

Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Bijlage 2: Literatuuronderzoek

What works in refugee integration strategies?
A confrontation of the SNTR approach within the broader
literature

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Behorende bij rapport

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Introduction

Doing what works makes perfect sense; why should you undertake activities which have not been proven to produce a desirable outcome? But the process is not as straightforward in practice. As a learning organisation, Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam (SNTR) is continuously developing and transforming itself. In an attempt to help examine its operations, this report places the SNTR integration approach within the broader literature regarding processes of refugee integration. It does so by exploring what the literature has to say about the different interventions and strategies undertaken. This will help to understand why and how processes within the SNTR programme may or may not be successful, as well as to consider other potential approaches to this work.

This review of literature takes an exploratory rather than evaluative role, as the effect of the SNTR programme cannot be measured simply by comparing it to other projects and initiatives. This would instead require (quasi-) experimental research¹ to be carried out. Furthermore, a proper comparison can only be conducted between interventions which operate in similar contexts, where the target populations conserve congruent characteristics (i.e. age, country of origin, educational level), as we know can have a significant impact on the ways in which the target population responds and performs (Dagevos & Miltenburg, 2018). With these points in consideration, this literature review aims to present available strategies to refugee integration, and juxtapose these with approaches of the SNTR programme. When possible, the review will attempt to derive preliminary conclusions regarding plausible effectiveness and best practices in this sector.

This report focuses on three central themes relating to the SNTR approach: social support, language acquisition, and labour market integration. For the purpose of clarity and detailed insight, this review considers the interventions individually and separately. In reality, measures facilitating integration are only effective if they are carried out in combination with one another. As a result, the following interventions can best be seen as building blocks towards integration.

Methods

To gather relevant information for this review, a first selection of literature was carried out by members of the Bridge project's team. The recommended literature provided a broad overview on what was known about refugee integration in the Netherlands and internationally. Amongst it were a series of evaluation studies carried out on other integration programmes in the Netherlands. From these reports, a series of sources were found, presenting experimental studies and policy reports written by other research institutes in the field. As such, a form of snowball sampling of literature took place. In order to fill in some gaps of knowledge in the literature, additional expert interviews were held with experts. These were: Ton van Elst, Anne-Marie van Bergen, and Petra Pompa (for more information, see Annex I).

It is important to note that refugee integration is a complex topic as the concept of 'integration' touches upon processes of language acquisition, re-integration, and welfare, which can each be considered as different fields in themselves, but are also slightly different when operating with the particular target group of refugees. As the array of literature in these three fields is practically without limits, it was necessary to frame the search and analysis. On general terms, the consulted literature was always directly related to refugee integration processes, however in order to fill knowledge gaps, literature on the broader population was at times included. For example, literature on labour market integration in the Netherlands (not specifically concerning refugees) and literature on social-support considered a broader target

¹ Carried out in the effect evaluation research of the EUR Bridge Research Project.

population than refugees alone. With regards to the literature on language acquisition, a choice was made to limit this review to literature discussing permit holders' experience with language learning, instead of diving into the linguistics research. This is because linguistics consists of an entirely separate field of knowledge which extends beyond the scope of this research. We recognize the potential limitations of this methodological choice, namely that we are not able to use scientific support when discussing these choices in programme design.

Alongside gaps in the themes involved in refugee integration, lacunas also exist on the type of research available in the field. As a result, the priority was always given to experimental and effectiveness research, but more theoretical pieces as well as governmental reports were also included in order to contribute to the plausible reasoning carried out in this report.

Social Support

SNTR offers social support to its participants with the goal of making them self-sustainable. Hereby the organisation understands self-sustainment (in Dutch: 'zelfredzaamheid') to mean that participants are able to arrange their administrative and practical affairs, that they understand and respect the Dutch norms and values, and that they (know how to) actively participate in Dutch society. Diving into the literature reveals a series of interesting findings to juxtapose the SNTR approach.

Coaching

Self-sustainment has been a recurrent theme in discussions in the field of social support. In particular, the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) published a report in 2017 on this topic, named 'Weten is nog geen doen' (translated into English: 'knowing is not yet doing'). This policy brief questions whether self-sustainment is a realistic goal for all citizens, in particular the more vulnerable groups of the Dutch population who may not conserve the necessary skills to arrange their lives on administrative and practical domains. In effect, citizens are expected to maintain a healthy lifestyle, make well-informed and optimal choices, plan and manage their finances, be well insured and be able to communicate digitally with the government. With this in mind, the WRR advocates for a more realistic perspective to be taken by the government and professionals, by taking into account the different (and at times limited) capacity of certain groups of citizens. The report mentions situations of (mental) stress caused by poverty and debt to be an important obstacle towards self-sustainment, but factors such as flight and war trauma, or a lack of awareness of the local rules and proceedings as a result of recent arrival in the country, could also be applicable in this context (Bovens, Keizer & Tiemeijer, 2017).

Nonetheless, if self-sustainment is maintained as an essential goal for all citizens, there still may exist a series of challenges in the execution of the support of permit holders to become self-sustainable. Indeed, the Inspection Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs reveals that many organisations in the Netherlands face difficulties in enabling permit holders to maintain their (financial) administration. The report explains that too much focus is set for a too long period of time on doing things for the clients, before moving on to letting them arrange affairs themselves (Inspectie Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2019). As a result, the question which remains to be answered is: how can people be supported towards becoming (more)² self-sustainable? It is extremely difficult to determine with certainty which approach to social support is most effective. This is because testing the effects of such a complex social concept is confounded with an unlimited number of factors influencing the process. For example, it is not only dependent on the individual's ability to think and act for themselves, but is also linked to the support network they may have, as well as certain contextual factors which sometimes boil down to plain luck (Meinema, 2017).

The 'voordoen, samen doen, zelf doen' method

As a result, organisations are to make a series of choices regarding how they wish to design their approach. SNTR chose to follow Bureau Frontlijn's approach of 'voordoen, samen doen, zelf doen'. This approach consists of supporting clients in carrying out simple and concrete activities, such as filling out forms, or making appointments to go to the doctor. This is done under the assumption that the experience of scarcity is what hinders people from keeping an eye on the long-term perspective, thereby creating tunnel visions, and leading them to make unreasonable choices, such as not investing in learning basic life skills. People therefore need to be taught how to do things, and that can be done by first doing things for them, then

² In some cases, certain individuals will never be able to function self-sustainment and will always need the help of a professional. This may be the case in situations of mental and physical disabilities, such as extremely low levels of IQ, or deep-grounded traumas.

doing them together, and then letting the client imitate the process by carrying out tasks themselves (van der Aa, van den Berg, van Beek, Hamdi & Verheijen, 2015). To our knowledge, an evaluation of the effectiveness of this approach is yet to exist. Van der Aa and colleagues (2015) carried out an evaluation of Bureau Frontlijn's projects, but did not analyse results of the treated population's level of self-sustainment³. Instead, the report's main finding highlights that Bureau Frontlijn operated very differently than the district teams of the municipality of Rotterdam, where the responsibility to address problems was placed upon the clients themselves.

Experts from the knowledge institute Movisie agree that more responsibility needs to be placed on the client when supporting them sustain themselves. In fact, this institute argues that the focus on making people become more self-sustainable employs the wrong approach (Meinema, 2017). Ton van Elst (August 1st 2019), senior researcher at Movisie, states:

"The focus should not be on enabling someone to act independently, although this of course a part of it, but it should be on the capacity to make choices regarding what one is to do in their life [...] it is about gaining responsibility. If you have a flight history, everything has been taken away from you. People are never asked what they can do, they are simply (at best) provided with the help they need [...] This idea operates along similar lines as the story: 'Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day/ Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime'."

The self-direction ('eigen regie') approach which Movisie puts forward focuses on discovering one's motivations to do things in life (Meinema, 2017). To take the example of opening mail, an important activity of social support coaches of SNTR, Ton van Elst (August 1st 2019) encourages the professional to undertake motivational talk with their client by starting a discussion on the reasons/motivations why someone must open their mail themselves, instead of waiting for the social worker to do this for or with them. Van Elst insists on the process of discovering where one's motivation lies in order to ensure that they will carry out the activity themselves in the future. "Someone can know how to do things, but it does not mean that they will actually do so", he says (August 1st 2019). The researcher is critical of the "voordoen, samen doen, zelf doen" method, as it is focused on transmitting a message but it in fact employs a limited customized approach to the individual client and their own talents in order to find a connection with how this person will be able to do this themselves. He argues that it takes a stimulus response approach and will only work on clients who are already motivated to become self-sustainable. This is in line with Appelo (2005, cited in Meinema, 2007), who argues that people only change if they conserve the desire to change themselves. Hereby, the author argues that only three things are important in this process: one needs to experience a problem themselves, if they do not experience a situation as problematic, they will not change. Secondly, they must have insight in what exactly is the bottleneck in the problematic situation, in order to realise that something can be done to change this situation. Thirdly, discipline is necessary to address the problem step by step (Appelo, 2005, cited in Meinema, 2007).

In summary, this review of literature shows that there are different approaches to social support, attached with their divergent scientific opinions on their plausible effectiveness. Whether or not a period of taking over the arrangement of affairs in early stages of guidance, as predicted by the 'voordoen, samendoen,

³ This is due to the fact that, as mentioned earlier, it is extremely difficult to measure the impact of a social programme on such a complex phenomenon. Ecroys provides the following explanations as to why they were not able to test the effect of Frontlijn's approach: "Effectiveness is difficult to determine due to the diverse (multivariate) nature of the interventions carried out by Frontlijn that can also occur at different levels (single / multiple problems) and at different levels of life. Effectiveness can only be determined if specific goals (the demand for help has been determined [...]the objectives for the projects of Frontlijn are only formulated in general terms [...]). Although the assistance provided by Bureau Frontlijn in many cases has a direct solution-oriented character, the assistance is ultimately aimed at promoting the self-reliance of clients. Determining this can only take place over time, and only on the basis of a suitable research instrument.

zelfdoen' method, is effective requires empirical evidence to provide support for one or the other. Perhaps these two approaches are not mutually exclusive, but instead show that just learning a "trick" may not be enough.

Group sessions as an alternative form of social support

Social support is often carried out in the form of one-on-one coaching; however, group sessions can also be an alternative way to offer social support to clients, and it is slowly being introduced in SNTR's operations (Bool, 2013). The literature describes a series of benefits and pitfalls of conducting social support in group form. A first, rather obvious advantage is that it is more time and cost-efficient. Van Elst (August 1st, 2019) as well as the Inspection department of the Ministry of Social Affairs agree that when it comes to basic knowledge transfer regarding registrations for social welfare or health insurance, group sessions can be useful to explain things to a larger group instead of going through it on an individual basis (Inspectie Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2019).

Second, as professionals must divide their attention across a group instead of providing individual support, clients are brought to carry out steps on their own. This often leads to two additional positive outcomes: On the one hand, it may help to establish boundaries in their relationship of support with a client. In their evaluation of cultural projects with permit holders van Dijk, Grinsven, de Groot, de Haan & Kluit (2019) declared the setting of boundaries as a crucial element of success, as it helps to ensure a good collaboration, where clear agreements have been made regarding what the professional can and cannot do for their client. In their last 'Integration Barometer', the Dutch Refugee Council recognised this problem as an important and recurrent one in their operations, as (volunteer) social workers struggle to find a balance in how far they go to support a permit holder in getting their life in order (Kahmann, de Winter-Koçak & de Gruijter, 2018).

On the other hand, it empowers the group to help themselves, but also to help each other. This phenomenon was observed by professionals carrying out group sessions with permit holders on financial self-reliance in four different municipalities across the Netherlands (Inspectie Ministerie van Sociale Zaken, 2019). The group context can also work as a stimulant if a safe learning environment is created in the group, as recognition for struggles can be found more broadly in the group (Bakker & van Eekert, 2013). This motivation process is reflected in social identity theory, which explains that the sense of belonging resulting from close relationships can play an important role in helping an individual develop themselves (Tajfel & Turner, 1979 in van Dijk et al., 2019). Along similar lines, van Elst (August 1st, 2019) asserts that group-based coaching can also be useful to promote dialogue, if organised around raising awareness on a certain topic. Indeed, if people are given the freedom to express different views, the resulting disagreement can subsequently help clients determine their own position and thereby the feeling of self-direction as described above.

Despite the potential added value of group sessions, certain reports have also exclaimed concerns regarding whether these fit the needs of the clients. The inspection service of the ministry of Social Affairs was able to speak with forty professionals across four municipalities on their experiences with organising group sessions to inform permit holders on how to become financially self-sustainable (Inspectie Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2019). The report revealed that these professionals often struggle with low turn-out rates of sessions, as certain parts of the target group do not show up. These professionals explained the lack of participation to be due to the fact that these sessions were often ill-adapted to the target group. In particular, the differences in language proficiency and educational background made it difficult for them to deliver a message which would be understood by the entire client population (Inspectie Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2019). A study in the municipality of Amsterdam also indicated similar issues with their 'TOV' programme, which is a series of group sessions for refugees on

Dutch culture, the health care system and the city of Amsterdam (Oostveen, Klaver & Born, 2019). The challenges involved with catering a heterogenous group were already present in policy discussions fifteen years ago. Indeed, it was discussed in the WRR's report "Normen, waarden, en last van gedrag" (translated in English: "Norms values, and behavioural problems"), where the institute discussed the challenges involved in heterogenous group sessions teaching participants about local norms and values (WRR, 2003).

With these findings in mind, it can be derived that although group sessions can be very effective for a variety of (above-mentioned) reasons, their implementation may require some customisation to the particular group in order to be effective. In particular, Ton van Elst (August 1st, 2019) argues that groups may need to be tailored according to the goal which the session strives to achieve. In sessions discussing certain sensitive topics, the expert states that groups may need to be split up in order to promote a feeling of confidence and security. In sessions where the aim is to raise awareness, for example on the norms and values of the Netherlands, a heterogenous group will more likely promote dialogue. Finally, in information sessions, it is more effective to work with a homogenous group, in order to ensure that everyone is able to understand the message that is being transferred. Notwithstanding, van Elst (August 1st, 2019) cautions that one must always keep a close eye on the client population, as a result group sessions should always be implemented complementarily to individual coaching.

The Integrality of social support

SNTR strives to place integrality as a central theme of the social support services it offers, by providing frequent, long-standing, and home-based assistance to families, which enables them to monitor the wellbeing of the individual participants, as well as the families as a whole. The literature defines integral support as support which pays attention to all areas of an individual's life by getting professionals to work together to coordinate processes, methods, and expertise to arrive at one joint plan for the client (Franken et al., 2016). To our knowledge, there are no scientific sources which determine the effectiveness of integral approaches to social support on permit holder. Instead, justification for this approach can be based on the need for a method which is able to grasp the complexity involved with social guidance (Guiaux, Jungmann & Sol, 2016). The reasoning is that human functioning is dependent on the mental, physical, and social wellbeing of an individual (Nijhof & de Levita, 2012). These three domains of life are also interdependent and interrelated, which makes human wellbeing prone to a vicious circle of multi-problems. The dynamic goes as follows: An underlying problem (such as illiteracy, cultural impediments, psychological and physical limitations) can easily create other problems (such as the difficulty to find and keep work), which in turn have consequences on other domains of life, such as financial problems and, over time, to social exclusion. This in turn leads to psychosocial (behavioural) problems, which reinforce social exclusion, but which also form an obstacle to finding work (Bosselaar, Maurits, Molenaar-Cox & Prins, 2010). In other words, given this complexity, there is reason to believe that only an approach which is able to grasp the entire extent of these problems can plausibly be effective (Wright et al., 2011).

Providing the cohesion and continuity necessary for effective integral support is not easy in practice, as it requires the enduring involvement of many different institutions in the field of parenting, housing, health, work, and income (van der Zijden & Diephuis, 2012). SNTR strives to provide services on as many fields as it can without exceeding the limits of its service-oriented care, and refraining from taking over responsibilities which the municipality conserves towards its inhabitants. In fact, it can be argued that SNTR conserves an organisational structure which makes it easier for it to implement an integral approach than municipalities (Pommer, Boelhouwer, Eggink, Marangos & Ooms, 2018). Nonetheless, SNTR's integral services are supported by De Lange, Besselsen, Rahouti & Rijken (2017); Their research urges for a replication of the Swedish approach to integration, which consists of "one-stop shops" where different organisations dealing with refugee integration are physically brought together to provide a holistic view on the permit holder's wellbeing, but also to make sure that different institutions can collaborate to develop

one coherent and consistent message towards the client. This approach is to a certain extent already carried out by SNTR, as the organisation provides housing, language, work, and (child-)welfare programmes all in one location. It is then the responsibility of the social guidance, or future- coach to coordinate different matters and communicate these to the permit holder. Although it is believed that this organisational system is more effective, to this date there has been no hard evidence to prove this.

Activation

Developing a network

After a first settlement period, SNTR encourages its participants to start taking steps towards participation in society. From a social point of view, activating participants is important in order to help them develop a network. Developing a network is important in order to reduce newcomers' loneliness (Post & van der Lucht, 2012; Winsemius, Ballering, Scheffer & Schoorl, 2016), but also to gather people who can provide help to address potential problems which a client may encounter. The latter element is central behind the concept of the 'self-direction' approach described above; Ensuring that a client is self-sustainable has as much to do with whether or not they are able to find the right sources of help when they have a question, than it is about making sure they are able to perform tasks themselves (Winsemius et al., 2016). As such, Granovetter (1973) argues that people need strong relationships as well as weak ones (acquaintances), as a diverse network can help to get something concrete done (for example finding a job) or providing information.

In order to help participants, develop their network, members of the SNTR staff strive to help participants by introducing them to their neighbours and encourage them to participate in events organised in the local community centre. A research which considered the added value of the Dutch Law for social support for people in welfare ('Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning voor re-integratie van mensen in de bijstand') conducted a quick scan of local projects to identify a series of working elements involved in interventions aiming to promote social participation (Bouwman-van 't Veer, Knijn & van Berkel, 2011). It revealed that customisation in the support which the coach offers their clients is a central element of success to motivate them to become more active. The authors demonstrate that by being creative in the possibilities for activities which are adapted to the clients' respective needs, interests, and limitations, clients are encouraged, and sometimes forced (in the context of the WMO law) to participate and make an independent choice in selecting an adequate form of activity. These insights should be kept in mind when coaches strive to help participants find adapted activities with their participants.

Volunteer work

Another way to get to know one's neighbourhood or city is by undertaking volunteer work. The literature describes important social effects of volunteer work⁴, as it helps individuals to develop their network, improve their language skills, as well as improve their physical and mental health (Cohen, 2009; De Wit, Bekkers, Karamati & Verkaik, 2015; Wilson & Musick, 1999). This is because volunteering is an active leisure activity, which thereby also gives self-esteem (Cohen, 2009). For older people in particular, conducting volunteer work appears to go hand in hand with improvements in health (De Wit et al., 2015)⁵.

⁴ Volunteer work can also be seen as a stepping stone towards paid employment. However, for the purpose of clarity in this report, we only consider the social effects of volunteer work in this section, and will later come back to the other effects of volunteer work in the chapter "Participation and Work".

⁵ An important explanation for the fact that older people benefit more from health than younger people is that older people with more health problems (Bakker et al., 2018).

When considering the deployment of this intervention to encourage participants to undertake volunteer work, the literature on activation coaching asserts that efforts to activate people are more effective if they are encouraging than if they are mandatory (Lub, 2017). Longitudinal research studying activation coaching revealed that although mandatory approaches initially led to higher levels of participation, the durability and tempo of societal involvement decreased over time when compared to recreational activities (Bolle 2012; Reijenga, 2014). Within the SNTR's integration trajectory, the coach is not in the position to oblige permit holders to carry out these activities. Instead, the staff goes to great lengths to explain and facilitate the activation process. This approach is supported by the literature, which highlights the importance of informing permit holders on opportunities for volunteer work. The Dutch Refugee Council's Integration Barometer indicates that refugees often want to carry out volunteer work, but are unaware of the possibilities to do so (Kahmann et al., 2018). In line with this, Bakker and colleagues (2018)'s evaluation of the volunteer project 'Aan de slag' reveals that the concept of volunteer work is often unknown to permit holders and needs to be explained. The research further shows that although the group sees the potential of undertaking such work, they are often mentally busy with other concerns. In the process of offering opportunities for participation, Van Dijk and colleagues (2019) assert that the focus must be set on treating the permit holder as a professional who has something to offer, in order to step away from the self-image of a refugee.

Professionals

Coaches

To provide the different forms of social support, SNTR has hired professional social workers, otherwise known as 'coaches. This distinguishes SNTR from other organisations providing social support for refugees, such as the Dutch Council for Refugees, whose social workers often work on a volunteer basis. In their evaluation of the national civic integration programme, Blom, Bakker, Goedvolk, van der Maas-Vos & Plaggenhoef (2018) reflect on this by emphasising the need for organisations to work with better informed social counsellors in order to provide accurate and valuable advice and support to permit holders on matters concerning their civic integration.

Along with being adequately informed on the rules and procedures of Dutch civic integration, the deployment of professionals means that the social workers are trained, paid, and invested for full working weeks in the support and guidance of the permit holder. This professionalisation also means that coaches usually are equipped with the relevant knowledge and experience to implement methods of social guidance of which the effectiveness has been researched and tested (Bool, 2013). Researchers who evaluated the 'Piëzo Methodiek', a similar integration trajectory implemented in the city of Zoetermeer and other regions in the Netherlands, assert that an intensive and systematic support system, with a structured intake, clear phases, as well as learning goals is crucial to promote the social integration of participants (Van den Enden, Booijink & Keuzenkamp, 2019). This assertion is supported by the national and international literature, which encourages regular and long-lasting support for clients facing multiple and emerging problems (Borgonovi, 2008; Bosselaar et al., 2010; Nijhof et al., 2012).

Finally, an essential characteristic of coaches must be their intercultural sensitivity to provide comprehensive guidance (Büschel et al., 2015); An evaluation of integration services in a series of European member states revealed that considerable gaps, notably in the field of adjusted care to reflect the specific national and cultural background of the client, were apparent (Cedefop, 2014).

Connectors

To assist these coaches, SNTR has hired connectors; members of the SNTR staff who are proficient in both the Dutch and Syrian language and culture, and who often have a refugee background themselves. Their

task is to facilitate the relationship between participants and SNTR, by conducting linguistic as well as cultural translations between SNTR and participants of its programme. As the deployment of such professionals is relatively unique, it was difficult to find studies which explored to what extent this is effective. Nonetheless, the importance of linguistic and cultural translation is regularly cited in the literature. Indeed, Hagelund (2005) argues for the importance of translating information for the newcomer in order to help them feel a sense of involvement and ownership in their integration trajectory. For a permit holder to feel involved, they must actually understand what is happening, for instance by understanding the letters they receive from the municipality, the tax authorities and DUO, in order to actively address issues (Van Dijk et al., 2019). Until their level of Dutch is sufficient to do this themselves, the Dutch Refugee Council asserts that the translation of information is necessary for them to be informed (Kahmann et al., 2018).

Alongside facilitating a linguistic understanding, Ton van Elst argues that deploying staff conserving a similar cultural origin can help to “create a sense of identification between the staff member and the client, as the connector conserves a similar cultural background as the participant” (August 1st, 2019). Furthermore, Anne-Marie van Bergen (August 19th, 2019) argues that the connector can mediate a discussion by helping either the coach or the participant that communicating a message in a certain manner may not be effective due to the cultural differences which exist between the two individuals. However, this job requires some important skills of peer support in order to be able to keep one’s distance to the client. Indeed, it is important to encourage the client to communicate in the local language as much as possible rather than letting them switch to Arabic, even though that is their mother tongue (van Elst, August 1st, 2019).

Explaining norms and values

SNTR explains Dutch norms and values in order to help the permit holder become more aware and informed of Dutch customs and thereby feel more connected and able to participate in Dutch society. For example, in order to be able to properly communicate with Dutch people, it is perhaps important to know that men must greet both men and women by shaking their hands, that looking people in the eye is a form of respect, as well as arriving on time at appointments. These cultural habits are discussed in trainings as well as in the language class. During house visits, participants also have the chance to discuss these topics with their coach. This can take place through discussing situations which families have encountered (i.e. using an example); when the subject appears to be less easily approachable (because the family does not bring up the matter themselves, or there appears to be a big taboo), the coaches may use a specially-designed card game.

The importance of transferring local norms and values to newcomers is a long-standing topic of discussion. The WRR wrote a policy brief encouraging the government to promote opportunities for permit holders to participate in society through getting involved in community activities, conducting volunteer work, as well as by deploying role models (2003). In 2017, fifteen municipalities experimented with pilot interventions aimed at transferring knowledge about norms and values to newcomers. Klaver & Witkamp (2017)’s evaluation of these interventions revealed that trajectories which were intensive (i.e. constituted a minimum of 8 sessions), where dialogue sessions were included, as well as activities and excursions indeed contributed to newcomers’ increased knowledge on Dutch norms and values. In line with this, a significant amount of literature exists which discusses the working elements which are necessary for the successful implementation of this intervention. In particular, van ‘t Rood & Nieuwboer (2018) highlight the importance of creating a safe context where participants are stimulated to share their opinions, doubts, and dilemmas during civic integration classes in the Hague. Ince (2013) confirms this, as the author states that by having these discussions on a one-on-one basis, the social workers promote trust in the

relationship, which is all the more effective when the topics to be discussed are more demanding/concerning in nature. In addition to creating a safe and open context for discussion, Klaassen (2009, cited in Klaver & Witkamp, 2017) also emphasises the importance of learning through the lens of a 'double context', meaning through the context of the receiving society and the context of the permit holder.

In particular, this last element can be recognised in SNTR's operations. Indeed, connectors strive to help create this 'double context' by assisting coaches and trainers in their explanations through using their own similar cultural backgrounds in order to facilitate the focus on understanding the differences between the two cultures. To a certain extent, connectors' efforts to create a bridge between Dutch and Syrian cultures is also in line with David Kolb (2014)'s work, which describes the cyclical process of integrating new information (in this case, norms and values): First, the student must have a concrete example that concerns the value or norm that they are learning about, secondly, they must perceive and reflect on this experience. Next, they must analyse this perception in more abstract and generalist terms, so as to decide if they can philosophically agree with the value or norm. Finally, the student must actively experiment with this new knowledge in order to properly integrate yet. It is important to note that this theory assumes that the student is actually willing to go through this change.

Language acquisition

A comprehensive language course

A central component of the SNTR integration programme consists of offering a comprehensive language course, as classes take place four times per week and are provided with additional financing until the permit holder has reached his target language level, which can be higher than the current civic integration requirement of A2.

Duration

An extensive amount of research exists that delineates the importance of language acquisition for (economic) integration (De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010; Guiaux et al., 2018). However, in-depth analyses further reveal that this learning process must take place in a timely manner for it to actually produce a significant economic impact. Namely, evidence from an OECD research in Sweden suggests that after about 500 hours of language training, there may be no additional impact on the employment prospects of immigrants (Lemaître, 2004). With this in mind, certain scholars have argued for the shortening of the duration of language courses in order to accelerate permit holders' access to the labour market (Liebig, 2007). More specifically, the authors advocate for more integrated trajectories where language lessons are combined with professional opportunities. As this point touches on a different discussion, namely the 'work first' vs. 'care first' approach, it is further discussed below in the chapter 'Participation and Work'.

Frequency

The available research on permit holders' experiences with learning the Dutch language appears to support SNTR's choice to provide intensive and frequent lessons. Indeed, research by the Dutch Refugee Council reveals that 23 out of the 36 interviewed respondents would like to have more language classes per week (Kahmann et al., 2018). This finding is confirmed by earlier research on the matter (MWM2, 2016, as cited in Blom et al., 2018) as well as by evaluation research carried out in the municipality of Amersfoort (Odé, Hento, van Eijk, van den Nieuwendijk & Oostveen, 2017); Here, a refugee following nine hours of courses per week exclaimed: "[Our book is not adapted for the amount of hours of instructions we receive. It is too much material. The teacher is very good, but there is too little time in the class. As a result, we must do a lot of the learning at home]⁶" (Odé et al., 2017, p. 42).

However, what permit holders want is not necessarily an indication of the effectiveness of the programme's design. In particular, an intensive language trajectory can conflict with refugees' opportunities to practice their knowledge of the Dutch language (through carrying out volunteer work, or participating in language cafés). Literature on language acquisition provides an overwhelming consensus on the positive effects of conversational interaction on language acquisition, as an individual can learn new vocabulary, syntax, and forms of conjugation (Gass & Varonis, 1994). As a result, a compromise perhaps needs to be found between refugees' desire to receive more intensive lessons and the importance of timely trajectories. In line with this, Clausen & Husted (2005) suggest to organise evening lessons in order to promote language learning and participation. Furthermore, Booiijink, van den Enden & Keuzenkamp (2017) suggest providing language lessons at the workplace as alternatives to having to make the exclusive choice between language and work. To our knowledge, the effectiveness of such forms of language lessons has not yet been tested. However, these approaches are most likely only worth considering for very ambitious students, who perhaps do not have a family on the side whom they must care for. Damen, van der Linden,

⁶ Translated from dutch

Dagevos & van Dam (2019)'s qualitative research on SNTR participants' integration experience in Rotterdam reveals that the respondents experience a lot of stress with this process. As a result, perhaps providing combined language trajectories would not be effective for this target group.

Composition of the language class

In its efforts to provide the best quality of language trajectory, SNTR has made a series of choices in the composition of its language class. Research has shown that the size of language classes is a recurrent topic of dissatisfaction for permit holders. Amongst these, the lack of time and attention which teachers have for individual questions and feedback has been discussed in the Dutch Refugee Council's Integration Barometer (Kahmann et al., 2018). In addition, the respondents explained that the diversity in levels and learning abilities of students in the class further aggravates the learning process, some students find the language class to be going too fast, and others complain that it is going too slow. This is in line with findings in other studies on refugee's civic integration process, where frustration regarding refugees' lack of control on their language learning progress was expressed, as it is often not possible for them to move on to another (more adapted) class and level (Blom et al., 2018; Odé et al., 2017). There also exists experimental evidence on the effect of group compositions on learning abilities which supports these anecdotal findings; Faris (2009) carried out a comparative study of test results between groups of students with similar learning abilities and groups where students' learning abilities varied widely. The author's findings revealed that learning groups who were made up of students whose learning abilities differed produced more positive results than classes with learning groups constituted of students with similar learning abilities.

Language Buddy

The deployment of language buddies in the SNTR programme is designed to on the one hand, help participants practice the Dutch language, as well as to provide them with a bridge to Dutch society; The exact focus of the relationship and activities undertaken is left open to the buddy and participant to decide themselves. Scientific research as well as project evaluations agree that conversing helps with language acquisition (Gass & Varonis, 1994). In an evaluation on the "Taal Coach" project, these positive effects were recognised by the volunteer as well as the permit holder themselves (Brink et al., 2011). In particular, it was said that the intimate relationship created a sense of motivation and heightened the self-confidence of the permit holder (McGowen, Saintas & Gill, 2009). Although these positive effects were also recognised in the evaluation of another project called "Maatjes Gezocht", this study also highlighted some dissatisfaction within certain volunteers. These ones explained that the permit holder tended to limit their focus on the relationship by seeing the volunteer as a "source of help instead of a friend, who was useful for solving practical problems, doing homework in order to pass the civic integration exam, but not to gain a broader knowledge of the Dutch language (Dekker et al., 2013). Furthermore, both evaluations recognised that although the project had fostered strong and long-lasting relationships between buddies and permit holders, the permit holder was seldom introduced to a new network of local Dutch people through their buddy. Indeed, contact most often took place at home, with the permit holder (and their family) alone, instead of consisting of more neighbourhood interaction (Brink, van der Well & Klaver, 2011).

It is difficult to determine the actual effectiveness of buddy projects, as these are deployed in combination with other instruments for language acquisition (Månsson & Delander, 2017). The effectiveness of such projects is furthermore dependant on its execution (Brink et al., 2011). Nonetheless, the literature highlights three best practices for buddy projects: First, it is important to recognise the different profiles a volunteer may undertake and assigning one of these which fits the individual best. Namely, these can be: the class assistant (a more formal and general role), language coach (provides help with language outside of the classroom), and a buddy (focuses on discussing and promoting cultural integration) (Brink et al.,

2011). It is also important to establish a good match between buddies and participants, as well as to establish beforehand what the participant expects to achieve out of this relationship (Elderenbosch, 2016). Third, volunteers need to feel as if they are part of an organisation, so that they are taken seriously and offered support, in the form of teaching materials as well as through regular contact with the project coordinator.

Dual Trajectories

Within the available language classes at SNTR, a dual trajectory has recently been developed, where students follow two days of lessons, one day of training and coaching, and the fourth day is spent conducting an internship. 'Aan de slag' is momentarily only being offered to the specific target group of illiterates. To this date the majority of research conducted on dual trajectories has focused primarily on discussing possible effects on mid- to highly skilled individuals who wish to limit the time they spend in language classes (Born & Schwefer, 2016; Liebig, 2007).

Indeed, the literature states that alongside promoting an early activation, benefits of this approach include the creation of focus and clear expectations (for the participant and the employer) regarding the end-goal of the trajectory, as well as a positive effect on language acquisition (Konle-Seidl & Bolits, 2016; Martin et al., 2016; UNHCR, 2013). This happens on the one hand by submerging participants in the language, as well as learning professional language and vocabulary (Oostveen & Klaver, 2018). Nonetheless, there also exist potential shortfalls with dual trajectories, namely that dual trajectories are often expensive and require a lot of employer's time. As a result, it has been argued that dual trajectories should be implemented in sectors with a large labour shortage. Additionally, employers must be convinced that the refugee employee is of equivalent quality as the current workers (Desiderio, 2016). However, with proper matching facilities, van den Enden (2018) argues that the profit can be considerable given that the supply and demand of the workforce have been properly discussed.

As a result of these optimistic findings, there is reasons to believe that implementing dual trajectories for a broader target group than illiterates alone could have bring positive results to SNTR's language programme.

Participation and Work

SNTR strives to help its participants enter the Dutch labour market in order to actively participate in society and no longer be dependent on social welfare. To do so, the organisation offers permit holders a variety of different services, which they can choose to make use of. These include: trainings on the Dutch working culture and application process, and tailored coaching to help the permit holder in their job search process; Furthermore, the organisation facilitates contacts with employers, and arranges labour opportunities for its participants to gain working experience.

The timing of employment strategies

Before discussing the effects of the different interventions which SNTR offers to facilitate permit holders' economic integration, it is interesting to consider the timing at which these strategies are deployed. There exist disagreements on the approach and timing of which a newcomer should be encouraged to enter the labour market. Some argue for the 'settle-in' approach, which states that although labour market participation is important, efforts to promote this should only be implemented after an initial settlement period. This is because knowledge of the local language is regarded to be a crucial element to ensure the proper integration on the labour market, thereby favouring that time be taken before demanding permit holders to actively participate in society (Auer, 2017; Dagevos, 2007; Odé et al., 2013). Others believe in the 'work-first' approach, which encourage participants early on to (explore possibilities to) become active in either paid employment or some other means of participating (albeit voluntary work or internships) at an early stage⁷. This is based on the assertion that early-stage participation helps to avoid decreases in productivity due to outdated knowledge, gaps in CV's and a lack of social skills, as well as negative health impacts (Bakker, 2016; Martin et al., 2016; Maibom, J., Rosholm, M., & Svarer, 2017; Sol et al., 2011). Furthermore, research by Miltenburg, Dagevos & Huijnk (2019) have shown that Syrian refugees who already undertook some form of participation (in the asylum seekers' centre, for example), found it easier to combine multiple forms of participation at a later stage of their integration process.

These bifurcating possibilities to the economic integration of refugees require organisations to make a series of choices regarding how they wish to address the matter. SNTR's activities align themselves more with the 'settle-in' approach, by first setting the focus on language acquisition and social support before guiding permit holders on their orientation of the labour market. This contrasts the present-day approach taken by many local governments which, in response to the WRR's policy brief urging for accelerated and parallel trajectories to refugee integration, focus on adopting early focus on labour market participation (Engbersen et al., 2015; Razenberg et al., 2018). In particular, the municipality of Amsterdam, as well as initiatives such as VIP and Stichting NVA strive to integrate participants onto the labour market as quickly as possible after they have been settled into their municipality (Klaver & Oostveen, 2017; Stavenuiter, Tinnemans, Kahmann & van der Hoff, 2019).

As a result of the increasing popularity of work-first approaches, a series of studies have been carried out to evaluate their effectiveness. In Amsterdam, VIP, and NVA, employment rates of permit holders raised to 25-33% in their first year of arrival. However, employment was often interrupted and took place in lower work sectors, factors which do not facilitate sustainable employment (Oostveen et al., 2019; Stavenuiter et al, 2019). These findings are also in line with international longitudinal research, which indicates that acceleration employment policies produce increased labour outcomes on the short-term, but these benefits tend to fade over time (Liebig, 2007). Additionally, longitudinal studies in the United States and

⁷ In this literature review, the term 'work-first' does not refer to 'workfare'-type policies where doing some kind of (unpaid) work is a requirement in order to receive a benefit.

the United Kingdom also revealed that upward mobility is limited in accelerated employment projects (Flaming, Drayse & Force 1999; Hales, Taylor, Mand & Miller, 2003).

Furthermore, this discussion raises the question of what is understood behind 'successful' economic integration; Alongside activity rates it is also interesting to consider the types of activities in which permit holders are involved in, as another threat to economic integration can refer to the limited labour mobility resulting of being placed in undervalued jobs (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2013). This has been reported to have a strong impact on refugees' mental health and self-esteem (Tcholakava, 2012; as cited in UNHCR, 2013), as well as lead to unsustainable employment activities in the form of part-time or fixed-term contracts (Blanco & Barou, 2011; as cited in UNHCR, 2013). As a result of these ambiguous findings, it is extremely difficult to determine with whether the 'work-first' and the 'settle-first' approach is effective, and whether one of these is more effective than the other; Evaluation research of settle-first approaches remains relatively scarce, and the literature lacks studies conducting a comparative analysis of these two. We are thus left without clear answers, which make it difficult to determine whether SNTR's strategy for employment is effective. This review of literature once again shows that there exist important disagreements with regards to employment strategies, which lack sufficient empirical evidence to derive a hard judgement on the matter.

Coaching

The pillar of the SNTR labour market integration trajectory is the provision of a 'Future Coach', who provides employment counselling by helping the participants explore job opportunities and take steps to gain access to employment or to enrol in an education programme. National and international research alike seems to recognise the positive effect which individual support of job seekers plays in processes of labour market integration (Åslund & Johannson, 2011; Fadyl & McPherson, 2009; Roorda, 2013). In particular, employment counselling is said to help promote the intrinsic motivation of the job seekers, as well as keep an overview of the steps which need to be made to integrate the labour market (Senécal & Guay, 2000; UNHCR, 2013). In particular, the literature describes a series of activities to be carried out by an employment counsellor in order for it to be effective:

Targeted and intensive

Research indicates positive effects for refugees when they receive intensive counselling during a job-search process, and in particular individuals who are at a great distance from the labour market (Åslund & Johannson, 2011; Fadyl & McPherson, 2009). In particular, the Social Economic Council (in Dutch 'Sociaal Economische Raad', [SER]) (2018) has also emphasized the importance of intensive support for permit holders starting their own business. Preconditions for such supervision include: offering a single permanent counsellor, working with counsellors who are trained in working with the specific target group, and the ability of the counsellor to be able to create trust with both the permit holder and the employer in order to facilitate employment (Van den Enden et al., 2018).

There has been an increasing trend in recent years to develop a specific approach for the economic integration of permit holders, as 84% of municipalities now deploy dedicated employment counsellors for this target group (Razenberg et al., 2018). Given that the SNTR programme only focuses on permit holders, the Future Coaches can also be viewed as dedicated employment counsellors. Dedicated employment counsellors are considered by local governments to be an important working element in helping permit holders gain access to employment; This is because it requires specific knowledge to adequately support permit holders, for instance about their cultural background, their process of language acquisition and civic integration as well as other barriers which permit holders may face in gaining access to employment (Bodsworth, 2013 cited in Baslund, Di Bartolomea & Ludoph, 2017). Also, these dedicated employment

counsellors often conserve a smaller caseload, which gives them more time to help each individual person (Razenberg et al., 2018). In effect, Future Coaches at SNTR conserve an approximate caseload of 40 participants, whereas general case managers at the municipality of Rotterdam must cater to 80 clients (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2019). Research on the municipality of Amsterdam's employment counselling strategies revealed that the permit holders are overall very positive about these dedicated employment counsellors relative to generic employment counsellors (Oostveen et al., 2019). This seems to be confirmed by the broader international literature, which agrees that newcomers who have little knowledge about the workings of the new labour market can benefit from some additional care and support in their integration process (Hagelund, 2005; Pedersen et al., 2012).

A comprehensive client profile and an individual plan of action

Developing an accurate profile of refugees' competences and skills is considered in various studies as an important first step in the successful economic integration of this group (UNHCR, 2013; Martin et al., 2016). In particular, research on the German 'integration contract' revealed that the inventory of skills is an essential working element in the counselling of migrants (including refugees) towards employment (Aldashev, Thomsen & Thomas, 2010). It appears that this assessment is an important condition to facilitate the consideration of the particular background characteristics of the client, in order subsequently be able to develop an adapted plan of action. Unfortunately, the literature does not discuss how such a skills assessment should be carried out.

However, further information is available on the effectiveness of developing individual action plans. Indeed, research shows that a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective for the diverse target group of refugees (UNHCR, 2013). Even when all the participants, in the context of the SNTR programme, come from Syria, there remains important differences in the populations' demographic characteristics (Dagevos et al., 2019; van den Linden & Dagevos, 2019). As a result, this emphasises the need for customised counselling in the form of individually tailored action plans (UNHCR, 2013). There are many different examples of positive experiences with action plans. Amongst these, Hagelund (2005) describes the value of involving refugees in their action plans so that they are no longer perceived (and no longer perceive themselves) as clients, but as participants who are able to, with some form of support, address their own problems. Similarly, evaluation research in England has shown that individual plans helped refugees "to consider new ways of knowing themselves and presenting themselves to potential employers" (Schultheiss, Watts, Sterland & O'Neill, 2011). These examples show that individual action plans can help refugees feel ownership and remain active in their own integration process, which is well adapted to their needs, capacities, and ambitions. This feeling of ownership increases motivation and confidence, which could possibly help refugees make steps on the labour market. Unfortunately, no studies testing the actual effectiveness of individual action plans were found, however the qualitative findings described above seem to support the importance of this intervention in terms of goal-oriented activation.

Preparing for the labour market

SNTR strives to support permit holders in preparing themselves to the labour market by providing training sessions on the Dutch working culture and the job application process, helping participants get their diplomas valued, and, when applicable, refer them to possible education possibilities.

Training

The literature is positive about the effects which job-searching and working culture training sessions have on labour market outcomes. Heyma & van der Werf (2014) conducted a (cost)-effectiveness study of the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV)'s re-integration services for the population dependent on welfare benefits between 2008 and 2010; It revealed that the deployment of training sessions led to an increase of

6 percentage point chances of re-employment within eighteen months. Furthermore, evaluation research on the initiative VIP and Stichting NVA projects reveal that participants value the opportunity to learn the Dutch norms in the work sphere and practice their skills, which made job searching less stressful and helped them stay proactive and motivated (Stavenuiter et al., 2019). This is also in line with evidence found in Blonk, Van Twuijver, Van de Ven & Hazelzet (2015)'s research on the effectiveness of training sessions which highlighted the effects of these on participants' proactivity and motivation. Finally, trainings can also be useful to provide information to permit holders about what they should not or do not want to do, in particular when starting a company. Indeed, Stavenuiter et al. (2019)'s research highlights the multiple practical and legal challenges which permit holders faced when wanting to start their own business and had not expected. As a result, the authors recommend to provide job-seekers with timely, detailed, accurate information about the Dutch labour market and the different possibilities for employment.

Diploma valuation

Alongside understanding the labour market, permit holders must actually conserve the proper qualifications (i.e. diplomas and professional experiences) in order to be considered for professional opportunities. As a result, when permit holders have followed schooling in their origin country, it can indeed be beneficial to have these diplomas valued (Odé & Dagevos, 2017). In particular, a study conducted in Germany found that permit holders who get their diplomas valued have up to 23% more chances of finding work, and similar results have also been found in the Dutch context (Kanas & van Tubergen, 2009; Konle-Seidl & Bolits, 2016). When diploma valuation is not a possibility, the literature refers to, amongst others, the example of a Norwegian initiative to suggest the creation of expert panels, competences tests, and assessments, to attempt to recreate an equivalent description of permit holders' professional background (Born & Schwefer, 2016; Konle-Seidl & Bolits, 2016).

Education

When permit holders do not conserve educational/professional credentials, or they are not able to properly value these from their country of origin, it becomes more difficult for them to find employment in the Netherlands (De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010). Indeed, Kanas and Van Tubergen (2009) demonstrate that pre-migration educational and professional experiences is often not highly regarded because of the lack of available insight into the value of these and thereby implied limited compatibility with the host-society labour market. Consequently, results from a survey carried out across 190 municipalities in the Netherlands revealed that local governments estimate that only 9% of permit holders are considered to be directly transferable to the labour market (De Gruijter & Razenberg, 2016). Given these findings, it appears that encouraging permit holders to complete a Dutch education programme would facilitate their integration onto the labour market. Bakker (2016) conducted longitudinal research on the labour market outcomes of refugees who arrived between 1995 and 1999; Her findings revealed that 85% of those who conserved a Dutch diploma obtained paid work in the Netherlands.

Notwithstanding these optimistic results, further research on the effects which education can have on different groups, as well as on either the long or short term, reveal some nuances of the effect of education on labour market outcomes. Indeed, certain studies have cautioned against the investment in education of permit holders, as it does not lead to resulting improved labour market outcomes (Farrell et al., 2011; Lemaitre, 2007; cited in Martin et al., 2016). In particular, Liebig (2007)'s research in Denmark describes the 'lock-in' effect, where participation in educational programmes has been found to delay integration, as newcomers have "less time to look for a job, if they are under full-time activation" (p. 43). Indeed, an important point considered in the discussion of the effectiveness of training programmes on permit holders' labour market outcomes refers to the term within which they become active on the labour market. However, several studies have shown that although investing in education programmes may have limited

positive or even negative effects on labour market position of newcomers in the short term, it leads to positive effects on the longer term (after two years) (OECD, 2005).

As a result of the complexity involved in understanding the effectiveness of educational programmes on refugees' economic integration, it can be concluded that the deployment of educational programmes should be determined based on the permit holder's particular profile and situation; As such, their learnability, motivation, age, capacities, as well as the opportunities available in the work sector they wish to integrate must all be considered when determining the value of investing in an educational programme. Certain scholars have taken a more bold position by arguing that the contrasting findings give reason to prioritise the deployment of short-term educational programmes (of maximum one year), which are job-oriented, and ideally attached to a concrete job prospect (Born & Schwerfer, 2011; Blonk et al., 2015; Roorda, 2013).

Facilitating a Network

The access to a network is deemed to be a central element to facilitate newcomers' access to the labour market, as it provides important informal information on employment prospects and recruitment methods (Calvo-Armengol & Jackson, 2004; Konle-Seidl & Bolits, 2016; Martin et al., 2016). Indeed, in their study of refugees' odds of employment and occupational status in the Netherlands, De Vroome & van Tubergen (2010) found that having Dutch friends increased refugees' chances of employment by 1.4 times. Yet building a network can be a difficult process, which refugees often struggle with (Campion, 2018). Indeed, research by Klaver & Odé (2003) states that permit holders have insufficient knowledge about the functioning of the labour market, making it difficult for them to actively search for employment opportunities. In order to help SNTR participants come into contact with local networks, SNTR strives to help its participants by coupling them with a "Future Buddy", organising networking events and company visits, as well as matching permit holders directly with vacancies.

Future Buddy

SNTR has developed a 'Future Buddy' project, which aims to couple its participants with a native Dutch to support them in the job finding process. This buddy acts alongside the employment counsellor, and can offer a series of benefits: Firstly, buddies can help permit holders find employment through tapping into their own network (Drever & Hoffmeister, 2008; Steyaert, 2012). They can also encourage permit holders to develop new social contacts and extend their network on their own (Gruppen, 2010). In line with this, networks can also influence people's mind-sets; if it is evident/the norm to have a job, then a job seeker will be naturally stimulated to look for work themselves (Bouwman- Van't Veer et al., 2011). Unfortunately, there is no research available which is able to delineate the effectiveness of these initiatives, as they are often implemented in combination with other instruments. However, Månsson & Delander (2017)'s investigation of the impact of a Swedish mentoring programme on the labour market status of newly arrived refugees was able to identify a positive correlation between have a mentor and job with an income above the minimum limit.

Matching permit holders with companies

Furthermore, SNTR introduces permit holders to a network of companies through diverse events, such as company visits, network events, and an ambassadors' network. Rijken, de Lange, Besselsen & Rahouti (2017) are positive about the plausible effectiveness of such events and activities, under the condition that they focus specifically on gaps in the labour market, where it will be easier to accelerate/facilitate the employment process. In addition to facilitating a network, SNTR strives to couple the job-seeking permit holder with available vacancies in the form of direct matching. The WRR as well as the SER argue for the benefits of matching (Engbersen et al., 2015; SER, 2018). This is because matching activities, if well carried

out, provide more support and information to the employer, thereby making them more aware of risks, possibilities, and opportunities which the refugee target group presents, which, among others, helps to manage expectations (Correa-Velez, Barnett & Gifford, 2013; Groenewoud, Mallee, Witvliet & Blommesteijn, 2014). Indeed, research in the Netherlands as well as in Sweden presents that employers are afraid to hire refugees (Lundborg & Skedinger, 2016; Razenberg & de Gruijter, 2017). As a result, an intermediary is important, so that the employer can have regular contact with the organisation which provides them with a feeling of trust and enables to set conditions/make agreement (Bakker & Van Ekert, 2013).

However, the literature also cautions that adequate support must be provided in the matching process in order for it to be successful. Indeed, Dutch research has shown that employers are not satisfied with the governmental assistance they receive, as municipalities lack insight in the job seeker's profile, thereby often not meeting the right recruitment requests (Razenberg & de Gruijter, 2016; 2017). With this in mind, it is important that SNTR invest the adequate time and attention in the matching process in order for it to be effective. This could, for example, taken the form of supported employment:

Supported employment and monitoring job placements

'Supported Employment' (SE) is one of the most evidence-based methods of re-integration. It is primarily used for people with disabilities and is based upon the idea that anyone can be employed if they want to work and sufficient support is provided. In SE programmes, participants are placed in a job at a regular employer as quickly as possible, after which they are coached and trained on-the-job by an external job coach (Groenewoud et al., 2014). The job coach visits the participant regularly on-the-job and helps them cope with the work environment, and often also speaks with the employer about the functioning of the participant and possible issues. Other characteristics of SE include voluntary participation, long-lasting support and the possibility to adjust the work environment. SE has been proven to be effective for handicapped workers (most notably people with psychiatric issues) (Groenewoud et al., 2014), but is increasingly being used to support other disadvantaged groups such as young people leaving care, ex-offenders and people recovering from drug and alcohol misuse (British Association of Supported Employment [BASE], 2019). Supported employment may also be an effective method for re-integration of refugees, although there is currently no evidence to support this. A randomized controlled trial on SE for Syrian refugees has been initiated in Bergen, Norway in May 2017, of which the results are expected in May 2020 (Norwegian Research Centre [NORCE], 2018).

An important working element of the SE method lies in the fact that an external job coach provides on-the-job support to both the participant and the employer (Groenewoud et al., 2014). Job coaching as an instrument is widely used in the Netherlands, and has been found to contribute to helping people with a distance to the labour market into employment (Drijvers & Engelen, 2018). Several types of problems can arise after a job placement, for instance if the employee is often late for work, is afraid to ask questions or has a hard time fitting in with other employees. Problems such as these can have a negative impact on their functioning and, if unresolved, may cause them to drop out of their jobs (Oostveen et al., 2019). A job coach helps to prevent or eliminate these problems, by facilitating an open communication between employee and employer, managing their expectations and showing the employer how best to supervise the employee (Drijvers & Engelen, 2018; Oostveen et al., 2019). Many municipalities also provide job coaching for permit holders and have found it to be beneficial for this group (Drijvers & Engelen, 2018; Oostveen et al., 2018; Stavenuiter et al., 2019). Indeed, one could argue that permit holders are likely to benefit from job coaching to prevent misunderstandings or problems in their relationship with their Dutch employer that may result from cultural differences. SNTR currently does not provide job coaching for participants, nor does it pro-actively maintain contact with employers to monitor how job placements are going. This carries the risk that participants will drop out of their jobs and return to unemployment.

Work

Within the SNTR programme, participants are encouraged to take up some form of labour market-oriented activity in order to increase their employability and gather work experience. Different names are used to describe these activities, such as work experience placements, (language) internships, and voluntary work. These names tend to be used interchangeably, causing some confusion when discussing some in fact very different types of employment activities. Booijink and colleagues (2017b) recently published a paper explaining the differences between these:

- **Voluntary work:** work that is voluntary, unpaid and benefits others or society as a whole. This is usually carried out at public or non-profit organisations and is often not focused on learning specific skills.
- **(language) internship:** work that the participant is not yet fully proficient in, and that they are aiming to learn. Language internships use work as a means to improve language proficiency. This takes place at a regular employer, that also employs paid workers.
- **Work experience placement:** work that is focused specifically at learning working skills. Here, a training plan is made, in which specific goals are described for the short and longer term. This also takes place at a regular employer that also employs paid workers, and is carried out under the supervision of a mentor.

Volunteer work is often considered to be a 'stepping stone' towards obtaining employment. However, past research has in fact refuted this assumption. In effect, findings from the British Household Panel Survey (Paine, McKay & Moro, 2013) as well as the German Socio-Economic Household Survey (Strauss, 2009) reveal that "volunteering has a weak effect on employability outcomes, in terms of moving into employment, job retention, and progression" (Paine et al., 2013, p. 369). In line with these findings, the evaluation of the Dutch project 'Aan de Slag' and other projects on volunteer work in asylum seekers' centres, emphasises that whereas permit holders may gain access to paid work after having carried out volunteer work, this process does not take place in a straightforward and causal manner (Bakker et al., 2018). Indeed, work carried out on a volunteer basis rarely is transformed into paid work, additionally the experience of one's CV does not necessary act as a catalyst in the application process for paid work (Hirst, 2001). Instead, Bakker and colleagues (2018) argue that the experience of making social contacts as well as developing a network may in the long turn help people to find work. These findings thereby tell us that it is important that the goal of the activation and volunteer work be made clear to the permit holder in order for them to be able to benefit most extensively from the guidance (Van Dijk et al., 2019; van 't Veer et al., 2011). Additionally, positive effects of unpaid work may be seen in the effect which the activation process may have on increasing permit holders' self-confidence, which often acts as an important barrier to the labour market (Blonk et al., 2015).

In contrast, work experience placements can be said to have a stronger impact on a job seeker's chances for future employment; Booijink and colleagues (2017b) identified several important success factors that increase the extent to which voluntary work, internships and work experience placements contribute to the employability of permit holders. Firstly, there should be an active focus on learning and developing working skills. This means that learning goals should be clearly formulated in a training plan, and that the permit holder needs to be coached on the job by a mentor. Also, there needs to be a good fit between the type of work and the learning goals of the participant. It is important to evaluate this regularly, because over time participants may find out that the work is different than they expected.

Conclusions

In order to examine Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam (SNTR)'s operations, this review of literature has explored various (evaluation) studies, policy briefs, and experimental research on integration practices in the Netherlands and internationally. It also considers insights from expert interviews which were conducted to fill knowledge gaps on the implementation and contextual conditions for intervention success. After having elaborated on the different interventions of social support, language acquisition, and labour market integration, this concluding section aims to provide a recap of the review's central findings.

Successful coaching for social support is based on responsibility, motivation, and creating a sense of ownership

When reflecting on the findings around social support, we find three central themes for successful coaching: First, the self-direction approach (in Dutch 'eigen regie') insists on motivating clients and fostering a sense of own responsibility to handle their own affairs. This involves creating a sense of urgency, as well as having discussions on the reasons to undertake independent tasks when it comes to arranging administrative affairs. In turn, fostering motivation has a lot to do with developing a sense of involvement and ownership. As the literature explains, linguistic translation is essential here, as it provides the newcomer with an understanding of what is going on. Furthermore, cultural translation can also play an important role by mediating possible cultural differences and misunderstandings. Various scholars in the field promote the use of cultural translators to create a 'double context' in order to help bridge differences and thereby facilitate the coaching of clients with a foreign nationality. Despite the numerous benefits of these translation processes, the literature also cautions against relying too strongly on the native language for communication purposes, as this may hinder the language acquisition of the client.

A customised approach is important when considering the timing of economic integration strategies

Disagreements exist around the timing of employment strategies, with advocates of the 'work first' or 'settle first' approach. Many organisations and municipalities in the Netherlands today are implementing the former approach to refugee integration. However, evaluations of these policies have revealed that although early activation ensures higher employment rates, it is also prone to vulnerable employment, limited upward mobility, as well as employment beneath potential. In addition, investing in early economic integration requires finding a balance with available time and energy for language learning. An alternative to these conflicting interests consists of trajectories which combine learning and working, through dual trajectories. However, the coordination of these trajectories also includes financial and logistical challenges, as well as an important commitment for employers. Additionally, these trajectories also involve very busy schedules, which may be difficult for permit holders to combine with family responsibilities. With these findings in mind, it becomes difficult to determine which approach and accompanying focus of integration, should be prioritised.

In response to these conflicting strategies, many studies encourage customising the approach undertaken according to the individual client's needs and ambitions. Indeed, this review has shown that a targeted approach employing a comprehensive client profile and an individual plan of action has been found to be most effective when facilitating refugee integration. This is because plans of actions also create a sense of ownership and help to develop other ways of self-presentation. These mechanisms in turn fosters the newcomer's motivation and confidence level.

The right conditions for sustainable work

Once a permit holder is ready to enter the labour market, he is still presented with different options to integrate the labour market. Volunteer work is often pushed forward as a valuable stepping stone towards paid employment. However, this review has revealed that this form of work mostly conserves activation and social effects, but in fact does not facilitate the economic integration of refugees. Instead, internships and work

experience placements are said to be more successful at introducing permit holders to paid employment, as such forms of work are usually combined with clear goals and supervision.

A second condition which is said to play an important role in helping permit holders find sustainable work is the deployment of job coaching. Indeed, although studies evaluating the effectiveness of this instrument for refugees does not yet exist, research conducted on other vulnerable groups describes the added value which a such a person can play to mediate discussions between employer and employee. Especially in the context of permit holders, it is safe to assume that addressing possible miscommunications which can arise as a result of cultural differences would play an important role in promoting sustainable employment.

A multi-faceted process requires an integral approach

Finally, as was mentioned in the introduction of this review, the concept of integration is a complex one, touching upon multiple fields of language acquisition, re-integration, and welfare. As a result, it is not surprising that the literature encourages the deployment of integration services for integration. These studies have encouraged the physical assembly of different services to provide a holistic view and a coordinate implementation process, as this is believed to be an important organisation element for refugee integration.

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Appendix 1. List of Interviewees

T. van Elst August 1st 2019

A. van Bergen August 19th 2019

P. Pompa September 5th 2019