

Refugees in transition to Dutch education: The role of social contacts

*An exploratory study on transition programs that prepare refugees for
vocational or higher education in the Netherlands*

Master's thesis

by

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An exploratory study on transition programs that prepare refugees for vocational or higher education in the Netherlands

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Kennisplatform
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Samenleving

I used to think that I could not have an education, that I did not have a future. But now I have that option. Nobody told us that at first. The municipality only talked about work, welfare benefits, language, civic integration. Not about education. It wasn't until I came here, that I learned what the possibilities are.

– Current participant ROC van Flevoland

Summary

This study looks at the role of social capital in transition programs. Transition programs prepare refugees for vocational or higher education in the Netherlands. Their main emphasis is on enhancing refugees' human capital – that is, knowledge and skills that are required for regular education. Social capital plays an important role in the development of human capital. Social capital consists of an individual's social networks and the social resources available to them through these networks. I distinguish between horizontal and vertical social capital. Horizontal refers to relations between individuals who have a similar socio-economic status, while vertical refers to relation between individuals with a different socio-economic status.

This study addresses the following research question: (1) In what way can social capital contribute to the development of the knowledge and skills that are required for refugees to start with regular education programs in the Netherlands, and (2) how does this take shape in the transition programs? The literature review discusses the hard and soft skills refugees need in regular education, as well as how they are addressed by the learning activities in transition programs. The empirical research addresses the role of social activities and networks in the programs, and the elements of social capital that would be a relevant addition to the programs. For the empirical research, I interviewed five transition program coordinators, seven current participants and five former participants. The interviews revolved around the social contacts of participants, and how these networks affected their experience in the transition programs.

I find that participants' social contacts yield four types of support: informational, instrumental, emotional and companionship. These types of support contribute to the development of human capital. Informational and instrumental support contribute to hard skills through – among others – knowledge of the Dutch language and education system. Emotional support and companionship contribute to intra- and interpersonal soft skills. In this way, social capital positively affects participants' human capital. I also found that vertical social capital provides informational support, while horizontal does not. Informational support therefore plays an important role in helping refugees move up the socio-economic ladder.

A practical implication of this research is that transition programs should take into account the importance of social capital for human capital development in their organizational structures. Social capital can not only contribute to education and labor market perspectives, but also to social integration as a whole. This is especially relevant with a view to upcoming legislation amendments, in which transition programs get a more prominent role in civic integration.

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1 Introduction

In the past six years, there has been an increase in the number of refugees entering Europe. In the Netherlands, most asylum applicants have come from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Eritrea, with Syrians and Eritreans having the highest chance of getting a residence permit (SER, 2016). Recent figures have shown that refugees with a residence permit (hereafter referred to as refugees) face various barriers when it comes to labor market participation (SER, 2018). It can take months or even years for them to enter the Dutch labor market. For instance, of asylum seekers that were granted a residence permit in 2014, only 11 percent had a paid job two and a half years later (CBS, 2018). There are several reasons for this problem, such as long waiting periods in the reception centers, limited command of the Dutch language, or problematic appreciation of home-country qualifications (Beckers & Muller-Dugic, 2018).

One attempt to tackle these issues has been the introduction of transition programs (*schakelprogramma's*). A transition program is an intensive preparation for vocational or higher education in the Netherlands, consisting of language training, the acquisition of study skills and a familiarization with Dutch society (Teunissen, 2016). The aim of the programs is to guide refugees towards regular education and eventually to paid work. The transition programs put emphasis on enhancing refugees' *human capital* – that is, the skills and knowledge they need for higher education. Enhancing (the compatibility of) refugees' human capital will make them more appealing as employees (Chiswick & Miller, 2001). Moreover, a Dutch diploma provides immigrants with the best chances of entering the labor market (Bakker, 2015; Bakker, Dagevos, & Engbersen, 2017).

However, it has been found that *social capital* also plays an important role in immigrants' educational opportunities (e.g. Coleman, 1988; Kanas & Van Tubergen, 2009; Morrice, 2007) and (consequent) labor market prospects (e.g. Aguilera, 2002; Drever & Hoffmeister, 2008; De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010; Woolcock, 1998). Social capital includes an individual's social networks, and the (social) resources available to them through these networks. Such social resources can be of use in the development of human capital. An individual's social relations and interactions with others yield social resources in the form of cognitive or social development (Coleman, 1990). Social resources, in turn, can benefit the development of human capital.

This study sets out to shed light on the ways in which refugees in transition programs establish social capital. Moreover, it aims to offer insights in the role that transition programs can play in strengthening these elements. As the programs' goal is to pave the way to regular

education, implementing elements that enhance social capital are likely to facilitate that process. This study is of an exploratory nature and intends to contribute to knowledge about the content and outcomes of the transition programs, and the role of social capital therein.

1.1 Context

The current legislation regarding integration in the Netherlands is that immigrants from outside the European Union (with some exceptions) have to complete ‘civic integration’ (*inburgering*) in order to stay in the Netherlands. As established in the Civic Integration Law (*Wet Inburgering*), these immigrants have to take a civic integration exam. The exam consists of seven parts (Koolmees, 2018b): four parts on language skills (writing, reading, speaking and listening), Knowledge of Dutch Society (*KNM*), Orientation of the Dutch Labor Market (*ONA*) and a Declaration of Participation, which is an official commitment to respecting and actively contributing to Dutch society. In 2013, some essential changes were made to the Civic Integration Law. The most important change was that it became the immigrants’ individual responsibility to find a suitable integration course *and* to pay for it themselves. Refugees are given the possibility of getting a loan of up to 10.000 euros. The debts are cancelled provided that they pass the civic integration exam within three years after arrival. If they do not pass it within that timeframe, they are not only in debt but they also receive a fine (DUO, n.d.).

Recent evaluations have shown that the current state of affairs is resulting in several problems (Koolmees, 2018a; Leerkes & Scholten, 2016). One of the biggest bottlenecks is the mismatch in the responsibilities of the national government and municipalities. On the one hand, the execution of the Civic Integration Law is in the hands of the national government. On the other hand, municipalities are in charge of compliance with the Participation Law (*Participatiewet*). This law is intended to ensure that people who receive welfare benefits get paid work as soon as possible. Refugees often have to deal with both laws, because they are obliged to pass the civic integration exam and also receive welfare benefits in the early years after arrival. But there is little alignment between these two laws, because their respective implementation is the responsibility of different government bodies. This has led to problems for policy makers as well as for refugees (Koolmees, 2018a).

Other criticisms on the 2013 changes are that there is a lack of practice-oriented language acquisition, that the language level demand (A2 in accordance with the Common

European Framework of Reference¹) is too low for immigrants to qualify for vocational education, and that immigrants who do not pass the exam are often in significant debt and left to fend for themselves (Koolmees, 2018a).

For these reasons, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, Wouter Koolmees, has proposed several amendments to the Civic Integration Law (Koolmees, 2018b), which will become effective in 2021. First, municipalities will be given more responsibilities in the civic integration process, through synergy of the Civic Integration Law with the Participation Law. For example, the responsibility for *ONA* will be decentralized to municipalities. The loan system will be abolished and municipalities will receive a budget for arranging civic integration courses. Second, Koolmees has proposed three ‘learning routes’ for immigrants to tune civic integration to individual needs: a ‘main’ route, with a language level demand of B1 (in accordance with the CEFR), a route for low- or illiterates or people with limited learning abilities, and an education route to help immigrants below 30 obtain a Dutch diploma. Immigrants in the education route have to acquire language and study skills needed for Dutch vocational or higher education, in order to gain a sustainable labor market perspective (Koolmees, 2018b). Transition programs will play a prominent role in shaping the education route (Koolmees, 2019).

At the moment, there are at least 37 transition programs in place in the Netherlands. Although they are initiated by institutions for regular education, they are not publicly funded (De Voogd & Redjopawiro, 2018). In some cases, programs receive financial support from Foundation for Refugee Students UAF or municipalities (Born, Mack, & Odé, 2019). Most transition programs prepare participants for secondary vocational education (*mbo*), followed by higher professional education (*hbo*), and by far the least programs prepare for academic education (*wo*). The majority of transition program participants therefore end up in vocational (*mbo*) rather than higher (*hbo* or *wo*) education (Born, Mack, & Odé, 2019; Van Hal & Razenberg, 2018).

The programs are aimed at refugees, because other types of migrants (e.g. economic or family migrants) generally have the perspective of a household income upon arrival (IND, n.d.). For refugees, this is almost never the case. The age of transition program participants generally lies between 18 and 30 years old. Refugees younger than 18 usually attend an *ISK*² or regular secondary education. Refugees (as well as Dutch citizens) older than 30 are no longer entitled

¹ The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is used to assess foreign language proficiency. There are six proficiency levels, of which A1 is the lowest and C2 the highest (Council of Europe, 2019).

² *ISK* (*Internationale Schakelklas*) prepares foreign children aged 12 to 18 years for regular secondary education.

to a student loan. For this reason, some transition programs do not accept participants over 27, because they will not be able to continue studying with a loan after finishing the program. So although it is not impossible for older refugees to participate in a transition program, it is highly unlikely.

In light of the upcoming amendment, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment wanted to know more about the current possibilities for refugees who would be eligible for the education route. They instructed *Kennisplatform Integratie & Samenleving (KIS)* to conduct research about existing transition programs, the curricula they offer, and what the success factors and bottlenecks are with regard to the transition to vocational or higher education. In the first half of 2019, I did my research internship at KIS and was able to conduct the current study as part of their project on transition programs.

1.2 Societal relevance

The transition programs' main goal is to facilitate the transition to regular education, which increases refugees' chances of labor market participation. By familiarizing refugees with the Dutch education culture, as well as equipping them with the required knowledge and skills, transition programs create a pathway for refugees to regular education, while simultaneously saving them time. Rather than completing civic integration and education sequentially, the programs allow refugees to combine their civic integration obligations with an orientation towards regular education. This way, the period of labor market inactivity after arrival can become shorter.

Human capital is positively associated with labor market participation. Having more knowledge and skills makes an individual more likely to find employment. By contributing to human capital, social capital can indirectly contribute to labor market participation. However, there is also evidence for a direct effect of social capital on labor market participation. Social capital offers opportunities for societal orientation, including labor market orientation (De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010). Moreover, social networks can offer instrumental and informational support, by providing advice and/or connections in relation to the labor market (Huijnk & Miltenburg, 2018). Social capital therefore has the potential to positively contribute to the objectives of the transition programs. With the high unemployment rate among refugees in mind, it is valuable to explore the role of both human and social capital in the transition programs.

The legislation amendments are likely to lead to an increase in the demand for transition programs, as well as more central organization and funding from government bodies. However,

transition programs in their current form have only existed for a few years. There is currently no central organizational structure of transition programs, so they vary greatly in terms of content, goals, funding and outcomes. Because of this, there exists a knowledge gap with regard to the role of human and social capital in the programs. This study aims to close that gap, by exploring how human capital develops in the transition programs, how social capital takes shape in this process, and where there is room for improvement.

1.3 Scientific relevance

There is a substantial amount of scientific literature arguing that social capital is beneficial for the development of human capital (e.g. Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Field, 2005; 2008). This effect has been found to be particularly positive for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (Field, 2008, p. 54). The general line of argument is that networks and relationships yield ‘social resources’, which are useful to enhance an individual’s knowledge and skills. Loury (1987) argues that social resources take the form of peer influences or contacts that provide information, resulting in social or cognitive development. However, no conclusive answers have been given to the question what these ‘influences’ and ‘information’ entail, and how they can be conducive to human capital.

Another aspect of this study that has received little attention in scientific literature, is the ‘mutually beneficial interplay of social capital with human capital’ (Field, 2005, p. 31). Most literature focuses on the effects of social capital on (achievements in) education, but education can also contribute to social capital. This effect partly takes place because of simple proximity, but can also occur as the acquisition of social skills as a result of participating in education (Field, Social Capital, 2008, p. 54). Although there are studies that confirm the positive effect of education on indicators of social capital (see Huang, Maassen van den Brink, & Groot, 2009), there is little research on *how* social capital develops in education. This study aims to address that shortcoming by not only looking at the role of social capital in education, but also at the ways in which transition programs contribute to the development of social capital.

Finally, very little research has been done on education in the context of transition programs. There are reports on the education and labor market participation of refugees that mention the existence of transition programs (Engbersen, Dagevos, Jennissen, Bakker, & Leerkes, 2015; Huddleston, Niessen, & Tjaden, 2013; Martin, et al., 2016; Razenberg, Kahmann, De Gruijter, & Damhuis, 2018; Oostveen, Odé, & Mack, 2018; SER, 2016; SER, 2018; Van Hal & Razenberg, 2018). However, so far only two reports have investigated the content and outcomes of transition programs. In a qualitative study, Born, Mack and Odé (2019)

conducted interviews with program coordinators to shed light on the programs' success factors and bottlenecks in relation to the transition to higher education. Teunissen (2016) conducted a mixed-methods study to provide insights in the progress of refugees who want to obtain a Dutch diploma. Her quantitative data were obtained from the UAF database. UAF also conducted a small survey among refugee students. Teunissen's qualitative data were based on the assessments of the Taskforce Refugees in Higher Education.

The shortcomings of both studies are (1) that they have not done qualitative research on the experiences of refugees themselves, and (2) that they are only looking at the success or failure of the transition to vocational or higher education. Knowledge is therefore lacking on the experiences of refugees in the transition programs. There is a need for information on the opportunities for refugees to develop social and human capital in the transition programs. By using an exploratory and qualitative approach, this study aims to provide insights into these issues – which the existing literature has failed to offer.

1.4 Research objective and research questions

The transition programs aim to prepare refugees for vocational or higher education by enhancing their human capital in the form of Dutch language, working on deficiencies, and acquiring study skills that are compatible with Dutch education culture (Teunissen, 2016). This study sheds light on the role of social capital in the development of these elements. Moreover, it aims to offer insights in the opportunities for generating or strengthening social capital in the transition programs. The research question is twofold: (1) In what way can social capital contribute to the development of the knowledge and skills that are required for refugees to start with regular education programs in the Netherlands, and (2) how does this take shape in the transition programs?

To answer the research question, several sub-questions are formulated. First, one must know what kind of human capital is required for regular education in the Netherlands. Human capital is a broad concept, and can include a wide variety of knowledge and skills.

SQ1. What kind of knowledge and skills do refugees *need* in regular education?

It is important to get an impression of the content of transition programs in terms of the courses that are offered and their prominence in the curricula. As was already mentioned, the transition programs have thus far not been centrally organized, so there might be large differences between them. Unfortunately, the scope of this study does not allow a comparison of curricula.

Still, it is worthwhile to explore what participants of the transition programs are indeed taught, in order to get a general image.

SQ2. What are the content characteristics of the transition programs?

In order to estimate participants' social capital, it is necessary to know what social resources are available to them. Although there is no strict definition of 'social resources', there is a consensus that they are derived from social relationships and networks.

SQ3. What role do social activities and networks play in the transition programs?

Once the first three sub-questions have investigated the role of human capital, social capital, and subject-matter of the transition programs, it is possible to synergize these concepts in a recommendation for future development of the programs.

SQ4. What elements of social capital would be a relevant addition to the transition programs?

1.5 Structure

This study consists of five main chapters, the first being this introduction. In the second chapter, I critically review the existing literature related to my research questions. I discuss some of the most influential authors in theorizing social capital and its role in the development of human capital (e.g. Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam). I also reflect on the requirements for regular education and the role of transition programs, thereby answering sub-questions 1 and 2. The literature review is concluded with a conceptual framework that serves as the basic structure for the empirical analysis.

The third chapter is the methodology section. I elaborate on my research philosophy, approach and strategy. As my research question is twofold, I also explain how I collected my data in two stages: literature research and empirical research. I provide an overview of the respondents and their characteristics. Then I discuss how I organized and analyzed my data. Finally, I critically reflect on my methodology and data collection, discussing confidentiality, validity and reliability.

The fourth chapter is the empirical analysis. Using the conceptual framework as a starting point, I discuss each concept and the corresponding codes, sub-codes and sub-sub-

codes. I describe my findings, supported by citations of the respondents. I reflect on these descriptions to interpret their meanings. In this chapter, I answer sub-questions 3 and 4.

The fifth and final chapter contains a conclusion and discussion. I summarize my findings and the answers to the sub-questions. I formulate an answer to my main research question and discuss the theoretical and practical implications of my research. I then critically reflect on the research process, the steps that I took and choices I made. I discuss limitation of the current study and possibilities for future research.

2 Literature review and conceptual framework

This chapter explores the existing scientific literature on the role of social capital in the development of human capital. More specifically, it focuses on how this process takes shape in transition programs. First, conceptual background is provided on refugees and social capital. This is then linked to the development of human capital and how this takes shape in the transition programs. This chapter provides answers to SQ1 (What kind of knowledge and skills do refugees need in regular education?) and SQ2 (What are the content characteristics of the transition programs?). It also provides a conceptual model in order to substantiate methodological and analytical choices that were made in this research.

2.1 Refugees

A refugee is defined by the UNHCR as ‘...someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group’ (UNHCR, n.d.). In particular, this study focuses on the experiences of refugees who have been granted an asylum status in the Netherlands. That means that their asylum request has officially been approved and they have been granted a residence permit for at least five years (Rijksoverheid, n.d.).

Refugees are different from other migrants in a variety of ways. First of all, their migration can be described as forced rather than voluntary. In this way, they differ for example from economic migrants or family migrants (Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014). The very nature of their migration already has an impact on their situation in the destination country. As their migration is unanticipated, refugees have the disadvantage of having little time to prepare and familiarize themselves with the destination country (Chiswick & Miller, 2001). Moreover, the destination country is not always predetermined. During the migration trajectory, a transit place might become the destination, or vice versa (Schapendonk & Steel, 2014). This puts refugees at a disadvantage compared to other types of migrants.

Upon arrival, refugees also face difficulties. The asylum procedure can take months or even years, during which they often have limited rights and freedoms. This stagnates learning processes and puts personal and professional development on hold (Bakker, Dagevos, & Engbersen, 2013; Morrice, 2007). For this reason, refugees often face a ‘refugee entry effect’. Once asylum status has been granted, they have a disadvantage when entering the labor market in the host country compared to other types of migrants (Bakker, Dagevos, & Engbersen, 2017).

Traumatic events during the flight, lengthy stay in an asylum center and socio-economic backlog in the host country can accumulate into mental health problems and social isolation (Phillimore, 2011). In other words, refugees often get a ‘false start’ in the destination country.

2.2 Social capital

In economic sociology, capital is seen as an asset that individuals or groups possess, and which is positively related to productivity (Field, Social Capital, 2008). The concept of *social capital* emerged in scientific literature in the second half of the twentieth century. In his conceptualization of the social world as a constant interplay between agency and structure, Pierre Bourdieu (1986) argued that individuals require capital in order to exercise their agency. This includes economic capital (financial resources), cultural or human capital (‘soft’ skills such as social and communication skills) and social capital. According to Bourdieu, social capital consists of social contacts that provide access to other forms of capital. In other words, having a social network implies availability of the resources of the contacts in that network. Notably, social capital is the *access to* resources, and not only the *actual use* of resources (Lancee, 2010). Bourdieu sees social capital as having an inherently positive effect on capital in general.

According to Loury (1987), the access to resources that social capital provides can help an individual advance in education and the labor market. However, in his view, social capital is transferred from parent to child and thus determined at birth. This puts certain individuals at a disadvantage over others, as a result of parental experience with for example discrimination. While Bourdieu and Loury make an argument for social capital as providing individuals with resources, it is at the same time embedded in social structure. Coleman (1990, p. 302) argues that ‘social capital is defined by its function’. It is not tangible, like economic capital, because it *is* and *is generated by* relations among people.

Coleman (1990) goes on to describe social capital as essential for achieving certain goals. He adds that different forms of social capital can have different outcomes, depending on the context. He does not specify which forms of social capital could be valuable and which useless or even harmful, and in which situation, but his reasoning is in line with that of Granovetter (1973). In his seminal work on ‘the strength of weak ties’, Granovetter states that interpersonal relations can be placed on a continuum ranging from weak to strong. The social resources that these ‘ties’ yield, depend on their strength. In a hypothetical interaction between two individuals with strong ties, their social networks are likely to overlap. One individual will not gain a lot of social resources through their relationship with the other. If the social ties are

weak, the chance of overlap becomes smaller. This increases the amount of social resources to which both individuals have access. The consequent increase in opportunities for upward social mobility (i.e. moving up the socio-economic ladder, for example in the labor market) is what Granovetter calls the strength of weak ties.

Like Coleman, Granovetter emphasizes the context-dependency of the yields of social ties. Weak ties, he argues, are 'indispensable to individuals' opportunities and to their integration into communities' (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1378), while strong ties can lead to local group isolation (e.g. ghettoization). Cheong and colleagues agree that context matters when it comes to social networks, but they are more cautious in making the distinction between 'good' and 'bad' social capital (Cheong, Edwards, Goulbourne, & Solomos, 2007). They argue that the link between social capital and social cohesion is highly politicized. In policy, social capital is often seen as a solution for all issues of diversity. They emphasize the importance of keeping in mind the 'wider social, political, economic and cultural environment' when studying the impact of social capital (Cheong et al., 2007, p. 42).

Although Granovetter does not explicitly call social ties a form of social capital, he has become one of the most cited authors in scientific literature in this respect. Robert D. Putnam (2000), for example, has built on Granovetter's work in his book 'Bowling Alone', on the fragmentation of the American community. He distinguishes between two types of social capital: *bonding* and *bridging*. Bonding social capital refers to social networks that are 'inward looking', meaning that their members are similar in one or more aspects (e.g. ethnicity or socio-economic status). These networks are homogeneous and to some extent exclusive. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, implies that social networks cross certain group boundaries, making them 'outward looking' and heterogeneous. The 'weak' social ties that are involved in bridging social capital are likely to yield a greater amount and diversity of social resources than the 'strong' ties of bonding social capital.

However, whereas Granovetter suggests that strong ties can have a negative effect on social mobility by instigating social isolation, Putnam argues that bonding social capital also has its benefits. Bonding social capital, he says, can create dense networks with high levels of trust and reciprocity within a community. This may be profitable for the members, for example in terms of labor market opportunities. In other words, Putnam does not draw such a sharp contrast between the positive and negative effects of different types of social capital, but rather emphasizes that bridging social capital has a *stronger* positive effect on social mobility than bonding social capital. Indeed, while bonding social capital is good for 'getting by', bridging social capital is essential for 'getting ahead' (Putnam, 2000, p. 23).

2.2.1 Social capital and the development of human capital

Social capital plays an important role in the development of human capital. Human capital refers to the properties that individuals have – such as knowledge and skills – that make them more productive and therefore improve their position in the labor market (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). The concept was introduced by Gary S. Becker (1962) as an asset in which individuals can invest through schooling, training, and gathering information. An individual's social relations and interactions with others yield social resources in the form of cognitive or social development (Coleman, 1990). Social resources, in turn, can benefit the development of human capital. There is a substantial amount of scientific literature on the role of social capital in the development of human capital. Coleman (1988), for example, conducted a study comparing high school dropout rates between public schools, Catholic schools and other private schools. The dropout rates in Catholic schools were significantly lower than in the other schools. Coleman explains this finding by pointing out that Catholics tend to maintain strong family relations and strong communities, and therefore have high levels of (bonding) social capital. This indicates the importance of social capital in the creation of human capital.

Coleman sees social capital as an instrument for developing human capital. He argues that strong social ties create shared norms around the value of knowledge and skills, and in this way stimulate learning. Field (2005), on the other hand, sees social capital as instrumental as well as inherently contributing to human capital. He has devoted an extensive study to arguing that social relations are of vital importance for the continuous process of acquiring knowledge and skills – what he calls 'lifelong learning'. The resources to which social capital provides access can include other individuals' knowledge and skills. But through cooperation practices, social connections can also yield communicational and organizational skills (Field, 2005, p. 29). In other words, social connections create 'new' human capital, while at the same time providing access to 'existing' human capital.

Some authors have divided the development of human capital into 'formal' and 'informal' learning (Field, 2005; Morrice, 2007). The former refers to institutionalized education, whereas the latter involves all activities that contribute to the learning process outside the formal learning environment (Morrice, 2007). According to Eraut (2000), most learning takes place outside formal learning environments. He therefore suggests that the term 'informal' is too generalizing. He argues that 'informal' can be associated with many aspects of a social context, and is therefore inadequate to describe a type of learning alone. To avoid confusion, he proposes to use the term 'non-formal' instead. Whereas informal learning is an all-encompassing term to refer to unintentional learning that takes place in everyday life, non-

formal learning is ‘education that is provided by bodies whose main purpose is something other than education’ (Field, 2005, p. 3), for example the workplace. Non-formal learning is also used to describe education that takes place in facilities that are designed to complement formal learning (Commission of the European Communities, 2000).

As there are different types of social capital (bonding and bridging) and different types of human capital development (formal, informal and non-formal), one can expect that the relationship between social and human capital is context-dependent. Field (2005) has created a model to determine how the concepts relate to each other (Table 1). Bonding social capital promotes formal learning, as people in a strong community internalize the expectations their close family and peers have of them (Coleman, 1988). However, this can also create a negative effect on formal learning, if the group has no norms of high achievements (Field, 2005). Bridging social capital, while it generally originates in formal settings, is more likely to promote informal and non-formal learning. Interactions outside the immediate social group can generate a wide variety of information and skills (Field, 2005). In short, both types of social capital contribute to learning, but which type of social capital contributes to which type of learning is path-dependent. As Morrice (2007, p. 164) puts it: ‘The question is not who has social capital and who does not, the question is what form of social capital individuals and groups possess and whether it is a form which will provide them with the ideas and ‘know-how’ to achieve their goals.’

Morrice (2007; 2009) emphasizes that the value of informal and non-formal learning is often underestimated. She argues that, while bridging social capital may influence informal and non-formal learning, the reverse also holds. Opportunities for informal and non-formal learning can facilitate the development of bridging social capital. Informal and non-formal learning activities create situations where a group has a common goal, stimulating community

Table 1. The effects of different types of social capital on lifelong learning (Field, 2005, p. 34)

Type of social capital	Possible effects on lifelong learning
Bonding – dense but bounded networks, homogeneity of membership, high levels of reciprocity and trust, exclusion of outsiders	Free exchange of ideas, information and skills within group; high trust placed in information received, limited access to new and varied knowledge from outside group
Bridging – loose and open-ended networks, heterogeneity of membership, shared norms and common goals, levels of trust and reciprocity may be more limited	Relatively free exchange of a variety of ideas, information, skills and knowledge within group and between own and other groups; high trust in information and knowledge from within group (and possibly from others with shared values)

development and expanding networks. This is especially valuable for marginalized and socially isolated groups – such as refugees – as bridging social capital is often not immediately accessible to them (Morrice, 2007).

This reciprocity of social and human capital is a recurring subject in scientific literature. It is argued that while social capital has a role in the creation of human capital, education and employment can in turn contribute to social capital. This has led to issues of causality in quantitative studies (e.g. Kanas & Van Tubergen, 2009), as they don't always allow for determining the causal direction of the relationship between social and human capital.

This issue is addressed by Knipprath and De Rick (2015). While the positive effect of lifelong learning on social capital has been confirmed by several authors (e.g. Preston, 2003), they perform a longitudinal analysis to determine the predictive power of social capital on lifelong learning. They find that although human capital is a more important predictor, social capital can be beneficial or supplementary for those with lower levels of human capital. In other words, social capital and human capital mutually influence each other.

2.2.2 Social capital in relation to refugees

As discussed earlier, refugees face various disadvantages compared to other types of migrants. Especially in terms of economic integration (employment and wages) refugees tend to lag behind. This is called the 'refugee gap' (Connor, 2010). Upon arrival in the host country, the first priority for refugees is to establish safety and shelter. This includes applying for asylum, in many cases relocation within the host country, and dealing with the bureaucracy related to housing, welfare benefits, education and employment. Unsurprisingly, this process is time-consuming. In the Netherlands, it takes on average two and a half years before refugees are ready to resume their professional lives (De Voogd & Redjopawiro, 2018). But by contributing to human capital, social capital can play an important role in refugees' educational opportunities and (consequent) labor market prospects. Several studies have looked at the ways in which migrants and refugees can use their social capital to help them in their integration process in the host country. For example, social capital offers opportunities for societal orientation, including labor market orientation (Aguilera, 2002; De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010; Drever & Hoffmeister, 2008). Social networks can offer instrumental and informational support, by providing advice and/or connections in relation to the labor market (Huijnk & Miltenburg, 2018).

Bakker (2015) emphasizes the importance of human capital in overcoming the refugee gap. In this respect, host-country education and qualifications provide refugees with the best

opportunities in the labor market. Indeed, Kanas and Van Tubergen (2009) find that ‘host-country human capital’ has higher economic returns for migrants than ‘origin-country human capital’. In addition, they argue that migrants who follow host-country education are likely to develop contacts with natives, improving economic prospects. However, this is not supported by their findings. Rather, the positive relationship between host-country schooling and economic outcomes is explained by the increased compatibility of immigrants’ human capital. Although Kanas and Van Tubergen (2009) find no direct effect of social capital on migrants’ economic outcomes, it is likely that social capital – in particular bridging – enhances a crucial type of human capital development: learning the destination language. Research on migrants’ acquisition of the language of the country of destination has shown that *exposure* plays an important role (Chiswick & Miller, 2001; Van Tubergen & Kalmijn, 2005). Immigrants’ proficiency in the destination language is the result of their opportunities to hear, study and use the language. The amount of exposure depends on the language skills and usage of people with whom immigrants interact. But better command of the destination language will also stimulate contacts with natives. One can therefore expect that bridging social capital and language acquisition are mutually reinforcing.

According to Lancee (2010, p. 207), bridging social capital is especially important to migrants because it creates ‘a wider network containing more valuable resources, such as job opportunities’. Lancee finds that for immigrants in the Netherlands, bridging social capital is positively associated with the likelihood of being employed. In his research, immigrants with a high level of bridging social capital are more than two times more likely to be employed than those who do not possess bridging social capital. Bonding social capital, on the other hand, was not found to have an effect on employment.

Indeed, based on their socio-economic backlog upon settlement in the host country, bridging rather than bonding social capital appears more likely to help refugees with ‘getting ahead’. However, this does not mean that bonding social capital is useless. Especially in the early stages after arrival, the co-ethnic network can assist refugees in their asylum application process and societal orientation – especially as they at that point have a limited command of the destination language (Huijnk & Miltenburg, 2018). For refugees, it can be expected that both types of social capital will benefit their education and societal orientation, although in different ways, to varying degrees and in different stages of their integration process (Field, 2005; 2008; Lancee, 2010; Morrice, 2007).

In this respect, it is important that the concept of social capital is not oversimplified. For example, Ryan and colleagues distinguish between different types of social support which

networks provide: emotional, informational, instrumental and companionship. Emotional support involves high levels of empathy and trust, and addresses for example feelings of loneliness. Informational support helps one to familiarize with the local culture and environment. One can appeal to instrumental support for achieving higher goals (e.g. better employment or housing). Companionship takes the form of casual socializing (Ryan, Sales, Tilki, & Siara, 2008). These types of support may take place on a transnational level, especially for migrants and refugees. An individual may call upon different networks for different types of support, and this may change over time. The type of support which a relationship offers, depends on the nature of the relationship. This illustrates the fluidity and versatility of social capital.

However, in relation to migrants and refugees, social capital is often quite narrowly defined along the lines of ethnicity. In this case, bonding social capital consists of co-ethnic social networks, i.e. family or close friends with the same ethnic background. Bridging social capital consists of social contacts outside the ethnic community – typically with natives. But the idea of bonding and bridging social capital in terms of ethnicity has been criticized by several authors (e.g. Gericke, Burmeister, Löwe, Deller, & Pundt, 2018; Ryan et al., 2008; 2011). Ethnicity is a problematic term in general, as it has multiple interpretations and its definition is debatable. But especially in relation to refugees, there is a wide variety of factors that influence their social capital.

Ryan (2011) argues that the dichotomy between bonding and bridging is oversimplifying, as it does not allow for an in-depth understanding of the nature of social relationships and the support they provide. For example, a refugee might have ties with another refugee of a different ethnic background. In the bonding/bridging line of reasoning, this would qualify as bridging social capital. But if both refugees have a similar position in the host country (e.g. in terms of host-country human capital), their mutual relationship is unlikely to be useful for ‘getting ahead’. Similarly, two refugees of the same ethnic background may have a very different position in the host country. In other words, having a shared ethnic background does not suffice as the foundation of a valuable networking relationship. Therefore, social capital in relation to refugees requires more nuance.

In line with Granovetter (1973) and Bourdieu (1986), Ryan (2011) argues that it is more useful to investigate whether a relation bridges social distance. She proposes to differentiate between *horizontal* and *vertical* social capital. This distinction focuses on the socio-economic position of individuals (their ‘relative social location’), rather than their ethnic background. Horizontal social capital refers to relations between individuals who have similar access to

economic and human capital. Vertical social capital refers to contacts that provide access to more (or more valuable) resources and knowledge (Ryan, 2011).

Gericke and colleagues (2018) apply the differentiation between horizontal and vertical social capital to a study among refugees in Germany. They study the types of support that social networks offer for refugees' labor market integration in several stages after arriving in the host country. They combine bonding/bridging with horizontal/vertical to distinguish between four subtypes of social capital (Table 2). They also determine a variety of types of support which can be provided in different stages of refugees' labor market integration. In terms of content, these types of support roughly correspond with the four aforementioned types of support (emotional, informational, instrumental, companionship; Ryan et al., 2008). Gericke and colleagues find that while all types of social capital provided refugees with support during labor market integration, vertical bridging social capital was the most valuable source for adequate employment.

As refugees are an ethnically heterogeneous group, the differentiation between bonding and bridging does not cover the complexity of their social networks and the support they provide. The dimension of socio-economic position by means of horizontal and vertical social capital is a more adequate conceptualization of social capital, particularly in relation to refugees. In this context, vertical social capital is more likely to help refugees get ahead than horizontal social capital. The more social contacts an individual has that are higher up the social and economic hierarchy, the greater their access to skills and knowledge that might benefit them directly or indirectly (Morrice, 2007). Indeed, 'a weak tie functions most effectively when it bridges social distance' (Ryan, 2011, p. 711).

Table 2. The four subtypes of social capital (Gericke, Burmeister, Löwe, Deller, & Pundt, 2018, p. 51)

	Horizontal	Vertical
Bonding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family members living in host country • Friends/acquaintances with same nationality or ethnic background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations/institutions based on shared religion, nationality or ethnic background
Bridging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends/acquaintances with different nationality or ethnic background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social system contacts/officials • Social workers/NGOs • Volunteers • Co-workers/supervisors

2.3 Requirements for regular education

To access regular education, students have to meet certain requirements. These requirements are related to human capital, and can be divided into hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills are teachable and measurable. They often make up the curriculum in formal learning activities. They can, however, be acquired through informal or non-formal learning. Soft skills, on the other hand, are less tangible. Soft skills are learned through informal or non-formal activities, such as social interaction and communication (Field, 2005, p. 15; Robinson, 2011). There is increasing recognition for the need to include soft skills in formal education (Commission of the European Communities, 2000). This section describes the requirements – in terms of skills – that apply specifically to refugees entering regular education.

Hard skills make up the know-how of specific tasks that a refugee needs in regular education. The most important hard skill is command of the destination language. Language acquisition is an important determinant of immigrants' socio-economic development in the host country, and can be seen as an investment in human capital. According to Chiswick and Miller (2001), language acquisition is the product of exposure, efficiency, incentives and wealth. These four elements positively affect language acquisition. In Dutch civic integration programs, learning the language includes writing, reading, speaking and listening (DUO, n.d.). These elements are examined through standardized tests according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The current minimum requirement for civic integration is level A2, but will become B1 when new legislation is passed in 2021 (Koolmees, 2018b). Other hard skills that refugees need include math and numeracy, study skills (e.g. planning or giving a presentation) and computer skills (e.g. writing a report).

Soft skills can be defined as interpersonal or intrapersonal skills (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2003). Social interactions require interpersonal skills, or as Field (2005) calls them, 'social literacy'. They include empathy, sensitivity (Robinson, 2011), the capacity for trust (Field, 2005), teamwork and communication skills (Huijnk & Miltenburg, 2018). Individuals can learn these capacities through their social connections, for example in practices of cooperation – in other words, through social capital (Field, 2005, p. 29). Intrapersonal skills are an individual's personal characteristics. They include self-esteem, confidence and sense of empowerment (Morrice, 2009). Empowerment means having knowledge, and being willing and able to use that knowledge to take action (Hannah, 2008). This is especially important for refugees, due to their marginalized position. A lack of empowerment can obstruct the learning process, because learning requires a sense of personal and social agency (Morrice, 2009). That is why this is an important requirement for refugees entering regular education.

This section provides an answer to SQ1: What kind of knowledge and skills do refugees need in regular education? Together, hard and soft skills shape the requirements that refugees should meet to prepare for regular education. It can be argued that education also contributes to further enhancement of these skills. The next section will therefore focus on the transition programs and how they contribute to the requirements for regular education.

2.4 The role of transition programs

Education is one of the most important factors explaining variation in economic well-being (Potocky-Tripodi, 2004). Therefore, the power of education should not be underestimated – especially in relation to refugees. Less than 10 percent of refugees in the Netherlands has a paid job 18 months after they are granted a residence permit (CBS, 2019). Those refugees who are able to find a job, often work in low-skilled, temporary jobs that are below their level of education (Odé & Dagevos, 2017). For example, 47 percent of Syrian refugees with a job have indicated that they are too highly educated for the work they do (SCP, 2018). This can be explained by a lack of host-country qualifications. Bakker (2015) emphasizes the importance of a Dutch diploma for labor market integration of refugees. In her dissertation research, she found that ‘once refugees who have obtained their highest qualification in the Netherlands have entered the labor market, they are as likely as native Dutch employees to find a matching job’ (Bakker, 2015, p. 81).

In other words, for refugees, host-country human capital is of crucial importance for suitable and sustainable employment. Transition programs can serve as a stepping stone for refugees, by offering them host-country human capital and the perspective of a sustainable labor market position. Both formal and non-formal learning take place in the transition programs. The curricula offer formal learning in the form of education, while information provided by the municipality, the educational institution and other guidance services can be seen as non-formal learning in the form of societal orientation. As discussed earlier, social capital has the potential to reinforce both types of learning.

In the United Kingdom, Morrice (2009) studied a learning program for refugees called Ways into Learning and Work (WILAW). This six-month course had the aim to support refugees to access higher education. The course helped participants acquire job application skills, English language skills and knowledge of the culture of education and work. It also included non-formal learning activities such as networking, specialist speakers and individual support and guidance. While most research on lifelong learning focuses on measurable outcomes such as admission into higher education, Morrice also studied the less tangible and

long-term effects of the course. The participants spoke especially highly of the networking activities and specialist speakers. These opportunities for informal learning provided them with knowledge about norms and expectations in education and the labor market. In this way, the WILAW course contributed to their social capital, which allowed them to navigate an unfamiliar system and culture. Morrice (2009) emphasizes the importance of non-formal and social learning to help prepare refugees for regular education.

The transition programs in the Netherlands display many similarities with the WILAW course. They also focus on both formal and non-formal learning activities in order to provide refugees with the required knowledge and skills for regular education. This brings us to SQ2: What are the content characteristics of the transition programs? The curriculum varies across different programs, but generally consists of Dutch language, math, study skills and computer skills (Koolmees, 2019). In some cases, English language and/or exact sciences are included as well. These subjects account for the hard skills that are required for regular education. The programs usually also pay attention to communication skills, teamwork and critical reflection (KIS, forthcoming). By focusing on these qualities, the transition programs contribute to the soft skills that are indispensable for regular education as well as for entry into the Dutch labor market.

The primary goal of transition programs is to enhance refugees' *human capital*. This study aims to determine the role of *social capital* within the transition programs. Based on the overall findings of mutual reinforcement between human and social capital, the relationship between social capital and educational outcomes of the transition programs is likely to be a positive one. Field (2008, p. 51) has argued that 'social capital may offer particularly significant educational resources for those who are otherwise relatively disadvantaged'. Similarly, Aguilera (2002) notes that disadvantaged groups often lack information about the labor market, due to limited social networks. He argues that any program directed at providing such information is most effective if it is embedded in a program for developing human capital. This is supported by Lancee's (2010) finding that people are more likely to exchange social resources if their social connections are embedded in institutions such as education. This suggests that transition programs can play a vital role in the development of social capital necessary for upward social mobility.

The obvious direction of the relationship between human capital and social capital is that people develop social contacts when they are enrolled in education. However, the literature has shown that social capital can also play an instrumental role in the development of human capital, or even be an inherent source of human capital in the form of soft skills. The exploratory

and qualitative nature of this study do not allow for any definitive statement about the relationship between human capital and social capital – nor does it have the goal to provide one. This study does, however, aim to contribute to a deeper insight into the types of support which social capital offers, and how this takes shape in the transition programs.

2.5 Conceptual model

The conceptual model is shown in Figure 1. It displays the three main concepts of interest: social capital, human capital, and learning activities in transition programs. First, social capital is divided into horizontal and vertical. Unlike Gericke and colleagues, who combine this with bonding and bridging (see Table 2), I have excluded bonding and bridging to avoid reducing refugees' social capital to a matter of ethnicity. Second, human capital is divided into hard skills and soft skills. Third, learning activities in transition programs consist of formal and non-formal learning activities. I have excluded informal learning from the conceptual model, because the term is too broad in relation to transition programs. I use non-formal to refer to education that takes place in a context whose primary purpose is not education.

The conceptual model displays three relationships. Two relationships have been described in this literature review: the contribution of learning activities to human capital; and the mutual connection between human capital and social capital. The third relationship, between social capital and learning activities in transition programs, is studied more closely in the empirical research. It is expected that social capital plays a role in transition programs, as a result of the programs (through an increased social network) and/or as a stimulating factor of human capital outcomes.

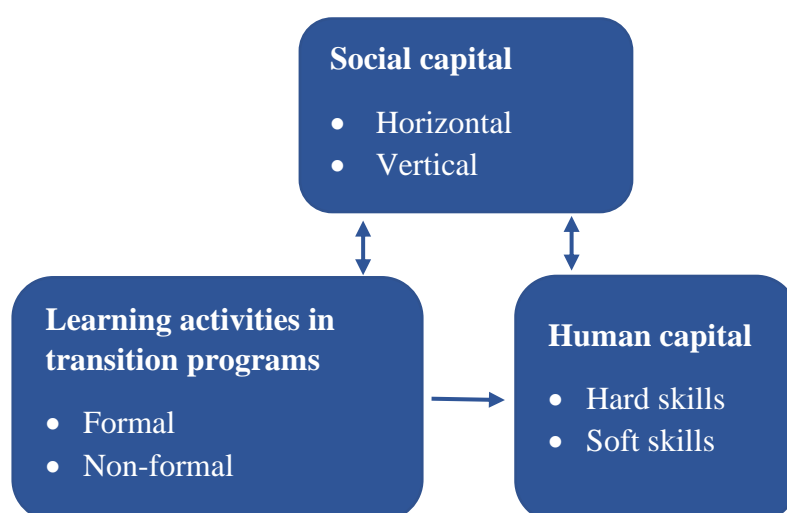


Figure 1. Conceptual model

3 Methodology

This chapter discusses methodological choices that were made and research methods that were used. The first section discusses the research philosophy, interpretivism. Then the research approach is considered, including a discussion on the benefits of qualitative versus quantitative research methods in relation to the current research topic. I also briefly review ways of measuring social capital. This is followed by the research strategy, discussing practical research decisions. Then I explain how the data was collected and how literature research and empirical research complement one another. I subsequently describe the methods of analysis, in which I consider the different phases of coding qualitative data. A final section discusses critical reflections on the research methods.

3.1 Research philosophy

This study seeks to paint a picture of the individual experiences and perspectives of those involved in transition programs. It does not aim to uncover central dogmas – rather, it aims to interpret the subjective meanings individuals ascribe to the transition programs. Therefore, the philosophy of this study is in line with interpretivism (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The starting point is the respondents' perspectives on the role of social capital in the transition programs. By paying attention to the multitude and variety of individual experiences, this study aims to disclose their complexity.

Interpretivism requires four basic assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2017). First, 'reality' cannot be seen as an objective truth. Ontologically, reality is a versatile construct based on experiences and interactions with others. Second, through interpreting subjective meanings respondents ascribe to their situations, the researcher becomes a co-creator of the respondent's reality. Third, individual values are of utmost importance and need to be honored. Fourth, by focusing on individual experiences, ideas and categories arise as a result of an inductive method. In other words, as researcher, I had to be highly sensitive and attentive to the respondents' as well as my own subjective meanings. Throughout the research process, I had to be aware of my position in the research and my interpretations (hence interpretivism) of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

3.2 Research approach

The philosophical assumptions of interpretivism underline the importance of qualitative methods. First of all, this study does not aspire to the replicability and generalizability

quantitative research offers, as it is of an exploratory nature. Secondly, individual experiences can only be captured by in-depth, face-to-face interviews. Having a conversation gives respondents the opportunity to explore the subject and assign value to certain issues (Longhurst, 2016). Qualitative research empowers individuals to unfold the processes they experience. It helps to understand the contexts in which these processes take place and to explain underlying mechanisms (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Most importantly, it allows the researcher to capture interactions among people. This is crucial when studying social capital, because the value respondents ascribe to these interactions is highly subjective.

These issues cannot be fully comprehended using quantitative methods, because they lack sensitivity to (individual) differences (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Much of the educational literature on social capital employs large-scale data on the role of social capital in education. The problem with such quantitative approaches is that they often categorize all variables measuring social factors as social capital. This has resulted in problems of conceptualization and measurement of social capital. Qualitative methods are more adequate in capturing differences in access to social networks and resources (Dika & Singh, 2002).

So how should social capital be measured? Andriani and Christoforou (2016) propose to focus on the structural dimensions of social capital. The structural dimensions refer to the variety of networks that benefit collective action. They include the size and density of social networks, the characteristics and diversity of their members, and relational properties such as frequency and intensity (Franke, 2005). By using structural dimensions as an indicator of social capital, attention is paid to the diversity of network relations, the resources they yield and the impact they have (Andriani & Christoforou, 2016; Field, 2008). Although quantitative and mixed methods that address the structural dimensions of social capital are most certainly not irrelevant, qualitative research has the ability to ‘obtain a more realistic and holistic view of human behavior and relations’ (Andriani & Christoforou, 2016, p. 19).

3.3 Research strategy

To be able to treat the differences between respondents with respect, it is important to establish a sense of trust between the interviewer and the respondent (Evers & De Boer, 2011). This is especially critical when interviewing refugees, because past experiences might make them cautious to open up. It is desirable to create an informal atmosphere in which there is no power relation between the interviewer and the respondent (Creswell & Poth, 2017; McLafferty, 2016). To ensure the informality and ease of a conversation while still addressing the topics of interest, semi-structured face-to-face interviews are the best strategy.

Semi-structured means that the interviewer has prepared a topic list, somewhat predetermining the subject-matter. The topic list consists of preformulated questions and sub-questions. However, these questions serve solely as guidelines so that all topics of interest are discussed. This is to ensure consistency and comparability between interviews. The researcher still offers the respondents enough room to steer the conversation in a certain direction they feel is important (Longhurst, 2016). In a quantitative survey, the respondent has to answer a standardized set of questions. This gives them little to no opportunity to express such feelings.

Semi-structured interviews are best to conduct face-to-face, as this creates a flexibility that allows the conversation to flow in a natural way (McLafferty, 2016). This is preferable over for example telephone or online interviews, because it establishes a sense of trust and empathy. Through personal contact, the interviewer and the respondent can meaningfully unfold the complexity of experiences, emotions and values (Longhurst, 2016).

3.4 Data collection

As the research question of this study is twofold, obtaining the data took place in two stages. The first part of the question – in what ways social capital contributes to the human capital required for higher education – was addressed in the literature review (see previous chapter). This resulted in a ‘skeletal framework’ (Boeije, 2010, p. 23) for proceeding with the second part of the question – how the role of social capital takes shape in the transition programs – which is addressed by empirical research. This section discusses the criteria for and means of data collection in both types of research.

3.4.1 Literature research

To conduct a literature search, I followed the steps as described by Healey and Healey (2016). I started by defining broad key terms, such as ‘refugee integration’ and ‘social capital’. I identified a number of books that were potentially of interest for my topic (e.g. Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014; Dagevos, Odé, Beckers, & De Vries, 2018; Field, 2005; 2008; Putnam, 2000). I also did an online search to find more background information on my topic. I used the official websites of the Dutch government (on immigration and civic integration policy and procedures) and non-governmental organizations such as VluchtelingenWerk (advocate for refugees in the Netherlands), Nuffic (organization for internationalization in Dutch education) and UAF (foundation that helps refugees find suitable education in the Netherlands). I also used reports published by both Dutch and international research agencies (e.g. *Sociaal en Cultureel*

Planbureau or research departments of the European Union) to find factual data and information on policy interventions.

Once I had established the broad terms, I identified related terms such as ‘refugee employment’, ‘refugee education’ or ‘immigrants and social capital’. In the process, the key terms became increasingly narrow (e.g. ‘social capital and refugee host-country education’). These narrow key terms helped me find journal articles related to my topic. I used online databases such as Google Scholar and Web of Science. The journals from which I retrieved my references were mainly related to the social sciences (e.g. migration and/or refugee studies, social policy) and educational sciences (e.g. lifelong/adult education).

I structured my literature search by sorting out what references were cited in a particular article, and in what other publications the article was itself cited in. I kept an overview of the relevant references, in which I summarized their theoretical backgrounds, main findings and citations that were of possible significance for my own research. The literature research provided me with concepts which could be further explored in the empirical research (Boeije, 2010).

3.4.2 Empirical research

The empirical data collection for this study was part of a project by research program *Kennisplatform Integratie en Samenleving* (KIS, forthcoming). The project was commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW). KIS was asked to explore the current state of affairs of transition programs, in light of the upcoming changes in civic integration legislation. As a research intern, I was able to work on this project and use the data for the current study. My goal was to find out what role social capital plays in the development of human capital in the context of transition programs.

To select transition programs for our study, we started with an exploratory meeting with a representative from Foundation for Refugee Students UAF. They maintain an overview of and regular contact with transition programs. The representative told us about the existing initiatives and recommended possible respondents. After this meeting, programs were selected based on two main criteria. First, a representative distribution was sought in terms of educational level. The majority of transition programs prepare their participants for secondary vocational education (*mbo*), followed by higher vocational education (*hbo*), and only a few prepare for scientific education (*wo*). Second, an equal distribution was sought in geographical terms. In the Netherlands, refugees are resettled based on the population size of municipalities. Smaller municipalities therefore have limited educational opportunities for refugees.

Consequently, all existing transition programs were located in cities. We made an overview of all existing transition programs and the relevant information we could find (educational level, location, affiliation with educational institution, contact information). Based on our criteria, we made a selection of five transition programs.

We decided to start our data collection by interviewing program coordinators. This way, we were able to gain more information on the content and aims of the programs before interviewing participants. One coordinator was already known to the KIS researchers from a previous study. The others were recruited via online search and outreach. The in-depth interviews with program coordinators focused on the conditions in which participants can successfully be prepared for the transition to vocational or higher education (Appendix A.1). The coordinators were asked what factors they think are bottlenecks and what factors are sources of success. They were also asked how they think the transition program contributes to participants' social networks, and whether these networks might benefit them during as well as after finishing the program.

After the five interviews with coordinators were completed, we interviewed participants. They were recruited through snowball sampling via the coordinators. We asked the coordinators to select participants for the interviews. If the participants agreed to be interviewed, the coordinators shared their contact information with us. Putting the coordinators in charge of selection produces a bias, as they might exclusively select participants who had a positive experience with the transition programs. However, the snowball method is useful for groups that are hard to reach (Boeije, 2010, p. 40). Refugees can be hard to reach, as they often associate researchers with 'authorities', possibly making them reluctant to participate in research. Therefore, approaching the transition program participants through coordinators was the best option, as it had a higher chance of response compared to 'cold' recruitment. Moreover, the coordinators were not present during the interviews with participants, so the participants were still able to freely express their views.

The criterium for participants was that they were either a former or a current participant. We wanted to interview former participants because we wanted to know how their experience in the programs had affected the transition to regular education. Moreover, we believed that former participants would be more capable of critically reflecting on the programs than current participants. But we also wanted to interview current participants, because they would be able to recall more recent experiences and therefore to give us more detailed information.

We set out to interview twelve participants, of which eight former and four current participants. However, the coordinators found it more difficult to contact the former

participants, because they did not always have their contact information. Eventually, we interviewed five former and seven current participants. This turned out not to be a problem, as the interviews were conducted in May and June of 2019 and the programs had started in September 2018 (one-year programs) or January 2019 (six-month programs). Therefore, all current participants had completed most of the program and were in our opinion able to critically reflect on their experiences. For an overview of the selected transition programs and distribution of former and current participants, and their characteristics, see Table 3 and 4.

The (former) participant interviews focused on how they experienced the transition programs in terms of the social relationships they built with their classmates as well as outside the formal learning environment (Appendix A.2 and A.3). Questions revolved around the

Table 3. Transition programs and participant distribution

Name of the program	Educational institution	Educational level (aim)	Location	Former participants	Current participants
<i>Voorbereidend Jaar Erasmus (VJE)</i>	Erasmus University	<i>wo</i>	Rotterdam	0	0
<i>Pre-bachelor</i>	Hogeschool Utrecht	<i>hbo</i>	Utrecht	1	1
<i>Schakeltraject</i>	Da Vinci College	<i>mbo</i>	Dordrecht	2	2
<i>Entree Schakelklas (ESK)</i>	ROC Mondriaan	<i>mbo</i>	The Hague	0	3
<i>InBurgering+ (IB+)</i>	ROC van Flevoland	<i>mbo</i>	Almere	2	1
				5	7

Table 4. Characteristics of transition program participants

Current/former participant	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Years in the Netherlands
Current	Male	21	Syria	3
Current	Female	24	Somalia	6
Current	Female	20	Eritrea	2,5
Current	Female	24	Iran	3
Current	Male	23	Syria	2
Current	Female	23	Syria	2,5
Current	Female	25	Iraq	3
Former	Male	20	Syria	4
Former	Female	24	Eritrea	3
Former	Male	30	Syria	4
Former	Female	23	Syria	3
Former	Male	25	Syria	3

people they befriended during the program, whether these people were fellow refugees or others, and the kind of support they received from these contacts. The former participants were also asked about their experience with the transition to regular education in the Netherlands. At the end of the interviews, participants received a gift voucher.

Unfortunately, the coordinator from Rotterdam could not help us recruit any participants, because they were preoccupied with exams at the time of the interviews. The coordinator from The Hague was unable to contact any former participants due to lack of contact information. However, these deficiencies do not pose a problem for the current study. As mentioned earlier, I do not strive to draw replicable or generalizable conclusions. Rather, individual experiences and perspectives are my subject of interest.

3.5 Method of analysis

The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed using ATLAS.ti. This program is very suitable for organizing data and codes (Creswell & Poth, 2017), making it a good fit for the three stages of data analysis: descriptive coding, content coding and analytical coding. In the initial stage, descriptive coding, I used the three main concepts from the conceptual framework (learning activities in transition programs; human capital; social capital). I identified fragments that were related to these concepts in the broadest sense. As these concepts are each divided into two main themes, I split each concept into two codes (formal and non-formal learning activities; hard skills and soft skills; horizontal and vertical social capital).

Once all relevant fragments were assigned to one of the codes, I moved on to content coding. During the stage of content coding, I re-read the fragments that had been assigned to the codes. Rather than just looking in what pre-determined theme each fragment would fit, I looked for relevant themes that arose in the interviews. I only did this for social capital, because this constituted the largest part of the interviews as it was my main topic of interest. I first split horizontal and vertical social capital into sub-codes. These sub-codes were related to whether the contact was from within or outside the transition programs. I then split these sub-codes into sub-sub-codes, which were related to the content of the fragments (for clarification see Appendix B).

In the final stage, analytical coding, I made an overview of the fragments for each sub-sub-code. I related the content to the frequency of the contact and the type of support it provided. I extracted interpretations from the data and assigned relevance to these interpretations. I looked how each element was related to other elements, and what consequences these findings had for the role of social capital in the transition programs. I repeated the three stages several times,

during which some fragments were reassigned or code definitions were altered. This process resulted in a codebook (Appendix C) in which the boundaries of each code are defined (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

3.6 Methodological reflections

To make a valuable contribution to scientific knowledge, it is important to adhere to a code of ethics (Hay, 2016). Especially with a vulnerable group such as refugees, it is important to treat respondents fairly and respectfully (Creswell & Poth, 2017). We have therefore done our utmost to ensure that the respondents trusted us, that they were well informed and aware of their rights. The information gained from the interviews was treated with caution and the privacy of respondents was respected. Respondents were extensively informed of the purpose of the study and their right to quit the interview whenever they wanted. They were given the option to agree or disagree to an audio recording of the interview. Because participants shared with us their experiences with the transition programs, it was important that they were aware of their anonymity and the confidentiality with which the data was treated. They were also made aware that we worked independently of the educational institution and the government.

The identity of the respondents was protected throughout the research. Their names are not used anywhere. For the coordinators, the name of the affiliated institution was used. This means that their names are traceable, but they all agreed to this in writing. The coordinators only shared contact information of (former) participants with us if they had agreed to that, in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation. For the (former) participants, we used codes instead of names for the transcripts and audio recordings. The key to these codes was in a password-protected file in a secure online environment.

Finally, validity and reliability are two important factors in monitoring the quality of research (Boeije, 2010). Validity is concerned with whether a certain measure reflects the concept it is supposed to measure. I addressed this issue by extracting concepts from the existing literature and incorporating them in the topic lists for the interviews. Reliability is the consistency of the measures used in the research. In qualitative research, inter-rater reliability is of particular importance during analysis. Inter-rater reliability means that the 'right' code is ascribed to a certain fragment. In other words, if a different researcher were to conduct the analysis, the fragment would receive the same code. I addressed this issue by using a codebook (Appendix C).

4 Analysis

For the analysis, I used the conceptual framework as a starting point. The conceptual framework consists of three main concepts: human capital, learning activities in transition programs, and social capital. Each concept is divided into two categories. Human capital is divided into hard skills and soft skills, learning activities in transition programs are divided into formal and non-formal, and social capital is divided into horizontal and vertical. The sub-headings in this chapter correspond with the codes that were created in the three stages of data analysis (descriptive coding, content coding and analytical coding).

4.1 Human capital

To gain access to regular education in the Netherlands, the most important requirement is to have human capital. That is, an individual must possess certain knowledge and skills. In the conceptual framework, human capital is divided into two components: hard skills and soft skills. Although the main starting point of transition programs is contributing to hard skills, soft skills also play an important role.

4.1.1 *Hard skills*

Hard skills are defined as teachable and measurable. They can be seen as a direct and intended outcome of education. Hard skills are essential in the transition programs, because they qualify participants to continue their studies in regular education. As could be expected, the Dutch language is the main hard skill that transition programs focus on. Not only do most participants have to pass the Dutch language test for their civic integration, it is also an important requirement for almost all studies in the Netherlands. Therefore, Dutch language lessons account for the largest component of the curricula of the transition programs, making them relatively intense. Several participants told us that they were very content about this, because they had learned Dutch much better and faster in the transition program than elsewhere. It had helped them gain confidence in other fields as well.

I am talking to you now. When I came here, I couldn't do that. I was nervous, I couldn't answer, I couldn't read and write. I have been at ESK for five months, and I am really good now. I am here all day, writing, talking to teachers or other students, reading books. That's really good for me, I'm happy. When I came to ESK, I had been in the Netherlands for 5,5 years, but I couldn't speak well. I cried, I was unable to say anything... I used to go to a language school, but I didn't have a good teacher. I just stared at a piece of paper for three hours, not talking to other people. And when time was up I went home and I hadn't learned anything. Here, you're here all day, and the teacher is working for us.

– Current participant ROC Mondriaan

I never used to talk, I didn't have any contact. I was very shy. I never practiced, just reading and writing but not speaking. But now, I am not afraid to talk. I know it's not that good, but at least I'm not afraid.

– Current participant ROC van Flevoland

Other hard skills that are covered by the transition programs are math, and in some cases English language training. All programs also focus on study skills (e.g. writing a report, giving a presentation, planning and time management) and computer skills (Word, PowerPoint, email), although in different ways. In some programs, there is a separate subject that explicitly focuses on acquiring these skills, while others make it more implicit in other subjects.

Interviewer: Do they get subjects like study skills?

Respondent: No, they get citizenship, career guidance, math, Dutch and vocational training. Each subject has its own study skill. For example digital skills, because we work with digital teaching methods, among other things.

– Coordinator ROC Mondriaan

Some transition programs offer the curricula of civic integration components such as Knowledge of Dutch Society (KNM) or Orientation of the Dutch Labor Market (ONA). These might not immediately seem like hard skills, but standardized testing for civic integration has made them to some degree 'measurable'. The participants reported positively about this, not only because it prepared them for the civic integration test but also because they found it useful in terms of content.

I learned a lot. Speaking of course, that is the most important one. And at KNM, I learned a lot. That is about the Netherlands, the traditions, the rules. That was really interesting, and important. And at ONA, you get an overview of work in the Netherlands.

– Former participant ROC van Flevoland

4.1.2 Soft skills

In contrast to hard skills, soft skills are not tangible or measurable. They are competencies that arise in social interactions, including for example critical (self) reflection, independence, teamwork or proactiveness. They can be seen as an indirect effect of education, because they

are learned through activities such as cooperation and communication. Soft skills are, however, becoming increasingly recognized and intended as an outcome of education.

The coordinators all ascribed importance to soft skills, and they are included in most programs. Some programs actively stimulate participants' acquisition of soft skills. In a subject called Learning Team (*Leerteam*) at Hogeschool Utrecht, for example, participants discuss their norms and values and how they could affect their educational career. However, in most programs we interviewed, soft skills are not discussed explicitly, but rather covered implicitly in other subjects. Among other things, the programs pay attention to norms and values related to teamwork, social interaction and communication skills.

We prepare our students for working in groups, which is very important at the university of applied sciences. In general, everyone aims for wo, but most of them go to hbo. So you assume that many people have to learn how to work in groups.

– Coordinator Erasmus University

Interviewer: What skills did you learn at the pre-bachelor?

Respondent: How you can work together with classmates. That is very important. Each student has a different experience, with the language, the education, networking. I learned from that.

– Former participant Hogeschool Utrecht

How do you write an application letter, what do you do during a job interview? Like being on time, taking off your coat. It was really the basis for my education. It was the basis for my future.

– Former participant Da Vinci College

Besides norms and values, some soft skills that were mentioned by coordinators as goals of the programs were taking initiative/proactiveness, critical (self) reflection, discipline and independence. They saw these skills as important factors in equipping participants for further education. This was acknowledged by the participants.

Interviewer: Can you name the skills that you learn?

Respondent: That you become independent. When I came to the Netherlands, I didn't know what a motivation letter is, what a resumé is, what I had to do to look for work. Now I can do everything independently. A year ago, I had no goal, I wasn't serious. Now I am very serious to achieve my goal.

– Current participant Da Vinci College

Finally, a soft skill that was considered important was expectation management. Some refugees believe that they can pick up their studies or career right where they left off in their country of origin. In practice, this turns out to be very difficult due to all sorts of factors. For example, the educational level in the country of origin is lower, or the requirements in the Netherlands are higher. Some coordinators emphasized that participants have to be made aware that the

transition program is only the first step. Some participants confirmed that it was nice to know where they stood.

It is very important to start immediately with expectation management. The gap between what people think they can do and what is realistic, turns out to be really wide for some students. For example... if they want to do hbo or university, because they did that in their home country as well... You have to make clear that mbo is also fine, because you can continue after that. You don't have to go to hbo right away. The likelihood that you fail will be much bigger than if you take the mbo route.

– Coordinator ROC van Flevoland

I learned a lot about which programs there are. My ambition was to become a nurse. I wanted to do that right away. But then I learned that you have to do it step-by-step, from level one to two, three, four. I didn't know that at first.

– Former participant Da Vinci College

4.1.3 Reflection on human capital

It should be clear by now that both hard and soft skills are important in preparing refugees for regular education. However, it can be difficult to disentangle hard skills from soft skills, as they are often learned simultaneously and reinforce each other. Take for example what can be considered the most important hard skill learned in the transition programs: the Dutch language. Without being able to speak and understand Dutch, it is nearly impossible for refugees to get ahead in the Dutch education system. But language acquisition is never fully separated from getting to know a culture. In this way, learning Dutch serves as a stepping stone for a variety of soft skills, such as awareness of cultural norms and values. Both coordinators and participants emphasized the importance of being familiar with cultural norms and values concerning social behavior and interaction.

So hard skills and soft skills are both acquired in the transition programs as two elements that constantly complement and reinforce each other. What I gather from the analysis of human capital in the transition programs, is that Dutch language and familiarization with Dutch culture are considered two of the most important skills. In the first place because they are crucial in preparing refugees for regular education, but also because they help to make progress in other areas, such as labor market position and social integration. Together, hard and soft skills account for the knowledge and skills that are required for regular education.

4.2 Learning activities

As the transition programs aim to prepare participants for further education, their main focus is on the development of human capital. A variety of learning activities takes place during the transition programs in order to achieve this goal. The conceptual framework distinguishes between formal and non-formal learning activities. Both types of learning take shape in the transition programs and lead to a variety of knowledge and skills. Although it might seem like formal activities lead to hard skills and non-formal activities lead to soft skills, the reality is more nuanced. As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to draw a strict line between activities that yield hard skills and those that yield soft skills, as they often reinforce each other. Soft skills are gaining ground in formal learning activities. Especially in transition programs, which not only try to equip participants with basic knowledge of language and math, but also to familiarize them with the Dutch (educational) culture, it is acknowledged that soft skills need to be included in the curriculum. It is also not ruled out that non-formal learning activities might lead to hard skills.

4.2.1 Formal learning activities

Formal learning activities are embedded in institutionalized education as a structural part of the curriculum. The formal learning activities in the transition programs are intended to result in a variety of hard and soft skills. All the hard skills that were mentioned above were covered by a subject. These subjects were not discussed thoroughly in the interviews, because we believed the content of subjects such as Dutch or math was self-evident. We did ask coordinators and participants about other formal learning activities, and how they take shape in the transition programs. Most formal learning in the transition programs is related to career orientation. For example, all programs offer career guidance (*loopbaanbegeleiding* or *LOB*). The participants learn – among other things – how to choose an educational direction or how to look for and apply to a job.

You got an assignment, such as writing down what you're good at, what you like, what you don't like. And you had conversations with the supervisor about what you wanted to do after the pre-bachelor.

– Former participant Hogeschool Utrecht

Some programs also encourage career orientation through internships. The way in which this is carried out and the purpose differs per program. At Hogeschool Utrecht, for example, participants are assigned apprenticeships (*leerwerkplekken*). According to the coordinator, having a first-hand experience in a company or organization gives participants a better idea of

a profession than preparing them theoretically. At ROC Mondriaan, participants do a ‘language internship’ one day a week. Here, the main goal is that participants also speak Dutch outside of school. In addition, the internship helps them to get acquainted with Dutch work ethics and culture and to make progress in social integration.

The company has to teach the students what it is like to work in a Dutch company. For example, that being on time is more important in the Netherlands than in the countries they are from. And that it is allowed to counteract or ask critical questions, that people won't get mad if you do. Or, if you're not enjoying it or you would like to get different tasks, that you should be able to say that. That bit of interaction, those small things that are so typical of our culture, they learn that there.

– Coordinator ROC Mondriaan

Some transition programs have a component in which they explicitly focus on acquiring study skills such as working together on an assignment or project, writing a report or doing a presentation. Hogeschool Utrecht offers Learning Team, in which the participants discuss how they can acquire such skills.

You talk in general about your skills, how you can develop them, norms and values, giving each other feedback, how you can give a presentation. And you look at yourself, what kind of problems do you have, what do you think you could improve. I found that very useful.

– Current participant Hogeschool Utrecht

ROC van Flevoland offers a subject focusing particularly on acquiring social skills. Participants learn about social interaction and body language, and about norms and values in Dutch society. According to one of the participants, however, this subject is not always well-received by the students.

The students in our class do not like it very much. In our culture, you don't get classes about behavior and interaction, only about writing and reading. Some people find it really difficult to understand why. They think, I am 25, I know how to interact with people. But I think it's good to learn about a different culture. Because for example in the Netherlands, a handshake has to be firm. Not in our country.

– Current participant ROC van Flevoland

4.2.2 Non-formal learning activities

Non-formal learning is education that takes place, even though the main purpose of the activity is something other than education. It is also used to refer to activities that aim to complement formal learning. Especially the latter description matches the transition programs. Most programs we interviewed attribute great importance to non-formal learning activities. For example, Da Vinci College cooperates with the municipality of Dordrecht for a youth program aimed at refugees. This program consists of all sorts of activities, which are supposed to be both

informative and entertaining (visiting the library, the police station, doing a city walk, bowling, going to a sports game, playing games). According to the coordinator, these activities play an important role in making the program successful.

We have one day a week for activities. We get swimming lessons, we do a lot of things. That is really fun. It helps us to get to know Dordrecht... At first I only knew the city center.

– Current participant Da Vinci College

Hogeschool Utrecht has a program component called *Hummus & Hutspot*. In this program, the participants do a variety of creative activities such as theater and visual arts. In the first year of the pre-bachelor, the participants did this together with regular students from Hogeschool Utrecht and international minor-students. In the second year, only international minor-students participated. In this way, the transition program participants are able to meet other people, work together and exchange cultures.

That contact is super important. It is about how do you work together, who are you, how does a refugee identity affect you, and what lies behind that. We try not to state that explicitly, but to use it in all sorts of cooperation. Show it. And for the Dutch students, they all come here thinking, we are going to help refugees. But they all leave saying they were helped themselves. They learn how valuable it is to do things together, to be part of a community, and to make time for each other.

– Coordinator Hogeschool Utrecht

We had a subject called Hummus & Hutspot. It combines Dutch students with pre-bachelor students, to do something fun together. And to get to know topics in the Netherlands, like politics, projects in Utrecht... or things in society, like the labor market. That was with Dutch students and international minor-students. They weren't refugees. That was super fun.

– Former participant Hogeschool Utrecht

At ROC van Flevoland, non-formal learning activities are mostly initiated by student coaches. The participants are assigned (Dutch) student coaches who help and guide them throughout the program. They organize activities such as playing a game of soccer, visiting the library or doing a city walk. ROC Mondriaan also matches participants with 'regular' students for non-formal activities. However, these activities are less structural and more short-lived than at ROC van Flevoland. They also need to be focused on something related to the program. Generally, ROC Mondriaan prioritizes formal activities over non-formal activities.

We must always be careful that we can still go through the regular education program. Because it is precisely that intensity that ensures that we achieve pretty high levels with them. And in the end, that is what we prefer.

– Coordinator ROC Mondriaan

4.2.3 Reflection on learning activities

In formal learning activities, career orientation appears to be the main priority. This is not necessarily aimed at helping participants to get a job, but more so at helping them in the process of choosing an educational direction which eventually leads to a career. Along the way, they pick up hard skills (e.g. Dutch language and time management) as well as soft skills (e.g. knowledge of social interaction norms and the Dutch work culture). Non-formal activities vary, and can be informative and/or entertaining. They are aimed at helping participants to relax by doing something outside of school. This is what makes them non-formal: their primary goal is not education. Still, they play an important role in the acquisition of soft skills as there is often a prominent social aspect. Non-formal activities also contribute to the acquisition of hard skills, by creating an occasion for practicing Dutch or gathering practical information.

Based on the analysis of learning activities, it appears that both formal and non-formal activities are well-received by participants. Both types of activities equip them with hard *and* soft skills needed for higher education. By doing so, learning activities contribute to achieving the goal of the transition programs. My interpretation is also that the *combination* of both types of activities could be essential, firstly because together they yield a wide range of human capital and secondly because they keep the programs varied and refreshing.

4.3 Social capital

The aim of this study is to uncover the characteristics of social contact in relation to transition programs. We therefore asked participants to tell us something about their social contacts within the programs. However, it was also important to ask them about their social contacts outside the programs. This way, we were able to get a more complete image of their social lives and the types of contact that were most useful to them.

In the conceptual framework, social capital is divided into horizontal and vertical. These codes required further coding in order to grasp the dynamics and content of social contact. Based on the topic lists (Appendix A.2 and A.3), I divided horizontal and vertical social capital into sub-codes related to relevant themes that emerged in the interviews. The sub-codes are related to when, where and how contact takes place (for an overview of the codes and sub-codes, see Appendix B and C).

In addition, I identified two other elements of social capital: support and frequency. Support is related to the four types of support (informational, instrumental, emotional, companionship), and frequency tells us something about the intensity of a relationship. Although both elements are related to the nature of contact, as stand-alone entities they are not

informative. Therefore, instead of looking at each code of social capital separately, I discuss horizontal and vertical social capital, and explore the role of support and frequency within these codes. This way, the codes and sub-codes belonging to social capital give information on how different types of contact provide different types of social resources.

4.3.1 Horizontal social capital

Horizontal social capital relates to social contacts individuals have with people with a similar socio-economic status. There are two contexts in which participants can have horizontal social capital: with their classmates *within* the transition programs, or with others *outside* the transition programs. These were therefore the sub-codes for horizontal social capital.

4.3.1.1 Horizontal social capital within the transition program

This sub-code is related to the contact participants have with their classmates in the transition programs. Three main themes can be distinguished within this code, which I identified as sub-sub-codes: group dynamics; whether or not participants have contact with each other outside school; and whether or not they see their classmates as their friends.

Group dynamics is a theme that arose from questions related to the social climate in class. Coordinators talked to us about how they try to create a pleasurable and favorable atmosphere in the classroom. For instance, Da Vinci College cooperates with the municipality of Dordrecht to organize activities for participants as part of the youth program. The coordinators argued that negative group dynamics could be of disadvantage to the learning process. On the one hand, they try to avoid tension or conflict as much as possible. In practice, that often means that participants from the same country of origin stick together. On the other hand, the coordinators feel the need to mix the groups, for better group compositions but also to prepare the students for working together with people from different backgrounds in further education.

If you have for example Christians and Muslims in a group, you should be aware that some things don't work easily between students. And that they will constantly stick together in the same groups, also in terms of countries of origin, etcetera. At the same time, you want to prepare people for the fact that they will have to deal with many different students from very diverse backgrounds. And that you should interact with each other based on equality and tolerance no matter what. We try to already achieve that in the transition program.

– Coordinator Erasmus University

We try to mix it a little, but only as far as it's possible. They are teenagers after all. So we cannot always determine the group composition, they will protest. It's better to approach them with reason, and explain that it's not the best idea to only to things with [for example] Eritreans. They understand that, and then you see that they mix a little. But as soon as school ends, they go back to their own groups.

– Coordinator ROC Mondriaan

Some participants were content about the group dynamics. They told us that they felt good in class, because their classmates and their teachers were friendly and the atmosphere was a pleasant mix of fun and serious. These participants experienced companionship and emotional support from their peers, meaning that they felt comfortable and safe at school and in class.

In class, if there is no trust that you can say things without getting laughed at, it obstructs the learning process... It's very important that people feel dignified in the group.

– Coordinator ROC van Flevoland

My class was quiet and cozy. Everyone talked to each other, in Dutch. Because if someone is from somewhere else, you have to. There were other people from Syria, but also from Eritrea and other places. If you do an activity with everyone, you have to speak Dutch. Maybe I'm sitting next to someone from my class who also speaks Arabic, but you're not there to speak Arabic. You're there to try and speak Dutch.

– Former participant Da Vinci College

The second citation here is from a Syrian former participant and illustrates that he experienced no threshold for speaking Dutch in class, not even with other Arabic-speaking participants. This indicates a safe atmosphere in class in which participants are not afraid to be ridiculed for making mistakes.

Besides emotional support and companionship, some participants also experienced instrumental support from their classmates. Instrumental support helps individuals achieve higher goals. This can be related to many things, but always involves some kind of improvement. In the case of transition program participants, it is mostly related to education. Students help each other with homework assignments, or give each other advice on how to study or on educational orientation. Some participants indicated that their classmates also helped them study the Dutch language. Some participants expressed that they found it easier to study Dutch with other non-native speakers than with Dutch natives.

There is a girl... we talk a lot with each other, we write reports together... She is also from Syria. First, we spoke Arabic with each other. But a week ago we decided that we should speak Dutch with each other... I think that's important. If you're at the same level, you can correct each other. If you talk with a Dutch person, they might be hesitant to correct you.

– Current participant Hogeschool Utrecht

One participant also experienced instrumental support in terms of broadening his social network. If he needed help or information, he was able to use his contacts with his classmates (horizontal social capital) to gain access to someone else's resources (vertical social capital).

If there is something you don't know, you can ask each other. Maybe the other person doesn't know it either, but they know someone who does... They help you expand your network. For example, you have to do an internship in a company you like... If you know someone, who knows someone at that company... it helps to know people.

– Former participant Da Vinci College

However, other participants confirmed the coordinators' argumentation that negative group dynamics could be of disadvantage to the learning process. They reported that the group dynamics in the transition program had negatively affected their experience. Such group dynamics were related to ingroup differences, for instance in terms of country of origin, educational level or degree of seriousness. For example, participants for whom the study program was relatively easy, or who took it relatively serious, felt annoyed by others for whom it was more difficult or who took it less serious. For some, this was related to age, as older participants have different life experiences (e.g. having to take care of a family) or different attitudes than younger participants. To illustrate, the citations below are from a 24-year-old Iranian woman and a 25-year-old Iraqi woman (respectively). They fall in to a relatively older age group, considering that participants are generally between 18 and 27 years old.

My problem is that if the class is noisy, I can't concentrate. Some people aren't serious, they don't listen to the teacher. When the teacher talks, you should listen... That is why I think different levels should have separate classes. Otherwise people get many problems. My problem is that it should be quiet. But some people aren't quiet.

– Current participant Da Vinci College

There are students who are rude, or who don't show up... Those students are 18, 19, that age is difficult. I am already a mother at home, I don't want to be one at school too... Some students have a low level, or don't want to work. That makes me angry. I think you should be respectful, but they are rude. So I find that difficult.

– Current participant ROC van Flevoland

The participants who reported discontent about the group dynamics, also do not have frequent contact with their classmates, at most via Whatsapp. They also reported relatively little support from their classmates. It appears that ingroup differences can constitute an obstruction for the support and resources horizontal social capital has to offer.

We also asked participants whether they had contact with their classmates outside school. Some participants reported that they did not have contact with their classmates outside of school, or only incidentally (like running into each other in the street). Some of them did

experience support from their classmates in terms of companionship. They had one or a few classmates with whom they interacted more than with others for example by spending lunch breaks together. Their conversation topics revolved mostly around school. Sometimes such interactions also yielded instrumental support, if they helped each other for example with homework or practicing Dutch.

I have two friends at ESK. But we only talk at school... I also talk to the rest, but they are not my friends. With my two friends, we drink coffee or talk about school.

– Current participant ROC Mondriaan

Interviewer: Do you see your classmates outside school?

Respondent: Only one girl. But then we do talk about school... We also decided that we should put more emphasis on speaking [in Dutch]. I cannot manage to speak Dutch with the others.

– Current participant Hogeschool Utrecht

An important factor for the frequency with which participants have contact with classmates, is how busy they are with other activities. Several participants told us that they would like to have more contact with their classmates, but they were too busy with school. Some were also preoccupied with work and/or a family.

For many people, it is important to talk to each other. But I just look at what my assignment is. I am here to learn the language. So I want to be able to concentrate in class. We have fun in class, but you can't say that everyone is your friend. A friend is a special person. So far, I haven't made any friends. But I am very busy, even in the breaks I am busy learning and improving my language.

– Current participant Da Vinci College

This issue was also mentioned by the coordinators, as they reported that participants were often overloaded with (transnational) expectations and obligations and experienced a lot of pressure.

It starts with having food, a roof over your head, feeling safe, then social contacts. Only when all of that is taken care of, you're able to face the world beyond. But when refugees come here, they have to do all those things at the same time. The pressure is enormous.

– Coordinator Da Vinci College

Other participants did see their classmates outside of school and considered them as their friends. They socialized with each other by doing activities such as having dinner or going out. This yielded support in terms of companionship. Some of the participants also experienced emotional support from their classmates. When they were struggling with a personal problem, their classmates helped them, or asked them how they were doing. One participant, for example, indicated that the contact with her classmates helped against feelings of loneliness. The participants reported that the emotional support from their classmates made them feel good.

Our class was a really fun group. Almost everyone was helpful... So if someone had a problem, either personal or with a class or with a teacher, you could talk to each other.
– Former participant Hogeschool Utrecht

Former participants reported that they did not see their classmates from the transition program as much as they used to. Some reported that they did keep in touch via Whatsapp, but not that much in real life. This was mostly because they were busy with different studies or went to separate schools.

Interviewer: Do you still see each other?

Respondent: Not anymore since this year, some of them have chosen a different direction... So we are busy, which makes it more difficult to see each other.

Interviewer: Did you find that contact important?

Respondent: Well, they were my classmates. But not really my best friends.

– Former participant ROC van Flevoland

Interviewer: Do you still talk to your classmates?

Respondent: Not all of them. I still talk to two or three of them. But we do not see each other often, once every five or six months. But always via Whatsapp... Sometimes it's hard to keep contact. During the pre-bachelor, you see each other every day. So then the contact is steady and good. But if you haven't been at school for a year, and you don't see your friends or classmates anymore, the contact becomes less frequent. I hate that.

– Former participant Hogeschool Utrecht

4.3.1.2 Reflection on horizontal social capital within the transition program

Looking at the role of horizontal social capital within transition programs, participants have intensive contact with their classmates. This is possibly related to the intensity of the programs, as they spend much of their time at school and have little spare time for other social activities. If the group dynamics are experienced positively, the respondents report having regular contact with classmates outside school and receiving support from these contacts. This support includes instrumental support in terms of improving language or education in general; emotional support in terms of feelings of safety and trust and help with personal problems; and companionship in terms of socializing or friendships. Especially instrumental support seems to play an important role in the successful completion of a transition program. But the influence of emotional support and companionship on factors such as perseverance and general prosperity during the program should not be underestimated.

However, my impression of the interviews is that the participants do not reap the benefits of these types of support if the group dynamics are experienced negatively. These participants only see their classmates at school and report little support from their classmates. The reasons respondents mentioned for negative group dynamics were age, level of education,

country of origin or religious beliefs. It appears that group dynamics play a decisive role in the functioning of horizontal social capital in transition programs. It affects not only how participants experience the transition programs in general, but also the support they receive from their peers. However, former participants report that even if contact with their classmates was good throughout the program, contact inevitably decreased after the program ended. So the support that horizontal social capital with classmates offers, seems to be restricted to the timespan of the transition program.

4.3.1.3 Horizontal social capital outside the transition program

In the interviews with participants, we also asked if they could tell something about the people they have contact with outside the transition program. This resulted in three categories or sub-sub-codes: contact with family; contact with other newcomers; and contact during further education. The latter was only applicable to former participants.

Not all participants we interviewed had family in the Netherlands. For those who did, their families were a source of emotional support, for example when they were dealing with a personal problem. There were also participants whose family provided emotional support in the form of motivation.

Interviewer: Were there people who helped you with the transition program?

Respondent: Yes, my sister. She motivated me to study hard. [She said] it's important to have an education. She also did the transition program, before me.

– Former participant Da Vinci College

In a few cases, participants also received instrumental support from their families. For example, one former participant did the transition program together with his brother, and they would study together. Remarkable is that some participants reported that their children helped them with their homework or with learning Dutch. These children went to Dutch schools and had already made more progress in learning Dutch than their parents. One participant we interviewed told us that her seven-year-old daughter helped her with school.

I talk Dutch all day with my daughter. She helps me with my homework. She says mommy, this is easy! But for me, it's not easy. [Also because] I have seen many problems in Somalia, my head is full. I am small, but my head is big.

– Current participant ROC Mondriaan

Some participants had contact with other newcomers outside the transition program. These connections originated for example in the asylum center or civic integration language schools.

The participants maintained regular contact with these connections and experienced companionship through these relationships.

I know my friends from school: from my current school, the transition program and ISK. Most of them are from ISK, because they were the first people I knew here. [We have contact] every day [to do] fun things together.

– Former participant Da Vinci College

In some cases, the participants also experienced instrumental support from their contact with other newcomers from outside the transition programs. This was generally related to learning the Dutch language. In this case too, one participant commented that it was easier to practice Dutch with another non-native speaker than with Dutch natives.

I have a friend, she lives close to me. Two hours a week we talk about a certain topic. She is from Curacao. She also has to practice Dutch. So it's good for both of us. If you're both not so good at it, you're not afraid to talk and correct each other.

– Current participant Da Vinci College

Former participants also have contact with the classmates from their current school. In some cases their classmates are also from other countries, but generally they were Dutch. Still, it can be argued that this contact qualifies as horizontal social capital. As I explained earlier, country of origin is not all-determining, which is why I chose to use horizontal and vertical rather than bonding and bridging social capital. As the former transition program participants and their Dutch classmates are at the same level of education, they are in the same phase of socio-economic development. Therefore, I categorized this sub-sub-code related to contact during further education as horizontal social capital.

Dutch classmates of former participants provide instrumental support by helping with the Dutch language. Some former participants also classified their new classmates as friends, indicating that they received support in terms of companionship from them.

Now at [mbo] level 2, they are all Dutch people. In the beginning, that was difficult. I was new, I was afraid to ask anything because of the language. But not anymore. And now I'm also friends with them.

– Former participant Da Vinci College

Interviewer: Now in your current study, there are mostly Dutch students. Are they your friends?

Respondent: In my own class, yes.

Interviewer: Do you find that important?

Respondent: Yes, definitely, they know everything. About rules and such. So I can ask them about that. Especially about the Dutch language. If I hear a word I don't know, I ask what it means. So it helps to have Dutch friends.

– Former participant Da Vinci College

Several coordinators told us that contact with Dutch people during further education is sometimes problematic, because Dutch students can be unwilling to work together with or reach out to refugees.

[In regular education,] people with a migration background often come across Dutch students who do not want cooperate. Teachers allow free group formation, and refugees are incredibly often left out. [Dutch students] say, if I have to check your report, I get extra work and a lower grade.

– Coordinator Hogeschool Utrecht

However, some coordinators nuanced this statement. According to them, refugees tend to stick together, or might themselves be reluctant to make contact with Dutch students. But they told us that it could also simply be related to personality. A refugee with a stronger tendency to be open and outgoing, might also feel less excluded. Similarly, someone who feels excluded might also make fewer attempts to make contact.

Some say that they don't feel included by Dutch people, like being invited or having a conversation. They miss it, you notice that. There are many initiatives that approach us or are approached by us... to bring people together. We bring it to [the participants'] attention, but it's up to them to join. One person might do that more than the other.

– Coordinator ROC van Flevoland

It depends on their own mindset, I am convinced of that. We had students who do fine and who are very interested in the Netherlands and want to learn about the Dutch culture... But there are also those who stay in their own world. You radiate that, and then you're not approached.

– Coordinator ROC Mondriaan

The claims made by coordinators were not confirmed very explicitly by former participants themselves, although there were two who said that they had little contact with their current classmates. For one of them, a 25-year-old Syrian man, this was related to age.

Interviewer: What is the contact like with classmates from your current study?

Respondent: We only see each other at school, not outside school. I go to school with 16- and 17-year-olds. It's not such a big difference, but you notice it.

– Former participant ROC van Flevoland

4.3.1.4 Reflection on horizontal social capital outside the transition program

When asked about their contacts outside the transition programs, participants told us among others about their families, other newcomers or (for former participants) current classmates. Based on the probability that these people have a similar socio-economic status, I classified these contacts as horizontal social capital. These forms of horizontal social capital provide

participants mainly with instrumental support in terms of helping with studying or learning the Dutch language. Contact with family also provides emotional support, in terms of motivation to pursue an education. Contact with other newcomers or classmates in further education also provides (former) participants with companionship in terms of friendship.

So together, horizontal social capital outside the transition programs provides a variety of support. This has two implications. First, these contacts illustrate that horizontal social capital is not limited to transition program classmates. Second, it illustrates that horizontal social capital can help participants throughout the programs by providing support and contributing to overall wellbeing.

4.3.2 Vertical social capital

Vertical social capital relates to social contacts an individual has with people with a higher socio-economic status. As mentioned earlier, contact with Dutch people does not necessarily qualify as vertical social capital. However, when we asked participants about their opportunities to meet Dutch people, this was often the case. Similar to the analysis of horizontal social capital, I distinguished two contexts in which participants can have vertical social capital: *within* the transition programs, or *outside* transition programs. I identified these contexts as the sub-codes for vertical social capital.

4.3.2.1 Vertical social capital within the transition programs

Some transition programs structurally facilitate the development of vertical social capital. Structural here means that there is a program component in which participants have the opportunity to meet people ‘up the socio-economic ladder’, in practice mostly Dutch people. For example at Erasmus University and ROC van Flevoland, participants are assigned a (Dutch) student mentor or coach, who organizes activities with the participants and/or provides them with informational support.

[We have] peer-to-peer coaching by student coaches. As part of their studies they guide one or two of our students. It's a big success, because it's really peer-to-peer. They can become buddies, they're the same age, they face the same issues. But Dutch students better know their way around, so they can offer their help.

– Coordinator ROC van Flevoland

We have a language coach, they are hbo-students... They help us practice the language, with paperwork, everything. How to make an appointment, or cancel one... After class we go to the library, or for a walk, or to get coffee in the city. It's a part of IB+, everyone has a language coach. I like it.

– Current participant ROC van Flevoland

In the transition programs where contact with Dutch students is embedded structurally, contact is frequent. In some cases, a close bond develops between participants and their coaches, and their relationship provides emotional support and companionship. According to the coordinator of ROC van Flevoland, participants sometimes even maintain contact with their student coach after they finish the program.

Other transition programs also offer opportunities to meet Dutch people, but not as a structurally embedded part of the program. ROC Mondriaan, for example, organizes project-based activities with Dutch people. In line with their philosophy that all extracurricular activities have to be in some way related to school, this project focuses particularly on labor market perspective.

We participate in a project called Zaak en Co, that isn't among the students, but they get a Dutch coach from the business world who does things with them to help them pursue their goals.

– Coordinator ROC Mondriaan

A former participant from Da Vinci College reported that they also had project-based contact with Dutch students. However, the sporadic aspect of this contact meant that it was not very intensive or profound.

Interviewer: Were you able to meet Dutch students during the transition program?

Respondent: Yes, sometimes they came here for projects or presentations. But then it's just hi, how are you. You stayed mostly with your own class. There are no Dutch students here.

– Former participant Da Vinci College

Some participants reported that there were no opportunities at all to meet Dutch people during the transition program. Especially participants from Da Vinci College told us that they could not meet any Dutch people. This could be related to the fact that this transition program is located in a separate building that is not shared with regular students. Participants from all programs expressed that they felt the desire or even the need to meet (more) Dutch people. The most common argument was that this would provide them with instrumental support because it would help them improve their Dutch.

Interviewer: Would you like it if you could meet Dutch people at ESK?

Respondent: Yes. Now you're only with Syrian and Eritrean people. We only speak Dutch in class. During the breaks we speak Arabic or Kurdish. At [mbo] level 1, my Dutch can become better because there are Dutch people there.

– Current participant ROC Mondriaan

Interviewer: Would you like to meet Dutch people?

Respondent: Yes. I have no Dutch friends, but I would like to. If I talk to Dutch people, my Dutch can become good. But other students here, they speak just like me.

– Current participant ROC Mondriaan

Interviewer: Would you find it important [to meet Dutch people]?

Respondent: Yes, very important. Because then you learn Dutch faster. Because the people from Iran or Eritrea don't speak Dutch well either.

– Current participant Da Vinci College

Some participants told us that knowing Dutch people could be helpful in other ways as well. One type of support that was mentioned was informational support in terms of knowledge of Dutch society. Emotional support was also mentioned, in terms of helping to become more outgoing or to be less lonely.

Interviewer: Do you think it's important to have contact with Dutch people?

Respondent: Of course. First of all because you get a lot of information about the country, the system, the habits of Dutch people. And [second], you can improve the language if you have a Dutch friend. Contact is just important. Sometimes you're home alone and you just want to do something. I'm very social, but sometimes I feel lonely. I always try to make new friends, but not all Dutch people accept that. I've noticed that a little.

– Former participant Hogeschool Utrecht

It's important to have contact with Dutch people, because you cannot be shy. I used to be afraid that people would laugh at what I said. But most people are nice. So to practice with the language, but also to be open.

– Current participant ROC van Flevoland

Another sub-sub-code of vertical social capital that I distinguished, was the contact participants had with their teachers. This was addressed in the interviews, when we asked to whom participants go if they have questions or need help. Almost all participants we interviewed told us that their teachers from the transition program were their main contact person if they had problems or questions. Even some former participants still contacted their teachers from the program to ask questions. The nature of these problems or questions varied: sometimes they were related to education, money issues, civic integration, or work, in which case the teachers could offer informational support. The participants also indicated that they could go to their teachers for personal problems (e.g. stress, loneliness), who then provided emotional support. Sometimes the teachers also provided instrumental support, for example in one case where they

helped a participant to get better housing. The finding that teachers provide many types of support was affirmed by the coordinators, who told us that the teachers make a great effort for the (former) participants, even if it was not officially included in their tasks.

Interviewer: What do you think of the teachers?

Respondent: They're nice. If I have a question, I can go to my teacher. We have one teacher, she is here one day a week, she really helps us too much. She finds out everything for us, I really like that.

– Current participant ROC van Flevoland

Interviewer: What do you think of the teachers?

Respondent: They are pretty nice, and they know what we need... They are always open to answering questions. A couple of months ago I had a very bad situation. They really helped me. Not just with studying, also with my private life... They did their best to support me. They helped me really well, they tried to do fun things with me. I think that is an achievement of them. They are not obligated to do that.

– Current participant Hogeschool Utrecht

I used to live in Monster, I was really stressed there. I had no energy to go to school. But the teachers here helped me find a room in The Hague, in a student house. I didn't like Monster. I had a nice place, but it's not for me... it was always quiet. I'm really social. More people is better, I can't live alone. The Hague is better for me.

– Current participant ROC Mondriaan

Interviewer: What do you think of the teachers?

Respondent: Really sweet. Everyone helps you. Some people might think, okay, I'm your teacher and that's it. But our teacher last year really liked to help us, with all sorts of things, translating, something with the municipality, something outside school. She could help me well.

– Former participant ROC van Flevoland

4.3.2.2 Reflection on vertical social capital within the transition programs

As mentioned earlier, vertical social capital is more likely than horizontal social capital to help refugees 'get ahead'. Some transition programs try to take this into account by implementing social activities with Dutch people in the curriculum. This seems to be paying off. My impression of the interviews is that contact with Dutch people can yield a significant amount of (all types of) support. For instance, the student coaches can support transition program participants in a variety of ways, such as instrumentally (language) and with companionship. There is also potential for emotional support if the bond between a participant and their student coach is strong. Moreover, the respondents reported teachers as the main source of informational support.

So if vertical social capital does indeed help participants get ahead, two elements appear crucial: structural contact and informational support. Structural contact seems to be a prerequisite for providing support. My impression is that project-based or sporadic contact did not yield much support, aside from instrumental support in terms of practicing Dutch (although this is also more effective when done structurally). Informational support is also an important element, as this was not observed in horizontal social capital. The ability to receive information or advice on the local culture, system and environment appears to play a crucial role in helping refugees get ahead.

4.3.2.3 Vertical social capital outside the transition programs

Of course, participants can also have vertical social capital outside the transition programs. This type of contact could be with Dutch people, but also with people from other countries of origin. One Eritrean participant, for example, mentioned that she had contact with people from a variety of nationalities in the Netherlands. This included other Eritreans who had been in the Netherlands longer and had a lot of friends. It is likely that these contacts had already made more socio-economic progress in the Netherlands.

However, most vertical social capital that participants had outside the transition programs were contacts with Dutch people. For example, some participants had a job where they knew Dutch people. This provided them with instrumental support to improve their language, or with companionship by meeting new friends.

I work as a cleaner on the weekends. And I used to work in a restaurant. I met a lot of people there. I also met many Dutch people there.

Interviewer: Do you consider them as friends?

Respondent: Yes.

– Current participant ROC Mondriaan

Some participants knew Dutch people who volunteered for projects to help refugees. One participant, for example, said that she still kept in touch with Dutch volunteers from the asylum center where she used to live. They provided instrumental support by helping her to learn the Dutch language. Besides instrumental support, some participants reported experiencing companionship from Dutch people they knew. One participant from Hogeschool Utrecht lived in a student house, where she had regular contact (e.g. having dinner or going out) with a Dutch roommate whom she considered a friend. One Syrian participant from ROC van Flevoland had met a Dutch family, with whom he had developed a very strong connection.

Respondent: I know a Dutch family here. By coincidence, really. A Dutch man organizes sports activities for refugees. I once had a conversation with him, and then our relationship became stronger and stronger... He always tells [me and my brother] that we are like his children. He doesn't have sons, only two daughters. Each week we eat with them... I know the Netherlands because of them. They took us to Zeeland, Texel, The Hague. They really did a lot.

Interviewer: Do you consider them as friends?

Respondent: No, as family.

Interviewer: You talk to each other every week. About what?

Respondent: All sorts of things... Not just about school or things with the municipality...

Interviewer: Do they help you with Dutch?

Respondent: When I met them, we spoke English. Then after three or four months, we spoke a little Dutch, the first 15 minutes or so. After six or seven months, all we spoke was Dutch. So you notice the progress.

Interviewer: How important do you find that contact?

Respondent: Very important. You feel that you're close to people who really love you. You feel comfortable, nice. I feel better because I know them.

– Former participant ROC van Flevoland

This example shows how valuable vertical social capital can be for refugees. The contact between this participant and the Dutch family was frequent and the family provided him and his brother with all types of support: instrumental by helping with the language, informational by giving advice, emotional by making them feel comfortable and loved, and companionship by socializing with them.

4.3.2.4 Reflection on vertical social capital outside the transition programs

The vertical social capital that participants develop outside the transition programs originates in work or housing (e.g. in an asylum center). These contacts provide participants with instrumental support (language) and companionship. In some cases, there exists a close bond which also provides emotional or informational support. But generally, vertical social capital outside transition programs is rather limited. As one coordinator put it, building social networks takes time, which refugees barely have.

You can take into account that there are many things at once on the plates of refugees. And often, they have very few resources. They just haven't had the time yet to build [a network].

– Coordinator Hogeschool Utrecht

However, the example above of the Syrian man who had developed a close relationship with a Dutch family, shows that vertical social capital can play a valuable role in transition programs (and refugees' lives in general) by providing many types of support.

4.3.3 Reflection on social capital

My general impression is that horizontal social capital is easier to come by for transition program participants than vertical social capital. This makes sense, as they have intense contact with their classmates and often do not meet many other students throughout the program. Looking at the role of social capital in the transition programs in the context of SQ3 (What role do social activities and networks play in the transition programs?), these activities have to do with improving either ingroup dynamics, or social integration through contact with Dutch people. The implementation of such activities strongly varies per program. Some programs attach great value to the social aspect of the learning process. They organize (non-formal) activities to improve group dynamics, or they have a structural component for contact with Dutch people. Other programs give higher priority to the intensity of the program so that the participants achieve high educational levels, but at the expense of social activities.

In the light of SQ4 (What elements of social capital would be a relevant addition to the transition programs?), I have formulated four practical recommendations for transition programs. First, as group dynamics play an important role in participants' experience of the transition programs, I recommend dividing classes into smaller groups. With a view to social integration, it is undesirable (and verging on discriminatory) to divide classes based on differences in country of origin or religion. As the coordinators already emphasized, participants should learn to work in diverse groups based on mutual respect. However, it might be valuable to divide classes along the lines of educational level or age. These two factors were most commonly mentioned by participants as negatively affecting group dynamics, because they play a role in people's attitudes in class. As one participant of ROC van Flevoland reported, dividing the class into two groups based on educational level improved the situation for all participants involved.

I had a problem, in the first period. You're not at the same level. You're with some people at A1 level. Some people don't want to come to class, because they feel stupid. That was a problem. But now it's better, because there are two groups with different assignments. We're still in the same class, but they get more attention. So their level also improves.

– Current participant ROC van Flevoland

In educational science, this is not new information. But the backgrounds and educational history of refugees can vary widely, which creates ingroup differences bigger than in most regular educational programs. This makes it even more relevant to divide groups.

Second, several coordinators reported that former participants had difficulty with meeting Dutch people for a variety of reasons. According to the coordinators, there are two

sides of the coin: on the one hand, Dutch students are unwilling to reach out to refugees; while on the other hand, it depends on the mindset of refugees themselves. The fact that coordinators' arguments were not explicitly underlined by participants might be due to selection bias. Since the participants were selected by the coordinators, it is unlikely that we spoke with (former) participants with a closed personality or who have had such an experience. However, horizontal social capital yields support that contributes to the overall welfare and educational progress of transition program participants. If the coordinators' concerns that former participants have difficulty making contact in further education are justified, it might be valuable to put more focus on the development of horizontal social capital after the programs are finished. Transition programs should intensify their communication with regular educational institutions, and stimulate them to improve social cohesion between refugees and regular students.

Third, I have observed that opportunities for developing vertical social capital in the transition programs are most effective when implemented structurally. Therefore, I recommend making student coaches a structural component of transition programs that have not done so yet. Doing so could benefit the successful transition to regular education, as well as the social integration of the participants in general. However, we did not interview any participants of Erasmus University, so this recommendation is based primarily on the interviews with coordinators of Erasmus University and ROC van Flevoland, and the experiences of (former) participants of ROC van Flevoland. Still, many participants reported positively about contact with Dutch people and expressed the desire to meet more Dutch people.

Fourth, transition programs might do well to recruit Dutch volunteers, for example as a teaching assistant or for organizing activities. Vertical social capital from outside the transition programs has the potential of providing support and benefiting participants in a variety of ways. Involving Dutch people from outside the programs could put participants in touch with people 'up the socio-economic ladder', thereby enhancing their social network and social resources.

Both horizontal and vertical social capital have a positive impact on transition programs. They provide participants with a variety of support, which ultimately benefits the programs (Table 5). In the current research, horizontal social capital accounts for three types of support: instrumental, emotional and companionship. In other words, transition program participants can call upon their peers' social resources for help with the Dutch language, with personal problems, or for socializing and friendships. These types of support contribute to successful completion of the program, as well as participants' perseverance and general prosperity.

Vertical social capital generally consists of the opportunities of transition program participants to meet Dutch people. These contacts also provide the aforementioned types of

support. In addition, they provide informational support. This generally comes from teachers, whom both current and former participants view as their main contact person for information or advice. Informational support plays an important role in achieving the goal of the programs to familiarize participants with Dutch culture and increase their self-reliance in navigating Dutch society.

Reflecting on the role of social capital in transition programs, let us revisit the reasoning that horizontal social capital is good for getting by, but vertical social capital is essential for getting ahead. At first sight, one might say that instrumental support is the essential element when it comes to ‘getting ahead’, as it involves some form of improvement. However, it seems that informational support is the crucial factor in the distinction between horizontal and vertical social capital. All things considered, the four types of support apparently complement each other in such a way, that the combination ensures that refugees can get ahead.

Table 5. Social capital benefits transition programs through the social support it provides.

Type of social capital	Type of support				Benefits for transition programs
	Instrumental	Emotional	Companionship	Informational	
Horizontal Provided that group dynamics are positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dutch language • Homework/ studying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of safety and trust • Help with personal problems • Motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socializing • Friendship 	<i>n/a</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful completion of the program • Perseverance • General prosperity
Vertical Provided that contact is structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dutch language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with personal problems • Help with becoming less shy and more open or outgoing (sense of empowerment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socializing • Friendship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice • Information on education, money, civic integration, work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful completion of the program • Familiarity with Dutch culture • Ability to navigate Dutch society

5 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the role of social capital in transition programs that prepare refugees for vocational or higher education. Unemployment among refugees is high, and acquiring a Dutch diploma gives them the best chances of getting paid work. The transition programs aim to equip refugees with the human capital required for regular education, so they will be able to obtain a Dutch diploma and build a career in the Netherlands.

It is widely recognized in scientific literature that social capital plays a role in human capital development. Social relations yield social resources, which benefit the development of human capital. When an individual's network is enhanced, they gain access to other people's knowledge and skills. I therefore expected that social capital could be of great importance to participants of the transition programs. This study addresses a twofold research question: (1) In what way can social capital contribute to the development of the knowledge and skills that are required for refugees to start with regular education programs in the Netherlands, and (2) how does this take shape in the transition programs? In order to answer these questions, I formulated four sub-questions that were addressed in the literature review and the empirical research.

SQ1 is related to the knowledge and skills refugees need in regular education. This comes down to two types of human capital: hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills are measurable, for instance in the form of exams and grades. For refugees, the Dutch language is the most important hard skill they need to acquire. Other important hard skills are study skills, such as writing a report or giving a presentation. Soft skills are the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills of an individual, that are acquired through social interaction. Soft skills needed for regular education are for example independence, critical (self) reflection and discipline. Hard and soft skills should not be seen as separate entities, but rather as complementing and reinforcing each other.

SQ2 is related to the content characteristics of transition programs. The curricula of the programs consist of both formal and non-formal learning activities. Formal learning activities are activities that have as main goal to contribute to human capital. They are often embedded in school subjects, such as Dutch and math. In some cases, they are not separate subjects but make up part of a subject, such as study skills and computer skills. Non-formal learning activities are activities that do not formally aim to contribute to education, but do stimulate the development of human capital. The transition programs have a wide range of non-formal learning activities, ranging from informative (e.g. visiting the library) to creative (e.g. theater)

to entertaining (e.g. going to a sports game). Both formal and non-formal activities can contribute to hard skills as well as soft skills.

SQ3 concerns the role of social activities and networks in the transition programs. The programs we researched attach great value to the social aspect of the learning process. Social activities differ per program in terms of content. In some programs, social activities are more focused on improving group dynamics among the participants (e.g. the youth program at Da Vinci College). In others, the activities are more outward looking and include (Dutch) people from outside the programs. The role of social networks also differs between the programs, mostly depending on how structurally social activities are implemented. Structural social activities seem to benefit participants' social capital more than non-structural or sporadic activities, because they provide the opportunity to develop connections that yield social support. Social support comes in different forms – informational, instrumental, emotional or companionship – all of which can contribute to participants' successful completion of the programs.

Based on SQ4, I formulated recommendations for changes that could be relevant additions for the transition programs. These recommendations are related to the role of horizontal as well as vertical social capital. To improve horizontal social capital in the transition programs, I recommend dividing classes into smaller groups based on educational level or age. This would improve group dynamics and consequently the learning process and overall satisfaction of participants. I also recommend to continue to stimulate horizontal social capital after the transition program. By intensifying communication between transition programs and regular programs, the latter can help improve social cohesion during participants' further education. For vertical social capital, I recommend to put participants in touch with Dutch people in two ways: by making student coaches a structural program component, and by involving Dutch volunteers in the organization of the transition programs. This would enhance participants' vertical networks, thereby providing types of support that can help them get ahead in Dutch education and society as a whole.

5.1 Theoretical implications

Addressing the first part of the main research question, social capital contributes to the development of human capital required for regular education by taking the shape of social support. This leads to theoretical implications for the role of social capital in human capital development. Many scientific studies theoretically or empirically support the existence of a positive relationship between the two. Loury (1987) and Coleman (1990) for example, have

argued that social capital can advance an individual's social and cognitive development by providing access to social resources. Although it is clear that these resources are derived from social contacts, it is not specified what they entail. According to Ryan and colleagues (Ryan, Sales, Tilki, & Siara, 2008), social contacts can provide a variety of types of support: informational, instrumental, emotional and companionship. This is supported by my research. Informational and instrumental support provide transition program participants with hard skills that are needed for regular education (e.g. knowledge of the Dutch language and education system). Emotional support and companionship contribute to interpersonal (e.g. communication) and intrapersonal (e.g. sense of empowerment) soft skills. In other words, social capital yields resources in the form of social support, which contribute to the development of human capital that is required for regular education.

I have also found that the kind of support which a relationship offers, depends on the nature of the relationship. With regard to horizontal social capital, it is important that the ingroup dynamics are perceived positively. If a transition program participant perceives the group dynamics negatively, they do not experience social support from their peers. In other words, they do not reap the benefits of horizontal social capital in relation to human capital. This resonates the argument by Field (2005) that bonding social capital can have a negative effect on formal learning.

For vertical social capital, it is important that contact is structural. If it is not, individuals do not experience social support from their vertical contacts. Transition program participants who only sporadically have contact with people with a higher socio-economic status, do not experience the support that these contacts potentially have to offer. In other words, these contacts do not contribute to their human capital development. This contradicts Granovetter's (1973) theory that there is a strength to weak ties. My findings suggest that refugees in transition programs only experience social support from strong ties.

My research supports the general line of argument that social capital positively affects the development of human capital. My contribution to scientific knowledge on this topic is twofold. First, I looked more closely at the characteristics of social resources and found that the four types of support proposed by Ryan and colleagues play an important role in the acquisition of hard and soft skills. Second, I studied the distinction between horizontal and vertical social capital and found that, although both contribute to human capital development, the respective social contacts have to meet certain conditions. Moreover, I found that informational support is a key factor in making the difference between horizontal social capital helping refugees get by, and vertical social capital helping them get ahead.

5.2 Practical implications

The remaining part of the main research question is how the contribution of social capital to the requirements for regular education takes shape in transition programs. I observed that all programs take into account the relevance of social capital for the development of human capital. Some programs focus more on the development of horizontal social capital. For example Da Vinci College, which cooperates with the municipality of Dordrecht for a youth program consisting of activities for refugees. Other programs focus more on the development of vertical social capital. ROC van Flevoland and Erasmus University, for example, match their participants with Dutch student coaches. It can be argued that program components that strengthen vertical social capital are more beneficial for participants' social integration in a broad sense. However, I observed that horizontal social capital is relevant as well, as positive group dynamics can contribute to the learning process.

A practical implication of my research is that it could be a valuable addition to transition programs create an even more prominent role for horizontal as well as vertical social capital. This would positively affect the human capital development of participants, which would ultimately increase their chances on the labor market. Based on SQ4, I have already given some practical recommendations in relation to the organizational structures of transition programs. To promote participants' horizontal social capital, the programs should focus on group dynamics during as well as after the transition programs. For vertical social capital, it would be valuable to include Dutch people as supporting figures in the programs.

The current lack of central organization of transition programs makes implementation of these recommendations difficult. But after the upcoming amendments of the Civic Integration Law, municipalities will largely be in charge of civic integration. They are given a key position in the implementation of the proposed learning routes. This includes the education route, which will be shaped by transition programs. So municipalities will be more involved in the content and goals of transition programs. I propose that municipalities take into account the importance of social contacts for the learning process when exercising these new responsibilities. They can cooperate with transition programs to create more opportunities for participants to develop horizontal and vertical social capital. This way, transition programs can contribute not only to refugees' education and labor market perspectives, but also to their social integration as a whole.

5.3 Limitations and possibilities for future research

In the research process, I made several choices that resulted in limitations for the current study. First, the selection of interview respondents was not random. We selected some of the coordinators based on recommendations by UAF and pre-existing contacts of KIS. This could skew the sample towards more successful programs. We did, however, pay attention to the distribution of transition programs according to geographical location and intended educational level. There was also a selection bias in the recruitment of participants, as this was done through snowball sampling via the coordinators. But there is to my knowledge no database containing all refugees who participate(d) in a transition program from which we would be able to do ‘cold’ recruitment. Moreover, I believe that snowball sampling was the best way to reach participants, because they were approached by someone they knew and trusted.

A second issue related to respondent selection was the fact that we recruited current as well as former participants. When we set out to conduct participant interviews, we wanted the majority of the respondents to be former participants. The reason for this was that we believed former participants would be more capable of critically reflecting on their experiences in the transition programs than current participants. It turned out, however, that former participants were harder to reach for the coordinators due to lack of contact information. But all current participants we interviewed were already advanced in the programs, and were in our opinion very capable of critical reflection. So although the element of time did play a role in the research design, the difference between current and former participants is not discussed in detail in the analysis. For future research, it might be of interest to delve deeper into the element of time, for example by conducting a longitudinal study to see how social capital in the transition programs affects participants’ human capital in the long term.

A final limitation in terms of respondent recruitment is that we were unable to interview any participants from Erasmus University. This did not directly lead to serious defects in the current study, because it aims to present individual experiences and not generalizations. However, it might have been valuable to interview participants from Erasmus University with a view to the fact that they have student mentors. The interviews with the coordinator from Erasmus University, as well as with the coordinator and (former) participants of ROC van Flevoland, indicated that student coaches/mentors were a relevant addition to the development of social capital in the transition programs. It now remains unknown whether (former) participants of Erasmus University had a similarly positive experience with student mentors. Future studies on the role of social capital in transition programs should include this in their research design by seeking a more even distribution in the programs in terms of whether or not

student coaches are a program component. This would allow for comparison and a more reliable estimation of the value of student coaches in the development of social capital for refugees.

With regard to the content of the interviews, two more issues arise. First, we asked participants whether they see their classmates as their friends. The term ‘friends’ is interpreted differently by different people. In addition, its meaning can differ across cultures. It is therefore important to be cautious in assigning meaning to the interview fragments concerned. Whenever participants talked about people as their ‘friends’, this was ascribed the code ‘companionship’. Companionship includes, but is not limited to, friendship. It also includes more casual forms of socializing. This leaves the notion of friends open to a more broad interpretation, without affecting the inter-rater validity of this research.

Finally, a topic that was not explicitly addressed in the topic lists, was the role of social media. Nowadays, social media are seen as an increasingly relevant element of social capital. They can play an important role in sharing resources and support among refugees (Xu, Holzer, Maitland, & Gillet, 2017). Because the focus of this research was on social capital in an educational context, I deemed it more important to pay attention to the ‘real-life’ interpersonal contacts that affect participants’ human capital. But for future research, it would certainly be valuable to study the element of social media in transition programs.

Despite its limitations, the exploratory nature of this study serves as a stepping stone for future analyses on social capital and its role in human capital development. This study has generated knowledge enrichment on the ways in which social support structures can contribute to refugee integration. This is of particular relevance with a view to the upcoming amendments to Civic Integration Law, as this study provides insights into the role social contacts play for refugees in transition to Dutch education.

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Appendix A: Topic Lists

A.1 Coordinators

1. Introductie

- Wat is uw naam, functie, dagelijks werk
- Kunt u iets vertellen over het schakeltraject?
 - Uw rol binnen het schakeltraject
 - De deelnemers (aantal/samenstelling/land van herkomst/geslacht)
 - Hoe komen de deelnemers bij jullie terecht? (doorverwezen vanuit gemeente/COA/maatschappelijke organisatie)
 - Wat zijn de toelatingseisen?
 - Wat is de motivatie bij die eisen?
 - Welk percentage moet je ongeveer afwijzen?
 - Het beoogde niveau (mbo/hbo/wo)
 - De doorstroom naar regulier onderwijs (*zo veel mogelijk specificeren hoeveel deelnemers en naar welke instellingen en welk niveau*)
 - Heeft u zicht op hoeveel deelnemers.. (*gebruik evt. het plaatje van Regioplan*)
 - voortijdig stoppen met het schakeltraject?
 - na succesvolle afronding van het schakeltraject *geen* vervolgopleiding gaan volgen?

2. Totstandkoming/organisatie schakeltraject

- Wanneer zijn jullie met dit schakeltraject begonnen?
- Hoe is dit schakeltraject tot stand gekomen?
- Welke partijen waren er betrokken?
- Op wiens initiatief werd dit schakeltraject gestart?
- Uit welke middelen wordt het schakeltraject gefinancierd?
- Hoeveel deelnemers heb je minimaal nodig om het schakeljaar draaiende te houden?

3. Inhoud schakeltraject

- Hoe ziet het programma eruit?
 - Uit welke onderdelen bestaat het programma? (*inclusief inhoud vakken*)
 - Wat voor vaardigheden leren de deelnemers?
 - Op welke manier dragen deze verschillende onderdelen/vaardigheden bij aan de voorbereiding op de vervolgopleiding?
 - Hoeveel uur per week besteden de deelnemers aan het programma?
 - Hoe is de verdeling tussen vakken? (bijv. verhouding NT2 met KNM)
 - Worden de studenten begeleid buiten het officiële lesaanbod om? (bijv. mentor/aanspreekpunt)
 - Zo ja, hoe?
- Kunt u iets vertellen over hoe het niveau van het schakeltraject aansluit bij het niveau van de deelnemers?
 - Hoe zou dat eventueel beter afgestemd kunnen worden?

4. Transitie

- Zijn jullie tevreden over de doorstroomcijfers?
- Hebben jullie specifieke doelstellingen voor de doorstroomcijfers?
 - Zo ja, worden die gehaald?
- Hebben jullie contact en/of samenwerking met vervolgopleiding(en)?
 - Zo ja:
 - Welke?
 - Hoe zit de relatie in elkaar? (bijv. binnen dezelfde instelling of niet)
 - Wat is de rolverdeling?
 - Hoe gaat de overdracht in zijn werk?
 - Wat zou er verbeterd kunnen worden?
 - Zo nee:
 - Waarom niet?
 - Zouden jullie dat in de toekomst wel willen? Waarom wel/niet?
- Wat zijn volgens u de verklaringen voor het al dan niet doorstromen naar een vervolgopleiding? Succesfactoren doorstroom en knelpunten doorstroom
 - Welke factoren zijn bevorderlijk voor de doorstroom?
 - Welke factoren belemmeren de doorstroom?
- Wat zou er volgens u moeten veranderen omtrent het schakeltraject om een betere doorstroom te bewerkstelligen? Veranderen tbv doorstroom
 - Qua inhoud en opzet van het (*eigen*) schakeltraject
 - In de begeleiding van statushouders in een schakeltraject (wie moet dat doen?)
 - In de wet- en regelgeving
 - In de financiering
 - In de samenwerking met andere partijen (bijv. gemeente)
 - In de relatie tussen het schakeltraject en de vervolgopleiding
- Begeleiding bij vervolgopleiding
- Uitval

5. Sociale contacten

We weten dat het voor het integratieproces van nieuwkomers belangrijk is dat zij een goed sociaal netwerk opbouwen. De volgende vragen gaan over sociale contacten in/tijdens het schakeltraject.

Sociaal leerklimaat binnen schakeltraject

- Hoe belangrijk denkt u dat onderling contact tussen de deelnemers is voor het succesvol doorlopen van het schakeltraject?
- Wordt er binnen het schakeltraject iets gedaan om het sociale leerklimaat te bevorderen? (*met sociaal leerklimaat bedoelen we sfeer in de klas, onderlinge samenwerking, groepsgevoel; dit kan bijvoorbeeld gaan over werkvormen in de klas maar ook over om buitenschoolse activiteiten*)
 - Zo ja:
 - Wat wordt er gedaan?
 - Draagt dat bij aan een succesvolle doorstroom?
 - Zo nee:
 - Waarom niet?
 - Denkt u dat dit wel zou kunnen bijdragen aan succesvolle doorstroom?

Sociale netwerk algemeen

- Zou u kunnen omschrijven wat de eventuele bijdrage van het schakeltraject is aan het opbouwen van een sociaal netwerk? (*zowel binnen als buiten het schakeljaar*)
- Hoe belangrijk denk u dat contact met Nederlanders is voor het succesvol doorlopen van het schakeltraject?
- Zou er nog iets aan het schakeltraject verbeterd kunnen worden om het opbouwen van een sociaal netwerk te bevorderen? (*zowel met andere statushouders als met Nederlanders*)

6. Toekomst

In het nieuwe inburgeringsstelsel vanaf 1 januari 2021 is het de bedoeling dat (meer) jonge statushouders via de onderwijsroute een Nederlandse (beroeps)opleiding gaan volgen. Daarvoor is in veel gevallen een schakelvoorziening nodig.

- Bent u (globaal) bekend met de voorgenomen plannen?
 - Wat vindt u hiervan?
- Bent u bezig met de voorbereiding op het nieuwe stelsel?
 - Wat doet u?
 - Wat doet u (nog) niet?
 - Met wie werkt u samen?
- Wat heeft u (nog meer) nodig om u goed te kunnen voorbereiden?
- Wat zijn uw verwachtingen bij de toekomst van uw schakeltraject? (*korte/lange termijn*)
 - Op financieel gebied
 - Op inhoudelijk gebied (bijv. taaleis B1)
 - M.b.t. grootte en samenstelling van de klassen (met het oog op ‘opdrogen’ vluchtelingenstroom)
- Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste uitdagingen of kwesties waarvoor (nog) een oplossing moet worden gevonden?
- Zal naar uw inschatting het nieuwe inburgeringsstelsel leiden tot een toename van het aantal jonge statushouders dat een schakeltraject volgt?
 - Wie/welke jongeren zijn geschikt of minder geschikt om deel te nemen aan een schakeltraject?
- In hoeverre werken jullie nu samen met de gemeente of regio?
 - Wat gaat er goed?
 - Wat kan er beter?
- Wat zijn uw verwachtingen van de toekomstige samenwerking met de gemeente of regio? (*met betrekking tot het nieuwe stelsel*)
- Zijn er bepaalde condities die de gemeente, regio of landelijke overheid kan scheppen voor uw schakeltraject?
 - Ter bevordering van de doorstroom
 - Op financieel gebied
- Waar denkt u dat de gemeenten rekening mee kunnen/moeten houden bij de implementatie van de beoogde veranderingen?

7. Afsluiting

- Heeft u nog aanvullende opmerkingen?

A.2 Current participants

1. Voorstellen

- Waarom wilde je meedoen aan dit interview?
- Kan je iets over jezelf vertellen?
 - Hoe oud ben je?
 - Waar kom je vandaan?
 - Hoelang ben je al in Nederland?
 - Welk schakeljaar volg je?
 - Heb je inburgeringsplicht en zo ja, heb je al aan alle onderdelen voldaan?
 - Heb je in je thuisland al een opleiding gedaan en zo ja, welke?
- Welke (beroeps)opleiding wil je hierna volgen? *(en aan welke onderwijsinstelling)*

2. Ervaring schakeljaar

- Hoe hoorde je over het bestaan van dit schakeljaar?
- Hoe kwam je terecht bij dit schakeljaar?
- Heeft iemand je geholpen bij het vinden/kiezen van een schakeljaar?
 - Wie? *(vrienden/familie/gemeente/COA/maatschappelijke organisatie)*
 - Hoe?
- Wat voor vakken volg je?
- Wat voor vaardigheden leer je?
- Wat vind je van het niveau? *(te moeilijk/te makkelijk/goed)*
- Wat vind je van de docenten?
 - Vind je dat de docenten van het schakeljaar goed omgaan met andere culturen? Waarom wel/niet? *(voorbeeld)*
- Wie helpt je met vragen of problemen? *(binnen schakeljaar, dus aanspreekpunt/mentor/decaan)*
 - Waarover praat je met hem/haar?
 - Wat vind je van deze hulp? *(wat kan er beter?)*
- Wat vind je goed aan dit schakeljaar?
- Wat kan er beter aan dit schakeljaar?

3. Doorstroom regulier onderwijs

- Wat doe je om je op een opleiding te oriënteren?
- Wie of wat helpt je bij het zoeken/kiezen van een opleiding? *(voorbeeld)*
- Ben je al bezig met de inschrijving?
 - Weet je hoe dat werkt?
 - Voldoe je aan de toelatingseisen?
- Zou je een vriend/familielid aanraden om dit schakeljaar te volgen?
- Welk beroep wil je doen als je klaar bent met school?
 - Waarom?

4. Sociale contacten

Sociale contacten m.b.t. schakeltraject (hierbij belangrijk om naar voorbeelden te vragen)

- Wat vind je van de sfeer in de klas?
- Hoe voel je je in de groep?
- Kan je iets vertellen over de mensen met wie je omgaat **binnen** dit schakeljaar? (hoe vaak, waarover)
 - Kenmerken: land van herkomst, leeftijd, geslacht
 - Zie je hen als vrienden?
 - Hoe vaak hebben jullie contact?
 - Waarover hebben jullie contact?
 - Helpen zij je met school? (hoe: inhoudelijk of organisatorisch? Geef een voorbeeld)
 - Spreek je hen ook **buiten** het schakeljaar? (dus buiten lesuren)
 - Hoe belangrijk vind je dit contact?
- Kan je door het schakeljaar goed samenwerken met andere mensen?
 - Hoe zou dat (nog) beter kunnen?
- Kan je bij het schakeljaar ook Nederlandse studenten ontmoeten? Waarom wel/niet?
 - Vind je dat belangrijk?
- Wie helpen je meer bij het doorlopen van het schakeljaar: Nederlandse vrienden of andere mensen (bijv. andere statushouders)?

Sociale contacten algemeen

- Kan je iets vertellen over de mensen met wie je omgaat in het algemeen? (leren kennen **buiten** het schakeljaar) (hoe vaak, waarover)
 - Hoe ken je hen? (kan ook bijv. familie zijn)
 - Zie je hen als vrienden?
 - Hoe vaak hebben jullie contact?
 - Waarover hebben jullie contact?
 - Helpen zij je met het schakeljaar? (hoe: inhoudelijk of organisatorisch? Geef een voorbeeld)
 - Hoe belangrijk vind je dit contact?
 - Vind je dit meer of minder belangrijk dan je contacten **binnen** het schakeljaar?
- Als je informatie zoekt over je opleiding, inburgering, of werk, wie vraag je dan om hulp?
 - Wie is dat/hoe ken je die?
 - Kan je die relatie omschrijven?
 - Waarover hebben jullie contact?

5. Afsluiting

- Heb je nog vragen of opmerkingen?

A.3 Former participants

1. Voorstellen

- Waarom wilde je meedoen aan dit interview?
- Kan je iets over jezelf vertellen?
 - Hoe oud ben je?
 - Waar kom je vandaan?
 - Hoelang ben je al in Nederland?
 - Welk schakeljaar heb je gevolgd en wanneer?
 - Heb je inburgeringsplicht en zo ja, heb je al aan alle onderdelen voldaan?
 - Heb je in je thuisland al een opleiding gedaan en zo ja, welke?
- Volg je momenteel een (beroeps)opleiding? Zo ja:
 - Welke?
 - Waar? (*onderwijsinstelling*)
 - Wanneer ben je daarmee begonnen?

2. Ervaring schakeljaar (*benadrukken dat deze vragen gaan over het schakeljaar, en niet over de huidige opleiding*)

- Hoe hoorde je over het bestaan van dit schakeljaar?
- Hoe kwam je terecht bij dit schakeljaar?
- Heeft iemand je geholpen bij het vinden/kiezen van een schakeljaar?
 - Wie? (*vrienden/familie/gemeente/COA/maatschappelijke organisatie*)
 - Hoe?
- Wat voor vakken volgde je?
- Wat voor vaardigheden leerde je?
- Wat vond je van het niveau? (*te moeilijk/te makkelijk/goed*)
- Wat vond je van de docenten?
 - Vond je dat de docenten van het schakeljaar goed omgingen met andere culturen? Waarom wel/niet? (*voorbeeld*)
- Wie hielp je met vragen of problemen? (*binnen schakeljaar, dus aanspreekpunt/mentor/decaan*)
 - Waarover praatte je het met hem/haar?
 - Wat vond je van deze hulp? (*wat kon er beter?*)
- Wat vond je goed aan dit schakeljaar?
- Wat kan er beter aan dit schakeljaar?

3. Doorstroom regulier onderwijs (*benadrukken dat deze vragen gaan over de huidige opleiding en niet over het schakeljaar*) → indien niet doorgestroomd, ga naar 4

- Wie of wat hielp je bij het zoeken/kiezen van een opleiding? (*voorbeeld*)
- Hoe ging de inschrijving voor je opleiding? (*hulp vanuit schakeljaar?*)
- Hoe ging de toelating voor je opleiding?
- Was dit schakeljaar een goede voorbereiding op je opleiding?
 - Waarom wel/niet?
- Wat gaat er goed bij je opleiding?
 - Komt dat doordat je het schakeljaar hebt gevolgd?
- Wat vind je moeilijk bij je huidige opleiding?

- Hoe kan het schakeljaar dat verbeteren?
- Hoe kan dit schakeljaar deelnemers beter voorbereiden op een (beroeps)opleiding?
- Zou je een vriend/familielid aanraden om dit schakeljaar te volgen?
- Welk beroep wil je doen als je klaar bent met school?
 - Waarom?

4. Indien niet doorgestroomd naar vervolgopleiding

- Wat doe je nu?
- Welke opleiding wilde je gaan doen?
- Waarom is dat niet gelukt? (*Wel ingeschreven of daarvoor al gestopt? Heeft het te maken met andere zorgen/problemen?*)
- Heeft iemand geprobeerd hierbij te helpen? (*vanuit het schakeljaar / voorbeeld*)
- Had diegene iets anders/beter kunnen doen om jou te helpen?
- Wil je later alsnog een opleiding volgen?
 - Wanneer?
- Wat is er nodig om alsnog een opleiding te volgen?
 - Wat kan je zelf doen?
 - Welke hulp heb je nodig?
- Ben je blij dat je het schakeljaar hebt gedaan?
- Zou je een vriend/familielid aanraden om dit schakeljaar te volgen?

5. Sociale contacten

De volgende vragen gaan over het sociale contact dat je hebt in Nederland, en of dit je geholpen heeft tijdens het schakeljaar. Met sociaal contact worden de mensen bedoeld met wie je contact hebt, zoals familie, vrienden of kennissen.

Sociale contacten m.b.t. schakeltraject (*hierbij belangrijk om naar voorbeelden te vragen*)

- Wat vond je van de sfeer in de klas?
- Hoe voelde je je in de groep?
- Kan je iets vertellen over de mensen met wie je omging **binnen** het schakeljaar? (*hoe vaak, waarover*)
 - Kenmerken: land van herkomst, leeftijd, geslacht
 - Zag je hen als vrienden?
 - Hoe vaak hadden jullie contact?
 - Waarover hadden jullie contact?
 - Hielpen zij je met het schakeljaar? (*hoe: inhoudelijk of organisatorisch? Geef een voorbeeld*)
 - Sprak je hen ook **buiten** het schakeljaar? (*dus buiten lesuren*)
 - Spreek je hen nog steeds?
 - Hoe belangrijk vind je dit contact?
- Kan je door het schakeljaar goed samenwerken met andere mensen?
 - Hoe zou dat (nog) beter kunnen?
- Kon je bij het schakeljaar ook Nederlandse studenten ontmoeten? Waarom wel/niet?
 - Vind je dat belangrijk?
- Wie hebben je meer geholpen bij het doorlopen van het schakeljaar: Nederlandse vrienden of andere mensen (*bijv. andere statushouders*)?

Sociale contacten algemeen

- Kan je iets vertellen over de mensen met wie je omgaat in het algemeen? (**buiten** het *schakeljaar* leren kennen) (*hoe vaak, waarover*)
 - Hoe ken je hen? (*kan ook bijv. familie zijn*)
 - Zie je hen als vrienden?
 - Hoe vaak hebben jullie contact?
 - Waarover hebben jullie contact?
 - Hielpen zij je met het schakeljaar? (*hoe: inhoudelijk of organisatorisch? Geef een voorbeeld*)
 - Helpen zij je met je huidige opleiding? (*indien van toepassing*)
 - Helpen zij je met je Nederlands?
 - Hoe belangrijk vind je dit contact?
 - Vind je dit meer of minder belangrijk dan je contacten **binnen** het schakeljaar?
- Als je informatie zoekt over je opleiding, inburgering, of werk, wie vraag je dan om hulp?
 - Wie is dat/hoe ken je die?
 - Kan je die relatie omschrijven?
 - Waarover hebben jullie contact?
- Hoe is de omgang met klasgenoten in je huidige opleiding/op je huidige school?
 - Vind je samenwerken met anderen makkelijk/moeilijk? (*met wie makkelijk en met wie moeilijk?*)
- Kan je bij je huidige opleiding ook Nederlandse studenten ontmoeten? Waarom wel/niet?
 - Vind je dat belangrijk?

6. Afsluiting

- Heb je nog vragen of opmerkingen?

Appendix B: Code tree

- HUMAN CAPITAL
 - HC Hard skills
 - HC Soft skills
- LEARNING ACTIVITIES
 - LA Formal
 - LA Non-formal
- SOCIAL CAPITAL
 - SC Horizontal
 - Contact within transition program (SCHW)
 - Group dynamics
 - Outside school
 - Classmates as friends
 - Contact outside transition program (SCHO)
 - With family
 - With other newcomers
 - During further education (former participants)
 - SC Vertical
 - Contact within transition program (SCVW)
 - Structural
 - Non-structural
 - Contact with teachers
 - Contact outside transition program (SCVO)
 - SC Support (SCS)
 - Informational
 - Instrumental
 - Emotional
 - Companionship
 - SC Frequency (SCF)
 - Regularly
 - Incidentally
 - By phone
 - Only at school

Appendix C: Codebook

Concept	Code (level I)	Sub-code (level II)	Sub-sub-code (level III)	Explanation
HUMAN CAPITAL	Hard skills	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	Dutch language, math, English language, study skills (computer skills, giving a presentation, writing a report, planning/time management), KNM (traditions and rules of Dutch society), ONA (how to look for/apply to jobs)
	Soft skills	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	Norms and values, critical (self) reflection, independence, teamwork, proactiveness/ taking initiative, social interaction
LEARNING ACTIVITIES	Formal	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	School subjects, internship, career orientation, group assignments
	Non-formal	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	Visiting public places (House of Representatives, library, police station, fire department, city walk), creative activities (theater, painting), playing sports, playing games, other group activities (bowling, visiting a sports game)
SOCIAL CAPITAL	Horizontal	Contact within transition program	Group dynamics	Social climate in the classroom, and how this is affected by ingroup differences
			Outside school	Whether or not participants have contact with each other outside the program
			Classmates as friends	Whether or not they consider their classmates as their friends
		Contact outside transition program	With family	Contact with family in the Netherlands
			With other newcomers	Contact with other newcomers from outside transition program
			During further education	Contact with classmates during further education (former participants)

	Vertical	Contact within transition program	Structural	Participants structurally have the opportunity to make contact with people with a higher socio-economic status during the transition program (e.g. student coach)
			Non-structural	Participants do not have the opportunity to make contact with people with a higher socio-economic status during the transition program, or only sporadically (e.g. project-based contact)
			Teacher	Participants (can) go to their teacher from the transition program for information or help
		Contact outside transition program	<i>n/a</i>	Participants have contact with people with a higher socio-economic status outside the transition program
	Support	Informational	<i>n/a</i>	The contact provides information (e.g. about school or work)
		Instrumental	<i>n/a</i>	The contact provides opportunities for improvement (e.g. in education, work, housing)
		Emotional	<i>n/a</i>	The contact provides emotional support such as motivation, trust, empathy, or help with personal problems
		Companionship	<i>n/a</i>	The contact provides someone to talk to or do activities with, or have a friendship with
	Frequency	Regularly	<i>n/a</i>	The contact takes place on a regular basis (e.g. weekly or monthly)
		Incidentally	<i>n/a</i>	The contact takes place every now and then, but not regularly (e.g. running into each other in the street)
		By phone	<i>n/a</i>	The contact takes place by phone or via Whatsapp
		Only at school	<i>n/a</i>	The contact is restricted to the school context