How can Dutch Higher Education Insitutions improve the accessibility of their study programmes to refugee students?

Bachelor Thesis

Dissertation supervisor: Ms. Saskia Rademaker

6 March, 2018

Iris van Wilgen
Student number: 13044540
Class: ES4

The Hague University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Management & Organisation
European Studies

Executive Summary

The aim of this paper is to analyse current practices and issues regarding the accessibility of study programmes in Dutch HEIs for refugee students in order to improve the current situation. This was done by researching relevant literature, looking into the role of networks, and analysing best practices in Germany. A 'general inductive approach' was used in order to give a conclusive answer to the research question. For the purpose of this research, it was chosen to adopt a qualitative research method, which included three interviews with a total of four experts.

The first important finding is that the barriers to study programme accessibility are political, regulatory and cultural in nature. The main challenges that were identified are the following: a political climate favouring assimilation over integration, regulatory barriers such as unattainable entry requirements for study programmes, language barriers that do not allow the student to properly transfer their academic potential, discrimination, stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings that undermine the acculturation process and the final barrier is that the refugee student is new to the Dutch study culture, in which the emphasis lies on low-hierarchy, project-based group work. The role of international networks in combatting these barriers was found to be limited. The Dutch Taskforce for Refugee in Higher Education however, has played an important role in bringing key stakeholders together and streamlining processes regarding study programme accessibility.

Other crucial findings evolve around current practices to enhance access to Dutch study programmes. The first is that there is an issue with a lack of proper counselling for refugee students, which is reinforced by the Dutch culture's emphasis on self-reliance. Secondly, the fact that Dutch HEIs struggle with adopting more inclusive teaching styles might relate to Dutch teachers' informal policy of non-differentiation. This is ingrained in the political landscape as well, as the Dutch lean towards assimilation over integration.

Investigating ways to enhance access to Dutch study programmes has disclosed many challenges of a political, regulatory and cultural nature. Since having a positive acculturation process is key to whether or not a study programme is accessible to the refugee student, it is recommended for Dutch HEIs to focus their efforts on lowering acculturative stress experienced by this group. More in particular, inspiring practices in Germany can teach Dutch HEIs to focus more on counselling. Appointing one contact person per HEI for all refugee students is one possible way of doing that.

How can Dutch Higher Education Institutions improve the accessibility of their study programmes to refugee students?

Table of Contents

Glossary

EC	European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System (study credits)
HE	Higher Education
HEI(s)	Higher Education Institution(s)
MOOC(s)	Massive Open Online Course(s)
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TL	Target Language

Chapter 1: Introduction

"In a divided and unequal world – as we are witnessing today –, higher education can open up opportunities to develop each person's full talents, equip graduates to contribute to economic development and innovation, and cultivate responsibility to a larger common good." – Dr. Susana Ménèndez (Actieplan Vluchtelingen HO work in progress', 2015)

As Dr. Susana Ménèndez observes in the quote above, higher education not only offers an opportunity for the individual to grow, but also for society to grow with it. The large influx of refugees in the Netherlands and Europe in general, and among them (potential) refugee students, has often been referred to as a crisis. However, it could also be regarded as an opportunity for the Dutch society to grow. In order for this to actually be the case, it seems crucial for the Dutch Higher Education system to be as inclusive as possible. More concrete, this means that accessibility of Dutch study programmes needs to be enhanced. This paper shall focus on practical ways in which Higher Education Institutions can do this. The central question this report aims to answer is the following: How can Dutch Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) improve the accessibility of their study programmes to refugee students?

As more refugees with a diploma or with qualifications to start their studies here in the Netherlands approach this country, it becomes essential for HEIs to find a way to deal with these (potential) students. Because the problem is still relatively new, programmes in place for refugee students are still evolving and changing. It appears Higher Education Institutions are looking for practical guidelines and best practices that are simple to implement. In the past two to three years, there have been attempts to meet the HEIs needs. For instance, the European Commission has published three lists of best practices (European Commission, n.d.). These lists however, while they are a good start, do not provide HEIs with implementation guidelines, nor does it say anything about the adaptability of certain practices in different education systems.

It was chosen to develop this report as a reversed triangle: starting out with a broad scope, continually narrowing it down. Firstly, the barriers for refugee students in the Netherlands will be established. Then, the role of the former Taskforce for Refugee Students in Higher Education and the network that was established after the taskforce was dissolved, will be looked into. Narrowing the scope further, policies from HEIs themselves shall be examined.

Finally, the Dutch practices are compared to so-called 'inspiring practices' in Germany that have been established as such by the European Commission, in order to possibly find out in which areas the Dutch can learn from the Germans.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Chapter 2.1: Research Methods and Research Approach

The aim of this paper is to analyse current practices and issues regarding the accessibility of study programmes in Dutch HEIs for refugee students, as well as to look at literature, best practices in Germany, and finally, the role of networks, in order to improve the current situation. A 'general inductive approach' was used in order to give a conclusive answer to the research question. As stated by Thomas (2006), the general inductive approach is very well suited within a qualitative methodology. According to him, the main purpose of this approach is to let objectives or themes emerge from the data. It is the counterpart of the deductive approach, in which the researcher looks at the data with a certain theme, objective or hypothesis in mind (p. 238). The latter would be very appropriate for hypothesis testing research. This research paper however, is aimed at researching practical obstacles and barriers. If there were to be a set hypothesis on what these practical obstacles are prior to having seen the data set, it would obstruct the researcher in allowing the data to tell a different story. In other words, the general inductive approach was used in order to conduct the research in a way that was as unbiased and valid as possible.

As part of this approach, transcripts of personal interviews and relevant scientific literature were read closely, re-read several times, and coded using an open system, meaning that anything relevant to this research was coded. After rereading the data set and adjusting the coding framework that was already lied down, the open codes were axially coded. This meant that certain codes having to do with the same phenomenon, group of people, or policy for example, were coded with the same axial code. From these axial codes, certain themes emerged, namely: Entry trajectory Schakeljaar, language acquisition, role municipality, getting acquainted with Dutch study culture, cultural differences, study choice counselling, expectation management, enrolling at universities, deficiency education, language issues, issue Schakeljaar, cultural background, integration hazards, language skills, recommendations implementation, legal barriers, procedures, non-supple attitude national government, achievements taskforce, Ministry of Education, allocation financial resources, entry requirements study programmes, counselling, issues Dutch Higher Education system, cultural obstacle, positive features Dutch Higher Education System, and finally, interventions.

These themes were then translated into a closed coding system, in which each of the aforementioned relevant parts of the data set was awarded a final, closed code. The following closed codes were identified: cultural obstacles, legal obstacles, role taskforce, current implementation practices, and finally, current implementation issues.

According to Thomas (2006), an issue with the general inductive approach and this type of coding framework, is its reliability; would a different researcher come up with the same coding framework, themes and results, from looking at the same data set? Ways to solve this, according to him, are peer or stakeholder checks, during not only the coding process, but during the research project as a whole (p. 239, 242). Before this report was finalized, it was sent to all participants of this research, who could assess if their words were interpreted correctly. Hereby, the researcher hopes to remove most of the bias, and create more validity and reliability.

Personal interviews, as mentioned before, have been used as a qualitative data gathering method for the purpose of this research paper. Interviews were done in a semi-structured way, which allowed the researcher the flexibility to specify or clarify the answers of participants during the interview.

Chapter 2.2: Research Steps

The first research step was to define the scope and limits of the research. The scope was determined for four elements: the definition of the refugee student, the focus on accessibility versus study retention and study success, the choice of education level, and finally, the European Union member state to be used for comparison of best practices. The first element for which the scope was decided, was the definition of a refugee student to be used in this particular research. After consulting *Asielrecht* by Mr. Van Bennekom and Mr. Van der Winden (2011), it was decided that for this research, the definition of a refugee student is limited to a refugee who is granted permission to stay in the Netherlands on grounds A (regular), B (subsidiary protection), C (humanitarian) or D (categorial protection). In addition to that, the refugee needed to have a qualification that at least equals a Dutch havo-diploma. Another consideration was, that as stated by McBrien (2005), research on accessibility and study barriers is often done for the group of students with a migrant background (p. 333). As these research papers often include the refugee student, it was decided to first look at barriers for all students with a migrant background, and to then search for refugee-specific issues. The second step in determining the scope of this paper, was to determine the focus on accessibility, rather than study retention or study success. Desk research of literature on students with a migrant background and refugee students in particular, showed that although enhancing the accessibility of a study programme or education system oftentimes influences study retention and study success positively, they are not the same thing. This works the other way around as well; factors obstructing study retention and study success often are barriers to access a

programme as well. It was eventually chosen to research accessibility, as there is very few research on the particular cases of study retention and study success of refugee students in the Netherlands that I could consult. Next to the having more research available, looking at accessibility would also provide for a more interdisciplinary research, that does not only focus on cultural and educational factors – but also on legal and political ones, for example. This interdisciplinary nature suits European Studies, the study programme for which this bachelor thesis is written, very well. The third factor to be considered in deciding on the scope, was the choice of education level. The main issue here was whether or not to include vocational education (mbo in Dutch) into the definition of higher education. According to Science Guide, in 2016, around 30 per cent of all refugee students in the Netherlands were studying in vocational education (Science Guide, 2016). The fourth, and final, step in the decision on the scope of the research concerned the country to be looked at for best practices. Both neighbour countries to the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, were considered, as their higher education system also distinguishes between research universities and universities of applied sciences – although the implication of the difference between the two is different in each of the aforementioned countries. Eventually, Germany was chosen, as their HEIs were listed far more often in the lists published by the European Commission on the most inspiring practices.

After the scope was decided on, desk research was conducted on models of acculturation, study retention models, as well as articles published on study barriers experienced by students with a migrant background. Refugee-specific issues needed to be researched separately. Each document was assessed on credibility, and re-read several times, in line with the general inductive approach. A total of four people was interviewed to clarify findings in literature, learn implementation issues, and learn more about the implications of the theory on daily practice. Participants were found during desk research on the internet or were referred to by others. In both cases, contact was made via e-mail. The first two participants were Eelke Tuinstra and Pauline Broekhoven, the first is a teacher in a Schakeljaar (Transition Year) for refugee students, the latter coordinator of said Schakeljaar. They told me more about the issues refugee students face, and Pauline Broekhoven in particular could disclose some issues that had to do with implementation of the rules. This information could not have been derived from theory or articles. The third participant was Dr. Susana Ménèndez, she was the initiator of the Dutch Taskforce for Refugee Students in Higher Education. She could answer all questions related to the role of networks. The fourth and final participant was Wâtte Zijlstra, a researcher and expert on issues experienced by students with a migration background. He has worked for ECHO, Dutch centre of expertise on diversity policy. In the ideal situation, a fifth participant would have been a coordinator of one of the programmes in Germany that have been listed as a best practice, to learn from the issues they face and how they handle them. Due to time

constraints, this was not possible however. After the interviews had been conducted, the transcripts were coded in line with the general inductive approach as mentioned above.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This report is about HEI policies regarding refugee students and how they can be improved. In order to properly understand this target group, it seems crucial to understand the mental process that is happening during the time that the refugee student is starting to settle into the culture of the host country. In socio(psycho)logical literature, that process of settling in is referred to as the acculturation process. This chapter aims to describe this process and explain the phenomenon of 'acculturative stress'. The implications of the acculturation process for the refugee student shall be attempted to be made more concrete for the purposes of this report, by looking into acculturation and learning a second language, and how the process of acculturation can be seen in the behaviour of the refugee student in a school setting.

Chapter 3.1 Acculturation Process

The very simple definition of acculturation put forward by Gibson (2001) is that acculturation is *"… the process of culture change and adaptation that occurs when individuals with different cultures come in contact"* (p. 19). To put this definition into perspective, years earlier, Berry (1989) proposed that any theory on acculturation should at least the three following components: its basic nature, its characteristic course and finally, the level at which this takes place (p. 1). The definition of Gibson clearly fits into the first component, as it describes the nature of acculturation. Berry adds to this note on the nature of acculturation, that when the two cultures meet, the result is that one of the groups changes as a result of this contact. Usually, this change is negative for one of the two parties. One culture usually becomes dominant over the other. Berry asserts that for refugees the conflict this causes is particularly hard, as they already have to deal with the grief that comes from leaving their homes involuntarily (p. 1). As for the second component, Berry distinguishes three stages within the acculturation process: contact, conflict, and adaptation. Conflict is not inevitable, but this highly depends on the nature of the contact in the first phase. If this contact was good-natured, and if there was willingness from both sides, the conflict phase can be avoided. Adaptation comes as the result of resolving conflict or tensions that have risen from the contact. There are three modes of adaptation: adjustment (like in the well-known 'melting pot' analogy), reaction (campaigning against the source of conflict), and withdrawal (retreating to own community, stopping the contact that caused conflict) (pp. 1-2).

There are six common responses to acculturation, according to Berry (1989). The first is a language shift in the non-dominant group: refugees are expected to learn the language of the host country. The second response is a change in cognitive style, often acquired in formal education. This will allow some (not all) refugee student to be able to actively switch between

different perceptions, ways of intellectually functioning and learning styles. The third response to acculturation, is a shift in personality, where the individual in the non-dominant group takes over some traits of individuals from the dominant group. Again, some people might be able to actively switch between traits when dealing with different groups, others may not. The fourth and fifth common response to acculturation are to do with identity and attitudes. The sense of identity, mainly in the non-dominant group, changes. The non-dominant group might want to identify with the dominant group, whereas the dominant group could also show fear of loss of identity, caused by conflicts with the non-dominant group. The final response, acculturative stress, will be discussed in a separate sub chapter (pp. 4-5).

Chapter 3.2 Acculturative Stress

Acculturative stress, sometimes referred to as acculturation stress, is a very common phenomenon within the process of acculturation. The term, according to Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok (1987), refers to *"… a reduction in health status (including psychological, somatic and social aspects) of individuals who are undergoing acculturation, and for which there is evidence that these health phenomena are related systematically to acculturation phenomena"* (p. 491). These (mental) health phenomena described by Berry, Kim, Minde and Mok (1987) include a lower mental health status, where individuals might face depression, confusion and anxiety. It also entails feelings of marginality and alienation, as well as identity confusion (p. 492). Factors that contribute to the amount of acculturative stress an individual might feel, are the nature of the larger society, the type of acculturating group, modes of acculturation, demographic and social characteristics of the individual, and psychological characteristics of the individual (p. 493). The nature of the larger society reflects its tendency towards a multiculturalism or towards assimilation (p. 494). The latter can cause more pressure on the individual. The type of acculturating group, in this case refugees, makes the group more vulnerable to acculturative stress, as their migration has not been a voluntary choice (p. 494). The third factor, modes of acculturation, has to do with the aforementioned modes put forward by Berry. The most favourable situation is that of integration, referred to by Berry as 'adjustment', the least favourable (and therefore the most likely mode to cause acculturative stress) is marginalisation, or as Berry put it, 'withdrawal' (p. 494-495). Finally, the characteristics of the individual, whether they be demographic, social, or psychological, influences their coping strategies. Some individuals possess coping strategies that might allow them to adapt more easily. The more one is able to cope with the challenges that acculturation brings, the less likely he is to experience acculturative stress (p. 495).

Chapter 3.3 Acculturation and Second Language Acquisition

Acquisition of the language of the hosting country is a crucial element in acculturation. Schumann (1986) has developed a model that reflects the factors that contribute to successful Second Language Acquisition (SLA) within acculturation (see Figure 1).

Social Factors:	Dominance; Nondominance; Subordination; Assimilation; Acculturation; Preservation; Enclosure; Cohesiveness; Size; Congruence; Attitude; Intended Length of Residence in TL Area.
Affective Factors:	Language Shock; Culture Shock; Motivation; Ego-permeability.
Personality Factors:	Tolerance for Ambiguity; Sensitivity to Rejection; Introversion/Extroversion; Self-esteem.
Cognitive Factors:	Cognitive Development; Cognitive Processes: imitation, analogy, generalisation, rote memorisation; Cognitive Style: field dependence, category width, cognitive interference, monitoring.
Biological Factors:	Lateralisation; Transfer; Infrasystems.
Aptitude Factors:	Modern Language Aptitude; IQ; Strephosymbolia.
Personal Factors:	Nesting Patterns; Transition Anxiety; Reaction to Teaching Methods; Choice of Learning Strategies.
Input Factors:	Frequency; Salience; Complexity; Type of Interlocutor.
Instructional Factors:	Goals; Teacher; Method; Text; Duration; Intensity.

Figure 1: factors in acculturation and SLA (Schumann, 1978, p. 380)

Schumann gives no specific instructions when it comes to language teaching and instead focuses more on the learner and his characteristics. It can be seen in the model that the factors the HEI can directly influence remain limited to input and instructional factors. In a more indirect way, the HEI can influence cognitive factors, such as cognitive interference and monitoring, as well as personal factors such as choice of learning strategies.

In essence, his conclusion was that a student can only learn the language of the dominant group to the degree that he acculturates (p. 379). What he also suggests is that, as the individual acculturates, they come in contact with the dominant group that speaks the target language (TL). This means that acculturation can also be seen as a driving force of SLA. So, if the acculturation process goes relatively smoothly with limited acculturative stress, this means the individual is more likely to be successful at learning the TL (p. 385).

Chapter 3.4 Acculturation and (Higher) Education

Considering the large impact acculturation and acculturation stress can have on an individual, it seems crucial that educators are aware of the needs of the still acculturating refugee student. According to a Cowart (2011): *"When students feel like outsiders in the school environment, do not have a sense of belonging, have few friends involved in school, and are not integrated into the social and academic life of their school, they become likely candidates for academic failure"* (p. 136). This scenario should be avoided, obviously. Cowart (2011) suggests that *"educators can powerfully support their newcomer students by becoming cognizant of their incredible needs, previous lives, and cultures, and by being well-informed about the influence of the refugee experience on acculturation as well as the impact of acculturation on second language acquisition"* (p. 150). In her paper, Cowart (2011) makes some very concrete suggestions in order to do this. The first has to do with knowing the background of the refugee student when it comes to linguistics, culture and academic background (p. 148). Another recommendation is to employ a multicultural teaching style, including information by and about different cultures and in a variety of languages to reduce social distance and encourage learning from each other. This will work best if the institution promotes a learning culture in which curiosity, respect and multiculturalism are celebrated (p. 148-150).

In conclusion, it can be said that although there are many factors that the HEI cannot influence, such as the nature of the host society and the involuntary nature of the refugee student's migration, it can indeed have an influence on some factors that lower acculturative stress and that aid SLA and integration in education.

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 4.1: Barriers

In this chapter, different barriers that refugee students might encounter are outlined. This does not mean that all refugee students experience these barriers or experience them to the same degree. Also, one should never see the barriers isolated from the acculturation process as a whole. It is a combination of different (degrees in influence) of the barriers that effect the refugee student. Finally, some barriers might overlap in ways, and/or can enforce each other. A lack in language skills for example, can reinforce stereotyping and cause cultural misunderstandings.

4.1.1 Political Climate

As was already established in the previous chapter, an important factor in the success of the acculturation process of the refugee, both on an individual and group level, is the role of society. When the society is geared towards assimilation, rather than integration, this can be harmful to the acculturation process of the refugee. In the words of McBrien (2005), assimilation is often understood to be a process in which the individual from the non-dominant group gives up their own culture, exchanging it for the culture of the host society. According to McBrien, if the refugee student feels like they are not allowed to retain some elements of their culture, this can cause acculturative stress, which in turn harm the acculturation process and negatively impacts the refugee's chance at academic success (p. 331). In the Netherlands, with the rise of populist parties such as *Forum voor Democratie* and *de Partij voor de Vrijheid*, Dutch society tends more and more towards assimilation as the best strategies for new groups of immigrants. An important remark McBrien (2005) made in this regard, is that for some refugees it is practically impossible to fully assimilate and to 'melt' into the culture of the dominant group. This can be because of their phenotype (darker skin colour and hair for example) or religious garb (such as headscarfs). According to McBrien, "*as a result, governmental and societal policies that encourage or discourage welcoming refugees from various countries play a prominent role in their success*" (p. 332). In other words, especially for this group, unwelcoming policies and a unwelcoming political climate can form a large barrier, especially at the early stages of acculturation. .

4.1.2 Regulatory Barriers

The first regulatory barrier to be distinguished here, evolves around the recognition of previously acquired degrees. A very common practice (see chapter 4.3) in the Netherlands is the Schakeljaar (Transition Year), in which the refugee student transitions into Dutch HE. According to Pauline Broekhoven, co-ordinator at the Schakeljaar of The Hague University of

Applied Sciences, in order to start this Schakeljaar, the refugee student needs to at least possess a degree that is the equivalent of a Dutch havo diploma. If the refugee student has had the chance to bring the diploma, it needs to be evaluated by Nuffic, a semi-government organisation that accredits and values degrees. If there is no paper evidence, it becomes slightly more difficult, according to Broekhoven. Testing knowledge is then a good option (Personal Interview, 2017). While the refugee student waits for their status as a refugee and/or the accreditation of their degree, by law, refugees are not allowed to do anything other than wait. For example, they cannot start doing a language course, says Wâtte Zijlstra (Personal Interview, 2017). Only after they have been granted a residence permit, refugees are allowed to start their integration courses (inburgeringscursus in Dutch) and official language courses.

Secondly, rules and procedures around language acquisition have proven to be an obstacle, both from the perspective of the student and of the Higher Education Institution. According to Eelke Tuinstra, teacher at The Hague University of Applied Sciences Schakeljaar, the entry requirements regarding language skills are that for English, the student needs to have a level of at least A1, and for Dutch, the level needs to be at least B2. From the perspective of the refugee student, the barrier lies with the costs of the language course – generally, they are to be carried by the student himself. Also, since the liberalisation of the laws regarding integration courses in 2013, which has now put the responsibility for succeeding at the integration test with the refugees themselves, a lot of private language institutions have emerged, at which refugees can follow language courses. Not all of these private institutions are bonafide, and according to the AD, a Dutch newspaper, many refugees have been taken advantage of: institutions asking too much money for the education they offered. Quality labels, offered by the government, are not always reliable (Tieleman, 2017).

From the perspective of the Higher Education Institution, the problem is slightly different. According to Dr. Susana Ménèndez, initiator of the Taskforce for Refugee Students in Higher Education and member of the board of The Hague University of Applied Sciences, it becomes an issue when the institution decides to provide refugee students with language courses for free, carrying the costs that normally would be paid for by the refugee students themselves. In order to create and teach these courses, university funds need to be allocated that normally would be used for other things. Many HEIs have done so, risking penalties from the *Onderwijsinspectie* (Dutch government agency that checks on education institutions) for the way they allocated their funds (Personal Interview, 2017). Fear of repercussions from the *Onderwijsinspectie* might lead HEIs to decide not to offer language courses, which could form an obstacle for the refugee student that does not have the financial resources to follow a language course.

The third obstacle evolves around the Schakeljaar: the municipality only allows it to be one year. This results in a very dense, high intensity programme, in which students not only have to follow the Schakeljaar programme (which is different for everyone, as different students have different deficiencies and wish to follow different study programmes), but they also have to make their study choice, as well as successfully enrol in the study programme of choice. On top of that, they need to make sure to meet the requirements set by the study programme of preference. According to Pauline Broekhoven, all this pressure leads to high absence rates amongst the Schakeljaar students (Personal Interview, 2017).

The fourth and final obstacle of a regulatory nature, is to do with some of the legal requirements to enter a Dutch study programme, which can be hard to meet for a refugee student. The perfect example of this, brought forward by Eelke Tuinstra (teacher at the Schakeljaar) and Pauline Broekhoven, is that refugee students, as well as Dutch students, need to have a certain knowledge of Dutch society before being allowed to enter a programme. For Dutch students, this is no problem, as that was part of their mandatory programme in secondary school. For the refugee student however, this is far more difficult. They have to prove to have the same knowledge of Dutch society as a Dutch student within the time span of the Schakeljaar, which is less than a calendar year. Currently, admission committees from study programmes look at each case individually and decide in a case-by-case manner what needs to happen in order for the student to be admitted. Considerations in making these decisions differ per study programme, similar to how the requirements to enter a study programme are different for all programmes (Personal Interview, 2017).

4.1.3 Language

According to McBrien (2005), all studies on SLA indicated that immigrant students with good skills in the TL are better adjusted to the school environment in the host country. On the other hand, students with heavy accents or general difficulties with the TL are often seen to be ridiculed, sometimes even punished when they used their native language (p. 341-342).

Not speaking the language fluently can cause a lot of stress for students, particularly in a classroom setting. In a paper by Cowart (2011), one student described their experience as follows: "*One year ago, I was afraid of being killed by soldiers, and now my big fear is that the teacher will call on me to answer a question. When I do get called on, my mind swirls and jumbles up all the grammar rules in my head. Then slowly I have to work my thoughts into a sentence and have to force my tongue and mouth to speak it. … It takes so much work energy, work and effort to listen, understand, talk, study, learn, and remember everything in class that I often go off by myself during recess to be quiet*" (p. 141). Evidently, this statement does not

speak for the entire group, as it is an individual experience, but it is certain that this experience is not unique. According to McBrien (2005), this can have to do with the way in which the student had to flee their homes. McBrien distinguishes between anticipatory refugee movements, where refugees foresee their departure, and acute refugee movements, in which the danger was immediate, and the refugees had to leave their homes in a rush. The first group has often had the chance to think of a country they would want to settle in, perhaps they have even had the chance to become acquainted with the language (p. 334). This way, this group has an advantage over the acute refugee.

A perhaps more pressing barrier that can actually be addressed by the HEI, is that educators could be more aware of the oftentimes overlooked difference between capabilities of refugee students when it comes to colloquial expression of the TL, versus the academic use of the TL. According to McBrien (2005), what often happens is that a student is competent at spoken, colloquial English for example, but considerably behind to native speakers when it comes to the academic form of the English. The result is that some students might be put in a level that is still too difficult considering the language barrier, and for others the opposite might apply: that they are put in a low-level academic track (like vocational education), when there is plenty of academic potential, but the student simply lacks the language skills to transfer this potential (p. 342). In both cases, language forms a barrier for the student to be in a suitable study programme, that matches their academic abilities.

4.1.4 Discrimination, Stereotypes and Cultural Misunderstandings

McBrien (2005) sums up exactly why and how stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings are very harmful. Firstly, cultural misunderstandings can result in prejudice and discrimination. This results in an even larger chance for the refugee student at experiencing the acculturative stress that overcoming the impact of negative attitudes within the host environment brings. Also, these negative attitudes can worsen the already experienced acculturative stress that struggling with a new language and cultural changes bring. According to a number of studies, discrimination is even seen as the greatest barrier to adaptation for refugee students (p. 330).

An example of discrimination happening in the classroom due to cultural misunderstandings is that, according to McBrien (2005), refugee students might give short responses to questions (often due to language issues), might communicate unexpected nonverbal expressions, and can have a reaction of embarrassment to praise (p. 342). These responses can be misinterpreted by the educator as deficiencies that need to be 'fixed'.

An example based on stereotyping was given by Eelke Tuinstra, who explained that some refugee students came up to him and told him about teachers telling them to be grateful that they got the opportunity to study here in the Netherlands, acting like it would not be possible in their home country to have that kind of possibility. This while some of these students might even have finished their degree already, but that might want to refresh their knowledge, whether that be for personal reasons or because of legal requirements. According to Tuinstra, different students react differently to these stereotypes, but it definitely has the potential to be harmful (Personal interview, 2017).

4.1.5 Differences in Educational Practice and Dutch Study Culture

The final barrier within the Dutch education system to be discussed here, is that of the Dutch study culture. According to Wâtte Zijlstra, Dutch study culture is highly individualistic, and relies heavily on the notion of the student as a highly self-reliant individual, who is himself responsible for their own study success (Personal Interview, 2017). For the refugee student, who is still in the middle of the acculturation process, it can cause a lot of extra stress to find that it is assumed that they will find out everything by themselves and that there is very little possibility to have more guidance.

Another prominent difference in Dutch study culture versus the home culture of many refugee students, is the lack of hierarchy. In a personal interview, Eelke Tuinstra (2017) mentioned it is very common for the refugee student to have been brought up in a traditional learning environment, in which the teacher at the top of the hierarchy teaches their students on their area of expertise. Students are expected to listen quietly, take in knowledge and not ask questions. This would be seen as disrespectful. Dutch study culture, much like society in general, is stooled on the principle that everyone should be equally important and that all should have a say. Asking questions is usually encouraged and interaction between students and teachers is highly appreciated (Personal Interview, 2017). On top of that, honesty and directness are traits that are valued highly as well, while in other cultures it would be highly disrespectful to say no, for example. It highly differs per student how easily they can adapt to this change.

The final element of Dutch study culture to be discussed here, is the emphasis on project-based working, preferably in groups. Within this form of education, it is expected from the students to actively participate, to be able to give feedback (which requires a certain level of directness within Dutch study culture, otherwise one might be misinterpreted) and to work together (Pauline Broekhoven, Personal Interview, 2017).

Chapter 4.2: Role Networks and Taskforce

In this chapter, the focus is shifted from general obstacles within education, to what organisations and institutions have collectively done to overcome these obstacles. The nature of the collectives to be discussed below varies greatly. Firstly, the most relevant networks on the European Union level shall be discussed. Then, the Dutch case will be looked into, explaining what the Dutch Taskforce for Refugee Students in Higher Education, initiated by Dr. Susana Ménèndez, has achieved and what the situation is like now in The Netherlands.

4.2.1 International Networks

Within the context of the European Union, several networks and initiatives have been set up. According to the European Commission web site, there are roughly two types of initiatives to be distinguished: the ones focused on the refugee students who have already arrived in the EU, and the ones focusing on offering education outside of Europe in so-called Partner Countries. For the purpose of this research, only networks and initiatives that are active within the EU shall be discussed. Within this category, there is another distinction possible – that between programmes geared towards HEIs and the initiatives that are geared directly towards the refugee student. An example of the former are strategic partnerships as part of Erasmus+ between different institutions, and an example of the latter is free access for refugee students to Online Linguistic Support (OLS), again, as part of Erasmus+. The European Commission also provides guides and toolkits to improve the recognition of previously acquired competencies and degrees (European Commission, n.d.). What is mainly noticeable, is that for all the initiatives and programmes, the European Commission merely lays out guidelines that promote cooperation. This does not come as a surprise, considering education is a highly 'decentralised' subject within the European Union, and is largely left up to the member states to decide. The role of the international community in overcoming barriers at the member state level, let alone at the HEI-level, is therefore questionable.

4.2.2 The Dutch case: Taskforce and the Current State of Networks

The first initiative in the Netherlands to work together to solve some of the most pertinent issues faced by refugees, was the aforementioned Taskforce Refugee Students in Higher Education. According to Sunana Ménèndez, initiator of the taskforce, it was a high-level collaboration between the biggest universities (of applied sciences) in the South Holland region and later more HEIs all over the country, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, Nuffic, UAF, Vereniging Hogescholen, VSNU, and ECHO, knowledge institute for diversity (Personal Interview, 2017).

According to the *Werkwijzer Vluchtelingen* website, there were five so-called action lines. The first was to discover the educational demands of the refugee student. The second was to scale up transition and language education. The thirds action line had to do with counselling and guidance before, during and after the studies. The fourth one was about the recognition of previously acquired degrees. The fifth, and final one, was to map local initiatives (Sociaal Economische Raad, n.d.).

According to Dr. Ménèndez, one of the most important achievements of the taskforce was the establishment of regional networks between universities and universities of applied sciences. The second one was the possibility for free validation of degrees and the analysis of previously acquired competencies. Some more concrete examples: *"Nuffic extended their service to a 24-hour service in degree validation. Nuffic also did an analysis of the system of higher education in Syria to help all institutions, universities and hogescholen, to exactly know the level on which the refugee can enter an institution. We organised a national conference in March 2016 in Utrecht. It was attended by people all over the country and from all universities and universities of applied sciences, more than 200 people. Everybody wanted to know and understand the possibilities for refugees at their universities. After that, we organised a network in which organisations on a regional level, started with courses in languages, but also courses in Academic skills and preparation in order to enter a university […] We also organised the possibility of some financial compensation for travel costs, because a lot of refugee live far away from the places where they can follow courses."*

"*After a year, we said: okay, what we could do is already done. Now it is up to universities and hogescholen to go further. And the networks are still very active. Currently, practically all of the Dutch Higher Education Institutions has an agreement with UAF."* This means that all schools aim to be open to refugee students. According to Pauline Broekhoven (2017), representatives from many Dutch HEIs meet periodically to discuss issues within their Schakeljaar trajectories share best practices and exchange knowledge.

Chapter 4.3: Current practices Dutch HEIs and implementation issues

4.3.1 Current Practices

Many Dutch Higher Education Institutions already do a lot for refugees. These are not coordinated actions that are applied throughout the entirety of Dutch HE, though. The Dutch system is highly decentralized, which means that although, for example, many HEIs have a

Schakeljaar in some form or shape. Although the idea is similar, it is executed very differently. In this chapter, the main fields of action shall be identified. These actions may or may not take place within the framework of a Schakeljaar.

The first practices to be discussed are those evolving around Dutch study culture. For some of these elements, students can actually be prepared. For others, this does not apply. An example from the latter category was put forward by Wâtte Zijlstra. He claims that in Dutch society in general, only the individual is responsible for the individual's success. *"This is also reflected in higher education, in that students are responsible for their own success. Teachers believe this as well and let them go, because everyone has to do it themselves and that is part of education" (*Personal Interview, 2017)*. This statement, as well as other elements of Dutch study culture that have the potential to negatively impact the refugee student, will be further elaborated on in the Analysis chapter. However, there are still many elements of Dutch study culture that students are currently being prepared for in the Schakeljaar, mostly through exposure. An example of an element uniquely to Dutch study culture, is how Dutch education is oriented towards group work and project-based learning. Both of these things, students can get accustomed to during the Schakeljaar, in which they have to start working in groups during projects (Broekhoven, Tuinstra, Personal Interview, 2017).

Language education is another very common practice. According to Eelke Tuinstra, upon arrival at the HEI, all refugee students have already had some form of language education because they need to at least have a Dutch level of B1. During the Schakeljaar trajectory, this level is supposed to be elevated to B2 – the required entrance level for most Dutch study programmes. Another, slightly less important part of language education, is the English as a third language. At the end of the Schakeljaar, students are expected to have attained at least level B1. This, similar to Dutch, is an elevation of one level compared to the entry level. For English, the bar for entering the Schakeljaar was set at A2 (Personal Interview, 2017).

Another important element within the Schakejlaar is deficiency education. All refugee students are expected to take Dutch and English classes, this is not the case with deficiency education. Most Schakeljaar programmes offer different subjects within the deficiency curriculum. As many students wish to follow a study in the field of health care and technique, commonly chosen deficiency subjects are mathematics, economics and physics (Tuinstra, Personal Interview, 2017).

Two practices at Dutch HEIs that are more on the 'soft' side of education, are expectation management and study choice counselling. In the interview with Broekhoven and Tuinstra, it

became clear that upon arrival in the Netherlands, many students have a preconceived idea of the type of education they wish to follow. This type is usually the one they know or might have already followed in their country of origin. Higher education in the Netherlands however, is set up in a slightly different manner than in most countries. Here, one has the option to go for a more practical approach at universities of applied sciences, or to go for a more research-oriented approach at a research university. Research universities fit better into the classical idea of the type of higher education that refugee students are already familiar with from their home country. Some students might have to adjust their expectations of going to a research university, for example because they will not be able to meet the entry requirements in the limited time the municipality has given Schakeljaar programmes. Others might find that the practical approach is more suitable for them, or perhaps that their study of choice is only available at one type of university (Personal Interview, 2017). In order for all these considerations not to cause too much acculturative stress, it is important that educators or counsellors play a guiding role in the study choice. The reason this is so important is partly practical, students need someone to help them with applications and telling them when the deadlines are. However, it is not only practical, it is also a big part of giving the student the impression that they are welcome. Tackling regulatory barriers and cultural confusion on your own as a refugee student, might give him the impression he is not welcome, which is known to cause acculturative stress. By providing guidance in this area, the amount of acculturative stress can be limited.

According to Pauline Broekhoven (2017), at The Hague University of Applied Sciences, special attention has been paid to the ethnic and cultural diversity within the team of teachers at the Schakeljaar (Personal Interview, 2017). The idea is that, by bringing in teachers with varying cultural backgrounds, the refugee students gets the opportunity to become acquainted with many different cultures, other than that of himself and the culture of the dominant group of the host country. This can be enriching and have a positive effect on the acculturation process. From another perspective, a multicultural team of teachers might also be better equipped to cope with a multicultural classroom, in which students with different backgrounds, learning styles and linguistic knowledge are all coming together.

Many Dutch HEIs have introduced a mentoring programme on their campus. Often this was separated from the Schakeljaar programme, which allows for a broader scope than when a mentor is tied to the Schakeljaar. The idea behind the mentoring programme is that the acculturation process of the refugee student can be enhanced through interaction with a member of the dominant group. Mentors can play a guiding role in SLA, in integrating the refugee student in the academic and social life at the HEI (and sometimes also in society in

the broader sense) and can help with administrative tasks. Mentoring programmes at HEIs are often, but not exclusively, set up together with UAF.

4.3.2 Implementation Issues

In this sub chapter, the issues encountered while implementing the aforementioned measures shall be explained. The first issue to be discussed here, evolves around handling a multicultural classroom. The literature is very clear in that this is the best option, not only for the acculturation process of the refugee student, but also for the native student to expand their knowledge on other cultures and to make the so-called psychological distance to persons from other cultures smaller. However, in practice this can be difficult. According to Wâtte Zijlstra (2017), 40 per cent of the teachers do not distinguish between student groups. He claims that purposely avoiding differentiation between groups is deeply anchored within Dutch culture. As he puts it, it is considered 'fair' to treat everyone in the same way (Personal Interview, 2017). However, for a multicultural approach to succeed, it is important that differences are not only recognised, but that they are also embraced as a positive thing.

As mentioned before, proper counselling is important in practical matters, but also to give the refugee student a sense of being welcome in the host country. However, Pauline Broekhoven, Eelke Tuinstra and Wâtte Zijlstra all indicated that there is not enough time for proper counselling. Within the Schakeljaar trajectory, emphasis lies on formal education, being the languages and deficiency education (Personal Interview, 2017). After transitioning into a regular study programme, Wâtte Zijlstra claims there still is not enough time, because per semester, a student only gets around 20 minutes one-on-one time with a study counsellor. For the refugee student, but arguably for most students, this is not enough (Personal Interview, 2017).

Furthermore, the high intensity of the Schakeljaar programme leads to pressure on the teacher (wanting to do more, but not being able to), but also on the student. The absence rate during the Schakeljaar is very high because the intensity of the programme is too high, according to Pauline Broekhoven (Personal Interview, 2017). Considering that teachers in the Netherlands already experience face high demands and have a large workload, this is a real issue.

A final implementation issue, is to attain permanent change. According to Wâtte Zijlstra (2017), many interventions have been tried already, and many have been successful, but what has proved to be a challenge is the transition from a one-off intervention to daily practice. Training teachers for instance on how to work with a multicultural classroom, can work as an intervention. On the whole however, a 2015 report by the OECD has made clear that the

Netherlands underperforms when it comes to study success of students with a migrant background. It can be seen from anecdotes that the intervention might have been successful, but in the end, this is not reflected in increased access to study programmes or enhanced study success of this vulnerable group of students. In this light, it becomes even more remarkable that in the Netherlands, teachers are very likely to think they do not need extra training, regarding this topic. In short, the Netherlands is underperforming due to a lack of good change management – however, the general tendency is to think that all goes well, and that no extra attention is needed (p. 16-17).

In conclusion, most implementation issues do not have to do with a lack of goodwill, but rather with the high work load, as experienced by teachers. The issue here is that often, teachers are the first and often only ones in direct contact with the refugee student and their acculturation process.

Chapter 4.4: German Best Practices

The best practices in this chapter have been retrieved from three documents issued by the European Commission, under the umbrella 'Inspiring Practices: Higher Education helping Newly Arrived Refugees'. There are three categories to be distinguished, and for each category, a different document has been developed. The first is called 'Access to Higher Education outside Europe and Awareness in Society' (European Commission, n.d.), the second 'Meet basic needs and ease social integration of refugees' (European Commission, n.d.), and the third 'Recognition of Skills, access to Higher Education and Integration of Researchers' (European Commission, n.d.). In all three documents, different challenges are identified, as well as inspiring examples on how to handle said challenges. The documents were first published by the European Commission (EC) in 2015 and have since been regularly updated. The first versions were drafted through a survey among universities and student organisations, conducted on 24 September 2015. On 6 October 2015, the first version of the three lists was completed further during a workshop. To ensure the lists remain up to date, Higher Education Institutions can still send in their practices to a dedicated EC e-mail address. This chapter shall be structured according to the types of practices encountered in the three EC documents.

4.4.1 Enhancing (Early) Access to Higher Education

Among this category, 24 HEIs have some sort of programme in place. The most common practice in order to provide easier access for refugee students to German HE, is that HEIs – a total of eight in the EC list – have organised that refugee students can attend courses as guest students. In all cases, the refugee student does not have to enrol as a student. This way, strict admission rules are circumvented. Enrolling as a guest student is sometimes done for free for refugee students, sometimes they do have to pay a fee. Only in one of the eight cases in total, at the University of Bremen, refugee students with a status as guest student are allowed to complete their degree this way and obtain a certificate.

With a total of five cases, the second most common practice among this category is providing language courses. This can be within in the context of a Transition Year, but also within the context of a cross faculty approach. Other times, it is part of a buddy programme. In the last case, the teachers are obviously not specifically trained to do this, so the courses tend to be different in this setting than when the refugee student is taught the language as part of the formal education.

Another practice to be discussed within this category, are the two HEIs listed by the EC that have decided to step out of the tradition realm of education institutions, and that have actively reached out to (potential) refugee students when they are still in camps and asylum centres. The two HEIs have very different approaches however, when it comes to their activities within the camps and asylum centres. The Hamburg University of Technology mainly focuses on language skills, whereas Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt has trained volunteers working at the camps in counselling potential refugee students. The counselling volunteers are trained in, concerns study choice and labour market opportunities.

Finally, there are five HEIs that have developed online platforms, in order for the refugee student to have easier access to their institutions or to HE in general. Some good examples are the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) jointly developed by the Goethe Universität Frankfurt Am Main, Stifterverband, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, DAAD, FernUniversität in Hagen, Bilderfest Factual Entertainment and Candena. Other examples include the creation of online course (University of Applied Sciences Lübeck) and the launch of an online platform for refugees with information on possibilities for enrolment and support services on site (University of Karlsruhe).

4.4.2 Buddy Programmes

Out of all the German HEIs with their practices listed as 'best practice', ten HEIs have some sort of buddy programme in place, connecting the refugee student with a regular student. The nature of the programmes differs, as well as the duration, and type of commitment from both sides. At the Deggendorf Institute of Technology for example, the buddy programme lasts only as long as their welcoming period (European Commission, n.d.). At the other nine institutions, the focus seems to lie more with integration at school and in society, through help with the language or administrative tasks.

4.4.3 Counselling and other Continuous Programmes for Refugee Students

A total of ten HEIs were listed in this category. Three of those have to do with the appointment of a contact person, designated especially for the refugee student. Two of them evolve around the HEI as a place where regular meetings between the refugee student, university representatives, local businesses and civil society can take place. The other five practices were all very different and varied from a programme similar to the Dutch Schakeljaar (at the University of Applied Sciences Magdeburg-Stendal) to co-operation between different universities in the same town (Augsburg University and Augsburg University of Applied Sciences). In many cases, the counselling was specified not only to be about studies, but also about providing help with administrative tasks.

4.4.4 Recognition of Skills and/or Degrees

For this category, a total of five practices are listed by the EC as an 'inspiring practice'. Three of those are practices regarding the use of tests when there is no paper evidence of previously acquired credentials or degrees. The other comes from the University of Applied Sciences Magdeburg, where they will grant access to a full study programme when a refugee student has successfully completed a language training. The final practice in this category is being implemented by the Hamburg University of Technology. This HEI has put forward plans to recognise their student's voluntary work for refugees as part of their study programme, granting them ECTS within the non-technical part of the curriculum.

4.4.5 Raising Awareness among Teachers, Staff and Students

The three HEIs listed by the EC that raise awareness among teachers, staff and students, all do so in a very different manner. Because there are so very few of them, all practices shall be discussed here. First of all, the Ludwigsburg University of Education trains their teachers to adopt inclusive practices when working with young refugees/migrants. Secondly, TU Dortmund encourages students studying 'German as a foreign language' to do their internship in refugee centres in order to foster their integration into the community. The third HEI to be discussed

here, is the University of Applied Sciences Ludwigshafen in the Rhine. They even have two practices listed: the first is regarding their fund-raising activities, the second is about their calls for projects and research on the refugee crisis.

4.4.6 Cross-Faculty Approaches

In total, three of the German HEIs listed by the EC take a cross-faculty approach to the issue. For instance, the University of Giessen has the Faculty of Law providing legal advice, which can be classified as volunteer work and count as ECTS in most cases. Their health faculty offers medical services to NGOs, the language faculty trains volunteers to teach language classes, education students help children, and the psychology faculty supports traumatised refugees (European Commission, n.d.).

In Chapter 5, these practices will be analysed for elements that might be transferable to the Dutch higher education system.

Chapter 5: Analysis

Chapter 5.1 Relations between Barriers and Implementation Issues

In this sub chapter, the preciously established barriers for refugees within the Dutch HE system and issues with implementing measures to combat these barriers shall be linked. It will be examined what the relation is between a barrier and an implementation issue, and whether there is some correlation or causality to be found. This can help understand where certain implementation issues might come from, and what needs to be taken into consideration when trying to resolve the issue.

The first barrier to be highlighted here, is that of Dutch study culture and its focus on self-reliance. It appears that this barrier might be linked to the fact that all of the experts consulted for this research, said there is not enough time and room for proper counselling. This is something that could cause friction when one would attempt to introduce more moments for the refugee student to have counselling and to be guided.

Secondly, it can be argued that the combination of a political climate in which assimilation is favoured over integration, and a study culture in which it is deemed not 'fair' to differentiation between groups makes it harder for teachers to deal with a multicultural classroom. Both the political and the study climate ask of the teacher not to differentiate, and to treat the class as it were a homogenous group. The same applies to certain entry requirements, with the extreme example of society studies: refugee students are expected to have the same level of knowledge of Dutch society as a Dutch student who has completed their secondary education in the Netherlands. In this example, the Dutch way of not differentiating is reflected, as well as the barrier this can be for the refugee student.

In both cases, it seems crucial that there is strong leadership within the HEI that can align the typical Dutch values of equality and non-differentiation, with inclusive education and more specific attention to the group of refugee students. Wâtte Zijlstra underlines this conclusion, saying that managers at HEIs should show leadership in these situations, not only by telling teachers and staff to be more inclusive, but also by leading by example – by being inclusive themselves. The discussion on multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion should be ongoing, and not stop when a supposed solution to one of the barriers or implementation issues has been found (Personal Interview, 2017).

Chapter 5.2 Implementation German Practices in the Netherlands

In this subchapter, The German practices listed in the previous chapter shall be analysed for transferability to the Dutch HE system. The order in which the categories of practices were discussed in the last chapter, shall remain the same for this chapter.

The first category to be discussed, is (early) access to Higher Education. Different practices within this category are enrolling refugee students as guest students in the beginning, providing language courses, training and educating people outside of the HEI on refugee topics, and finally, developing online courses and platforms. Within the Dutch education system, enrolling as a guest student would require either a change in the rules for guest students, or would require a very lenient study programme, that is willing to bend the rules a little in order for the refugee student to have easier access. In the Netherlands, generally, there is no such thing as a 'guest student'. The terminology used here is to be a student in a so-called 'subsidiary course', the Dutch term would be *bijvakstudent*. After comparing procedures to enrol as a bijvakstudent at the University of Groningen, Utrecht, Delft and Amsterdam, it can be concluded that these procedures are identical everywhere. There are many requirements to enrol as a bijvakstudent, but the basis is that one can only be a *bijvakstudent* if one is already enrolled at a different institution (RUG, n.d.). So, within the Dutch education system it makes no sense to first enrol as a bijvakstudent to have enhanced access to the system, because to become a bijvakstudent, one needs to already be *in* the system. In short, this practice is not transferable. As for language courses, they have already found their place in both the Schakeljaar and the whole trajectory towards being able to enter the Schakeljaar. As for training people outside of HE, in the Netherlands, this does not seem to be necessary. According to an article in the Volkskrant, a Dutch quality newspaper, only in the last few months of 2015, 47,000 volunteers applied to the two biggest organisations that occupy themselves with refugees in the Netherlands. This means that in The Netherlands, the refugee-volunteer ratio is practically one on one (Van der Velden, 2015). These volunteers and the organisations they work for, already have taken up responsibilities that in Germany might need to be taken by HEIs. Finally, for refugees that have access to internet (via their smartphones for example), MOOCs can be a great gateway to Dutch education. However, the development of MOOCs costs money, and not all HEIs provide MOOCs. One can imagine that for HEIs that already work with MOOCs, it might be a logical option to open these up to potential refugee students. The use of MOOCs by HEIs is not yet common practice though in the Netherlands. Another consideration put forward by De Langen (2013), is that MOOCs, in other to be Massive (the M in MOOC stands for Massive), need to be in English. A Dutch MOOC is by nature not very Massive, as the number of people who speak Dutch is limited. The way this relates to the issue at hand, is that one might wonder if following an English MOOC in fact enhances access to

Dutch Higher Education. After all, the refugee student does not improve their Dutch language skills through this English-taught online course, while he also does not become better acquainted with Dutch study culture. In short, MOOCs are not yet common practice, so the opening up a MOOC for refugee students would only be feasible for a very select group of HEIs. Another consideration is that via MOOCs, students do not get to integrate in Dutch HE the way they would in the traditional manner, by learning in a classroom setting.

Buddy programmes, the second category, are already very popular at Dutch HEIs and are elaborately discussed in Chapter 4.3.

The third category evolves around counselling, which has proven to be an issue within Dutch HE. Especially during the Schakeljaar, efforts are made to provide counselling regarding study choice, for instance. Literature indicates however, that it is important that the refugee student, because of its vulnerable position, is properly guided and mentored. Experience shows however, that teachers cannot provide the refugee student with the guidance they need, because of the already very large workload on teachers. The solution to this issue might very well be found in the German practice of appointing a contact person for refugee students, whose only job is to guide and coach refugee students not only through their academic career, but also through their acculturation process.

As for the fourth category, recognition of skills and degrees, it becomes clear that in the Netherlands, there are too many regulatory barriers (see chapter 4.1) for this practice to be implemented here. Within Dutch HE, it would be impossible to grant the refugee student access to a study programme without some sort of (paper) evidence that he meets all the entry requirements. It would require a true culture shift, as Dutch study culture is very focused on treating every student equally and holding everyone to the same standards (see Chapter 4.3.2).

The fifth category was about raising awareness. This is important, as it can create a more welcoming environment for the refugee student, which aids his acculturation process. The first practice that was discussed, was that of the Ludwigsburg University of Education, where teachers are trained to adopt a more inclusive teaching style. According to Wâtte Zijlstra, this has already happened in the Netherlands as well, but has proven to not work on the long term here: *"often, it is only a training for one day, or maybe a few days, but after that, it stops. When you are talking about inclusive education, it is a process, you have to live it. Then, one training is not enough. You therefore need good leadership who are living inclusive education and who are living it for other people. It [inclusive education] is a subject that teachers have to talk about*

every week, or every month, they have to go in discussion and to take time to reflect on what they think is difficult, be vulnerable to each other. This is a mind set and a situation the leadership has to create. A training can help, but it is not the medicine" (Personal Interview, 2017). The second awareness-raising practice was bringing the refugee student and various civil society actors together. In the Netherlands, this is done mostly by UAF, who organise network events at which refugee students can meet potential employers.

The final practices on cross-faculty approaches seem to be mostly oriented at helping refugees outside of the HEI. As was mentioned before, this type of aid is not really need in Dutch society.

It can be concluded that in the area of counselling, Dutch HEIs can learn from German practices and appoint one contact person for all refugee students at a HEI. Another solution is to organise a way in which continuous monitoring can happen, so that the counselling sessions do not stop after the student is done with the Schakeljaar.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this thesis was to research ways in which Dutch HEIs could improve the accessibility of their study programmes to refugee students. The implications of the acculturation process and the stress this can cause to students with a migrant background were understood by conducting a review of relevant literature. It was revealed that many factors play a role in the acculturation process of the refugee student, and that the HEI can only influence input and instructional factors. It also became clear that the less acculturative stress the refugee student experiences, the more easily they tend to navigate not only through life in general, but also through their academic career.

Based on literature by McBrien, the OECD and opinions from experts, five main types of barriers to accessible study programmes were distinguished: political climate, regulatory barriers, language barriers, barriers regarding discrimination, stereotyping and cultural misunderstandings, and finally, and differences in educational practices. As for the first two barriers, the main conclusion was that providing a welcoming environment is key. When it came to language barriers, it was most important that teachers know the background of the student and are able to anticipate on this. Barriers regarding stereotyping, discrimination and cultural misunderstandings are the most harmful, according to theory, and considering the tendency within Dutch study culture to not differentiatie between different student groups, this barrier is likely to be the most persistent. The final barrier, differences in educational practices came down to the refugee students having to get used to the Dutch study culture, which is oriented towards low-hierarchy learning, often project-based and in group settings.

The role of international networks in combatting the before established barriers was considered to be minimal. However, the Dutch Taskforce for Refugee Students in Higher Education has been very relevant not only in starting up the discussion on how to best welcome refugee students, but also in a very practical way. Some of their main achievements are the streamlining of Nuffic's degree accreditation process, bringing different HEIs in contact with each other and providing refugee students with a bursary that would allow them to start in a Schakeljaar programme, even when they live far away from the HEI.

The third step in conducting the research, was discovering what practices were already being implemented to help the refugee student, and what some of the issues were that arose during the process. Many HEIs have some form of a Schakeljaar trajectory. This usually includes language education and deficiency education. Whether it also includes soft skills, such as getting acquainted with Dutch study culture and learning to work together, differs per HEI. Also,

study choice counselling and expectation management in that regards are offered in very different ways. Two very important implementation issues are firstly, that the Schakeljaar is very short and therefore, very intense, on both students and teachers. The second large implementation issue is that of transferring knowledge acquired during a training, into day-to-day practice.

Finally, for the German practices it can be concluded that although there was a large variety of practices, overall, they were not transferable to the Dutch system. In the Netherlands, there seem to be more regulations than in Germany, which restricts the possibilities considerably. In the end, there was only one transferable practice.

Recommendations

With regards to reducing acculturative stress and easing the process of acculturation, from the perspective of the teacher, Cowart (2011) recommends knowing the background of the refugee student when it comes to linguistics, culture and academic background (p. 148). Another recommendation is to employ a multicultural teaching style, including information by and about different cultures and in a variety of languages to reduce social distance and encourage learning from each other. This will work best if the institution promotes a learning culture in which curiosity, respect and multiculturalism are celebrated (p. 148-150). As for linguistics in the classroom, allowing refugee students to bring a dictionary in class and especially during exams can reduce acculturative stress significantly, as it shows that the teacher, as the member of the dominant group, does not expect the student (from the non-dominant group) to fully assimilate with the host culture (yet). Also, simply not feeling confident about your language skills can cause a lot of stress. In the worst case scenario, the student might be able to use their full academic potential, because they lack the vocabulary that express said potential.

On the HEI level, as the barriers and implementation issues appear to be closely related to each other, it is recommended to first look at ways to reduce the barriers, because this might already have a positive impact on some of the implementation issues. The first proposition to be made in this regard, is to take a look at the culture of self-resilience and possibly, with the help of change management tools, transform that to a culture in which one can still be seen as self-resilient when receiving (regular) counselling. From there, the implementation issue of having a lack of time and space to provide proper counselling will probably be solved much more easily. The second proposition is to train Dutch teachers and staff in differentiating, recognising that different (groups of) students have different needs and then catering to those needs separately. In the ideal situation, if this (political and cultural) barrier is resolved, then

the implementation issue regarding the multicultural classroom immediately becomes non-existent.

Finally, from looking at German inspiring practices, it can be recommended to appoint one contact person for all refugee students at a HEI. Another solution is to organise a way in which continuous monitoring can happen, so that the counselling sessions do not stop after the student is done with the Schakeljaar.

In general, it is recommended that further research be done on change management with regards to inclusive education. The issues discussed in this paper are complex and often deeply ingrained in Dutch (study) culture, so it appears proper, theory-based, change management is needed in order to transfer the effect of the interventions into a cultural shift.

List of References

Actieplan Vluchtelingen HO 'work in progress' (2015) [quote from Susana Ménèndez, initiator of the Taskforce]. *Transfer,* Vol. 23, no. 2, p. 7

Berry, J.W. (1989, September). The Acculturation Process and Refugee Behaviour. *Context: Southeast Asians in California, Vol. 10, no. 75, p. 1-3*

Berry, J.W., Kim, U., Minde, T., Mok, D. (1987) Comparative Studies of Acculturative Stress. *The International Migration Review, Vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 491-511.*

Cowart, M. (2011). Linguistic and Cultural Considerations for English Language Learners. *Pp. 156-150.*

De Langen, F. (2013, April 7). *Moocs, wat zijn het, wat leren we ervan?* Retrieved January 16, 2018, from the Managementsite web site: https://www.managementsite.nl/moocs-businessmodel-online-onderwijs-verdienmodel

European Commission (n.d.) *Higher Education for Migrants and Refugees.* Retrieved December 11, 2017, from the European Commission web site: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/migration/higher-education-refugees_en

European Commission (n.d.). *Inspiring practices: Higher Education helping Newly Arrived Refugees. Access to HE outside Europe and Awareness in Society.* Retrieved December 11, 2017, from the European Commission web site: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/higher-education/doc/inspiring-practices-refugees-access_en.pdf

European Commission (n.d.). *Inspiring practices: Higher Education helping Newly Arrived Refugees. Meet basic needs and ease social integration of refugees.* Retrieved December 11, 2017, from the European Commission web site: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/higher-education/doc/inspiring-practices-refugees-basic-needs_en.pdf

European Commission (n.d.). *Inspiring practices: Higher Education helping Newly Arrived Refugees. Recognition of skills, access to HE and integration of researchers.*

Retrieved December 11, 2017, from the European Commission web site: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/higher-education/doc/inspiring-practices-refugees-skills-recognition_en.pdf

Gibson, M.A. (2001). Immigrant Adaptation and Patterns of Acculturation. *Human Development, Vol. 44, no. 1, p. 19.*

McBrien, J.L. (2005). Educational Needs and Barriers for Refugee Students in the United States: a Review of the Literature. *Review of Educational Research, Vol. 75,* no. 3, p. 3

OECD (2015) Helping immigrant students to succeed at school – and beyond.

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (n.d.). *Registration procedure subsidiary course.* Retrieved January 16, 2018, from the RUG web site: https://www.rug.nl/education/nederlandse-studenten/inschrijven/bijvak?lang=en

Schumann, J.H. (1986). Research on the Acculturation Model for Second Language Acquisition. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, Vol. 7, no. 5, pp. 379-*

Science Guide (2016, July 15). *Weinig vluchtelingen studeren in het hoger onderwijs.* Retrieved April 19, 2017, from the Science Guide web site: https://www.scienceguide.nl/2016/07/weinig-vluchtelingen-studeren-in-het-hoger-onderwijs/

Sociaal Economische Raad (n.d.). Taskforce Vluchtelingen Hoger Onderwijs. Retrieved April 9, 2017, from the Werkwijzer Vluchtelingen web site: https://www.werkwijzervluchtelingen.nl/initiatieven/taskforce-vluchtelingen-hoger-onderwijs.aspx

Thomas, D.R. (2006). *A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data.* American Journal of Evaluation. Pp 238

Tieleman, Y. (2017, October 4). *'Maximaal Taal troggelde geld van vluchtelingen af om zo veel mogelijk geld te verdienen.'* Retrieved October 4, from the AD web site:

https://www.ad.nl/utrecht/enlsquo-maximaal-taal-troggelde-geld-van-vluchtelingen-af-om-zo-veel-mogelijk-geld-te-verdienenenrsquo~a423d26f/

Van Bennekom, W.J., Mr. Van der Winden, J.H. (2011). *Asielrecht*. Den Haag: Boom Juridische Uitgevers.

Van der Velden, L. (2015, December 1). *Voor elke asielzoeker meldt zich een vrijwilliger aan.* Retrieved January 16, 2018, from the Volkskrant web site: https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/voor-elke-asielzoeker-meldt-zich-een-vrijwilliger-aan~a4199391/