes or had refugee students in regular classes was to teach the students Norwegian. All the teachers interviewed stated that language is the biggest challenge for refugee students' performance in school. The teachers expressed, like the teacher in the quote above, that regardless of their subject, they are really teaching the students Norwegian, and that this is challenging to do on such a basic level. The teachers' opinion that the refugee students are not able to become proficient enough in Norwegian for it to be the dominant teaching language in the time they are allowed to stay in introductory classes agrees with research suggestions that learning a new language well enough for it to be a satisfactory teaching language takes somewhere between 5-7 years (Cummins, 2000). The teachers also all experience the Norwegian school as very "concept heavy", and view this as challenging for refugee students, something that will be discussed further in the following section.

4.2.1 Concept training and simplification

> "It's a bit interesting, because what we call a concept in our everyday life, you actually need 10 other concepts to understand. And there is a lot we could talk about with simpler words, but we say atheist rather than non-believer, because at this level you should be able to use the word atheist in the right context, and in a subject with one class a week that is maybe the biggest challenge, that the Norwegian school is so concept heavy (T2)."

When asked how they adapt their education to refugee students needs, the main thing the teachers bring up is the need to focus on concepts, and to limit the number or the difficulty of these concepts that the refugee students are to learn. The teachers reported that they all use a plan for the week or month where the period's most important goals, concepts and homework are written down. They all emphasized the need to cut down on the amount of concepts the students need to learn, picking out some key concepts from this period plan and letting the students focus on learning those. The teachers also all mentioned that they simplify the language used in tasks and texts for the students.

The teachers reported that they did not feel they could teach the refugee students or the minority language students the same content as the others in class, because the students are not proficient enough in Norwegian. The teachers interviewed emphasized that there are differences in how much knowledge students have acquired when they are transferred to regular classes (see section 4.2.2), but they all state that the language skills and academic skills refugee students display at the time of transition are still far below what is needed to keep up with the native-born students, whether the students have spent 1 or 2 years in introductory classes. The teachers expressed that the Norwegian academic language skills that refugee students possess when they are transferred to regular classes are not good enough for them to learn the subject matter in the target language, resulting in refugee students not learning the same content as other students. This is a common method of adaptation when teaching students with limited target language skills, but it is also a method that is can possibly cause the academic proficiency gap between minority language students and others to increase over time (Cummins, 2000; Hauge, 2014). Building on students' prior experiences and knowledge or providing more native tongue education are adaptation approaches that are proposed by Hauge (2014) and Cummins (2000) as being more appropriate in a situation where students academic language skills are not sufficient to follow the Norwegian language

instruction in a subject. Several of teachers I interviewed (T1, T3, T6) did talk about the importance of connecting the academic content to students' prior knowledge and interests, but they also stated that it could be difficult to adapt education in this way because they did not have much knowledge about the students' prior experiences, or their interests, and found that using metaphors or cultural references was particularly difficult because of the differences between refugee students' cultural background and their own frames of reference.

The teachers also show that their impression is in agreement with what Cummins proposes – that learning subject matter in a language they do not have the appropriate skills in leads students to struggle with learning academic content that they might have mastered better if they were taught in a language they mastered (Cummins, 2000). T3 explains that in learning situations where the students have bilingual assistants helping them, the teacher does not have to simplify the content as much, and the impression that students are able to grasp more cognitively demanding subject matter better when they have a native language assistant helping them is a sentiment echoed by teachers T2 and T6. The other teachers did not address this particular topic. Still, the teachers explained that they sometimes see no other way than to simplify the material, often because of a lack of preexisting knowledge, as a teacher recounts:

> "I have to simplify everything. To cut concepts, focus on less material. I always have to have it in the back of my head, because what we do for the most time, you can't… analyze Ibsen, you know. You can see that there's no point in even trying to teach them this. There's a lack of background understanding. Some students come and, they are in class having religion and they discover that 'wow, there are more than one religion in the world? I didn't know'. And then are you supposed to say 'well let's look at and compare how they look at gods in the different religions'? It's just so far away sometimes. You can't teach them about Ibsen, you know. You can teach them that he was a famous Norwegian playwright, and give examples of what he has written. And then you rather have to work on concepts, because that's what they benefit from. They have to get more depth of language that's what it is (T3)."

In the quote above, we see an example of how the teachers often did not clearly separate between different aspects that affected their teaching of refugee students. The teacher was initially talking about the need to simplify due to 'a lack of background understanding'. By the end of the quoted portion, however, the teacher again came back to language skills as a main issue, stating that 'depth of language' was what the students lacked. This is a trend that

I recognized throughout all of the interviews, that the teachers talked of many different areas of refugee students' education as acting together and influencing each other, and that there was no one overarching issue that they expressed to be separate from the others.

4.2.2 Knowledge at time of transition

"The rights of minority language students, to Norwegian and special language education and everything, it's just meant as a transitional arrangement, until they learn sufficient Norwegian or what they call it. And as it is, that is Norwegian at a very very low level. So you can´t learn Norwegian and understand 10th grade curriculum when you´ve been here for a year or two, that's quite obvious (T7)."

Before you are transferred completely, you should be able to express yourself a bit orally, in writing, you know, have the chance to function in a normal class. But at the same time you have these time limits to how long you are allowed to be in the introductory program. So there is some cross-pressure there too (T2)."

T1, T2, T3 and T7 talk about how it can be difficult to adapt the content of the education to the refugee students' needs and knowledge because it is hard to know *what* the students know when they are transferred to ordinary classes, both regarding language skills, subject matter knowledge, and cultural knowledge. They found it difficult to know what competency the students actually had, and that it made it difficult to know what level to place the education on. They point out that there is no minimum standard for what a student should know before being transferred to ordinary classes fulltime, and as T7 expresses in the quote above, what guidelines there are for how much students should know before leaving introductory classes is in their opinion Norwegian at a low level. T2 points to the framework and laws regulating introductory teaching, and says that before students are transferred into ordinary classes, they should have the opportunity to function in a normal class, but that the policy on the area postulates that students are not able to stay in introductory classes for an unlimited amount of time. T7 touches on what Cummins' theory on bilingual education suggests: that students who are transferred into target-language only classes based on a display of surface level fluency may end up struggling with more advanced academic content and language (Cummins, 2000; Aasen, 2003). The teacher explains:

"In the beginning when I started working here I thought they were better than I had expected, that they understood more than, I'd expected… But it was more on the social surface language, when you move over to academic content then it suddenly becomes much harder. And that is very, like, typical (T7)."

Another aspect of refugee students' language skills that the teachers experienced as challenging to adapt to was that of vocabulary. Several of the teachers (T2, T3, T5, T7) expressed that they felt it was difficult to know what to expect when it came to vocabulary. Teachers experienced that the language knowledge, vocabulary and areas refugee students could talk about in Norwegian varied greatly, and that it often seemed random which words students had been taught or come across earlier. T5 adds to T2's narrative of the vocabulary refugee students acquire being random, saying that refugee students who start in introductory classes during the school year necessarily start learning whichever words the pre-existing class is learning that week, even if that means the first words a student learns at school are related to a topic that does not seem to be the most pressing to learn, giving an example of one student who recently arrived at the school:

"we were working on economy, so then the first words he learnt was like income and expenses and budget, you know. So here you have to work on so many levels at once, in the subject, it can be challenging (T5)."

T5 explained that they found it challenging to plan the education in introductory classes, because the student group shifts and changes so often. The teacher talked about how, in situations like the one described in the quote above, new students were taught what the teacher viewed as less essential vocabulary and subject matter when they first arrive, because the teachers cannot start at the same point every time a new student joins the class. The teacher said they attempted to manage the issue by dividing students into groups based on their language proficiency as often as possible, but that even when it was possible to divide students in such groups, there were large differences in language skills within groups. Finding it challenging to adapt their education to students of varying ages and levels of language and academic proficiency, the teacher expressed a wish for more competence in teaching Norwegian as a second language.

5. Framework conditions

During the interviews with the teachers, I found that there were other factors than their own educational choices and approaches that the teachers found to be very influential on how well the process of refugee students' transition into the school progressed. The teachers' opinions on the influence of what I have chosen to call *framework conditions* is what will be presented and discussed in this chapter. These framework conditions encompass the aspects of the refugee students' education that is not dependent on teachers' pedagogical and didactic choices. This includes organizational aspects of the students' education as well as cultural, social and psychological aspects of refugee students' integration process.

The first theme that appeared in the interviews with the teachers was that of organization and communication, and it is this topic that will be discussed in section 5.1. Cultural, social and psychological aspects that may affect refugee students' education will be discussed in section 5.2.

5.1 Organization and communication

All of the teachers pointed to the organization of the education as a challenge in the transition of refugee students into ordinary classes, as well as communication and information sharing. The introductory education at the relevant school is organized as in model *b)* in section 2.2.2, where students are taught in separate classes, most often for some time between one and one and a half year. A more extensive outline for the organization of the introductory education for refugee students at the school in question can be found in section 4.

5.1.1 Transition process

> "it's uncomfortable to, as a contact teacher or as class leader, to not have an overview of who should actually be in your class (T3)."

When asked about the organization of students in introductory classes and the transition into ordinary classes, T3, T4, T5 and T6 stated that they believe students start the transition from introductory to ordinary classes quickly, expressing that they think the students stay for a shorter length of time in the introductory classes than what seems necessary. They also said the transition could sometimes be abrupt. The teachers' experience is that students often are

introduced suddenly into their classes, with varying notice given to the class teachers. T3 and T5 recount situations where refugee students from the introductory classes have showed up in their classrooms, without the teachers having been informed beforehand that they would receive a new student that day. When asked why they thought they were not always noticed when a student was going to be transferred into their classes, teachers point to how the number of people involved makes the transition of refugee students from introductory classes to ordinary classes difficult to navigate. All of the teachers pointed out that in theory there are guidelines in place for refugee students' arrival at the school, which also outline refugee students' transition from introductory to ordinary classes. However, they all say that these guidelines are not always followed. When asked why this could be, several of the teachers discuss the fact that there are so many people involved in each student's education that it is hard to keep track of the situation, and to make sure that the right people get the right information:

> "right now there are a lot of students and they all have different native tongue teachers, there are just incredibly many people to keep track of, both students and other teachers (T3)."

> "you know, if there are ten new students that fall, the people in the introductory classes have to talk to maybe ten different contact teachers. So it depends on the situation at the school how much we are able to talk to each other. And it's unfortunately a bit random, to what degree students are followed up (T2)."

T2 stated that the amount of information that is given to the teachers who receive refugee students into their class also varies according to how busy the introductory class is, and this sentiment is echoed by T1 and T3, who both quote the number of students in the reception classes as one reason for the issues with the flow of information. They say that the past year or two, there has been a lot of pressure on the school's introductory unit due to an increase in the number of students who arrive, something which they connected to the record high number of asylum seekers who came to the country in 2015, saying that the uncommonly high number of refugees who arrived in 2015 still had an impact on the introductory program at their school.

Teachers also point to how the rules of introductory education makes the introductory classes inherently quite fluid and unpredictable, making it difficult for all teachers involved to have

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up-to-date information on a student's timetable. Because the rules governing the education of school age children in Norway say that all children of school age who have stayed, or are likely to stay in the country, for more than three months have the right and the duty to go to school (Education Act, 1998), the teachers explain that the time from children's arrival in the country to their entry in school is often short, and that there is not always time to plan for their introduction into classes. The fact that all students have the right to an adapted education (Education Act, 1998), and that all the students in the introductory classes have an individual schedule based on where they are in the transitional process, also cause the introductory classes to 'always be in movement' as this teacher puts it:

"it's a classroom that is always, you know, in movement. Someone going to their class, someone coming, and they are completely new or someone who has been there for two months, someone who has been here for four months. There is a lot of movement (T1)."

5.1.2 Information and communication

"I think when you meet a student that it's nice not to be working in the dark (T1)."

A wish that was expressed by all the teachers interviewed was the wish for better ways of and frameworks for sharing information. T1, as well as T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6 all express a wish to know more about the refugee students they are to teach before they greet them in the classroom. All the teachers say that the amount and type of information they get varies from case to case, and that the point in the student's transition process at which they get this information also varies a lot. They say that at some time in the early transition process, the contact teachers get general information about the refugee students, such as age, country of origin, language background, family situation and some information about the student's amount of previous schooling. Teachers T1-T6 all expressed a wish for more information than what they get, expressing the sentiment of "the more, the better" when it comes to this subject, in order to best meet students' needs. Based on the interviews, it seemed that particularly the teachers who worked as contact teachers or subject teachers in regular classes (T2, T3, T5, T7) got sparse and varying information, this was attributed by the teachers to aspects such as the number of students in the introductory classes and in general how busy the school is at the time in question. The teachers who worked in introductory classes fully or

partly, or had one-on-one education with refugee students (T1, T4, T5, T7) seemed to be able to talk to, get information from, and personally get to know the individual refugee students to a greater degree than did the teachers who worked in regular classes. T3 experienced it as difficult to find the time to get the information they would like to have, stating that they wished they could sit down and get to know refugee students who they are assigned as contact teachers to. This is a sentiment which was repeated in one form or another by all the teachers: that there is not enough time to do everything the teachers are supposed to do, nor time to do things the teachers wish they could do. The teachers all touched on the topic of time pressure during the interviews, linking it to different areas where they found it challenging to meet the needs of refugee students in the time they had at their disposal.

T7 is less decided when it comes to the issue of how much information teachers should have about the students before getting to know them. This teacher talks about having had to comfort a distraught refugee student because a lesson about warfare brought up traumatic memories, and explains how she is conflicted as to whether it would have been better to have known about the student's past in order to avoid the situation or not:

> "Well, I am a bit torn when it comes to this. I don't think it's right on behalf of the student, like this one, where we had a lesson about war and.. looked at horrible pictures, that is probably uncomfortable for her. But I think it could be quite uncomfortable for her as well, to know that all the teachers at school know what happened to her, you know. I kind of think, let her be a normal student without a heavy horrible history that is well known (T7)."

The teacher T7 expressed that they were uncertain what would be best for the student in the case above, and stated that they struggled with weighing the options, finding pros and cons both in providing teachers with a lot of information and with little information. This reflects a struggle that many teachers talked about: the difficulty of weighing some benefits against others, and choosing which areas to focus on at a certain time, or in general.

5.2 Cultural, social and psychological challenges

The second aspect of the framework conditions I found that the teachers reported as being important for the reception of refugee students in Norwegian schools was cultural, social and psychological factors that may affect the conditions of refugee students' education. The

teachers talked about how the topics discussed in the following three sections affect refugee students' education. Section 5.2.1 will address teachers experience of the importance of meeting students' psychological needs, section 5.2.2 will discuss challenges relating to cultural differences between students' place of origin and the Norwegian society, while section 5.2.3 will look at the teachers' experience of the school as a place for integration and socialization and challenges relating to this.

5.2.1 Addressing students' psychological needs

"It´s difficult to imagine that you can be a refugee today without experiencing something we would call traumatic (T2)."

Refugees have a higher risk of developing mental health problems than others (Helsedirektoratet, 2017), and as a place where children and youth spend a large part of their day, schools are in a unique position to prevent or identify mental health problems in refugee students (Bru et al., 2016). The teachers interviewed in this project all talk about mental health as a topic that they see as having a great impact on the education of refugee students, and express that when students struggle with mental health problems, they often struggle academically as well, like the teacher T6 states below:

"if the social and the mental isn't in place then they can't do the academic stuff either. It is like an eternal dance, an eternal vicious circle that stuff I think (T6)."

The teachers' experience that mental health problems can affect students' academic progression is supported by research (Bru et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013). Looking at the teachers' experiences and opinions it seems they all recognize that refugee students may have special needs in the area of mental health, requiring special attention. However, many of the teachers interviewed are of the opinion that their own competency and/or the competency of the school is lacking when it comes to how best to care for refugee students' mental health. Teachers T1, T2, T3, T4 and T6 all express that they are uncertain if they have the adequate competency to meet refugee students' needs in this area, wishing for more knowledge about how to best attend to refugee students' psychological and social needs. The teachers also expressed a wish to have more information that can help their competency in

addressing refugee students' psychological and social needs as best as possible at school. Some teachers told of sometimes being afraid to do something wrong or to cause harm to the students because they know the students come from sensitive backgrounds but do not know how to meet their psychological needs (T2, T6). Research does show that teachers report less mental health needs in refugee students than the students do themselves (Bean et al., 2006; Selle et al., 2006), and suggests that in order to promote a healthy psychosocial environment it is necessary for schools and teachers to have competency in how to recognize signs that a student is struggling with mental health problems, as well as how to advance if such issues occur and who to contact in order to provide help to the student in question (Bru et al., 2016; Helsedirektoratet, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013). Teachers T1 and T2 also experience that they do not know what topics or themes in the education might be emotionally difficult or challenging for students. They link the wish for more information as described in 5.1.3 to their ability to make learning situations a safe place for students with traumatic experiences, and wish for more information about each refugee student's past experiences in order to do this.

5.2.2 Adapting to a new school culture

"They are used to being assessed, and they come here and there are no grades, or maybe one or two for half a year. And they think 'pfff, wow' and that there are no demands or duties for them. Then in addition the teachers are so understanding, they maybe feel bad for students who haven´t had a chance to get the same education as Norwegian students and stuff. Many say that Norwegian teachers are nice. That they respect the person, the individual student. But this niceness, in my opinion it´s bad (T1)."

The quote above shows how one of the teachers interviewed thought about refugee students' reaction to the school culture in Norway. The teacher stated that they had heard many students call Norwegian teachers nice, however they do not think this is a positive thing, the teacher's opinion is that students seem to think there are no demands on them, and T1 believes this is because the students are not assessed as much as they might be used to from their country of origin, and because teachers have sympathy for students who come from difficult backgrounds and do not hold them to the same standards as other students. This reflects the potential cultural differences that may affect student – teacher relationships in culturally mixed education situations, as outlined by Hofstede (1986). Most refugee students

who have come to Norway the past years have come from Arab and African countries (Utlendingsdirektoratet, 2016a, 2016b), countries that differ largely from Norway in terms of the degree of power distance in the culture (Hofstede, 1986). Students coming from a culture where there is a large power distance may find it challenging or odd to arrive in a culture such as the one in Norway, where there is a small power distance and the education is student-centered rather than teacher-centered. The previous experiences and cultural values that refugee students bring with them from their earlier experiences and upbringing can affect how they expect interactions in the classroom to unfold (Hofstede, 1986), and how they adapt to the new educational culture in a new country. This is also the experience of teacher T1, who recounts how it is often necessary to take time to explain to refugee students from countries in Asia and Africa the rules and norms that apply in Norwegian schools, and that these rules have to be followed even if the teachers are less focused on order than students' previous experiences. Hofstede (1986) proposes that another aspect of educational situations that may be challenging in culturally mixed learning situations is that of student initiative. In Norway, it is established in the Education Act that "the pupils shall be actively involved in the learning situation" (1998, § 2-3), concurrent with Hofstedes (1986) analysis of education in cultures with a small degree of power distance. The expectation that students should be active and show initiative is according to teachers T1-T6 another challenge related to cultural differences when refugee students are introduced to the Norwegian educational system. The teachers present this as especially difficult for students with little to no former education, but also for students who have attended school in their country of origin the transition into the this culture of independence and individuality can be difficult. Talking about how the amount of independence expected from students in Norwegian schools can be difficult to adapt to, T2 states that:

> "even students with quite a bit of former schooling struggle with a Norwegian degree of oral activity, and that it is kind of up to yourself how much to engage (T2)."

When asked how cultural differences had an impact in their classrooms, all of the teachers touched upon how having students of different cultural backgrounds in the classroom gave something positive to the class and/or to themselves as teachers. T3 emphasized how she felt it was beneficial for all of her students to have students of different backgrounds in their group, while T1 found it motivational in her own work to be able to learn more about other languages and cultures, that it was exiting to go to work and know you would probably return

home that day knowing something new. T2 and T3 said they made an effort to make use of the diversity of the classroom in a positive way, to use the differences between students' such as their native languages and cultural background to educate the entire rest of the class.

5.2.3 The school as a place for socialization

> "You can sit there with as much academic ballast as you want, but if you don't feel like you are a part of the youth group you are supposed to be a part of… you need to feel that you are included (T2)."

Schools are obligated under the Education Act (1998) to promote a healthy psychosocial environment where students can experience social belonging and security. Inclusive social environments and fulfilling students' social needs can have a positive effect both on students' well-being and on their academic endeavors (Bru et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013). Several of the teachers interviewed expressed that the social integration of refugee students in the school environment had a large impact on how they seemed to be doing at school. The teachers T2, T3 and T6 stated that the social aspect of the school day often seemed challenging for refugee students, and that this could have an effect on other aspects of the education as well. They expressed that when students were not socially included in the class environment they struggled with the academic content and work, and were more likely to skip classes.

> "I think that when the social part isn't in place then there is nothing that pulls them to the class, right? They don´t have any friends there, they have no one to hang out with, no one to talk about subjects with, no one to work with, right? And then they don´t want to be there. So it really affects the subject (T6)."

T2 said that the transition and inclusion in the class seemed easier for the last students who were transferred into their class than for the first couple of refugee students who became part of their class. The teacher thought this was largely due to the fact that there already were students in the class who had gone through the process, that there were more students 'in the same boat', and that the teachers and other students in the class had received refugee students in the past and knew what aspects of the education can be challenging and were more able to

be proactive when it came to these areas. In addition, T2 expressed a sentiment that can be linked to the work of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2013), who talk about how feeling singled out or being treated as different from the rest of class can feel intimidating for students, and that being giving adapted tasks to students with special needs is best done in an environment where adapted education is used extensively. The teacher said that having more refugee students and students with Norwegian as a second language in their class entailed that there were more students with similar needs with regards to adaptation of the education, presenting this as good in two ways; that more students require the same type of adaptation meant the time and effort the teacher spent on creating adapted content was for the benefit of several students, and students are not singled out as needing adaptation, but are rather part of a group that gets adapted education in one form or another. The teacher expressed a wish that refugee students were placed in classes with other students with similar needs, to ease the transition for both students and teachers, a sentiment that T3 and T4 agreed with.

6 Conclusions

This thesis has explored how teachers adapt their educational practice in order to meet the needs of refugee students, and what challenges teachers experience in the period of these students' introduction. I have looked into this topic by conducting interviews with seven teachers working at a middle school in Trondheim where there is an introductory program for language minority students. I have looked into how the teachers report that they adapt their education to refugee students' needs in didactic and practical ways, looked at what aspects of the educational environment teachers find challenging when receiving refugee students, and lastly looked at areas where the teachers report that they see a need or a possibility for improvement in the way the process is handled.

There is a growing refugee population, both worldwide and in Norway, and Norwegian schools will most likely need to continue working on how to meet the needs of students as best as possible for years to come. This research project does not provide any answers as to how to provide an education that gives refugee students the same possibilities as other students, but may go a way in highlighting some areas that teachers find challenging, and that might need to be addressed by schools and the educational system.

The following section 6.1 will present the conclusion and summary of the finding of this research project. In section 6.2 I will discuss some aspects that may limit the validity of my research, before I in section 6.3 will give my suggestions for further research.

6.1 My findings

The main goal of this research project was to explore how teachers adapt their education in order to meet the needs of refugee students. Through the analysis of the material gathered from interviews conducted with teachers who worked with refugee students, I found that the teachers expressed three main areas in which they adapted their education:

- Didactic adaptation: teachers used certain methods and tools in learning situations.
- Language adaptation: teachers focused on language adaptation.
- Content adaptation: teachers simplified and reduced content.

Analyzing the material gathered from the interviews, I found that the methods of didactic adaptation the teachers used were similar. Looking closer at the specific didactical approaches teachers used in order to adapt their education to the needs of refugee students, I found that most or all of the teachers used the following methods:

- Concretization
- Oral methods
- Simplifying content
- Reducing content/concepts

The teachers all stated that they used visualization and/or other tools and methods to aid in *concretization*. The most used tool was that of *visualization*, for example through the use of images and animations. The teachers also stated that they used objects, body language and concrete instructions in order to render the subject matter more concrete.

Teachers T1-T3 and T5-T7 all expressed that they relied more on *oral methods*, tasks and communication than on using written language, as they experienced that refugee students were more proficient in oral communication than written. Looking at the teachers' reported use of group or individual tasks, there was a difference of opinion, with some teachers stating that individual work seemed challenging for refugee students in their class, and others saying group work seemed more challenging. There was a consensus among all the teachers who addressed this topic (T1-T6) that the degree of individuality and self-regulation that is expected in Norwegian schools poses a challenge for refugee students who come from cultures where the students' role is looked at in a different way.

The biggest issue according to the teachers is *language*. All of the teachers interviewed stated that the biggest challenge they encountered in the education of refugee students was that of students' language proficiency. They stated that at the time of transition into regular classes refugee students do not have the sufficient skills in Norwegian needed to keep up with the education provided in the regular classes without requiring a lot of adaptation of the education. The teachers expressed that their focus was primarily on teaching the students Norwegian, and that learning subject matter and academic skills came secondary to this goal of improving students' language proficiency.

The teachers also adapted the *content* of their education. They did this in two main ways, through *simplification* and *reduction of concepts*. The teachers who taught regular classes (T2- T6) all reported that they used a weekly or monthly plan where students get an overview of the periods' main goals, concepts and homework. The teachers T2-T6 stated that they reduced the amount of work refugee students were expected to complete, removing concepts and tasks from the plan so the students had less subject matter to go through than the students in class who spoke Norwegian as their first language. They also talked about a need to simplify the content matter that they taught refugee students. They did this due to issues of students' academic language proficiency, as well as students' lack of 'background understanding', or previous knowledge and cultural references. When simplifying content teachers stated that they attempted to provide the refugee students with more of a basic understanding of the subject in question, for example teaching them that Henrik Ibsen is a Norwegian playwright and some concepts related to drama and literature, rather than analyzing the works of Ibsen like the rest of the class. Not all of the teachers discussed the topic of bilingual assistants extensively, but those who did (T2, T3, T6) reported that it was not necessary to simplify the content as much when students had bilingual assistants who could teach them in their first language, lending some credence to the idea of Cummins (2000) that minority language students who are transferred into target-language only classes often struggle with academic content in the target language which they might have acquired more easily if taught in a language they mastered.

6.1.1 Improving the reception and education of refugee students

This research project does not provide a substantial foundation on which I can base recommendations of my own regarding how to improve the education of refugee students, however I can summarize the recommendations and wishes expressed by the teachers interviewed, and comment on how these recommendations and wishes might be implemented. The most substantial finding of my research is the difficulty of trying to separate the different aspects of refugee students' education apart, as a great variety of factors both external and at school affect each other and play together to impact how the students do in school. The teachers interviewed gave the impression that it is difficult to know where to start, and what to address in which way to help these students in the best way possible. However, some main themes that the teachers interviewed in this project pointed to as posing a challenge in the students' introduction to and progress in schools were:

- The organization of the transitional process
- Students' language proficiency
- Caring for students social and mental health needs

The teachers I interviewed talked about how organizational aspects of the introduction of refugee students could pose a challenge. On this topic the teachers all expressed that they wanted better, more reliable ways of sharing information. Still, all of the teachers interviewed viewed students' language skills as the biggest challenge they experienced in the education of refugee students. They stated that the time students are allowed to stay in introductory classes is to short for them to become proficient enough in Norwegian to follow the education in regular classes, and they wished for more competence in how to teach students with Norwegian as a second language. The teachers interviewed also expressed a wish for more competence in the area of attending to refugee students' psychosocial needs. Schools and teachers are in a unique position to prevent mental health problems and to provide help to students who struggle with such issues, presupposing that teachers and the school have the knowledge to recognize sign that students might be struggling, and know how to proceed if a student appears to need help.

The answer to the question of how to improve the areas of refugee students' education that the teachers I interviewed pointed to as being in need of improvement seems to be giving the teachers more competence and knowledge about how to meet refugee students' needs in the best way possible. Through the interviews with the teachers, I discovered that even though the teachers often seemed to adapt their education in ways that agree with the recommendations of theories of multicultural pedagogy, many of them felt uncertain if what they were doing was right. Providing all teachers, not only those working in introductory classes, with some knowledge of how refugee students may have special needs, as well as some basic information on how to meet those needs might go a long way in making teachers confident in their abilities to care for all the students in their classes. In addition, looking into simple and user-friendly ways and routines for sharing information amongst relevant actors, and for keeping track of the progress of refugee students in their transition into Norwegian schools appears to be recommendable.

6.2 Limitations to the validity of my research

Certain aspects that limit the validity of my research need to be taken into consideration. The first is that the number of informants I conducted interviews with is too low to provide a basis for drawing generalized conclusions, though the informants gave me valuable and interesting material to work with. The teachers also all worked at the same school, something which was a conscious choice, but that again makes this a study that is hard to draw generalized conclusions from.

The second limitation to my research, the biggest issue I encountered during the research process, is the fact that I was unable to conduct group interviews with refugee students. The sensitivity of the topic being researched, and the necessity to err on the side of caution in with regards to ethical consideration and insistence that students participate in the project, combined with the pressure of a limited amount of time at my disposal led me to choosing to be satisfied with the material I managed to gather, and to work with what I got from the interviews of the teachers. Not being able to set up an interview with refugee students caused me to have to reframe the focus of the thesis, and entails that I had no opportunity to compare the experiences of the teachers and the issues they saw as most pressing to the experiences of the students themselves. As such I cannot say anything about what refugee students themselves actually find challenging or worthy of improvement in the process of their introduction to the school. However, I believe the findings of this thesis can highlight some areas that warrant more looking into, and that it contributes to highlight the necessity of including and educating all teachers to be able to meet the needs of a growing refugee population.

6.3 Suggestions for further research

The most obvious suggestion for further research in this area would be to increase the number of informants, in order to increase the validity of the results. A similarly apparent advice would be to include refugee students as informants. Including refugee students themselves would provide a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for adapting the education to their needs. It would be interesting to explore whether or not the challenges teachers experience in connection to the introduction of refugee students into Norwegian schools are similar to the aspects of their education that refugee students themselves find challenging.

7 Literature

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Appendix A: Original quotes

The quotes presented in the thesis are based on original interview material in Norwegian, and have been translated into English by myself. The original quotes, as transcribed from the audio recordings of the interviews are presented below in the original Norwegian format. The quotes are presented below in the same order in which they appear in the thesis. All quotes within a section are presented underneath the corresponding section title below, in order to make it easier to find the corresponding quote throughout the text.

4.1.1 Visualization and concretization

"Visuelle hjelpemidler er bra. Jeg tar med meg Aftenposten Junior på skolen, med små tekster og masse bilder og bildetekster og sånt. Så hvis det andre blir for vanskelig kan du si 'les en artikkel og strek under vanskelige ord'. Eller lag enkle spørsmål, hvor er overskriften, tittel, de orda der. Hvis du har noe visuelt og bruker kroppsspråk, peker og sånn, det er bra (T3)."

"og de så på bildet og de forsto ikke hva jeg prata om, fordi ost for de det er jo som vår cottage cheese. De identifiserer ikke bildet med det som jeg sier I det hele tatt. (…) Så jeg tror kulturelle koder er veldig viktig. Jeg tror at vi som jobber med folk fra andre land vi må vite litt, ikke masse, men litt om de landene (T1)."

4.1.2 Classroom activities

"På mange måter er det lettere å undervise de som kommer som barn av arbeidsinnvandrere fordi selv om de ikke kan norsk så kan de det å gå på skole. Mens med mange av de som kommer som flyktninger så må vi lære dem det i tillegg. For eksempel arbeidsvaner, at du kan studere, du har innarbeida noen rutiner på å gjøre lekser, bare praktiske ting egentlig, som hvordan du organiserer skriveboka di". (T5)

"Jeg vet det er litt klisjé, men det viktigste er variasjon (T3)."

4.2 Language

"selv om jeg er samfunnsfagslærer så er det jo språkinnlæring jeg holder på med. Det er jo det som er målet vårt i alle fag, enten det er matte eller gym eller.. det er jo å lære dem norsk. Så fagene er bare middelet (T5)."

4.2.1 Concept training and simplification

"Det er litt interessant, for det vi kaller et begrep i vår hverdag, trenger du jo egentlig 10 andre begrep for å forstå. Det er mye man kan snakke om enkelt med enkle ord, men vi sier ateist i stedet for ikke-troende, fordi på det nivået så skal du kunne bruke ordet ateist i riktig kontekst, og med et fag med en time i uka da så er det kanskje den største faglige utfordringa, at norsk skole er veldig begrepstung (T2)."

"Jeg må forenkle alt. Kutte konsepter, fokusere på mindre stoff. Jeg må alltid ha det i bakhodet, for det vi holder på med for det meste av tida, du kan ikke… analysere Ibsen, ikke sant. Du ser at det er her er det ikke noe vits i å prøve å lære de en gang. Det er en mangel på bakgrunnsforståelse. Noen elever kommer og, de er i timen og skal ha religion også finner de ut at 'oi, finnes det flere enn en religion i verden? Det visste jeg ikke'. Også skal du liksom si 'nå skal vi se på og sammenligne gudssynet i de forskjellige religionene'? Det er bare så fjernt noen ganger. Du kan ikke lære de om Ibsen, ikke sant. Du kan lære de at Ibsen er en kjent norsk forfatter, og gi eksempler på hva han har skrevet. Også må du heller jobbe med begreper, det er jo det de har nytte av. De må jo få opp dybdespråket sitt det er det det er (T3)."

4.2.2 Knowledge at time of transition

"de rettighetene som fremmedspråklige har, på norsk og særskilt norsk opplæring og alt, det er jo bare ment som en overgangsordning, til de lærer seg tilstrekkelig norsk eller dugende norsk eller hva det heter. Og sånn som det er nå, så er det norsk på et veldig veldig svakt nivå. Og det går ikke an at man kan lære seg norsk og forstå fag på tiende trinn-nivå når du har bodd her i ett til to år, det sier seg litt selv egentlig (T7)."

"Før du blir overført fullstendig, så skal du kunne uttrykke deg litt muntlig, litt skriftlig, ikke sant, ha muligheten til å fungere i en vanlig klasse. Men samtidig så har du begrensninger på hvor lenge du har lov til å bli i introduksjonsprogrammet. Så det er litt kryss-press der og (T2)."

"I begynnelsen når jeg starta å jobbe her så synes jeg de var flinkere enn jeg hadde trodd, at de forsto mer enn jeg hadde trodd… Men det var mer på det sosiale overflatespråket, når du kommer inn på det faglige så blir det brått mer vanskelig. Og det er jo veldig, sånn, typisk (T7)."

"vi jobba med økonomi, så da ble de første orda han lærte inntekter og utgifter og budsjett, ikke sant. Så da må du jobbe på så mange nivå på en gang, i et fag, det kan være utfordrende (T5)."

5.1.1 Transition process

"det er ekkelt å, som kontaktlærer eller som klasseleder, å ikke ha oversikt over hvem som faktisk skal være inne i timen din (T3)."

"akkurat nå så er det mange elever og alle har ulike morsmålslærere, det er bare utrolig mange folk å holde styr på, både elever og andre lærere (T3)."

"ikke sant, hvis det er ti nye elever den høsten, så må de som jobber i mottak snakke med kanskje ti forskjellige kontaktlærere. Så det er avhengig av situasjonen på skolen hvor mye vi får prata sammen. Og det er dessverre litt tilfeldig, hvor mye man får fulgt opp elevene (T2)."

"det er et klasserom som alltid er, du vet, i bevegelse. Noen som går til klassen sin, noen som kommer, og de er helt nye eller noen som vært der i to måneder, noen som har vært der i fire måneder. Det er veldig mye forskjellig bevegelse (T1)."

5.1.2 Information and communication

"Jeg tror at når du møter en elev så er det fint å ikke jobbe i mørket (T1)."

"Ja, jeg er litt splitta i forhold til det altså. Jeg synes ikke det er riktig på vegne av eleven, for eksempel den eleven hvor vi hadde om krig i en time og… måtte se på fæle bilder og sånn, det var helt sikkert ubehagelig for hu. Men jeg tror og det kan være ganske ubehagelig for hu å vite at alle lærerne på skolen vet hva som hendte med henne, sant. Jeg tenker litt sånn, la hu få lov til å være en vanlig elev uten en tung fæl historie som er velkjent (T7)."

5.2.1 Adressing students' psychological needs

"Det er vanskelig å se for seg at man er en flyktning i dag uten å ha opplevd noe som vi ville kalt traumatisk (T2)."

"hvis det sosiale og det psykiske ikke er på plass så får de ikke til det faglige heller. Det går jo en evig runddans, en evig ond sirkel det der tenker jeg (T6)."

5.2.2 Adapting to a new school culture

"De er vant til å bli vurdert, også kommer de hit og det er ingen karakterer, eller kanskje en eller to på et halvår. Også tenker de 'pff, wow' og at det ikke er noen krav eller plikter for de. I tillegg til at lærerne de er så forståelsesfulle, de synes kanskje synd på elever som ikke har hatt en sjanse til å få den samme skolegangen som norske elever og sånt. Mange sier at norske lærere er snille. At de respekterer personen, individet i eleven. Men den snillheten den, etter min mening, den er dårlig (T1)."

"til og med elever som har hatt en del skolegang strever med den norske graden av muntlig aktivitet, at det på en måte er litt opp til deg selv hvor mye du engasjerer deg (T2)."

5.2.3 The school as a place for socialization

"Du kan sitte der med så mye faglig ballast du bare vil, men hvis man ikke føler at man er en del av det ungdomssamfunnet som du skal være en del av.. du trenger å kjenne at du er inkludert (T2)."

"Jeg tenker at når den sosiale delen ikke er på plass så er det ikke noe som trekker de til klassen, ikke sant? De har ingen venner der, de har ingen å henge med, ingen å snakke med fag om, ingen å jobbe med, ikke sant? Og da har de ikke lyst til å være der. Så det påvirker jo virkelig faget (T6)."

"Det er fortsatt litt sånn 'oss og dem' dessverre. Det virker letter for guttene.. nå generaliserer jeg veldig her da, men det virker enklere for de fordi de pleier å spille fotball og sånne ting i friminuttet, mens jentene prater og sladrer. Og da er det vanskelig for de som ikke snakker norsk så veldig godt å være en del av det, å henge med i samtalen". (T3)

Appendix B: Interview guide

Før intervjuet starter:
- Er det greit at jeg tar opp intervjuet på bånd?
- Informert samtykke: Gi infoskriv for signering
    - Du kan velge å ikke svare på spørsmål om du ikke vil det.
    - Du vil bli anonymisert i oppgaven.
- Fortell om temaene vi skal prate om i løpet av intervjuet.

Innledende spørsmål:
- Hva er din utdanningsbakgrunn?
- Hvor lenge har du vært lærer? Hvor lenge i din nåværende stilling?
- Hvor lenge har du jobbet med elever med bakgrunn som flyktninger?
- I hvilken sammenheng jobber du med disse elevene? Fortell litt om dine arbeidsoppgaver.

Forkunnskap
- Hvordan var du forberedt på dette arbeidet før oppstart av undervisning?
- Har du fått noe kursing eller annen opplæring/informasjon?
    - Var dette bra/tilstrekkelig?
- Er det noe kompetanse du føler du mangler opp mot det å undervise elever med flyktningebakgrunn?
- Hvilken informasjon får du om elevene før disse begynner i klassen din?
    - Er dette tilstrekkelig?

Undervisning
- Er det noen spesielle hensyn å ta med tanke på undervisningsmetoder og arbeidsmåter i undervisning av flyktninger?
    - Hvilke undervisningsmetoder fungerer best og verst?
    - Hvilke arbeidsmåter fungerer best og verst?
    - Er det noen utfordringer knyttet til elevaktivitet/aktiv deltagelse?
    - Hvordan samarbeider elevene?
    - Hvordan forholder elevene seg til normer og regler i klasserommet?

- Hva virker å være det vanskeligste for elevene, sett fra ditt ståsted?
- Er det noen elementer i undervisningssituasjonen som det har vært uventet at var utfordrende for disse elevene?
- Har det vært noen forskjell i hvordan du har arbeidet etter hvert som du har fått mer erfaring?
- Er det noe du skulle ønske du hadde visst da du først startet arbeidet med disse elevene?

Organisering
- Hva synes du om organiseringen av introduksjonstilbudet til elever med flyktningebakgrunn?
- Er det noe du ville endret på?

Avsluttende:
- Er det noe vi ikke har pratet om som du synes er relevant?
- Takk for deltagelsen