Voices of Change:
How Public Attitudes Shaped Refugee Education Policies During 2015 EU Refugee Management Crisis

Master Thesis

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Abstract

During the 2015 refugee management crisis, European Union member states struggled to uphold the international standards of high quality and accessible education to refugee children, which triggered countries to formulate and implement new national refugee education policies. This study examines how public attitudes towards refugee education, migration, and integration influenced primary education policies for refugee children during the crisis in the Netherlands and Sweden. Consequently, the following research question is posed: how do public attitudes influence national refugee education policies in the European Union? By answering this question, this study fills in significant research gaps in comparative education and migration policy literature and meets two main objectives: (1) to enhance the theoretical understanding of how public attitudes shape national refugee education policy formulation and implementation in the EU and (2) to analyze the roles and influence of interest groups and the general public in shaping refugee education policymaking. I employ a comparative case study (CCS) methodology combined with a comparative process tracing (CPT) approach. In summary, I demonstrate that the primary education policies for refugee children during the crisis generally reflected societal attitudes and interests. Interestingly, however, it seems that while politicians are responsive to both the unorganized public (i.e., voters) and the organized interest groups, the bureaucracy is mainly responsive to the policy preferences of the organized interest groups. The actions of politicians align closely with their voters attitudes towards migration, integration, and refugee education and the interests of the interest groups. These stakeholder groups generally advocated for new refugee education policies that only slightly differed from the existing policies. Based on these findings, I propose policy recommendations as well as recommendations for future research.

Key words: refugee education, policymaking, public attitudes, interest groups

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List of Abbreviations

AVS	-	Algemene Vereniging Schoolleiders (General Association of School Leaders)
AZC	-	Asielzoekerscentrum (Asylum Center)
C	-	Centerpartiet (Centre Party)
CCS	-	Comparative Case Study
CDA	-	Christen-Democratisch Appèl (Christian Democratic Party)
COA	-	Centraal Orgaan Asielzoekers (Central Agency for Asylum Seekers)
CPT	-	Comparative Process Tracing
CU	-	Christenunie (Christion Union)
D66	-	Democraten-66 (Democrats-66)
EU	-	European Union
FpL	-	Folkpartiet Liberalerna (People's Party-Liberals)
GES	-	Global Education Strategy
GL	-	Groenlinks (Greenleft)
KD	-	Kristdemokraterna (Christian Democrats)
M	-	Moderata Samlingspartiet (Moderate Party)
MP	-	Miljöpartiet de Gröna (Green Party)
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NT2	-	Nederlands als Tweede Taal (Dutch as a Second Language)
PAT	-	Principal-Agent Theory
PvdA	-	Partij van de Arbeid (Labor party)
PvdD	-	Partij van de Dieren (Party for the Animals)
PVV	-	Partij voor Vrijheid (Party for Freedom)
SAP	-	Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet (Swedish Social Democratic Party)
SD	-	Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden Democrats)
SFI	-	Swedish for Immigrants
SGP	-	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (Christian Conservative Party)
SP	-	Socialistische Partij (Socialist Party)
VNG	-	Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (Association of Dutch Municipalities)
Vp	-	Vänsterpartiet (Left Party)
VVD	-	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (Liberal Party)

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1. Introduction

Under the UN Declaration of Human Rights, UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, European Convention on Human Rights, and the EU's Reception Conditions Directive, all refugee children in the European Union (EU) have the right to accessible and high-quality education within three months of their arrival in the host country (EU Commission DG HOME, 2024; UN, 2018; Zambeta & Papadakou, 2019). These international standards are based on the notion that education supports integration, enhances language acquisition, provides stability, and mitigates the effects of trauma (Burde et al., 2017; Morrice, 2022). EU member states are responsible for upholding the right to education, which has resulted in varying refugee education policy approaches across the Union (Mamali & Arvanitis, 2022). In some countries, for example, refugee children first follow preparatory classes before they enter the regular education system, whereas in other states, children have the possibility to directly enter the regular educational system but with additional support (Zambeta & Papadakou, 2019). These differences show that *"[global] policy ideas are […] received and interpreted differently within different political architectures, national infrastructures and national ideologies"* (Ball, 1998, p. 126), and that *"the socio-political environment [is shaped by] the context within which policy is framed and enacted"* (Viennet & Pont, 2017, p. 36).

During the European refugee management crisis of 2015, refugee education became – more than ever – an European issue (de Wal Pastoor, 2016; Huddleston & Wolffhardt, 2016). In this year, more than 1.2 million people, mainly Syrians fleeing war and conflict, applied for asylum in the EU, of which 30 percent was children (Eurostat, 2023; Eurostat, 2024). Many member states faced challenges in regulating the reception and integration of the large influx of refugees (Cerna, 2019) and in achieving the desired educational standards provided to refugee children (Morrice, 2022). As a result, many refugee children were not enrolled into formal education within the stipulated three-month timeframe (Huddleston & Wolffhardt, 2016; UNHCR & UNICEF, 2019; Zambeta & Papadakou, 2019). In other words: a gap emerged between the international policy standards and regulations and national refugee education policy formulation and implementation (de Wal Pastoor, 2016). This lead to discussions within EU member states on how to improve national refugee education policies (de Wal Pastoor, 2016).

Comparative education scholars have attempted to explain why, when and how international standards are implemented differently across various socio-political contexts. In their explanations, they often highlight how national cultural factors, the path dependent nature of

institutionalized national norms and values, and national regulatory frameworks shape national education policies (Verger, 2014). However, limited cross-country comparative analyses on this matter are available (McCarthy, 2018; Verger, 2014). There is also limited research on the ways in which national migration and integration discourses shape the formulation and implementation of national refugee education policies. In contrast, scholars on migration policy have extensively studied these contextual and cross-country dynamics. Among others, they have identified a significant gap between societal discourses and attitudes towards migration and integration and the corresponding policies. This gap highlights that in the policymaking process, powerful interest groups advocating for (pro-migration) positions can exert influence that outweighs (negative) societal attitudes (Czaika & De Haas, 2011; Facchini & Mayda, 2008). However, these findings have not yet been applied to the refugee education policymaking processes.

Therefore, this study combines the insights and research gaps from the comparative education and migration policy fields to explain how national socio-political developments, and specifically how public attitudes on refugee education, migration and integration, influenced the national refugee education policies in Sweden and the Netherlands during the 2015 refugee management crisis. In doing so, the objectives of this study are twofold: (1) to enhance the theoretical understanding of how public attitudes shape national refugee education policy formulation and implementation in the EU and (2) to analyze the roles and influence of interest groups and the general public in shaping refugee education policymaking. Thus, the central question guiding this study is:

How do public attitudes influence national refugee education policies in the European Union?

By answering this research question, this study holds significant societal relevance. First, it gives insight into the responsiveness of the bureaucracy and politicians to public attitudes, as well as the degree to which refugee parents and refugee children themselves are meaningfully included in the refugee education policymaking process. Ensuring their inclusion fosters trust and legitimacy in governance, safeguards the rights of refugee populations, and ensures policies meet the needs of refugee children (Böhmelt, 2021; Brooks & Manza, 2006). Additionally, examining stakeholder inclusion might also reveal whether children's educational rights are consistently prioritized throughout the policy process in accordance with international policy regulations. Based on these insights, this study offers recommendations for future policies with the ultimate aim to improve accessibility and quality of primary education for refugee children.

In this study, I conduct a comparative case study (CCS) with a comparative process tracing (CPT) approach on Sweden and the Netherlands. I develop and test a causal framework that links public attitudes to refugee education policies. In summary, I demonstrate that the primary education policies for refugee children during the crisis generally reflected societal attitudes and interests. Interestingly, however, it seems that while politicians are responsive to both the unorganized public (i.e., voters) and the organized interest groups, the bureaucracy is mainly responsive to the policy preferences of the organized interest groups. The actions of politicians align closely with their voters attitudes towards migration, integration, and refugee education and the interests of the interest groups. These stakeholder groups generally advocated for new refugee education policies that only slightly differed from the existing policies.

Following this introduction, chapter 2 presents the theoretical foundations of this study. Chapter 3 elaborates on the research methodology. The findings are presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5. This study ends with policy recommendations and recommendations for future research in Chapter 6.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Conceptualizing Refugee Education Policy

National refugee education policies document the regulation of refugee education on a national level, while international regulations establish basic standards and principles for countries to follow in their policies (Cerna, 2019). In these international regulations, refugee education is defined depending on the context in which the education is provided. It includes education in disaster-zones (Education in Emergency), introductory/preparatory classes for newly arrived refugee children in the host country, and long-term educational provisions in host countries (Cerna, 2019). According to Huddleston and Wolffhardt (2016), successful refugee education policies focus on the provision of both high-quality and accessible education. They include clear regulations on the initial enrollment of a child into formal education and on the ways in which the child, once enrolled, is supported throughout their educational journey. Several key policy dimensions are used to monitor and evaluate national refugee education policies, of which applicable to primary education: (1) enrollment into mandatory education, (2) type of newcomers classes, (3) provision of second language instruction, (4) presence of additional support, (5) existence of tracking systems (Crul et al., 2019).

2.2 Refugee Education, Migration & Integration

Central to the understanding of national refugee education policy is the relationship between refugee education policy and social policy at large: refugee education policy is a component of the broader national social policies (Zambeta & Papadakou, 2019). As a result, national discussions on the content of refugee education policy mutually influence discussions on welfare services and the national views on, among others, migration and integration (Zambeta & Papadakou, 2019). Policies related to migration and integration are highly politicized due to their deep connection with political ideologies and debates surrounding migration, citizenship, and national identity within both civic society and governmental institutions (McCarthy, 2018). A large influx of refugees into a country typically sparks intense debates regarding the development and implementation of migration and integration policies (McCarthy, 2018), leading to refugee education policies being highly politicized and subject to significant scrutiny and debate.

Over the years, the relationship between refugees' integration in society and education has become stronger in the sense that refugee education has become a tool for refugee children's integration in the host country (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019; Salem, 2022). In general, there

are three main approaches that characterize a country's refugee education policy strategy to integrate refugee children into society through the provision of education: monocultural integration, multicultural integration and intercultural integration (ODIHR, 2018). The monocultural integration approach aims to integrate refugee children in society by teaching them the host country's dominant language, culture, traditions and norms. The original cultural and linguistic background of the child is deemed irrelevant in succeeding the new country. In contrast, the multicultural integration approach embraces the student's cultural background. Here, refugee students only learn the additional knowledge and skills essential for succeeding in the host country. The intercultural integration approach takes this a step further by actively welcoming the student's background. In this context, schools stimulate cultural and linguistic exchange (ODIHR, 2018).

2.3 Causal Framework: National Drivers of Refugee Education Policy

2.3.1 Inflow of Refugees and Changing State of Public Attitudes

Contextual conditions provide context for the interpretation and application of the theories that are discussed in detail below. They are the *"factors that determine whether a causal relationship functions as theorized"* (Beach & Pedersen, 2016, p. 89). In this case, the contextual conditions are (1) the inflow of a significant number of refugees that creates an opportunity for new policy formulation and implementation and (2) the changing public attitudes towards migration and integration during the crisis. First, crises, like the refugee management crisis of 2015, prompt politicians and policymakers to revisit their current policy framework, pressured by the public and their (changing) views on the policy issue at stake, while also bringing new issues to the forefront of the political agenda (Ansell, Boin & Kuipers, 2016). This suggests that a significant influx of refugees in a country could open a window of opportunity for new migration and integration policies, including refugee education policies.

Second, attitudes *"provide the lens through which individuals view their world and other people",* and it determines how we receive, process and respond to information (Hatemi & McDermott, 2016, p. 345). These attitudes are the result of a combination of environmental, developmental and social conditions as well as of inherent individual and biological traits (Hatemi & McDermott, 2016). Public attitudes on migration and integration encompass various aspects, including attitudes towards immigrants, the anticipated societal impact of immigration, and immigration policy (Dennison & Vrânceanu, 2022). Some of these views are more difficult to change than others. For example, fundamental attitudes, or what Sabatier (1998) calls "deep

core beliefs", are unlikely to change. Deep core belief systems refer to individual fundamental belief systems, including fundamental normative and ontological views on social equality, individual freedom, and religion (Sabatier, 1998). On a lower level, policy core beliefs represent values in relation to a specific issue. They include value priorities on the relative importance of different policy issues, but also on perceptions concerning the severity of an issue and its primary causes (Sabatier, 1998). Policy core beliefs are difficult to change (Sabatier, 1998). On the other hand, the so-called "secondary aspects" of a belief system, the choice of instruments used to achieve policy objectives, can more easily be changed (Sabatier, 1998).

2.3.2 Stakeholder Attitudes in Agenda Setting

During the agenda-setting stage of policymaking, stakeholders both within and outside the government actively work to influence the policy agenda in accordance with their interests (Howlett, Ramesh & Perl, 2009; Jann & Wegrich, 2017). Relevant stakeholders change over time, across policy issue, and among different countries (Viennet & Pont, 2017). In the realm of refugee education policies, relevant stakeholders may include teachers, school principals, (refugee) students, parents of (refugee) students, local communities, local authorities, NGOs, and governmental education and migration organizations. Each of these stakeholders voice their interests through different channels (Viennet & Pont, 2017). On the one hand, stakeholders might unite their voices, interests and power in larger interest groups. Interest groups act as essential channels for (individual) stakeholders to express their views and apply significant pressure on policymakers to promote their specific agendas (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). Utilizing the window of opportunity created by the crisis, interest groups leverage public attitudes towards the policy issue at stake to advocate for their preferred policy outcomes (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007; Malen, 2006). On the other hand, other stakeholders, such as parents of (refugee) students, might not be part of an interest group on refugee education, but can voice their interests through (local) elections as part of the national electorate (Viennet & Pont, 2017). Therefore, when conducting a stakeholder analysis, it is important to take both groups of stakeholders, the organized interest groups and the unorganized public, into account.

Based on Sabatier's (1998) insights on deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs and secondary aspects, I theorize that when deep core and policy core beliefs towards refugee education or towards migration and integration change, the unorganized public and organized interest groups will push for new refugee education policies that differ significantly from the existing policies to align with their new belief systems. Conversely, when societal attitudes on the level of secondary aspects shift, these stakeholders are believed to be in support of policies

that build upon rather than entirely depart from its previous policy approach. All in all, given the unlikeliness of transformative change in fundamental deep core and policy core attitudes (Sabatier, 1998), I hypothesize that if the organized interest groups and the unorganized public actively express their interests, they will advocate for new policies that focus on improving existing policy frameworks to better accommodate evolving views and needs, while maintaining the overall structure and principles of existing refugee education policies (H1).

2.3.3 Bureaucratic Goals in Policy Formulation

After interest groups have set the agenda for new refugee education policies, it is now up to the bureaucracy to address the interests raised through policy formulation (Howlett, Ramesh & Perl, 2009). Bureaucracies are the administrative bodies of a government, comprising of non-politicians that formulate and implement policies (Peters, 2015). These agents are delegated this authority to develop and implement policies by the principal: the politicians (Miller, 2005). Central to these principal-agent dynamics, also referred to as the principal-agent theory (PAT), are the underlying assumptions that (1) the goals of the agent and the principal differ and (2) the agent has a comparative informational advantage over the principal (Miller, 2005). In this context, bureaucrats serve as independent political actors, equipped not only with the expertise to develop and execute policies but also with their own networks and connections to the public (Peters, 2015). When leveraging these resources, they can exert pressure on political decision-makers or advocate for policies that may diverge from the preferences of politicians (Peters, 2015).

What, then, are the goals of the bureaucrats and how do they leverage their information asymmetry to advance these interests? According to Niskanen's (1968) bureaucracy theory, the bureaucracy's goal is to maximize their bureaucratic budget. This leads to a disconnect between the policy goal of principal to improve the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of public service delivery and the goal of the agent to maximize the budget and cut unnecessary costs (Niskanen, 1968). Information asymmetry in favor of the bureaucracy, which is increased by the bureaucracy's collaboration with knowledgeable interest groups, allows the bureaucracy to push for higher budgets (Niskanen, 1968). Informed by the literature on the budget-maximizing bureaucrat and within the context of refugee education policy formulation, I hypothesize that if bureaucracies collaborate with interest groups through organized meetings and individual consultations, they use this information advantage on the policy issue to advocate for increased funding in their policy proposals and interactions with politicians (H2).

2.3.4 Politicians Responsiveness to the Public in Policy Adoption

After the policy has been formulated by the bureaucracy, politicians decide whether or not to adopt the proposed policy (Howlett, Ramesh & Perl, 2009). To assess the extent to which politicians are responsive to the interests of the public when making these decisions, two factors need to be considered. First, in democratic countries, politicians are expected to represent the variety of public interests and to adopt policies that meet their demands (Ansell, 2010; Böhmelt, 2021). Politicians also have a strategic incentive to do so in order to reduce the risks of public upheaval, declining trust and electoral losses (Böhmelt, 2021; Brooks & Manza, 2006). Second, Böhmelt (2021) finds that politicians are particularly responsive to the public's demands in case of high saliency of the issue. In making these claims, he distinguishes between the unorganized attitudes of the citizens, for example the electorate, and the organized attitudes of citizens through interest groups. As he states, the agenda of the interest groups and the attitudes of the unorganized public both have the potential to shape (migration) policies, *"but the former largely cancels out the latter until a salient point is reached at which the influence stemming from public opinion takes over—the public can no longer be 'ignored' and is then more influential"* (Böhmelt, 2021, p. 1464). Applying Böhmelt's theory to the refugee education policy field, I hypothesize that if politicians perceive the policy issue as urgent, as demonstrated by their statements in parliament and their votes in favor of policy improvements, they will be responsive to their electorate and their actions aligned with their party manifesto. Conversely, when politicians perceive the policy issue as low in salience, they are more likely to engage with interest groups to address gaps in refugee education policy (H3).

2.3.5 Causal Framework Summarized

Table 1 summarizes the proposed causal framework and hypotheses.

Table 1. Causal Mechanism.

Contextual Conditions: (1) Influx of Refugees and (2) State of Public Attitudes				
Causal mechanism	**Cause (C):** Stakeholder Attitudes in Agenda Setting	**Stage 1:** Bureaucratic Goals in Policy Formulation	**Stage 2:** Politicians Responsiveness to the Public in Policy Adoption	**Outcome (O):** Refugee Education Policy
Theory	Utilizing the window of opportunity created by the crisis, the unorganized public and the organized interest groups apply significant pressure on the government to create refugee education policies in line with their interests (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007).	The bureaucracy is delegated the authority to formulate policy proposals. They collaborate with interest groups to advance their objectives through the policymaking process (Miller, 2005; Niskanen, 1968; Peters, 2015).	Politicians have a moral responsibility and strategic incentive to adopt policy proposals in line with the interests of the unorganized public and the organized interest groups (Ansell, 2010; Böhmelt, 2021; Brooks & Manza, 2006).	
Hypothesis	*H1*: If the organized interest groups and the unorganized public actively express their interests, they will advocate for new policies that focus on improving existing policy frameworks to better accommodate evolving views and needs, while maintaining the overall structure and principles of existing refugee education policies (Sabatier, 1998).	*H2*: If bureaucracies collaborate with interest groups through organized meetings and individual consultations, they use this information advantage on the policy issue to advocate for increased funding in their policy proposals and interactions with politicians (Niskanen, 1968).	*H3*: If politicians perceive the policy issue as urgent, as demonstrated by their statements in parliament and their votes in favor of policy improvements, they will be responsive to their electorate and their actions aligned with their party manifesto. Conversely, when politicians perceive the policy issue as low in salience, they are more likely to engage with interest groups to address gaps in refugee education policy (Böhmelt, 2021).	

2.3 Alternative Drivers of National Refugee Education Policy

In the existing literature, a variety of alternative national drivers of refugee education policy formulation and implementation are described. These include political institutions and administrative and regulatory viability. The former refers to the political party structures and political system (centralized vs. decentralized) of a country (Verger, 2014). For example,

subnational entities – e.g. the federal states in Germany – can have significant influence on education policy implementation of the national government, sometimes even through voting power (Ansell, 2010). A decentralized political system might also result in different refugee education policies within the same country (Viennet & Pont, 2017; Zambeta & Papadakou, 2019). The latter is concerned with the practicalities of implementing, or borrowing, a new refugee education policy. As Verger (2014, p. 21) states: *"new policy ideas are most likely to be taken up by policymakers if they perceive these ideas as technically workable and fitting within their budgetary, administrative and time-horizon constraints and capacities"*. Additionally, governments may instrumentalize global education policies to neutralize internal opposition to reform and thereby to support their own political agenda (Verger, 2014). Because global recommendations are often deemed to be neutral, borrowing these policies ideas might be used as a way to implement certain policies that would otherwise be impossible due to internal opposition (Verger, 2014). In cases of internal power struggles and of significant polarization in the refugee education debate, global policy implementation might also be the only way to bridge the interests and come to a solution (Besche-Truth, 2023; Verger, 2014).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In this study, I conduct a deductive comparative case study (CCS) in which I examine how the independent variable (public attitudes), or the Cause (C), influences the dependent variable (refugee education policy), or the Outcome (O). Given the interrelationship between refugee education, migration and integration policies, public attitudes refer to public attitudes towards refugee education as well as towards migration and integration. Specific attention is paid to the causal mechanism that shapes the relationship between the independent and dependent variable (Table 1). Therefore, a comparative process tracing (CPT) approach is taken.

3.2 Operationalization

The operationalization of the dependent variable is summarized in Table 2. The categories, indicators and values are derived directly from existing literature.

Table 2. Operationalization of the Dependent Variable.

Variable	Category	Indicator	Value
Refugee education policy	Enrollment in mandatory education (Crul et al., 2019)	Refugee children must be enrolled into education by law	-Yes -No
	Type of newcomers classes (Crul et al., 2019)	Refugee children are integrated into regular education, not segregated for more than a year in newcomers classes	-Yes -No
	Provision of second language instruction (Crul et al., 2019)	Second language instruction is a distinct subject in regular education	-Yes -No
	Presence of additional support (Crul et al., 2019)	Refugee children are provided with socio-economic support	-Yes -No
	Existence of tracking systems (Crul et al., 2019)	National tracking and assessment systems are in place to monitor refugee children	-Yes -No
	Integration of refugee children into formal education (ODIHR, 2018).	The cultural and linguistic background of the child is irrelevant (1), embraced (2) or welcomed (3) in education	-Monocultural integration (1) -Multicultural integration (2) -Intercultural integration (3)

The categories of the variables in the causal mechanism are derived from established literature. The indicators and values are carefully selected through logical reasoning and empirical evidence (Table 3).

Table 3. Operationalization of the Causal Mechanism.

Causal mechanism	Category	Indicator	Value
Contextual condition	Influx of refugee opens policy window	Increase in the number refugees compared to previous year	-Yes -No
		New refugee education policy is formulated and implemented	-Yes -No
	The shifting state of attitudes towards migration and integration	Positive or negative attitudes (of total population)	-Strongly positive (>75%) -Mildly positive (>50%) -Mildly negative (>25%) -Strongly negative (<25%)
Cause	Stakeholders express policy preferences	The extent to which the desired new policy differs from the existing policy approach	-Fundamental difference (new policy fundamentally differs from existing policy) -Slight difference (new policy is in line with existing policy approach)
	Organized interest groups actively advocate for their interests	Level of advocacy observed through: -Protests -Social media posts -Blogposts -Lobbying reports -Newspaper articles -Contact with (local) government officials	-High (3 or more channels of expression) -Moderate (2 channels) -Low (1 channel) -None
	The unorganized public actively advocates for their interests	Level of advocacy observed through: -Protests -Social media posts -Blogposts -Lobbying reports -Newspaper articles -Contact with government officials -Elections	-High (3 or more channels of expression) -Moderate (2 channels) -Low (1 channel) -None
Stage 1	Collaboration between bureaucracy and interest groups	Level of collaboration observed through: -Policy proposals -Letters to and from the bureaucracy -Advocacy reports -Speeches -Parliamentary debates	-High (3 or more collaborative efforts observed) - Moderate (2 efforts) - Low (1 effort) - None
	Bureaucracy's budget-maximization related interests	Level of budget-maximizing behavior observed through: -Policy proposals -Letters to and from the bureaucracy -Advocacy reports -Speeches -Parliamentary debates	-High (3 or more channels of expression) -Moderate (2 channels) -Low (1 channel) -None
Stage 2	Issue salience	Level of perceived urgency observed through: -Policy proposals -Letters to and from the bureaucracy -Speeches -Parliamentary debates	-High (issue dominates policy discourse) -Moderate (frequent mentions) -Low (rare mentions) -None
	Responsiveness to the unorganized public & organized interest groups	Level of responsiveness observed through: -Policy proposals -Letters to and from the bureaucracy -Speeches -Parliamentary debates	-High (3 or more responsive efforts observed) - Moderate (2 efforts) - Low (1 effort) - None

3.3 Case Selection

To answer the research question, this study focuses on two EU countries: Sweden and the Netherlands. These two EU countries are chosen based on their similarities in the alternative explanations (Table 4) and their comparable trend towards more negative public attitudes on migration and integration during the crisis (Table 5), but on their differences in refugee education policies (Table 6). Thereby, a most similar systems design is adopted.

Table 4. Similarities in Alternative Explanations.

Alternative explanation	Similarities between Sweden and the Netherlands
Political party system	Consensual multi-party systems
Political system	Unitary, centralized systems
Capabilities	Stable political and economic environment with an abundance of (financial) resources, capable of developing and implementing successful policies
Global (EU) regulations	Subject to the same UN and EU regulations: - Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and its 1967 Protocol - Global Compact on Refugees - EU's Reception Conditions Directive

Table 5. Negative Shift in Public Attitudes on Migration and Integration.

	Year	Sweden	The Netherlands
Public attitudes on migration and integration[1]	2014	Mildly positive: 59.5%	Mildly negative: 31.9%
	2016	Mildly negative: 48.3%	Largely negative: 16.3%

3.3.1 Outcome (O): Refugee Education Policy

Given the focus on Sweden and the Netherlands, refugee education refers to the short term introductory education as well as the long-term educational provisions for refugee children in the host country (Cerna, 2019). In these countries, refugee education in policy documents is often referred to as "newcomers education" or "education to newcomers children". This means that refugee children in Sweden and the Netherlands are subject to the same educational policies as, for example, expat children and other immigrant children. The Dutch and Swedish refugee education policies are summarized in Table 6.

[1] Percentage of the population that agreed to the following statement: "The government must be generous judging applications for refugee status." (ESS ERIC, 2023)

In the Netherlands, education is compulsory for all refugee children, regardless of legal status, within three days of their arrival in the country (Crul et al., 2015). Refugee children can be enrolled in one of four types of schools. Type 1, type 2 and type 3 schools are separated from mainstream education and aim to introduce refugee children to the Dutch language and culture before they transition to regular primary education within 1.5 years. The majority of refugee children are placed in these schools. In type 4 schools, refugee children are directly integrated into regular primary schools (B&T Organisatieadvies, 2016; Crul et al., 2015). In types 1, 2 and 3 schools, Dutch is taught intensely with the use of Dutch as a Second Language (NT2) teaching materials. In type 4 schools extra language support might be provided by the teacher. In regular primary education, Dutch as a second language is not a distinct subject. Teachers may offer additional language support, although this is not mandatory (Crul et al., 2015). Schools are not required to provide socio-emotional support (Crul et al., 2015). Additionally, when a new student enters the system, the teachers are expected to come with a personal development plan. However, no mandatory diagnostic tests exists; teacher might conduct an informal diagnostic test, depending on the capacity of the teacher and school (Inspectie van Onderwijs, 2016). All in all, the Dutch refugee education strategy follows the monocultural integration approach (ODIHR, 2018): it prioritizes learning the Dutch language and culture while, due to segregated schools, making limited efforts to foster cultural exchanges with native-born children.

To address the substantial student influx in 2015, new refugee education policies were implemented. These policies primarily focused on practical solutions to assist the government, municipalities, and schools in managing the influx. Among others, a customized funding scheme (maatwerkbekostiging) was introduced to financially support schools in delivering education, providing up to 9,000 euros per student annually (OCW, 2016). To mitigate potential funding shortfalls, school boards also received the opportunity to apply for special funding (bijzondere bekostiging) (OCW, 2016).

In Sweden, refugee children receive additional language and socio-emotional support in school. They are, as long as their asylum application is pending, not obliged to go to school (AIDA, 2015). Swedish municipalities bear the responsibility of enrolling refugee children into formal education, which can either take the form of introductory or regular classes. It is aimed to transition children as soon as possible to regular classes in mainstream primary education (ADIA, 2015). Moreover, schools have an obligation to provide additional socio-emotional support to refugee children (Crul et al., 2015). Mandatory diagnostic test for all new (refugee) students must be conducted within two months of their arrival at the school (Bunar, 2017; Emilsson, 2016). In addition, Swedish as a second language is a distinct subject in all schools

with its own learning materials and taught by specifically trained teachers, so newcomer children integrated into regular classes can easily learn the new language. Refugee children also receive additional language support (Crul et al., 2015). Interestingly, refugee children in primary education also have the opportunity to study in their native language (Ring, 2016). Given that Swedish schools actively embrace students' backgrounds, Swedish refugee education policies adopt a multicultural integration approach (ODIHR, 2018).

Nevertheless, as the influx of refugees surged following the summer of 2015, municipalities and schools found themselves increasingly overwhelmed by the growing number of arriving refugee students (Hagelund, 2020). Therefore, new policies were implemented. First, the for-decades existing introduction classes became legalized per law (Bunar, 2017). Second, school principals became obliged to assess the student's academic knowledge and experience (Bunar, 2017). Third, the government advised schools to physically locate the introduction classes close to the regular classes to promote integration into the mainstream educational system and mitigate segregation (Bunar, 2017). Fourth, when schools lack properly trained teachers or when the number of refugee students in schools is low, (online) remote learning for these children became regulated by law (Ring, 2016). Lastly, the government allocated substantial funds to assist municipalities in fulfilling their educational responsibilities (Emilsson, 2016).

Table 6. Differences in Refugee Education Policy.

Variable	Indicator	The Netherlands	Sweden
Refugee education policy	Refugee children must be enrolled into education by law	Yes	No
	Refugee children are integrated into regular education, not segregated for more than a year in newcomers classes	No	Yes
	Second language instruction is a distinct subject in regular education	No	Yes
	Refugee children are provided with socio-economic support	No	Yes
	National tracking and assessment systems are in place to monitor refugee children	No	Yes
	The cultural and linguistic background of the child is irrelevant (1), embraced (2) or welcomed (3) in education	Monocultural integration (1)	Multicultural integration (2)

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data are collected through the triangulation of a variety of quantitative and qualitative data sources. To perform a document analysis, data are derived from newspaper articles, poll/survey

data, academic articles, lobbying and advocacy reports, political party manifesto's and open government publications such as parliamentary debates, speeches, letters, and policy proposals (Appendix A). Data are collected for the period before and after the 2015 crisis: from 2014, when discussion on new refugee education policies started, to 2016, when the final policies were adopted. Data are collected on a country-by-country basis, and included both English language sources and native language sources (Dutch and Swedish). As stated, the data are analyzed using a causal process tracing approach. Specifically, I conduct a theory-testing process tracing study. Thereby, the goal of the analysis is to study whether the theorized and hypothesized stages of the causal mechanism (Table 1) hold true in both of the country cases (Beach & Pedersen, 2016). To accept the first hypothesis, I anticipate that when the unorganized public and/or organized interest groups demonstrate high or moderate levels of advocacy, they plead for new policies that differ slightly from the existing refugee education policies. For the second hypothesis to be supported, I expect to observe moderate to high efforts by the bureaucracy to maximize their budget in the case of high or moderate levels of collaboration between the bureaucracy and interest groups. The third hypothesis will be considered valid if there is moderate to high responsiveness of politicians to interest groups during periods of low issue salience, and moderate to high responsiveness to the unorganized public when perceived issue salience is high.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

To improve construct validity, multiple data sources and methods are used (triangulation). This is done to gather a comprehensive range of relevant data and mitigate potential systematic biases. In addition, variables are operationalized in detail, based on indices and academic literature, ensuring consistent testing of the causal mechanisms. Given the primary focus on establishing and testing the causal mechanism linking public attitudes and refugee education policy, emphasis is placed on achieving high internal validity rather than external validity. To improve internal validity, a causal mechanism is theorized and tested with the use of the causal process tracing approach, recognized as a valid method for empirically researching cause-and-effect relationships (Beach & Pedersen, 2016). Regarding generalizability, efforts were made to enhance external validity by selecting country cases based on theoretical underpinnings (analytical generalization). To improve reliability, and thereby repeatability and consistency, I included the most important collected data in the appendices.

However, enhancing the development of the causal mechanism could have been achieved through participant interviews with pertinent stakeholders. However, due to capacity

constraints, this avenue was not pursued. This is one of the main methodological limitations of this study. Another significant limitation arises from my limited proficiency in Swedish, potentially impeding the comprehensive exploration of relevant Swedish documentation. To address this challenge, I relied on online translation services, as well as digital resources and databases summarizing crucial information. While the well-defined operationalization of variables facilitated the extraction of thematic data, the online translation of Swedish documents might negatively impact the construct and external validity of this study.

4. Empirical Findings & Analysis

4.1 Contextual Conditions: Inflow of Refugees & Changing State of Public Attitudes

Before turning to the main part of the analysis, it must first be determined whether the two posed contextual conditions in both country cases are present. In 2015, the Netherlands witnessed a significant increase in refugee arrivals, with over 56,000 asylum applications recorded. This marked a doubling of applications within a year. Among these applicants were 18,600 children (CBS, 2016). Similar to the Netherlands, Sweden witnessed a rapid increase in asylum applications in 2015 (Figure 1). In this year, the number of applications rose to over 162.000, doubling from the preceding year's total of 81.000 (Denkelaar, Palaiologou & Toumpoulidis, 2018). Almost half of these people, around 70.000, were children (Zetterqvist Nelson & Hagström, 2016). In this context, the Dutch and Swedish government implemented new refugee education policies. In other words, the significant number of refugee arrivals in 2015 opened a window of opportunity to improve refugee education policies. Thereby, the first contextual condition is met.

In addition, attitudes towards migration and integration became more negative in Sweden and the Netherlands during the crisis. Thereby, the second contextual condition is met. However, claiming that there has been a fundamental shift in deep core beliefs of policy core beliefs is too strong. Whereas 32% of the Dutch population and 59.5% of the Swedish population believed that the government should be generous in judging applications for refugee status in 2014, this decreased to 16% in the Netherlands and 48.3% in Sweden in 2016 (ESS ERIC, 2023a; ESS ERIC 2023b). Dutch citizens actively expressed their, generally negative, attitudes towards migration and integration through (violent) protests, on social media, and in newspaper articles (Bakker, 2016; Evers, 2016; VU Amsterdam & Expertise-unit Sociale Stabiliteit, 2016). While generally mildly negative, the Swedish public remained a more positive attitude towards refugees compared to the Dutch citizens. Still, negative expressions on social media posts and in protests were common (Kleres, 2018; Yantseva, 2020).

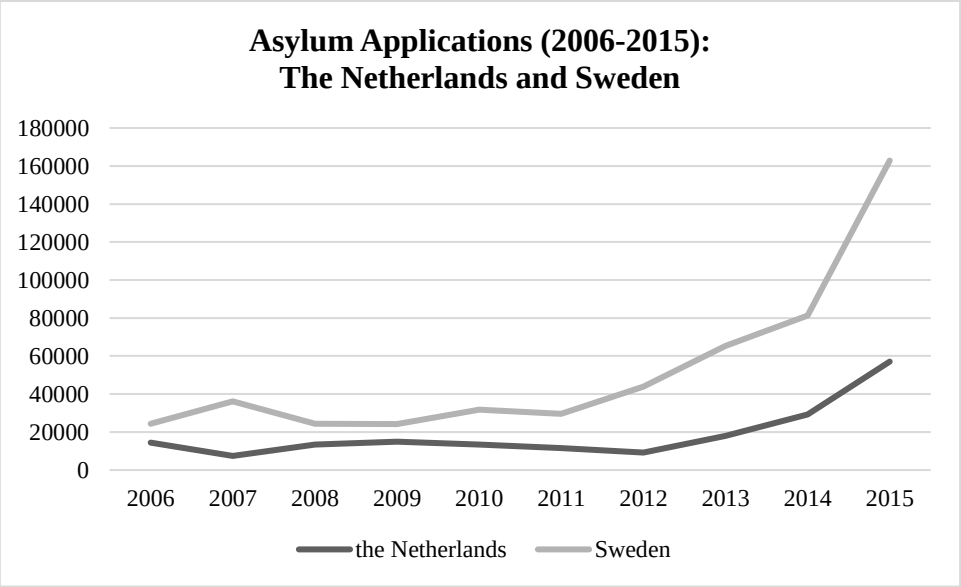

Figure 1. Asylum Applications Sweden and the Netherlands (2006 – 2015) (CBS, 2016 ; Denkelaar, Palaiologou & Toumpoulidis, 2018).

4.2 Cause (C): Stakeholder Attitudes in Agenda Setting

In line with the first hypothesis, I identify and analyze the interests of the relevant refugee education stakeholders in both country cases as well as their efforts to influence the policy agenda. By considering the interests of both the unorganized public and organized interest groups in this stage, I aim to gain deeper insights into their respective roles in shaping the policymaking process, which is one of the objectives of this study.

Refugee education interest groups that directly advocate for new refugee education policies in the Netherlands and Sweden are summarized in Appendix B and Appendix C respectively, together with their roles and responsibilities, and their actively advocated interest. Interest groups that actively engaged in advocacy efforts can be divided into five main categories: national governmental refugee education bodies, regional bodies, non-governmental refugee education bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and education providers. These categories are based on the distinct groups' roles and responsibilities in (the provision of) refugee education, as well as the citizen groups they represent. In response to the crisis, a collaborative network was formed in the Netherlands, through the creation of a steering council (regieteam) and support team (ondersteuningsraad), to address challenges in refugee education (AVS, 2016). This network consisted of representatives from regional bodies (the Association of Dutch Municipalities and the G4) and (non-)governmental refugee education bodies (the Primary Education Council, LOWAN, COA, General Association of School Leaders and the Inspectorate of Education) as well as from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

(Inspectie van Onderwijs, 2016). A collaborative network of multiple interest groups was not established in Sweden.

Interest groups in both countries voiced a diverse interests. In the Netherlands, these interest groups expressed sixteen different interests, mainly through contact with (local) government officials, lobbying reports, blogposts, and newspaper articles. In other words: they showed high levels of advocacy efforts. Whereas regional bodies mainly advocated for increased funding for schools (OCW, 2016), the interests of the national governmental refugee education bodies, non-governmental refugee education bodies, and education providers were more diverse. They pleaded for improving the quality of education to refugee children including the quality of the language teaching materials, the language skills of the parents, the diagnostic assessment of the students' skills and knowledge and customization of education, the number of qualified teaching staff on top of increased funding for schools (AVS, 2016; De Gelderlander, 2015; Inspectie van Onderwijs, 2016; OCW, 2016; Onderwijsraad, 2017; PO Raad, 2016). While the majority of these interest groups advocated for new policy measures that deviated slightly from the existing policy approach to boost educational accessibility and quality, the PO-Raad went beyond that. By advocating for the customization of education based on diagnostic assessments, this group aimed to bring about fundamental changes to the existing policy approach (PO Raad, 2016).

The Swedish interest groups similarly showed high levels of advocacy by collectively expressing 25 different interests through advocacy reports, blogpost, newspaper articles and contact with (local) government officials. The interests raised were relatively similar and overlapping among the various groups. For example, teaching staff called for more financial resources, additional teachers, and measures to avoid extra burdens (Nyheter, 2015; *Protokoll* 2015/16:2; *Protokoll* 2015/16:30). Regional bodies and national governmental refugee education bodies echoed these interests but also added regulatory aspects to ensure these needs could be met. These additional interests included the possibility of outsourced distance learning, increasing the number of schools that can accept newcomer students, setting long-term education policy goals, and improving cooperation between municipalities, governments, and civil society (Barnombudsmannen, 2017; Ekström & Lindvert, 2015; *Protokoll* 2015/16:24; *Proposition* 2015/16:184). Interestingly, four out of ten interest groups expressed their interests with regards to remote teaching and mandatory assessments, issues that were not yet incorporated in the refugee education policy, but that would fundamentally change Swedish refugee education policy approaches. Nevertheless, the majority of interest groups were aligned

in their advocacy for improving the underlying conditions to effectively implement existing policies, deeming fundamentally new refugee education policies unnecessary.

In contrast to the organized interest groups in the Netherlands and Sweden, the unorganized public did not demonstrate the same level of advocacy efforts to influence the policy agenda. Their levels of advocacy were low; only a subset of the population pleaded for new policies through national elections. By examining the party manifestos and election results of the most recent elections before the 2015 crisis, it is possible to get a general sense of public attitudes towards refugee education. An overview of the political parties in government during the crisis in both countries is provided in Appendix D and Appendix E. Additionally, an analysis of the party manifesto's of the main political is summarized in Appendix F and Appendix G.

Overall, it can be argued that refugee education was not a top priority for the Dutch public in the 2012 elections. Notably, only one party, the Green-Left Party (GL), advocated for small amendments of the existing refugee education policy by enhancing the quality of Dutch as a Second Language (NT2) education (GL, 2012). GL only received 2 percent of all votes (Appendix D) (Kiesraad, 2012). Interestingly, the manifestos of Swedish political parties indicate that refugee education was a more prominent issue on their political agenda: five (out of eight) political parties included strategies on small refugee education improvements (SAP, 2014; MP, 2014; Björland et al., 2014). This suggests that the Swedish public may have perceived refugee education as a more important issue than Dutch voters, or that refugee education in general is perceived to be a more important policy issue in Sweden than in the Netherlands. The Swedish MP, FpL, KD, C, and M proposed (slightly different) new refugee education policies by emphasizing the importance of swiftly integrating refugee children into schools and improving Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) materials (Björland et al., 2014; MP, 2014). In contrast, SD did not include strategies to improve refugee education but argued for re-nationalizing Swedish education (SD, 2014).

Examining the attitudes of political parties on migration, integration, and education can provide further insights into potential attitudes towards the formulation of new refugee education policies. The Dutch coalition government, consisting of the labor party (PvdA) and liberal party (VVD) held distinct views on migration and integration: where the PvdA advocated for fair and supportive migration and integration policies, the VVD planned to reduce immigration and implement stricter integration policies (PvdA, 2012; VVD, 2012). Moreover, unlike the VVD, the PvdA expressed a desire to finically invest in quality education (PvdA, 2012; VVD, 2012). The opposition parties were largely in favor of investing additional money into education. Regarding migration and integration, left-wing parties (PvdA, GL, PvvD) were

generally more pro-immigration and pro-integration compared to right-oriented parties (VVD, PVV, SGP) (GL, 2012; PvdA, 2012; PvvD, 2012; PVV, 2012; SGP, 2012; VVD, 2012). Among these, the PVV, a populist party and the third largest party, was the most in favor of completely restricting immigration (PVV, 2012). Thus, while the majority of the Dutch electorate supported investments in education, the public held different views on how to address migration and integration, and thereby most likely, refugee education.

In Sweden, all parties agreed that investments in educational quality must be improved (Björland et al, 2014; SAP, 2014; SD, 2014 MP, 2014; Vp, 2014). Furthermore, during the crisis, the largest parties, SAP and MP, held similar attitudes towards refugee education and towards migration, and integration, emphasizing humane, welcoming, and non-discriminatory policies (SAP, 2014; MP, 2014). Except for the populist SD, all parties largely agreed with the coalition government on these topics. Overall, the prioritization of refugee education and the recognition of the importance of social integration and humane migration policies was shared by most Swedish political parties, and thus by the public, in contrast to the more polarized Netherlands.

4.3 Stage 1: Bureaucratic Goals in Policy Formulation

Following hypothesis 2, I assess the level of collaboration observed between the bureaucracy and interest groups and the extent to which the bureaucracies act as budget-maximizers.

In the Netherlands, the level of collaboration between the bureaucracy (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) and interest groups was high. In response to a parliamentary debate in November 2014, well before the start of the crisis, the Ministry contacted LOWAN, the primary education council and the COA to discuss potential opportunities to revisit the (customized) funding measures within refugee education provision. In turn, these organizations were directly in contact with schools (*Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, no. 259). During this time, the Ministry also appointed account managers. Continuous contact between the account managers and schools enabled the bureaucracy to stay updated about potential new challenges in refugee education provision (*Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, no. 244; *Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, no. 259). For example, it was this close contact that led the Minister of Education to decide in June 2015 to provide case-by-case financial support for schools in need (*Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, no. 259).

On top of this, the Dutch Ministry was part of the steering council and support team set up to support schools in providing quality and available education to refugee children. Given the variety of interests groups within the steering council and support team, the newly introduced refugee education policy network consisted of stakeholders representing all different

interests. In this network, the Ministry regularly organized meetings to discuss new challenges together with potential solutions (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 31293, no. 271). As a result of a stakeholder meeting in September 2015, the bureaucracy proposed several new policies, which included measures on increasing customized financing for schools, additionally supporting for teachers, updating teaching materials (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 1). After that, contact between the bureaucracy and other interest groups continued. In December 2015, the State Secretary of Education sent a letter to the Second Chamber stating that there was daily contact with schools, municipalities, LOWAN, educational organizations and the Inspectorate of Education about refugee education (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 3). Interestingly, the Ministry did not only consult interest groups for advice and knowledge, they also had the power to shape the policy options. This was the case in April 2015: when the VNG did not support one of the policy options proposed by the Ministry, the bureaucrats decided to follow another route (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34242, no. 11).

Similar to the Netherlands, the levels of collaboration between the Swedish bureaucracy (the Ministry of Education) and interest groups were high: the bureaucracy actively sought contact with interest groups and responded to the issues and questions raised by them. Through this contact, the Ministry aimed to enhance its understanding of the policy issue. A good example of the strong relationship between interest groups and the bureaucracy is the fact that the first new refugee education policy was proposed by the bureaucracy before the 2015 crisis, in December 2014, was a direct response to the critical report on the provision of (refugee) education of the Inspectorate of Education published in May that year (*Proposition* 2014/15:45; Skolinspektionen, 2014). From this point onwards, the Ministry utilized the statistics published by the Swedish Migration Agency to monitor the influx of refugees (*Protokoll* 2014/15:122). In their policy response, the Ministry aimed to involve as many interest groups as possible. To realize this, for example, meeting with the Ombudsman, Inspectorate, Swedish Migration Agency and the SKL were organized to discuss the best solution to accessibility and quality challenges of refugee education (*Proposition* 2015/16:184). Additionally, the bureaucracy requested the National Education Agency in June 2015 to start an investigation on the ways in which municipalities can best be supported their provision of refugee education (*Protokoll* 2015/16:36). Throughout the crisis, they remained in close contact on this matter (*Interpellation* 2015/16:597). Lastly, letters by the SKL and Confederation of Independent schools requesting the Ministry to take action in the face of the significant influx of refugee children in society, shaped the policy debates within the bureaucracy (*Proposition* 2015/16:184). By cooperating with these different stakeholders, all different interests were addressed.

To what extent then, did the bureaucracy use the information advantage gained through the interaction with interest groups to maximize the budget to be spent on refugee education? In the Netherlands, the majority of the analyzed parliamentary debates between the Second Chamber and the Minister and/or State Secretary of Education focused on funding arrangements for schools. When analyzing these debates, it becomes clear that one the one hand, bureaucrats aim to increase funding to schools, proposing policies aligned with the input received from interest groups. On the other hand, they seek to minimize additional costs wherever feasible. Repeatedly, politicians emphasized the need for the Ministry to propose additional financial arrangements to further support schools financially. As was the case during a debate in May 2016, when one of the SP parliamentarianism frustratedly stated: "*It is clear that we are not willing to allocate enough money to educating asylum-seeking children*" (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 31293, no. 271). When parties voiced their concerns about the limited budget, the State Secretary publicly disagreed, stating that the funding was not insufficient (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 31293, no. 271). During the same debate, the State Secretary of Education argued that "*the regulations have functioned well over the past twenty years, during which there have also been fluctuating refugee flows. Expanding them would impose an additional financial burden, on top of the extra costs we already have in terms of volume."* (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 12). This serves as a clear example of how the Dutch bureaucracy aimed to minimize the costs associated with implementing additional financial regulations for schools. In other words: the bureaucracy demonstrated high levels of budget-maximizing behavior.

On the other hand, Swedish bureaucratic efforts appeared to be more comprehensive. Despite significant funding increases being discussed and granted, such as through the first major policy proposal at the end of 2014 and the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill of 2015 (*Proposition* 2014/15:45; *Protokoll* 2014/15:121; *Regeringskansliet*, 2015), financial resources did not dominate the debates between parliamentarians and the bureaucracy. Therefore, the Swedish bureaucracy showed more moderate forms of budget-maximizing behavior. Consequently, the tone of the Minister and of the politicians in these debates was generally milder compared to the Dutch case. Criticism targeted at the bureaucracy by the politicians for the perceived lack of action regarding refugee children, schools, and municipalities often stemmed not solely from financial constraints, but also from a perceived dearth of long-term vision in policies (*Protokoll* 2015/16:19). This suggests that either the funding was adequate or that the bureaucracy prioritized other policy issues over continuous attempts to maximize the Ministry's budget, such as remote teaching in children's mother tongues and mandatory assessments (*Protokoll* 2015/16:35).

4.4 Stage 2: Politicians Responsiveness to the Public in Policy Adoption

Based on hypothesis 3, I analyze the extent to which politicians' responsiveness to the unorganized public and the organized interest groups was moderate to high in times of low and high perceived issue salience.

In the Netherlands, new refugee education policies were implemented between November 2014 and July 2016. Overall, it can be argued that perceived issue salience was low from November 2014 to August 2015. During this period, several politicians submitted motions to formulate new refugee education policies. However, during this time, both the parliament and the Ministry did not consider it necessary to allocate significant attention or financial resources to this issue, treating it as just another policy matter. In June 2015, for example, when the State Secretary informed the Second Chamber on newest refugee education policy developments, the Ministry's main conclusion was that while case-by-case advice and occasional financial support were extended when necessary, they saw no need for large-scale policymaking (*Kamerstuk* 2015/15, 31293, no. 259).

Even though perceived salience of the issue was generally low, some political parties more than others recognized the importance of improving the accessibility and quality of refugee education. Interestingly, it was GL – the only Dutch political party that included refugee education improvements in its party manifesto – that took the lead in initiating new policies. In November 2014, this party initiated discussions in the Second Chamber concerning the policy issue of refugee education. Supported by the Christian Democrats and the labor party, they submitted a motion, which was later accepted, aimed at further reforming the funding mechanisms for refugee education (*Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 34000-VIII, nr. 52). Following the adoption of this motion, the Ministry formulated the policy in line with Groenlinks' views. The parliament adopted this policy, thereby increasing the refugee education budget with €45.000 to support schools with additional funding (*Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, no. 243). In a February 2015 debate, the labor party emphasized the necessity for more financial assistance to schools, advocating for further investigation into the current accessibility of refugee education. This stance was based on the party's own interactions with schools in the country and informed by the increasing number of newspaper articles on the lacking financial resources for schools (*Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, nr. 52).

In Sweden, new refugee education policies were implemented between December 2014 and June 2016. From December 2014 to August 2015 the perceived urgency to modify refugee education policies was relatively low, mirroring the situation in the Netherlands during the same period. Nonetheless, even during this period of low issue salience, most political parties

regarded improving the quality and accessibility of education for refugee children as a significant concern. As described, the Inspectorate's report on (refugee) education, released in December 2014, catalyzed new policy formulation. However, in the debates that followed the report, and as evidenced by the parliamentary minutes, politicians did not actively engage with refugee education interest groups, nor did they refer to any contact with these groups in parliamentary debates and speeches. Instead, their decisions and positions were largely driven by commitments to their electorate and aligned with their party manifestos. For example, opposition party M claimed in January that "*we need better cooperation between the state and municipalities, more housing, continued better schools and more reforms for better integration*" (*Protokoll* 2014/15:45). Additionally, the Prime Minister, representing the SAP stated in January 2015: "*We want to ensure that language training starts much earlier in the integration process. It hasn't worked well enough. This means that SFI [Swedish for Immigrants] must change.*" (*Protokoll* 2014/15:45) He also emphasized the need for high-quality education and timely support: "*There must be high quality in the school, and people must get help when they need it*" (*Protokoll* 2014/15:45).

In the Summer of 2015, both the Netherlands and Sweden experienced a significant influx of refugees, leading schools and municipalities to struggle with providing accessible and quality education for these newcomer children (AIDA, 2015; Hagelund, 2020; Denkelaar, Palaiologou & Toumpoulidis, 2018; OCW, 2016). In September 2015, the Dutch Groenlinks (GL) alongside the Christian Union (CU) and the Social Liberal Party (D66) tabled another motion during a debate. Expressing concerns about the accessibility of refugee education in the face of the rapidly increasing number of refugee arrivals in the country, they urged the Ministry to develop a policy proposal outlining the most effective ways of supporting schools in this regard, along with suggestions on how to allocate funds within the government's budget to accommodate this initiative (Kamerstuk 2015/15, 34300, no. 25). From this moment, the perceived urgency of the matter experienced a significant upsurge, within but also outside of the government walls. An increasing number of schools began articulating their challenges (in)directly to members of parliament and to the Ministry through account managers and newspapers intensified their coverage refugee education accessibility challenges (NOS 2015; Oving, 2015).

Consequently, between September 2015 and July 2016, a multitude of parliamentary debates, motions, and correspondence between political parties and the Dutch Ministry were dedicated to enhancing the accessibility, quality, and funding of refugee education in the Netherlands. Most political parties, including the PvdA, CDA, SP, D66, GL, CU and the SGP,

voiced their support for strengthening refugee education provisions. In May 2016, for example a CDA politician stated that *"teachers, school leaders, and lecturers indicate that newcomers need more time to learn our language and to successfully transition into regular education"* (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 12). In debates, these parties frequently referred to their interactions with schools, drawing from firsthand stories to inform their discussions and proposals regarding refugee education. Many of the motions put forth by these parties called for customized funding schemes, more application deadlines for customized funding (from once a year to four times a year), additional financial support, and extending extra funding into the second year of a refugee child's enrollment (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 31293, no. 271; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34223, no. 10; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34300-VIII, no. 48; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 12; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 14). For instance, during the same debate in May, the SP highlighted concerns about funding arrangements for schools, stating: "We keep receiving emails from schools that are raising the alarm about this." (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 12). Based on these motions, the bureaucracy proposed and implemented a variety of new policies (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 1; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 2; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 3; ; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 10; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 17).

It is striking, but given the content of the party manifesto's not particularly surprising, that the coalition parties PvdA and VVD took divergent positions during most of the debates on refugee education during the high salience period. In May 2016, for example, the PvdA advocated for stimulating the integration of refugee children into the mainstream education system to boost language acquisition, while the VVD advocated for a more *"sober approach"*, suggesting refugee children would be best off in segregated schools (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 12). Overall, together with the PVV, the VVD exhibited a more cautious approach in formulating new refugee education policies. According to the PVV: "*All parties must realize that in order to [allocate more funds to education for refugee children], we have to take away money from Dutch children of Dutch parents"* (*Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 12).

In Sweden, while new refugee education policies were an important topic on the political agenda even during periods of low issue salience, the need to further improve educational provisions for refugee children also became more urgent from September 2015 to June 2016. Consequently, new policy proposals were introduced in parliament for discussion and adoption (*Protokoll* 2014/15: 121; *Protokoll* 2014/15:122; *Protokoll* 2015/16:2; *Protokoll* 2015/16:8; *Protokoll* 2015/16:19; *Protokoll* 2015/16:24; *Protokoll* 2015/16:30; *Protokoll* 2015/16:31; *Protokoll* 2015/16:36; *Protokoll* 2015/16:37; *Protokoll* 2015/16:38; *Protokoll* 2015/16:42; *Protokoll* 2015/16:102; *Proposition* 2015/16:184). On the one hand, officials generally adhered

to their party manifesto positions and thus aligned with their electorates. During a debate in September 2015, the Centre Party (C) emphasized that Sweden must protect its status as a "*humanitarian powerhouse*" for refugees, while the Moderates (M) underscored Sweden's moral obligation to protect the most vulnerable, including children (*Protokoll* 2014/15:122). Interestingly, the opposition parties, such as C and M, were the most vocal about the proposed refugee education policies during the debates, thereby staying close to their manifesto. Similarly, the SD stayed true to their voters. This was particularly evident in the debates on the 2016 budget proposals, where the SD advocated for cuts in education spending—a proposal that all other political parties deemed highly unrealistic (*Protokoll* 2015/16:42). Moreover, the MP representative emphasized the humanitarian perspective, stating: " *Let us remind ourselves that the people who flee are just people. They are never large numbers, and they are not a threat to our society. They are people who need a sanctuary. We must never accept the rhetoric that certain parties put forward in our society and around Europe that paint people as a threat.*" (*Protokoll* 2015/16:38).

Additionally, politicians increasingly sought contact with interest groups, primarily municipalities, schools and organizations representing teachers, principals, and parents. These conversations allowed officials to incorporate the needs and wishes of these stakeholders into the policymaking process. For example, during debates on the introduction of remote (online) education in refugee children's mother tongues and mandatory assessments, opposition parties such as the Moderates (M) and the Left Party (V) referenced their interactions with schools and the teachers' union (*Protokoll* 2015/16:24; *Protokoll* 2015/16:30; *Protokoll* 2015/16:38). Addressing another policy proposal, the Moderates remarked: "*there were many in the school world and also parents who were worried about how it should work in practical terms*." (*Protokoll* 2015/16:24).

Based on the above, it can be argued that politicians' responsiveness to the unorganized public was high in times of low and high issue salience, in the sense that their political actions resembled their party manifesto's. In fact, in the Netherlands the very first call to action, in November 2014, was purely based on Groenlinks' ideological stances on improving the quality of refugee education. Furthermore, the disagreement between the coalition parties and the stance of the PVV on the most suitable refugee education policy solutions clearly fit their manifesto's stance on migration and integration. In Sweden, all political parties, including the more critical SD, essentially supported high quality and accessible refugee education policies and lenient integration policies, in line with their party manifesto's. A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the responsiveness of politicians to interests groups. In the Netherlands,

politicians were moderately responsive to interests groups when issue salience was perceived low and highly responsive in times of high issue salience. Additionally, they were mainly in contact with schools and interest groups that voiced the interest of the teachers and principals. In Sweden, the analyzed data suggest that contact with the organized interest groups was low during periods of low issue salience, but high during periods of high salience, particularly involving schools and municipalities. However, no clear relationship can thus be observed between the level of issue salience and politician's responsiveness to either stakeholder group.

5. Discussion

Given the high levels of advocacy of the interest groups in favor of new refugee education policies that slightly differ from the previous policies, the first hypothesis can be accepted (Table 7). However, it is important to note that exceptions exist. For example, in both country cases, but more so in Sweden than the Netherlands, several interest groups proposed more fundamental changes to the status quo. As a result, some of these more radical propositions, such as the introduction of remote teaching and mandatory assessments, were eventually incorporated in the Swedish policy (Ekström & Lindvert, 2015; Protokoll 2015/16:24; Nyheter, 2015; SKL, 2016; Skolinspektionen, 2014). In the Netherlands, the PO-Raad advocated for mandatory diagnostic assessments for all refugee children to better customize student's learning experience, albeit unsuccessfully (OCW, 2016; PO Raad, 2016). While this could be the result of successful lobbying practices of the interest groups, it may also stem from Sweden's historically more progressive and inclusive migration and integration policy approaches compared to the more conservative strategies taken by the Netherlands (Joppke, 2007; Midtbøen, 2015). However, this study does not further explore this factor. Additionally, it is important to recognize that the unorganized public and the organized interest groups were not similarly engaged with the policy issue at stake: the unorganized public's advocacy efforts during the crisis were low. They merely expressed their policy preferences on migration and integration, and in some cases on refugee education, by electing their chosen politicians in the national elections. These differences in the level of engagement might be the result of the greater financial and organizational capacities of interest groups, another factor not researched in this study (Olson, 1971).

Because high levels of collaboration between the bureaucracy and interest groups correlate with moderate (Sweden) and high (the Netherlands) levels of budget-maximizing behavior of the bureaucracy, hypothesis 2 is accepted (Table 7). In alignment with the PAT, bureaucracies in both countries operate largely independently from, but under the directives of, politicians (Miller, 2005). In both Sweden and the Netherlands, bureaucracies closely collaborate with various interest groups, ensuring that all interests, whether resulting in policy proposals or not, are at least heard. This collaboration includes one-on-one contacts between bureaucrats and interest group representatives, organized meetings involving multiple interest groups and the Ministry, and in the Dutch case, the development of steering councils and support teams. This ensures that policy proposals by the bureaucracy align closely with the interests of these groups. Additionally, the bureaucracy frequently adjusts or adds policy

proposals to align with the wishes of politicians. For instance, when the Swedish Moderates (M) requested an investigation into online distance learning possibilities, the bureaucracy promptly complied (*Protokoll* 2015/16:24). Interestingly, while adhering to the directives of their principals, Ministers and State Secretaries remain critical of suggestions from politicians, not always adopting their proposed directions. They often leverage their informational advantages, gained through cooperation with interest groups, over the officials. For example, when officials proposed customized funding for the first two years instead of just one, the Dutch State Secretary responded by saying, "*In my opinion, having a second year in primary education does not make such a big difference. […]. To be honest: most schools, even in primary education, have a small buffer. We recently had a discussion with schools where some expressed that the buffer was becoming too large*." (*Kamerstuk* 34334, no. 12) This demonstrates how the bureaucracy balances the interests and practical insights of the interest groups and the desires of the politicians. Additionally, it shows that interest groups' concerns are better represented by the bureaucracy, which is understandable since the unorganized public did not convey their views on the policy issue to them.

Moreover, bureaucracies in both countries advocated for increased funding to address the challenges faced by refugee education providers in the face of the large influx of refugees in the summer of 2015. They proposed to increase their budgets to enhance refugee education services, and these proposals were successfully adopted. This resulted in enlarged budgets for refugee education provision and organization, and corresponds to Niskanen's (1968) theory. In Sweden, bureaucrats emphasized not only the importance of increased funding but also sought to improve other aspects of refugee education, viewing budget increases as just one of many policy goals. All in all, the analyzed parliamentary speeches, debates and letters to and from the bureaucracy provide sufficient evidence to conclude that bureaucracies in both countries sought more financial resources, thereby also increasing their policy autonomy over the policy issue.

However, there is insufficient evidence to observe a clear relationship between the perceived salience of the refugee education policy issue and politicians' moderate to high responsiveness to the unorganized public and organized interest groups, as hypothesized. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is rejected (Table 7). Nevertheless, this study demonstrates that politicians are responsive to both the unorganized public and the organized interest groups, whereas the bureaucracy is mainly responsive to the policy preferences of the organized interest groups. The actions of politicians align closely with their voters attitudes towards migration, integration, and refugee education and the interests of the interest groups. This corresponds with theoretical evidence that states that politicians aim to represent well the interests of the citizens,

organized or not, to reduce the risks of public upheaval, declining trust and electoral losses (Böhmelt, 2021; Brooks & Manza, 2006). Additionally, these findings suggest that attitudes towards migration and integration are good predictors for attitudes towards refugee education: the more restrictive the stances on migration and integration, the more careful politicians were in expanding the existing policy strategy.

Table 7. Evaluation of Hypotheses.

Causal mechanism	Hypothesis	Conclusion
Cause: Stakeholders Attitudes in Agenda Setting	H1: If the organized interest groups and the unorganized public actively express their interests, they will advocate for new policies that focus on improving existing policy frameworks to better accommodate evolving views and needs, while maintaining the overall structure and principles of existing refugee education policies (Sabatier, 1998).	Accepted
Stage 1: Bureaucratic Goals in Policy Formulation	H2: If bureaucracies collaborate with interest groups through organized meetings and individual consultations, they use this information advantage on the policy issue to advocate for increased funding in their policy proposals and interactions with politicians (Niskanen, 1968).	Accepted
Stage 2: Politicians Responsiveness to the Public in Policy Adoption	H3: if politicians perceive the policy issue as urgent, as demonstrated by their statements in parliament and their votes in favor of policy improvements, they will be responsive to their electorate and their actions aligned with their party manifesto. Conversely, when politicians perceive the policy issue as low in salience, they are more likely to engage with interest groups to address gaps in refugee education policy (Böhmelt, 2021).	Rejected

6. Recommendations

Following the main conclusions of this study, I propose two main policy recommendations that could improve the protection of the educational rights of refugee children. First, the government should develop flexible funding mechanisms in the field of migration and integration to improve adaptability and responsiveness to the needs of refugee children during refugee crises. Such arrangements could lead faster policy responses (Rohwerder, 2017). Especially in the Netherlands, flexible funding schemes could have been advantageous: significant time was lost as bureaucracy and politicians debated funding arrangements, time that could have been better spent on developing policies directly aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of refugee education. Second, public engagement and advocacy among the people affected most by the refugee education challenges must be structurally improved. While the general public's attitudes on migration and integration and the specific refugee education preferences of the interest groups were incorporated in the policymaking process, the needs of refugee parents and refugee children were left out. To better involve these actors in the policymaking process, stakeholder engagement must be improved by recognizing that the attitudes of these actors are of great importance, by actively engaging these actors in the early stages of policymaking process, and by appointing experienced coordinators that manage this process (Hafferty, 2022).

In addition to the policy recommendations, I put forward several avenues for future research. First, while this study has aimed to contribute to the understanding of the roles and influence of interest groups and the general public in shaping refugee education policymaking, future research could delve deeper into the role of historical socio-political contextualities. Such research would examine how historical contexts influence the approaches taken in refugee education policymaking and how they shape the interests and strategies of refugee education interest groups. Second, an in-depth analysis on how interest groups leverage their financial and organizational resources to influence the policymaking behavior of bureaucracies and politicians could be interesting. Third, a comparative analysis that includes a broader range of EU countries could be conducted to further refine the proposed causal framework (Beach & Pedersen, 2016). Specifically, it might be worthwhile to apply and test Böhmelt's (2021) theory on politicians responsiveness to stakeholders in times of high and low perceived issue salience to other countries to further explore the factors shaping politicians responsiveness to stakeholder groups during crises.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Data Overview

Stage	Country case	Number of sources	Source
Contextual Conditions	The Netherlands	8	*Statistical data source:* CBS, 2016; ESS ERIC, 2023a; ESS ERIC, 2023b. *Data from report:* Bakker, 2016; Evers, 2016; Inspectie van Onderwijs, 2016; OCW, 2016; VU Amsterdam & Expertise-unit Sociale Stabiliteit, 2016.
	Sweden	9	*Statistical data source:* AIDA, 2015; ESS ERIC, 2023a; ESS ERIC, 2023b. *Data from report:* Denkelaar, Palaiologou & Toumpoulidis, 2018; Hagelund, 2020; Kleres, 2018; Yantseva, 2020; Zetterqvist Nelson & Hagström, 2016.
Cause: Stakeholder Attitudes in Agenda Setting	The Netherlands	17	*Data on interest group advocacy*: AVS, 2016; De Gelderlander, 2015; Inspectie van Onderwijs, 2016; Kiesraad, 2012; OCW, 2016; Onderwijsraad, 2017; PO Raad, 2016. *Party manifesto's:* CDA, 2012; CU, 2012; GL, 2012; PvdA, 2012; PvvD, 2012; PVV, 2012; 50PLUS, 2012; SP, 2012; SGP, 2012; VVD, 2012.
	Sweden	21	*Data on interest group advocacy:* Barnombudsmannen, 2017; Ekström & Lindvert, 2015; Emilsson, 2016; Migrationsverket. 2024; Nyheter, 2015; *Proposition* 2015/16:184; *Protokoll* 2015/16:2; *Protokoll* 2015/16:19; *Protokoll* 2015/16:24; *Protokoll* 2015/16:30; Save the Children Sweden, 2016; SKL, 2016; Skolinspektionen, 2014; Skolverket, 2015a; Skolverket, 2015b; Skolverket, 2015c. *Party manifesto's:* Björlund et al., 2014; MP, 2014; SAP, 2014; SD, 2014; Vp, 2014
Stage 1: Bureaucratic Goals in Policy Formulation	The Netherlands	7 (25)	*Data sources directly used:* *Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, no. 244; K*amerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, no. 259; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 31293, no. 271; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 1; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 3; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34242, no. 11; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 12. *Other data sources consulted:* *Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, nr. 52; *Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, no. 243; *Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 34000-VIII, nr. 52;

			Kamerstuk 2014/15, 34000-VIII, nr. 59; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 31293, no. 271; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34223, no. 10; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16: 34300, no. 25*;* *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34300-VIII, no. 48; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 2; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 10; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 14; *Kamerstuk* 2015/17, 34334 no. 16; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 17; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 18; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 19; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 20; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 21; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 22.
	Sweden	10 (23)	*Data sources directly used in text:* *Interpellation* 2015/16:597; *Proposition* 2014/15:45; *Proposition* 2015/16:184; *Protokoll* 2014/15:121; *Protokoll* 2014/15:122; *Protokoll* 2015/16:19; *Protokoll* 2015/16:35; *Protokoll* 2015/16:36; Regeringskansliet, 2015; Skolinspektionen, 2014. *Other data sources consulted and used:* Government Offices of Sweden, 2015; *Proposition* 2015/16:173*;* *Protokoll* 2014/15:123; *Protokoll* 2015/16:2; Protokoll 2015/16:8 Protokoll 2015/16:24; Protokoll 2015/16:30; Protokoll 2015/16:31; Protokoll 2015/16:33; Protokoll 2015/16:37; Protokoll 2015/16:38; Protokoll 2015/16:42; Protokoll 2015/16:102.
Stage 2: Politicians Responsiveness to the Public in Policy Adoption	The Netherlands	14 (total=25)	*Data sources directly used in text:* *Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, nr. 52; *Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, no. 243; *Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, no. 259; *Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 34000-VIII, nr. 52; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 31293, no. 271; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34223, no. 10; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34300-VIII, no. 48; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 1; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 2; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 3; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 10; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 12; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 14; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 17. *Other data sources consulted and used:* *Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 31293, no. 244; *Kamerstuk* 2014/15, 34000-VIII, nr. 59;

			Kamerstuk 2015/16, 34242, no. 11; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16, 34334, no. 12. *Kamerstuk* 2015/16: 34300, no. 25*;* *Kamerstuk* 2015/17, 34334 no. 16; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 18; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 19; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 20; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 21; *Kamerstuk* 2015/16 34334, no. 22.
	Sweden	15 (total=23)	*Data sources directly used in text:* *Proposition* 2015/16:184; *Protokoll* 2014/15:45; *Protokoll* 2014/15: 121; *Protokoll* 2014/15:122; *Protokoll* 2015/16:2; *Protokoll* 2015/16:8; *Protokoll* 2015/16:19; *Protokoll* 2015/16:24; *Protokoll* 2015/16:30; *Protokoll* 2015/16:31; *Protokoll* 2015/16:36; *Protokoll* 2015/16:37; *Protokoll* 2015/16:38; *Protokoll* 2015/16:42; *Protokoll* 2015/16:102. *Other data consulted and used:* Government Offices of Sweden, 2015; *Interpellation* 2015/16:597; *Proposition* 2015/16:173; *Protokoll* 2014/15:123; *Protokoll* 2015/16:33; *Protokoll* 2015/16:35; *Regeringskansliet*, 2015; *Skolinspektionen*, 2014.

Appendix B. Interest Group Analysis (The Netherlands)

Stakeholder	Role	Interest
National governmental refugee education bodies		
Inspectorate of Education (Onderwijs-inspectie)	- Reports on the quality and availability of education for (refugee) children - Supervises the quality of (refugee) education - Acts as a primary contact for addressing challenges related to refugee education provision (OCW, 2016)	- Municipalities must involve newcomers in policy for all disadvantaged students - We must pay increased attention to the quality of the education for newcomers (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2016).
Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Centraal Orgaan Asielzoekers (COA))	- Provides refugee housing - Discusses social services provision for refugees together with municipalities - Estimates the total number of incoming refugees - Executes Ohba regulation (education housing provisions) (OCW, 2016)	- We must successfully execute national policy regulations: all refugee children must be enrolled in school (OCW, 2016)
Regional bodies		
Association of Dutch Municipalities (Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG)	Facilitates cooperation between municipalities to improve local coordination to improve access to education for refugee children	- We must increase funding for schools (OCW, 2016)
G4	Facilitates regional collaboration between the four largest cities in (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht) to battle early school leaving among children of compulsory school age	- We must increase funding for schools (OCW, 2016)
Municipality	- Bears responsibility for providing school housing - Bears responsibility for accessible home-school transportation for refugee children - Bears responsibility for ensuring that refugee children in the municipality are enrolled in school (OCW, 2016)	- We must successfully execute national policy regulations: all refugee children must be enrolled in school
Non-governmental refugee education bodies		
Primary Education Council (PO-Raad)	- Provides information on and resources for the organization of refugee education - During the crisis, the PO-raad set up the steering council (regieteam) and	- We must limit the number of relocations - We must increase funding for schools - We must customize education based on the abilities and knowledge of a child. - We must stimulate Dutch language acquisition of parents (PO Raad, 2016)

	support team (ondersteuningsteam), a collaborative network aimed at addressing challenges in refugee education (Inspectie van Onderwijs, 2016; OCW, 2016)	
LOWAN	- Offers guidance and resources for organizing refugee education and facilitating the integration of children into the educational system (OCW, 2016)	- We must attract and train more (professional) teaching staff - We must improve the quality of the existing Dutch as a second language teaching materials (De Gelderlander, 2015)
Education Council (Onderwijs-raad)	- Advises the government on education policy	- We must improve the accessibility of education for refugee children - We must improve the quality of the existing Dutch as a second language teaching materials (Onderwijsraad, 2017)
Education providers		
General Association of School Leaders (Algemene Vereniging Schoolleiders (AVS))	- Supports schoolboards in overcoming refugee education challenges - Advocates for schools' interests in national politics	- We must increase funding for schools - We must stimulate Dutch language acquisition of parents (AVS, 2016)
School principals	- Bears direct responsibility for the provision of education - Ensures the availability and high quality of teaching personnel. (OCW, 2016)	- We must increase funding for schools (AVS, 2016)
School teachers	- Teaches refugee children - Assesses the knowledge and skills of the child - Assists parents and deals with language barriers (AVS, 2016)	- We must increase the number of teachers to offer refugee children the emotional, social and language support they need - We must improve the quality of the existing Dutch as a second language teaching materials (AVS, 2016)

Appendix C. Interest Group Analysis (Sweden)

Stakeholder	Role	Interest
National governmental refugee education body		
Inspectorate of Education (Skolinspek-tionen)	- Assesses the quality of education to (refugee) children in Sweden	- We must assess the new student's skills and knowledge as soon as possible and tailor our teaching to match their level (Skolinspektionen, 2014) - We must reach a consensus on how to offer additional support for newcomer children (Skolinspektionen, 2014) - We must improve the skills and knowledge of the teachers (Skolinspektionen, 2014) - We must be careful with outsourcing distance-learning: it could potentially lower the quality of education (*Protokoll* 2015/16:24)
Swedish Migration Agency (Migrations-verket)	- Process asylum and residence applications - Provides asylum seekers with housing and money for food (Migrationsverket, 2024)	- We must make policy that reflects the interest of the stakeholders, fits into the budget and is feasible to execute.
Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket)	- Manages preschool, school and adult education provision - Ensures accessibility and quality of education - Develops course plans, tests and regulations - Offers education for school staff - Researches and monitors school developments - Provides information on educational system (Skolverket, 2024)	- Regarding mandatory assessments in the child's first year of education, we must avoid placing additional burden on teachers (*Protokoll* 2015/16:30; Skolverket 2015b; Skolverket, 2015c) - We must improve cooperation between schools and refugee parents to improve the child's learning (Skolverket, 2015a) - We must improve the working conditions for teachings staff (Ekström & Lindvert, 2015) - We must tailor our teaching to match children's knowledge and experience level (Ekström & Lindvert, 2015) - We need to improve long-term goal-setting and policy in education (Ekström & Lindvert, 2015)
Children's ombudsman (Barnombuds-mannen)	- Represents the rights of the children in Sweden - Monitors the the implementation of children's rights in Swedish municipalities - Proposes law and policy changes - Collects data on children's rights - Advocates for the righs of the children, particularly those in vulnerable situations (Barnombudsmannen, 2017)	- We need to create a unified action plan for cooperation between municipalities, governments, and civil society to reduce the pressure on municipalities - We need to reduce the duration children spend in arrival accommodations (Barnombudsmannen, 2017)
Regional body		
Association of Local Authorities	- Supports school staff - Research educational topics	- We must allow outsourced-distance learning to improve refugee education accessibility (*Protokoll* 2015/16:24)

and Regions (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting (SKL))	- Advices and supports municipalities on (educational) matters (SKL, 2016)	- We must enable more schools to accept newcomer students, including independent schools (*Proposition* 2015/16:184) - We must tailor our teaching to match children's knowledge and experience level (SKL, 2016) - We must provide better guidance for teaching staff (SKL, 2016) - We must reduce administrative tasks for teaching staff (SKL, 2016) - We must actively attract more people to the teaching profession (SKL, 2016) - We must improve the working conditions for teachings staff (SKL, 2016) - We need to improve long-term goal-setting and policy in education (SKL, 2016)
Municipality	- Responsible for educational provision and SFI (Emilsson, 2016)	- We must successfully execute national policy regulations: all refugee children must be enrolled in school - We must actively attract more people to the teaching profession - We need more financial resources to provide children with quality education (*Protokoll* 2015/16:19)
NGO		
Save the Children Sweden	- Safeguards the rights of the child (Save the Children Sweden, 2016)	- We need to prioritize the perspective of children when making policy and ensure that all actions are in the best interest of the child (Save the Children Sweden, 2016)
Education providers		
Swedish Teachers' Union (Sveriges Lärare)	- Conducting surveys among teachers - Represents the needs of the teacher (Nyheter, 2015)	- Regarding mandatory assessments in the child's first year of education, teachers should have the autonomy to select the assessment methods that best suit their needs - We must avoid placing additional burden on teachers (Nyheter, 2015)
The Swedish Association of School Leaders (Sveriges Skolledare)	- Represent the needs of the school leaders	- Regarding mandatory assessments in the child's first year of education, we must avoid placing additional burden on teacher (*Protokoll* 2015/16:30)
Schools, including teachers	- Teaches refugee children - Assesses the knowledge and skills of the child - Assists parents and deals with language barriers	- We need more financial resources to provide children with quality education - We must actively attract more people to the teaching profession - We need smaller groups of children to teach (*Protokoll* 2015/16:2)

Appendix D. Political Party in Parliament (The Netherlands)

During the Refugee Management Crisis of 2015, two political parties formed the coalition government.

- Liberal Party (VVD), 26.6 % of votes;
- Labor Party (PvdA), 24.8% of votes (Kiesraad, 2012).

Several other parties were part of the coalition.

- Party for Freedom (PVV), 10.1% of votes;
- Socialist Party (SP), 9.7% of votes;
- Christian Democratic Party (CDA), 8.5% of votes;
- Democrats-66 (D66), 8.0% of votes;
- Christion Union (CU), 3.1% of votes;
- Greenleft (GL), 2.3% of votes;
- Christian Conservative Party (SGP), 2.1% of votes;
- Party for the Animals (PvvD), 1.9% of votes;
- 50PLUS, 1.9% of votes (Kiesraad, 2012).

Appendix E. Political Party in Parliament (Sweden)

During the Refugee Management Crisis of 2015, two political parties formed the coalition government.

- Social Democratic Party (SAP), 31.2 % of votes;
- Moderate Assembly Party (M), 23.2% of votes (Deloy, 2014).

Several other parties were part of the coalition.

- Swedish Democrats (SD), 12.9% of votes;
- Environment Party (MP), 6.8% of votes;
- Centre Party (C), 6.1% of votes;
- Left Party (L), 5.7% of votes;
- People's Party-Liberals (FpL), 5.4% of votes;
- Christian Democratic Party (KD), 4.6% of votes (Deloy, 2014).

Appendix F. Political Party Manifesto's Summarized (The Netherlands)

To identify the party's views on migration, integration and refugee education, I used several search terms: onderwijs (education), onderwijs aan vluchtelingenkinderen / nieuwkomersonderwijs (refugee education), migratie (migration), immigratie (immigration), asiel (asylum), integratie (integration) and inburgering (integration). The political party manifesto's of the political parties in parliament, based on these search terms, are summarized below.

Party	Concept	Summary of stance
VVD (VVD, 2012)	**Migration**	- "The VVD wants foreign companies to feel welcome in our country." - "The VVD wants to further reduce immigration of underprivileged migrants. If EU rules hinder this effort, an opt-out should be advocated." - "When an asylum seeker enters the Netherlands, it must be definitively determined as quickly as possible whether he/she is a refugee or not. If so, there is room for shelter in the Netherlands. If not, he/she must leave our country as soon as possible." - "If we want to make room for real refugees, we must limit the influx of economically disadvantaged migrants."
	Integration	- "The continued influx of disadvantaged migrants is working against solving integration problems and must therefore be stopped." - "Asylum seekers and migrants are responsible for integration themselves."
	Refugee education	General view on education: - "Good education for our children is the best guarantee for economic growth in the future." - "Improving education does not always require additional money or new regulations. It's about a change in mentality." Refugee education: - "Merely mastering the language, however essential, does not appear to be enough to successfully integrate and participate. Knowledge and understanding of Dutch core values – such as the equality of all people before the law, freedom of expression and tolerance – is essential. The VVD wants more attention to be paid to this in education."
PvdA (PvdA, 2012)	**Migration**	- "The PvdA supports a strict but fair admission policy for asylum seekers. People who are actually persecuted in their country must be able to count on protection from the Netherlands." - "The Dutch asylum procedure must be faster and simpler." - "It is always our duty to protect refugees and treat foreigners with dignity. For the PvdA, the interests of children are paramount." - "Refugees are not criminals. That is why we are developing alternatives to immigration detention and are reversing the criminalization of illegal stay (via the entry ban)."
	Integration	- "Integration for refugees who have been admitted remains entirely the responsibility of the government. Refugees who receive protection in the Netherlands must be able to make a good start in building a new life and connect with Dutch society. This also means that refugees are always assured of social guidance during the initial period - regardless of their place of residence. People who come to the Netherlands voluntarily pay for the integration themselves." - "During the waiting period for their admission, asylum seekers receive language lessons and the opportunity to acquire work skills and volunteer work."

	Refugee education	General view on education: - "Quality education becomes impossible if time and money are lacking." - "Education is and remains crucial for children's opportunities, to help achieve the dreams and goals of young people and to contribute to a strong and social society." Refugee education: - N/A
PVV (PVV, 2012)	**Migration**	- "Rejection of mass-immigration." - "We need to discontinue immigration from Islamic countries." - "Labor migration is inherently temporary. In other words: end of contract equals end of stay." - "No more than a thousand asylum seekers per year." - "Only acute assistance for (adult) asylum seekers and illegal immigrants."
	Integration	- Islam is not a religion but a totalitarian ideology." - "For non-Dutch nationals, eligibility for Dutch citizenship and benefits requires ten years of uninterrupted residence in the Netherlands without committing any crimes." - "Integration courses in the country of origin."
	Refugee education	General view on education: - "We are also reversing the cuts in appropriate education. At least 80 percent of the money that schools receive must be spent on education itself." - "Many national history topics are part of the curriculum." - "Our flag proudly waves at all schools." Refugee education: - N/A
SP (SP, 2012).	**Migration**	- "Where possible, asylum seekers are received in their own region. The Netherlands provides generous assistance in this regard, also in the form of capacity building. Asylum seekers who have arrived in the Netherlands are always entitled to humane reception. Asylum seekers quickly get clarity about their future. When deciding on their residence permit, the (political) situation in the country of origin and the individual circumstances of the asylum seeker are taken into account. […]. Asylum seekers are allowed to work to make themselves useful to society and to provide for themselves." - "Refugees are not criminals – and should not be treated as such." - "The Netherlands is intensifying its assistance to European countries on the European Union's external border to ensure manageable migration, with respect for the rights of refugees."
	Integration	- "We are stopping market forces in integration and we are not even starting on the intended commercialization of adult education. Integration will be tailor-made, close to home, in the neighborhood. The education inspectorate monitors quality. Oldcomers over the age of 55 may, but are not required to, participate in integration. Integration is free of charge for those who adhere to the training agreements made. We are canceling the integration exam abroad for marriage and family migrants."
	Refugee education	General view on education: - "We do not leave people out in the cold and invest in work, education." Refugee education: - N/A
CDA (CDA, 2012)	**Migration**	- "We are strict when it comes to the immigration of people for whom the prospect of successful participation is remote, open to real refugees and inviting for talent, for study or work." - "We are open to real refugees" - "The asylum procedures will become better, shorter, clearer and more efficient. To prevent people without future prospects from staying in the Netherlands for a long time, the procedures will be organized in such a way that the IND provides clarity within six months."

	Integration	- "We see successful integration as a mutual task and, above all, a mutual interest." - "Good command of Dutch is a minimum. The emphasis will also be on responsibilities towards Dutch society." - "Passing the integration exam is a condition for obtaining a permanent residence permit."
	Refugee education	General view on education: - "We invest in education and innovation" - "We invest in quality of education and reduce bureaucracy for schoolteams." Refugee education: - N/A
CU (CU, 2012)	**Migration**	- "The Netherlands does not benefit from large-scale immigration." - "Knowledge migration offers opportunities for both the Netherlands and the country of origin."
	Integration	- "Newcomers must pass an integration exam." - "The integration exam also tests knowledge of core Dutch values, such as our political and religious freedoms and basic social norms. - "Social support for refugees will be embedded in the Integration Act." - "Newcomers are full and empowered citizens, and they are treated as such."
	Refugee education	General view on education: - Education is therefore not a cost, but an investment for the future. The Christian Union invests in good education." - "We also invest in teachers, because the quality of teachers determines the quality of education." Refugee education: - N/A
GL (GL, 2012)	**Migration**	- "In Europe, we advocate for a humane and collective asylum policy, where responsibility is shared fairly." - "The asylum policy ensures the rights of asylum seekers, including a fair and thorough procedure, decent accommodation, and – if an asylum request is denied – safe and sustainable return." - "Asylum seekers' centers will be small-scale, providing sufficient privacy. There will be a focus on the safety and proper medical care for vulnerable groups. Asylum seekers are allowed to study and work while they are in the Netherlands. Especially asylum seekers with children will not have to move frequently. Unaccompanied minors will be placed in foster families whenever possible." - Netherlands will implement a compassionate refugee policy with fast procedures and a children's pardon.
	Integration	- "Costs for mandatory integration will not be passed on to migrants themselves. Migrants who already speak the language will be exempt from the integration requirement. Failing the integration exam will not affect residency rights, but lack of effort will be addressed with fines."
	Refugee education	General view on education: - GroenLinks invests in education, particularly in primary and vocational education." - "The planned cuts to special education – the extra support for students with disabilities – are reversed" Refugee education: - "We invest in improved language education for newcomers and established residents."
SGP (SGP, 2012).	**Migration**	- "Our country is small and densely populated. The capacity to accommodate (economic) migrants is therefore limited. Hence, we must restrict the influx of disadvantaged migrants."

		- "It's necessary to be vigilant about the contamination of the development cooperation budget, such as when it comes to the costs of asylum seeker reception and export credits." - "Opportunities for refugee accommodation in the region of origin need to be expanded."
	Integration	- "The focus of the integration course should be on mastering the Dutch language and basic knowledge of Dutch society. In particular, newcomers should be aware of Dutch symbols and rituals such as the national anthem (Wilhelmus), the Dutch flag, national holidays, and the national Remembrance Day." - "Additionally, welfare benefits will not be provided to those who do not cooperate with the obligation to attend an integration course."
	Refugee education	General view on education: - "The SGP believes that education is good when it is focused on a life as taught in the Bible." - "The general funding of education must be sufficient to deliver good quality." - "The government should be very cautious in prescribing mandatory tools and methods." Refugee education: - N/A
PvvD (PvvD, 2012)	**Migration**	- "The Netherlands actively commits to the protection, safety, humanitarian aid, and good living conditions of refugees in refugee camps." - "The Netherlands is committed to providing humane shelter for refugees in their own region." - "Refugees applying for asylum in the Netherlands should receive a decision on their residency status within two years."
	Integration	- N/A
	Refugee education	General view on education: - "Due to the many budget cuts and mergers, learning factories have emerged where personal attention is far from being found. The Party for the Animals prioritizes the human scale: education should be accessible and based on the aptitude, interests, and talents of the child." - "Invest in education." - ""Learning for a healthy future. A sustainable and healthy society starts at school." Refugee education - N/A
50Plus (50Plus, 2012)	**Migration**	- "The immigration policy is selective: strict yet fair. Newcomers must have sufficient education and background to integrate into Dutch society. Children who have lived in the Netherlands for more than eight years are granted a residence permit."
	Integration	- "Sport and play can promote integration."
	Refugee education	General view on education: - "Less administration, fewer managers, fewer meetings, and more focus on the classrooms. Core tasks are once again being prioritized" Refugee education: - N/A

Appendix G. Political Party Manifesto's Summarized (Sweden)

To identify the party's views on migration, integration and refugee education, I used several search terms: utbildning (education), flykting utbildning (refugee education), migration (migration), invandring (immigration), flykting (refugee), asyl (asylum), integration (integration), etablering (integration). The political party manifesto's of the political parties in parliament, based on these search terms, are summarized below.

Party	Concept	Summary of stance
SAP (SAP, 2014)	**Migration**	- "Anyone in need of protection should be given a sanctuary in our country. Everyone should have the right to an individual and legally secure examination of their asylum reasons. All municipalities in Sweden should take a shared responsibility for refugee reception. At the same time, the EU member states must be persuaded to take a more shared responsibility."
	Integration	- N/A.
	Refugee education	General view on education: - "Investments in schools, healthcare and social care come before tax cuts and privatizations." - "School companies must not be able to reduce the cost of education or the quality in the teaching to be able to make a profit, and no school must have the owners' profit as the main purpose - it must be education." - "All schools must maintain high quality. A school where children with different background, prerequisites, talents and interests come together, where they collaborate and learn to overcome barriers, produce the best results for all students." - "The school must provide a high level of knowledge and must therefore actively work against prejudice, bullying and racism, and promoting democracy, equality and respect for each child's unique value." Refugee education: - N/A.
MP (MP, 2014)	**Migration**	- "Strengthen the right to asylum." - "Counteract discrimination." - "Now it is time to stand up for human rights and a humane migration policy. Our vision is a world without borders, where everyone has the opportunity to move, but no one is forced to flee. We will always work for a more humane and open policy and we will never make it more difficult for people to come to Sweden." - "We view labor immigration positively."
	Integration	- "We also attach the greatest importance to a really good integration policy." - "Newly arrived adults and children must be included early in society, in the labor market and in school. All Swedish municipalities must participate in refugee reception. We want to improve the housing situation for all asylum seekers and protect the right to own housing. Voluntary organizations must be able to participate to an increased extent in the work of meeting new arrivals. New arrivals should be able to have their education assessed more easily in order to be able to quickly apply for a job in Sweden."
	Refugee education	General view on education:

		- "We prioritize education over tax reductions, making significant investments in schools as a valuable investment for the future" - "There should not be good and bad schools – all schools should be good. We want to see government cooperation with principals to raise the quality of schools with poor results." Refugee education: - "Newly arrived adults and children must be included early in society, in the labor market and in school."
Alliance for Sweden (FpL, KD, C, M) (Björlund et al., 2014)	**Migration**	- "We have said that Sweden should pursue a humane asylum policy and be a haven for those fleeing persecution and oppression." - "Significant efforts have been made to improve and speed up the asylum examination process. However, more must be done to make the process even more efficient in various ways and to shorten the time it takes for the individual to establish himself on the labor market." - "The alliance will ensure that the state takes its financial responsibility for the increased reception of refugees." - The alliance believes that Sweden will be better if more people move here to build a better future and work."
	Integration	- "Prioritizing employment opportunities and language proficiency remains fundamental to successful integration."
	Refugee education	General view on education: - "A quality education, emphasizing knowledge and learning, provides our children with a strong start in life and helps to equalize opportunities." - "In healthcare, education, and social services, fully funded reforms should be implemented to enhance quality. It is also crucial that budgetary reinforcements do not rely on increased taxation, as this could negatively impact employment and the business environment." Refugee education: - "We place special emphasis on supporting children and young people who have immigrated to Sweden from other countries and require rapid acquisition of the Swedish language."
SD (SD, 2014)	**Migration**	- "The Sweden Democrats advocate for a Sweden that is open to the world yet protective of its community, culture, and identity. By wisely using limited resources, we aim to help as many needy people globally as possible without neglecting our own country's needs. We strive for an immigration policy that ensures immigration is a benefit, not a burden, to society." - "Switching from the regular issuance of permanent residence permits to temporary ones, and significantly restricting asylum and family immigration to manageable levels, ensuring they do not exceed those of neighboring countries such as Denmark and Finland." - "Eliminating general labor immigration in favor of a 'blue card model' specifically targeting skilled workers with expertise that is scarce in the Swedish labor market."
	Integration	- "Abolishing all government integration policies except for Swedish language instruction, mandatory social orientation, and validation of education and work experience from the home country. Newly arrived immigrants should receive assistance with basic social adaptation tools but otherwise have the same social support as native Swedes—no more, no less."
	Refugee education	General view on education: - "We stand for a re-nationalization of the Swedish school with the aim of giving all children in the country the right to an equal and high-quality education regardless of where they live." - Investments in education

		Refugee education: - N/A
Vp (Vp, 2014)	**Migration**	- "Sweden will conduct one humane and generous refugee policy. Legal avenues to search asylum must be established." - "The right to protection away persecution is an individual human right and the must never be allowed to be influenced by business cycle or labor needs. Sweden will conduct one humane and generous refugee policy."
	Integration	- N/A.
	Refugee education	General view on education: - "In order to further develop quality in welfare, investments are needed in education and competence development." - The Left Party wants to legislate against extracting profits from care, school, preschool and elderly care. The resources should instead go to more staff and better quality." Refugee education: - N/A.