



## Educating Refugees to the Welfare State: Educational Social Integration and Language Education in the Danish Refugee Council from the late 1960s to the 1980s

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**Abstract** • This article explores the development of educational knowledge on integrating refugees to the Danish welfare state, conceptualised as “educational integration knowledge”. The topic is studied by analysing the Danish Refugee Council’s (DRC) educational social integration and language education for refugees ca. 1968–85, a period of increasing immigration and welfare state expansion, with which DRC’s development intertwined. The article examines how DRC developed educational integration knowledge in relation to its encounters with refugee groups, as well as changing circumstances in the welfare state. It was a two-way process entailing education both *for* and *about* refugees. Initially, DRC had pioneering autonomy to implement and develop its educational integration knowledge in the welfare state’s margins. However, the expanding and consolidating welfare state brought about increasingly rigid regulatory structures and efficiency requirements, respectively diminishing DRC’s autonomy.

**Keywords** • refugee education, educational integration, language education, the Danish welfare state

### **Introduction: Educating refugees in(to) the welfare state**

In the 1970s, the Danish press covered the topic of newly arrived refugees with headlines like “A new existence for the refugees”, “Starting all over” and “From refugee camp to a home in Denmark”.<sup>1</sup> These titles conveyed prevailing assumptions of what awaited the newcomers. Firstly, that they had come to Denmark to stay, which stands in rather stark contrast to the current policy of temporary protection.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, that in their new home country, refugees would need to (re)learn how to be a citizen and individual. However, educational integration did not only concern refugees themselves, but also the various professionals working with refugees. In this article, the focus is on *educational integration knowledge* from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s: that is,

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1 Isi Foighel, “En ny tilværelse for flygtningene,” *Politiken*, July 27, 1970; Herdis Wiene, “Starter helt forfra,” *Aarhus Stiftstidende*, January 31, 1970; Michael Thorsen, “Fra flygtningelejr til et hjem i Danmark,” *Politiken*, October 27, 1977.

2 See e.g. Nikolas Feith Tan, “The End of Protection: The Danish ‘Paradigm Shift’ and the Law of Cessation,” *Nordic Journal of International Law* 90, no. 1 (2021).

the development of professional knowledge on integrating refugees into the Danish society by educational means.<sup>3</sup>

Still in the late 1960s, Danish humanitarian circles optimistically assumed that the “refugee problem” (the forced displacement of people on a larger scale) was a temporary phenomenon, at least on European soil. An evident manifestation of this outlook was the decision to gradually dismantle the Danish Refugee Council (DRC; da: *Dansk Flygtningehjælp*, DF), the non-governmental umbrella organisation for humanitarian associations responsible for integrating refugees in Denmark. DRC had performed this task on behalf of the state since 1956, but as refugee numbers dwindled over the years, the ever-diminishing assignment was no longer seen to warrant a dedicated organisation.<sup>4</sup> However, solving this positive problem soon lost its relevance: violent political conflicts re-entered the arena in Eastern Europe in 1968, and Denmark responded by opening its borders to give refuge to Czech defectors and Polish Jews in 1968–70. Over the next decade, this abrupt surge of refugee flows was followed by the arrival of yet new refugee groups from Uganda, Portugal, Chile and Vietnam, among others.

It became increasingly evident that the “refugee problem” had come to stay – and so, too, had DRC. The new chapter in Denmark’s refugee history thus also marked a turning point for the organisation, shifting its trajectory from being discontinued to instead consolidating its position as the central operator responsible for resettling and integrating refugees on behalf of the state. Refugee integration remained exclusively DRC’s task until 1999, when Denmark’s first Integration Act<sup>5</sup> transferred the duty to municipalities.

In the vast body of immigrant integration literature, “civic integration” refers to an increased emphasis on educational aspects of integration since the 1990s, in particular language education and social orientation, in connection with increasingly restrictive immigration and citizenship policies. In other words, educational integration is operationalised and formalised as a prerequisite for citizenship, residence and welfare services.<sup>6</sup>

Already in the 1960s–80s, education was at the core of Danish refugee integration, permeating the entire field and its various power dynamics. It encompassed both

3 The conceptualisation of educational integration knowledge draws on the theoretical design and development in the collaborative research project “Educating newcomers to the welfare state: Organisational responses to migration 1960s–2010s and their influence on Danish central policy” (EduState), consisting of Mette Buchardt (PI), Karen Nielsen Breidahl (Co-PI), Sophy Bergenheim and Siv Holm Hjortlund, funded by Independent Research Fund Denmark, 2022–26, <https://www.en.culture.aau.dk/research/research-groups/cfu/educating-newcomers-to-the-welfare-state>; see Mette Buchardt and Karen. N. Breidahl, “Educating Newcomers for the Modern Welfare State: Danish Frontline Organisations as Educational Sites and Drivers of Knowledge from the Late 1960s to the Late 1990s,” *Nordic Journal of Educational History*, this issue. The source corpus for the article is also collected in the above-mentioned project.

4 Arne Piel Christensen and Knud Vilby, *Danske værdier og udfordringer i en globaliseret verden: Fra et livs arbejde med flygtninge* (København: Vandkunsten, 2019), 28–30.

5 Lov nr. 474 af 1. juli 1998 om integration af udlændinge i Danmark.

6 See e.g. Christian Joppke, “Beyond national models: Civic integration policies for immigrants in Western Europe,” *West European Politics* 30, no. 1 (2007); Sara Wallace Goodman, *Immigration and Membership Politics in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Karin Borevi, Kristian Kriegbaum Jensen and Per Mouritsen, “The civic turn of immigrant integration policies in the Scandinavian welfare states,” *Comparative Migration Studies*, no. 5 (2017).

more formalised education in the form of language education and social orientation, as well as the more subtle notion of re-educating refugees, where they learned a new way of existence in a new society with the help of educational social integration, or “social-pedagogical guidance” (*socialpædagogisk rådgivning*).<sup>7</sup> Yet, compared to “civic integration”, this period was crucially different in terms of professional knowledge and institutional setting.

Given that it was the advent of refugee integration on a larger and more permanent scale, there were no well-established knowledge traditions specifically on that topic. Instead, in their self-educating and -professionalising endeavours, DRC’s social workers and language educators drew on adjacent specialties as well as their own experiential knowledge from refugee work. Likewise, at the time, there were no regulatory frameworks specifically for governing refugee integration.<sup>8</sup> Yet, since it was a state-subsidised function within the welfare state, it had to be publicly governed somehow – namely, by applying regulations originally designed for other purposes. Educational social integration was developed in relation to social legislation and thus fell under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Language education, on the other hand, was governed through the Act on Leisure-Time Education for Adults<sup>9</sup>, which belonged to the remit of the Ministry of Education.

The development of educational integration knowledge in DRC was thus not only intertwined with ongoing and different inflows of refugees, but also the development of the governing legislation in the Danish welfare state.

The article aims to fill a research gap in the overlapping fields of history of education and migration studies. The “civic turn” from the 1990s has prompted numerous critical studies (within an even wider body of literature on Scandinavian and European integration and immigration policies), but far fewer studies have focused on policies, actors and events prior to the 1980s. Within historical and social scientific research on education, the integrative role of formal education and language education for immi-

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7 Isi Foighel, “Dansk Flygtningehjælps sociale arbejde i forbindelse med integrationen af flygtninge,” appendix to minutes from meeting of the Officials Committee on Refugees (OffCom) 16 January 1970, Collection of Socialministeriet (SocMin), Danish National Archives (DNA).

8 The first applicable official frameworks were Denmark’s first refugee policy of 1979, the 1986 Act on Education for Adult Migrants (Lov nr. 355 af 4. juni 1986 om undervisning af voksne indvandrere), and the 1998 Integration Act.

9 Lov nr. 233 af 6. juni 1968 om fritidsundervisning m.v.

grant children has received scholarly attention,<sup>10</sup> whereas pre-1980s language education for adult migrants (let alone adult refugees) has garnered little scholarly attention beyond the sporadic linguistically orientated studies and contextualising background chapters.<sup>11</sup> Noteworthy exceptions are recent publications by Johanna Ringarp, and Åsa Broberg and Lázaro Moreno Herrera, which both discuss Swedish for Immigrants and socio-economic integration in or from the 1960s.<sup>12</sup>

DRC itself is also a markedly understudied organisation. So far, it has featured in a more substantial role only in Carsten Fenger-Grøn and Malene Grøndahl's monograph on the history of Danish refugees<sup>13</sup>, and in Marta Padovan-Özdemir and Trine Øland's postcolonial analyses of encounters between integration professionals and refugees in the Danish welfare state.<sup>14</sup>

Building on, but also expanding this body of research, the article poses the following question: How did DRC's professionals develop and circulate educational integration knowledge 1) in response to their encounters with refugee groups, and 2) in relation to changing circumstances in the Danish welfare state? In this article, "educational refugee integration" and "educational integration knowledge" are a term pair referring to a broad umbrella of interlinked policy and knowledge fields, such as educational social integration and language education. The sub-fields also played out on different levels and arenas with their various actors, ranging from interpersonal relations and intra-organisational activities to ministerial and international collaboration.

10 See e.g. Mette Buchardt, "The 'Culture' of the Migrant Pupils: A Nation- and Welfare State Historical Perspective on the European Refugee Crisis," *European Education* 50, no. 1 (2018); Nanna Ramsing Enemark, Jin Hui Li and Mette Buchardt, "Education Policies and the Dilemmas Concerning Migrant Students in the Northern European Welfare States: The case of Mother-Tongue Instruction," in *Migrants and Welfare States: Balancing Dilemmas in Northern Europe*, ed. Christian Albrekt Larsen (Cheltenham & Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2022); Marta Padovan-Özdemir, "Fabricating a Welfare Civilization: A Governmental Analysis of Pedagogical Repertoires Available to Teachers of Immigrant Pupils in Danish Public Schools, 1970–2013," in *Statecrafting on the Fringes: Studies of Welfare Work Addressing the Other*, ed. Trine Øland et al. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2019); Hui Jin Lin and Nanna Ramsing Enemark, "Educating to Belong: Policy and Practice of Mother-Tongue Instruction for Migrant Students in the Danish Welfare State," *European Educational Research Journal* 22, no. 1 (2023). For examples on links between education, power and discipline in general, see Björn Lundberg, "Discipline and Punish at Camp: Citizenship and the Issue of Violence at a Swedish Boy Scout Camp," *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 5, no. 2 (2018); Mette Bauer, Karin Borg, and Donald Broady, *Den skjulte læreplan: Skolen socialiserer men hvordan?* (København: Unge Pædagoger, 1993).

11 See, e.g. Johannes Wagner, "Faglig identitet og faglig udvikling i dansk som andetsprog," in *Studier i dansk som andetsprog*, ed. Anne Holmen and Karen Lund (København: Akademisk Forlag, 2001); Karen Bjerg Petersen, *Undervisningsfaget dansk som andetsprog for voksne: Nogle udviklingstendenser* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitet, 2010).

12 Johanna Ringarp, "Vems ansvar? En studie av sfi-utbildningens organisation och invandrarläraernas kvalifikationer, 1960–1998," *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 9, no. 1 (2022); Åsa Broberg and Lázaro Moreno Herrera, "Education for Access to the Swedish Labour Market and Society: A Historical Comparison of Practices for the Integration of Immigrants in the 1960s and early 2000s," in *Migration, Education and Employment: Pathways to Successful Integration*, ed. Marianne Teräs et al. (Cham: Springer, 2024).

13 Carsten Fenger-Grøn and Malene Grøndahl, *Flygtningenes danmarkshistorie 1954–2004* (Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2004).

14 See e.g. Marta Padovan-Özdemir and Trine Øland, "Denied, but Effective: Stock Stories in Danish Welfare Work with Refugees," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 25, no. 2 (2022a); Marta Padovan-Özdemir and Trine Øland, *Racism in Danish Welfare Work with Refugees: Troubled by Difference, Docility and Dignity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2022b).

In this article, I address the research question by analysing DRC's educational social integration and language education on two dimensions, or arenas, around which the article's empirical sections are also structured. The first section focuses on knowledge and responds to the first question by looking at how professionals across specialties co-produced knowledge and solutions for refugee integration. The second section respectively addresses the second, policy-focused question by exploring the institutional setting (regulations and public governance frameworks, in particular) in which educational integration knowledge was implemented as integration policy: as pedagogic social integration, and as language education. As a whole, the article illustrates how educational integration was a two-way process that involved education and knowledge *for* refugees, but also *about* refugees, as DRC and its integration professionals developed and adapted their fields and professions in response to arising issues and new refugee groups.

The material for this article consists of a diverse collection of sources, many of which have rarely or never been used in previous research. The collection ranges from archival materials (minutes, internal reports, memoranda) and correspondence to annual reports and newspaper articles, thus covering both internal materials as well as more polished accounts intended for wider audiences. As a whole, the source material illustrates various facets of DRC's educational integration work as well as the organisation's relations with other actors (ministries, member organisations, personnel). The archival sources consist of materials stored in DRC's premises (The Danish Refugee Council's Historical Archive) as well as three collections in the Danish National Archives: DRC, Danish Red Cross (RC, *Dansk Røde Kors*) and DRC, and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

### **Theoretical approach: Historicising educational integration knowledge**

In approaching the core theme of *educational integration knowledge*, the article adopts a historical epistemological approach rooted in the scholarship of history of knowledge. It reflects the notion that knowledge must be understood as a culturally, socio-politically and historically situated phenomenon. By studying “knowledge *in* society and knowledge *in* culture”,<sup>15</sup> this tradition also highlights the conditions under which knowledge is produced, legitimised, and circulated.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, “educational knowledge” refers not only to knowledge as the object and goal of education, but also education *in* society and *in* culture. Or, following historian of education and knowledge Björn Lundberg, the “why” of education: “[T]he rationale behind governance of education on a state level, the techniques involved in the concrete practices of teaching and learning, and the collection of data for evaluation

15 Simone Lässig, “The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda,” *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 59 (2016), 58.

16 Johan Östling, David Larsson Heidenblad and Anna Nilsson Hammar, “Introduction: Developing the History of Knowledge,” in *Forms of Knowledge: Developing the History of Knowledge*, ed. Johan Östling et al. (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2020); Johan Östling and David Larsson Heidenblad, “Introduction: Histories of knowledge in postwar Scandinavia,” in *Histories of Knowledge in Postwar Scandinavia: Arenas, Actors and Aspirations*, ed. Johan Östling et al. (London & New York: Routledge, 2020).

of educational practices (or student achievements).<sup>17</sup> Drawing also on the concept of educationalisation, which directs attention to how modern states have sought to resolve political and social problems by educating the population,<sup>18</sup> I address the “why” of educational integration knowledge from the perspective of DRC’s professionals: social workers engaged in educational social integration and language educators specialised in teaching Danish and social orientation.

In historicising educational integration knowledge, I employ the analytical concepts of “circulation” and “arena” from the history of knowledge. *Circulation* points to how, why and by whom knowledge is moved, transformed and implemented. *Arenas* are platforms that enable and constrain how knowledge is produced and circulated among knowledge actors and audiences. In short, they form the infrastructural operating conditions (prerequisites, hindrances and potentials) of knowledge. In addition, the importance of a form of knowledge is derived from its social relevance, whereby timing is also a crucial aspect.<sup>19</sup>

The empirical sections in this article are based on two “arena” concepts that illustrate the dual character of refugee integration as a knowledge *and* policy field: the “knowledge arena” and the “institutional arena”. The knowledge arena served as a site and network for knowledge actors to co-develop expertise and circulate educational integration knowledge. The underlying premise was that different areas of educational refugee integration were inherently intertwined aspects of a larger whole – sub-arenas of knowledge, if you will. Therefore, the first empirical section (on the knowledge arena) mostly discusses them in tandem as interlinked activities.

Translating educational integration knowledge into policy practice, for its part, entailed circulating this knowledge to the institutional arena: that is, the regulative and policy framework within which educational refugee integration was implemented. Since educational social integration and language education for refugees were subjected to different regulations and authorities, they were segregated into their own institutional arenas, even though they shared the same knowledge base and socio-pedagogical objectives. Respectively, in the second empirical section (on the institutional arena), each subsection discusses its own institutional arenas. For both of them, I outline the parameters that dictated the limits and opportunities for implementation, as well as how these parameters were negotiated between DRC and the state, but also internally within DRC.

In the article, DRC thus features as a knowledge actor (expert organisation), but it also acts as a platform for knowledge circulation: on one hand, connecting its own educational integration professionals as well as other knowledge actors, but, on the other, also imposing restrictions for how, where and to whom knowledge is circula-

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17 Björn Lundberg, “Exploring Histories of Knowledge and Education: An Introduction,” *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 9, no. 2 (2022), 3.

18 Marc Depaepe and Paul Smeyers, “Educationalization as an Ongoing Modernization Process,” *Educational Theory* 58, no.4 (2008); Daniel Tröhler, “Educationalization of Social Problems and the Educationalization of the Modern World,” in *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, ed. Michael A. Peters (Singapore: Springer, 2016).

19 Östling, Olsen and Larsson Heidenblad, (2020), 7; Östling, Larsson Heidenblad and Nilsson Hammar (2020), 16; on timing, see also Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

ted. In other words, DRC should not be understood as a uniform, neutral coordinator or facilitator for a shared cause, even though activities and relations typically were collegial and collaborative rather than antagonistic. Just like any other area of human activity, educational integration knowledge was underpinned by its own power dynamics and frictions.

This article hence explores various forms, areas and contexts of educational integration knowledge. This approach showcases how educational integration knowledge was not merely a set of ideas or practices, but a historically situated and institutionally mediated phenomenon, shaped by power relations, professional knowledge and shifting political priorities.

### **Knowledge arena: Circulating educational integration knowledge and solutions among professionals**

#### *Refugee reception and integration: A cross-sectoral effort and learning curve*

For almost half a century, Danish refugee integration was a joint endeavour of the state, most importantly the Ministry of Social Affairs, and a non-governmental organisation, DRC. It was partially state funded from 1957 and fully subsidised since 1967.<sup>20</sup>

In August 1969, DRC's management and the Ministry of Social Affairs' representatives sat down to discuss more permanent solutions for receiving and integrating refugees, as another surge of refugees was anticipated to arrive over autumn. Language education as early as possible was deemed "of crucial importance for integration from a psychological as well as social-pedagogical standpoint". The main focus was on socioeconomic goals: learning Danish at a level that allowed refugees to utilise their professional background and/or enrol into educational programmes as swiftly as possible.<sup>21</sup> However, also individual aspects like quality of life were deliberated. It was expressed, for example, in principles that occupational placement should aim for "as much fulfilment [*tilfredsstillende*] as possible", or that all refugees were offered language education regardless of their socioeconomic prospects in the Danish society, in order to mitigate social isolation and marginalisation.<sup>22</sup> The latter eventually became a long-standing principle and objective for integrative language education.

In 1970, DRC and the Ministry of Social Affairs acknowledged that refugee flows were unlikely to resume their moderate pre-1968 levels but would remain higher as well as continue to fluctuate abruptly. In 1970–73, DRC therefore underwent an organisational restructuring, which allowed it to adjust to the new and more permanent form of refugee integration. Among others, the reorganisation entailed decentralising refugee integration by establishing provincial integration centres in Århus (Jutland) and Odense (Funen) in addition to Copenhagen.

In designing and implementing the new educational refugee integration services, DRC collaborated with various public authorities, most importantly the Ministry of

20 Børge Thøfner, "Tilbageblik: Dansk Flygtningehjælp 1956–1982," in *Flygtningehjælp*, ed. Hans Gammeltoft-Hansen and Niels-Christian Andersen (København: Dansk Flygtningehjælp, 1983), 31, 34.

21 Minutes from DRC's finance and working committee (FWC) meeting 5 August 1969, Collection of Dansk Flygtningehjælp (DF), Danish National Archives.

22 DF, "Dansk Flygtningehjælps arbejde," internal report, 1973, The Danish Refugee Council's Historical Archive (DRCHA).

Social Affairs and the Municipality of Copenhagen, whose specialised civil servants were loaned to DRC as temporary expert personnel during the readjustment period 1970–72.<sup>23</sup> Among the most central figures were administrative secretary (*ekspeditionssekretær*) Fanny Hartmann from the Ministry of Social Affairs, and Harriet Holst from the Municipality of Copenhagen, who was specialised in re-education (*revalidering*). Hartmann assisted in outlining the parameters and guidelines for refugee integration, which included developing a systematised scheme for DRC's economic support.<sup>24</sup> Holst acted as the interim head of integration (i.e., head of DRC's three integration departments), drafted procedural guidelines and educated the personnel on the applicable regulations.<sup>25</sup> In other words, public administration knowledge was circulated from the field of social policy into the emerging field of integration policy.

In early 1970, at the height of the refugee situation, the arena of knowledge was respectively wide and active. In order to ease the pressure on DRC's operations in Copenhagen, nine interim centres were established across non-metropolitan Denmark. Only two were ran by DRC (Århus and Odense), the others by Danish Red Cross and Danchurchaid (*Folkekirkens Nødhjælp*), both DRC's member organisations. DRC still carried main responsibility for refugee integration, whereby all refugee centres were to follow DRC's model, as well as report to DRC. In practice, the overall chaos with the refugee situation brought about disruptions in coordination, breakdowns in communication, as well as delays in crucial behind-the-scenes work, like drafting guidelines. Therefore, despite the objective and expectation of uniformity, centres had to adopt an independent problem-solving approach. This strained the relations between RC and DRC, in particular.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the rocky start, all centres were eventually up and running as a nation-wide refugee integration network, collectively accumulating experiential knowledge. This knowledge was then circulated in joint workshops, in which centre leaders, frontline staff (social workers, teachers) and representatives from DRC, RC and the Ministry of Social Affairs discussed experiences, practices as well as challenges and their possible solutions.<sup>27</sup>

The pioneering period of educational integration of the late 1960s and early 1970s entailed circulation, transformation and consolidation of knowledge on a cross-sectoral arena of knowledge. Its formative impact is exemplified by the legacy of the very first integration model developed back then. Namely, when Denmark launched its first official refugee policy in accordance with its agreement with UNHCR in 1979, the introduction programme implemented under the policy followed the same structure,

23 For a more detailed account of the relations between DRC and the Ministry of Social Affairs, see Sophy Bergenheim, "The Refugee's Bridge to a New Future in Denmark: The Danish Refugee Council, the State and Social Integration, 1968–1978," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, forthcoming.

24 Minutes from the meeting of the Officials Committee on Refugees 16 January 1970, Collection of Socialministeriet, Danish National Archives.

25 Isi Foighel, Chairman's review at DRC's assembly 13 March 1970 & 18 June 1971, The Danish Refugee Council's Historical Archive; "Harriet Holst 50 år," *Politiken*, 26 July 1977.

26 Archival units 672 & 673, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp (DRK & DF)/ Socialministeriet, Danish National Archives.

27 E.g. Minutes from the meeting of the managers of Danish Red Cross' refugee homes 12 February 1970, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives.

principles and process as DRC's existing integration process. The only major difference was the shortening of the integration period under DRC from two years to an average of 18 months. Like its predecessor, this integration programme was collaboratively drafted by DRC and the Ministry of Social Affairs.<sup>28</sup>

***Educational refugee integration: systematic, but also responsive?***

DRC's educational integration knowledge was based on core values of multicultural, or acculturative, integration. Respectively, DRC opposed assimilatory integration, as DRC saw it leading to refugees effectively losing their identity.<sup>29</sup> Refugee integration was, by nature, a moving target: each refugee group had their specific identities, characteristics, needs and challenges, which in turn required an adaptive and responsive approach on the educational integration professionals' part. The educational integration process therefore strived for a level of cultural sensitivity, for example by accommodating certain cultural aspects, such as norms and hierarchies pertaining to gender and age.<sup>30</sup> The refugee's encounter with DRC and Denmark was thus made more palatable, which ideally would translate into a more positive and open attitude towards the integration process as a whole. DRC also sought to influence attitudes on the receiving end: its long-standing purpose was to educate authorities and the general public on "refugee questions" and to foster a positive stance toward refugees.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, refugee work operated under the changing socioeconomic and ideational conditions of the surrounding Danish society. The 1960s were marked by steady economic growth, which brought about structural changes for Denmark, transforming it into a wealthy post-industrial consumer society. Moreover, the optimistic planning ethos was manifested in long-prepared and extensive public policy reforms. One significant result was the decentralisation of public administration, which endowed municipalities with increased autonomy, as well as economic responsibility. Within social policy, there was a shift from punitive or victimising mitigation of poverty to empowering and supporting the individual citizen.<sup>32</sup>

The effects of the 1960s were also present in educational refugee integration, particularly the idea of re-education (*revalidering*). Re-educational social work reflected the modern planning state's objective to reform anyone with deficient work abilities into autonomous and self-reliant citizens, regardless of whether the handicap was physical,

28 Dansk Flygtningehjælp, *77/78 årsberetning II: Integration, asyl-, projekt- og informationsarbejde* (København: Dansk Flygtningehjælp, 1978); Dansk Flygtningehjælp, *Årsberetning – 1979* (København: Dansk Flygtningehjælp, 1980). Relations between DRC and the Ministry of Social Affairs, as well as the development of DRC's integration programme 1968–79 is discussed in more detail in Bergenheim (forthcoming).

29 E.g. Roland Wald, "Flygtningeproblemerne fortsat meget betydelige i Danmark: Samtale med Arne Piel Christensen," *Jødisk orientering* 47, no. 10 (1976); Malin Lindgren, "Det er sværest for mænd at blive danskere," *Politiken*, 18 February 1979.

30 E.g. Lindgren (1979).

31 DRC's statutes 1960, The Danish Refugee Council's Historical Archive.

32 Jørn Henrik Petersen, Klaus Petersen and Niels Finn Christiansen, "Det socialpolitiske idelandskab," in *Dansk velfærdshistorie: Velfærdsstatens storhedstid, 1956–1973*, ed. Jørn Henrik Petersen et al. (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2012); Niels Finn Christiansen, Klaus Petersen and Niels Finn Christiansen, "Samfundsforhold," in *Dansk velfærdshistorie: Velfærdsstatens storhedstid, 1956–1973*, ed. Jørn Henrik Petersen et al. (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2013).

psychological, social or occupational.<sup>33</sup> During the labour shortage of the late 1960s and early 1970s, circulating this professional knowledge into educational refugee integration was fairly frictionless.<sup>34</sup>

Alas, in 1973, the oil crisis wrought havoc on the global economy, which also cast a gloom over the economic conditions in Denmark: unemployment spiked, governments implemented cuts in public spending and other austerity measures, and yet inflation surged, eventually leading to stagflation. As the Danish educational field and labour market had become increasingly professionalised, the unskilled labour force was respectively hit particularly hard by rising unemployment rates. As the 1970s progressed, the welfare state became the target of increasingly vocal criticism calling for its retrenchment. In addition, anti-immigrant attitudes gained foothold throughout the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>35</sup>

From the mid-1970, unemployment and the disproportionately difficult position of refugees were a recurring topic in DRC's annual reviews. For refugees, the most direct impact of higher educational requirements were the ever-increasing demands for proficiency in Danish.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, refugees rarely had educational and professional backgrounds that were a direct fit with the Danish society and labour market. Typically, at least some retraining or additional qualifications were required, in addition to learning to navigate the alien environment of the Danish labour market, educational institution and/or workplace.

Previously, the occupational ambitions and subsequent frustrations of the highly educated Eastern European refugees had been perceived as an unnecessary complication for integration. From the mid-1970s, DRC instead gave priority to unskilled refugees with little to no knowledge of European languages. This principle was first implemented with Vietnamese refugees and carried on within the UNHCR quota programme.<sup>37</sup> Thus, ironically, by the 1970s, a significant proportion refugees were unskilled and unilingual, which set them and DRC's educational integration professionals up for a particularly difficult encounter with the specialised Danish education system and labour market. From the late 1970s, DRC tried to mitigate the situation through various projects and initiatives combining language education and occupational education. Such experiments included welding classes merged with language education, and combined language and vocational introductory courses for long-term unemployed (so-called EIFL courses), which became a permanent format in the language schools' repertoire.<sup>38</sup>

33 Søren Kolstrup, "Fra forsorgslov til bistandslov," in *Dansk velfærdshistorie: Velfærdsstatens storhedstid*, ed. Jørn Henrik Petersen et al. (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2012).

34 DF, 77/78 årsberetning II, 44.

35 Petersen, Petersen and Christiansen 2013; Jacob Christensen, "Arbejdsløshedsforsikring og aktivering," in *Dansk velfærdshistorie: Velfærdsstaten i tidehverv, 1973–1993*, ed. Jørn Henrik Petersen et al. (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2013).

36 E.g. Dansk Flygtningehjælp, "Dansk Flygtningehjælps beretning for perioden 1.10.1975–30.9.1976," The Danish Refugee Council's Historical Archive; Dansk Flygtningehjælp, 76/77 årsberetning (København: Dansk Flygtningehjælp, 1977), 29–30.

37 Helga Griffin, "Fra Vietnam til Danmark," in *Flygtningehjælp*, ed. Hans Gammeltoft-Hansen and Niels-Christian Andersen (København: Dansk Flygtningehjælp, 1983); Dansk Flygtningehjælp, *Beretning okt. 78–maj 79* (København: Dansk Flygtningehjælp, 1979), 36–8.

38 See e.g. DF, Årsberetning 1979.

Typically, issues and solutions in refugee integration were contemplated internally and together with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Occasionally, DRC encountered issues that fell beyond the integration programme, and member organisations would then often step up in addressing the issue – thus expanding the knowledge arena and intensifying the translational circulation of educational integration knowledge. For example, in the early 1970s, DRC's social workers took note of refugees' adaptive challenges relating to questions of personal identity, social belonging and leisure time. In response, DRC established activity centres in connection with its language schools, whereas Red Cross and the Danish Jewish Community (*Mosaik Troessamfund*) established leisure clubs as meeting places for refugees.<sup>39</sup>

### *Language education*

As a central aspect in refugee integration, language education formed a sub-arena of educational integration knowledge in its own right. The early days of DRC's language schools marked an era of enthusiastic pioneering with vigorous knowledge circulation and transformation. At the time, Danish for Immigrants or Danish as Second Language did not exist as a pedagogical discipline or even as a professional training programme. Likewise, there were no established pedagogical approaches, curricula or materials. In other words, *everything* was new and had to be developed more or less from scratch.

On DRC's initiative, the Ministry of Education organised two pedagogy-focused intensive courses for teachers in Danish for foreigners in 1972–73, both attended by DRC's teachers. The ministry also organised statutory courses for special education stipulated in the Leisure-Time Act.<sup>40</sup> Otherwise, especially compared to the close and fruitful collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs around the integration programme, refugee education was not met with similar enthusiastic support from the Ministry of Education. Therefore, knowledge-production for refugee education was largely left to the discretion – and initiative – of DRC throughout the 1970s.

Already in the early 1970s, group of DRC's language educators aspired to form a methodologically orientated professional network. The basic methodology at the language schools was based on the so-called natural method: essentially, a bootcamp in spoken Danish, where pronunciation and communicative skills were heavily prioritised over proficiency in written Danish.<sup>41</sup> It was coupled with audiovisual methodologies, in which DRC's language educators were particularly interested. Especially from 1969 to the mid-1970s, there was much collaboration with organisations like ORT (Organisation for Rehabilitation through Training) and CEEL (Centre experimental pour l'en-

39 Foighel, Chairman's review 13 March 1970 & 18 June 1971, DRCHA; Dansk Flygtningehjælp, "Dansk Flygtningehjælps organisation, arbejdsopgaver, personale og arbejdsfordeling pr. 1.6.1971" & "[...] 1.11.1973", DRHCA; Elisabeth Kjærgaard, "Bestræbelser på flygtningenes sociale integration i Aarhus" & Hedevig Bjerre and Arne Piel Christensen, "Nogle aspekter i arbejdet med at fremme flygtningenes personlige tilpasning," memoranda for personnel seminar 24–26 April 1974, DRHCA.

40 Mogens Pihl, Chairman's review at DRC's assembly 13 November 1972, The Danish Refugee Council's Historical Archive; minutes from DRC's executive committee meeting 5 April 1974, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives.

41 ExC5 April 1974, DRK & DF, DNA; Sonja Hansen, Andreas Kamm and Troels Dannerfjord (ed.), *Undervisningserfaringer og metoder i basisundervisningen på Dansk Flygtningehjælps sprogskoler* (København: Dansk Flygtningehjælp, 1982).

seignement des langues) in connection with integrating Polish refugees, developing the language education dimension of the new integration model, and building up the competence of language educators through study trips, among others.<sup>42</sup> There were also ambitions to take the collaboration further: in 1974, a group of teachers proposed co-developing a systematic audiovisual methodology specifically for Danish. However, the project failed to gain funding either from the Ministry of Education or elsewhere, and the idea was abandoned the following year.<sup>43</sup>

Since the shortage of published materials suitable for teaching Danish to foreigners was a persistent issue throughout the entire 1970s, language schools developed materials and curricula in-house. They were then circulated on ad hoc basis internally across DRC's language schools, as well as the refugee centres set up in 1970 by RC and Danchurchaid for receiving and integrating Polish and Czech refugees.<sup>44</sup> Teachers also built up their own pedagogical competence by attending in-house and external courses and events (e.g., study trips or courses organised by Ministry of Education). Acquired skills, ideas and approaches were circulated in DRC through internal training.<sup>45</sup>

In the early 1980s, increasing immigrant numbers coupled with ever higher demands on the labour market eventually prompted initiatives to coordinate immigrant education both on a national level and internally within DRC. The nation-wide, publicly funded projects engaged a variety of actors involved in teaching Danish to foreigners (including DRC) and prefaced the 1986 Act on Education for Adult Immigrants<sup>46</sup>, the first law to govern the education of adult immigrants.<sup>47</sup>

DRC's internal projects sought to collect and circulate the knowledge in integrative language pedagogy and education materials accumulated within DRC over the years.<sup>48</sup> One of the resulting anthologies, published in 1982, came to form a cornerstone for DRC's more systematic endeavours. It outlined the core approach and objective of DRC's language education, namely, equipping refugees with "communicative survival skills" for managing formal and informal encounters in the Danish everyday linguistically and culturally. In other words, in addition to making the Danish reality intelligible to refugees, it was also about making *refugees* understandable to the average Dane.<sup>49</sup>

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42 Thyra Christensen, "Hjælp jøderne ud af deres ghetto her," *Berlingske Aftenavis*, 1 November 1969; minutes from DRC's executive committee meetings 5 April & 4 May 1974, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives.

43 Minutes from DRC's executive committee meetings 5 April 1974, 4 May 1974 & 26 June 1975, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives.

44 Mogens Rukov, cover letter to Stig Christensen re: materials for refugee education 16 January 1970, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives; archival units 672 & 673, DRK & DF / SocMin, DNA.

45 Pihl, Chairman's review 13 November 1972, DRCHA; ExC 5 April 1974, DRK & DF, DNA.

46 L 355 af 4.6.1986.

47 Bente Andersen and Susanne Rosenfeldt Nielsen, *Det pædagogiske arbejde på Dansk Flygtningehjælps sprogskoler 1980–1999* (Odense: Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Sprogcenter Odense, 2000), 15; Flemming Peuliche, Jette Isaksen and Povl Terkelsen (ed.), *Materialer til indvandrerdokumentation: Rapport fra en konference i Ry d. 2. og 3. november 1984* (København & Århus: SVUA & Voksen Pædagogisk Center, 1985).

48 Andersen and Nielsen (2000).

49 Hansen et al. (1982).

### *Gatekeeping educational integration knowledge*

The previous sub-sections could well give the impression that educational integration endeavours were perceived as a shared cause, whereby knowledge would be circulated as widely as possible. On a smaller scale (internally or within DRC's integration network), this image is quite accurate.

On a broader level, however, educational integration knowledge was sometimes treated as a finite and status-bearing resource to be guarded from outsiders. The most notable attempt at fencing the arena of knowledge was the question of refugees versus guestworkers. In the late 1960s and most of the 1970s, they were perceived as distinctly separate groups in Denmark. Public debates were mostly concerned with the guestworkers, whose total numbers were roughly tenfold compared to refugees in the early 1970s (ca. 35,000 in 1970<sup>50</sup> and ca. 3,300 in total in 1970–74<sup>51</sup>, respectively). DRC consistently objected to parallels being drawn between the groups – particularly when it was used as an argument for expanding state-funded integration services to non-refugee immigrants. DRC resolutely rebuffed all proposals to include guestworkers into its clientele, regardless of the suggested scope, form or duration.<sup>52</sup>

When it came to refugee integration, DRC appears to have been open to circulating its knowledge, not only internally but also on the wider arena of educational integration knowledge, in particular language education methods and materials. For example, despite all the chaos with the interim refugee centres, DRC's language education model was apparently communicated and implemented to the satisfaction of all parties.<sup>53</sup>

However, DRC was initially, throughout the 1970s, extremely reluctant to share its knowledge base with other educational institutions – even when the request came from DRC's own former teacher, who now worked at another organisation – and it publicly opposed the idea of merging language education for refugees and for guestworkers into a unified field.<sup>54</sup> It was not until 1980 that DRC finally came around: faced with the dire shortage of instruction materials, it proposed establishing a collaborative organ in order to tackle raise funding and coordinate material production efforts.<sup>55</sup>

50 *Betænkning om udenlandske arbejderes forhold i Danmark*, Betænkning nr. 589 (København, 1971), 20.

51 Number of refugees granted asylum (there are no exact annual figures for the 1970s). "Flygtninge, som har fået asyl i Danmark 1956–2019". Refugees Welcome. <https://refugeeswelcome.dk/media/dm2l4ixc/faktaark-hvor-mange-flgt-i-dk-1956-2019-og-hvorfra.pdf>

52 E.g. minutes from DRC's executive committee meeting 11 February 1971, Collection of Socialministeriet, Danish National Archives; minutes from DRC's executive committee meeting 22 February 1974, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives; minutes from the meeting of the Ministerial Committee on Refugees 30 March 1971, Collection of Socialministeriet, Danish National Archives.

53 Archival units 672 & 673, DRK & DF / SocMin, DNA.

54 Jørgen Siegmundfeldt, "Lærerkraft: Fremmedarbejdere og flygtninge bør nu ligestilles," *Information*, 31 July 1973.

55 Arne Piel Christensen and Troels Dannerfjord, "Danskundervisning: Orientering om iværksættelse af forskellige nye samarbejdsrelationer til erhvervsuddannelserne m.v.," appendix, to minutes from DRC's integration committee (IC) meeting 16 September 1979, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives.

## Institutional arena: Circulating educational integration knowledge into policy practice

### *Educational social integration and the spirit of the Social Assistance Act*<sup>56</sup>

Whereas the knowledge arena served as a shared platform for circulating knowledge across different areas of refugee integration (albeit not *immigrant* integration until the 1980s), translating this knowledge into policy entailed, by nature, segregating the areas into institutional arenas according to the applicable policy framework. Educational social integration was implemented under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs as social welfare, a policy area that had been undergoing significant transformations in the post-war era.

The 1950s and 1960s were marked by utopian ideas and reforms for an expanding Danish welfare state. State-orientated paternalistic ideas underpinning social debates were gradually replaced by citizen-orientated individualist notions. These new ideas no longer placed the blame with the individual for their personal predicaments but instead fostered an optimistic belief in the citizen's individual potential. Respectively, the professionalising field of social work saw the rise of personalised and holistic casework. The underlying guiding principle was the so-called one-tiered system, which was based on coordination and collaboration between institutions and authorities in accordance with the citizen's individual needs.<sup>57</sup> These principles were manifested in a number of state committees and legislative reforms regarding public administration and planning as well as social policy, most notably the 1961 Social Care Act (*forsorgsloven*)<sup>58</sup>, the 1970 municipal reform, the Social Reform Committee (1965–72) and the resulting 1974 Social Assistance Act (*bistandsloven*, in force 1976)<sup>59</sup>.

As Carsten Fenger-Grøn and Malene Grøndahl have noted, DRC's social workers were doing pioneering work in implementing the client-focused and one-tiered approach long before the 1974 reform.<sup>60</sup> Up until late 1969, DRC's social work with refugees was based on client-based principles, where refugees were designated personal caseworkers who coordinated their tailored integration plan. This entailed initiating the individual's integration process with an extensive intake interview (*førstegangssamtale*), in order to gather basic details and determine both immediate next steps, such as organising housing, as well as longer-term (occupational) goals.

However, at the height of the influx of refugees, a profound conflict erupted between DRC's management and social workers. It boiled down to epistemological-methodological questions that also manifested themselves on a material level. The sharp increase in the number of refugees to process had led to alarming backlogs, as the personnel was critically and chronically understaffed, and DRC's attempts at recruiting more social workers proved fruitless.<sup>61</sup> The situation unfolded at the dawn of the educational

56 This section discusses social legislation from the perspective of the social workers' educational integration knowledge. For a more detailed analysis on the relation between social legislation and DRC's integration programme, see Bergenheim (forthcoming).

57 Kolstrup (2012); see also Petersen, Christiansen and Petersen (2012).

58 Lov nr. 169 af 31. maj 1961 om offentlig forsorg.

59 Lov nr. 333 af 19. juni 1974 om social bistand.

60 Fenger-Grøn and Grøndahl (2004), 59.

61 Foighel, "Sociale arbejde," app. OffCom 16 January 1970, SocMin, DNA.

professionalisation of social work, which meant that all qualified hands were already on deck, and much of the corps of professional social workers was still in the making (i.e. mid-studies).

DRC's leadership, particularly chairman Foighel, did not quite share the social workers' view on the importance of the intake interview, and in general he perceived the implemented methods as overly bureaucratic, needlessly exacerbating the prevailing circumstances. He posited that most refugees merely needed a helping hand in the start, whereby a more rudimentary process would suffice. On Foighel's initiative in late 1969, the intake process was split into registration, performed by administrative staff, and "social pedagogical guidance", undertaken by qualified social workers.<sup>62</sup>

While DRC's social workers agreed to this division of labour, they did not share Foighel's views on professional social work. Their spokesperson maintained that most refugees needed extensive assistance – more precisely, the support of "modern social coordination" based on a joint plan between the involved social institutions. Eventually, DRC's social workers deemed that their working circumstances made it impossible for them to conduct their work with professional dignity, as the new organisational structure and material conditions essentially did away with the core principles of the previous model for educational social integration. As a result, all thirteen social workers resigned in January 1970.<sup>63</sup>

DRC's management nonetheless followed through on scrapping the "meticulous individual guidance" – instead, the reorganised DRC adopted more of a brokering role.<sup>64</sup> In 1973, DRC's new chair, Mogens Pihl, described DRC's restructured integration work as a small-scale experiment of the "social supermarket" (*sociale supermarked*) idea of the social reform.<sup>65</sup> By this, he referred to the goal of intra-organisational coordination, as all functions from language education, social work and leisure-time activity centres were centralised under one roof. In addition, internal guidelines and organs were established in order to facilitate coordination between the integration departments.<sup>66</sup>

In 1971, DRC cemented its new guideline for refugee work in the slogan "help to self-help" (*hjælp til selv-hjælp*). The methodological approach shifted from individual counselling to group counselling, and the retrenched form of social and economic assistance was established as the default procedure. This was justified by the necessary operative flexibility in relation to refugee flows, as well as the aim to aid as many refugees as possible. The reduced service level was painted as ultimately benefiting refugees, as they learned to become independent in the Danish society – that is, help themsel-

62 Foighel, "Sociale arbejde," app. OffCom 16 January 1970, SocMin, DNA.

63 Viggo Duvå, "Dårlig start for 2000 nye medborgere," *Politiken*, 30 January 1970; also see Fenger-Grøn and Grøndahl (2004), 60.

64 Arne Piel Christensen, "Om Dansk Flygtningehjælps arbejde med de polske flygtninge," in *Integrationsproblemer i sundhedssystemet: De polske flygtninge i Danmark*, ed. Ralph Kempinski and Mian Krasnik (København: Københavns Universitet, 1972).

65 Mogens Pihl, memorandum for meeting with Minister of Social Affairs Eva Gredal on 18 November 1971, Collection of Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives; Pihl, Chairman's review 13 November 1972, DRCHA.

66 DF, "Organisation pr. 1.11.1973", DRCHA.

ves.<sup>67</sup> However, DRC's rhetoric and logic were at odds with the core ideas of the 1960s and 1970s social reforms. Optics were also not improved by the undeniably anachronistic term "help to self-help", a well-known nineteenth- and early twentieth-century concept connected to a markedly paternalistic notion of poor relief, with which the general Danish development had long since broken.<sup>68</sup>

One aspect of educational social integration as "help to self-help" was to identify and tap into the individual refugee's potential. In principle, this was in line with the 1960s–1970s ethos of empowering the citizen-individual, which also related to the tradition of re-education.<sup>69</sup> In refugee integration, the social worker's role was to function as an educational and cultural mediator between the refugee's latent potential and the society – as the decade progressed, increasingly from the perspective of how the refugee could contribute to society, rather than what the society could offer. Thus, the task entailed identifying the opportunities and limits of a refugee's potential and, respectively, redirecting any unrealistic and incompatible aspirations that they might harbour. On the other hand, DRC also recognised and celebrated acculturative integration and the multicultural potential that refugees possessed.<sup>70</sup> In sum, this aspect of educational social integration was by and large what Marta Padovan-Özdemir and Trine Øland have categorised as the "stock story of potentializing", which "materializes when the social worker instils a will in the refugee to 'contribute to the Danish society'"<sup>71</sup>

Another specialised form of expertise of DRC's educational social integration was translating and implementing social legislation beyond its customary scope of application. It had been one of the expressed motives for delegating refugee integration to a specialised private organisation,<sup>72</sup> and it still was a specific policy competency under the Social Assistance Act. Since the 1970s, refugee benefits had been harmonised with the legislation, and the 1979 refugee policy made it an official policy.<sup>73</sup> However, even as the principles were derived directly from the law, DRC's social workers still had the need for specialised legislative knowledge. The 1974 Social Assistance Act was still at the core of their expertise; namely, how to interpret the deliberately ambiguous legislation<sup>74</sup> and apply it to the educational integration work with refugees.

On occasion, educational social integration merged all of the above-mentioned aspects. In 1981, an internal ad hoc committee on refugee benefits recommended an interpretation of the Social Assistance Act that allowed a categorical decrease in bene-

67 Foighel, Chairman's review, 18.6.1971, DRCHA; DF, "Organisation pr. 1.6.1971", DRCHA.

68 Kolstrup (2012); Anders Sevelsted, "Moral Elites and the De-Paradoxification of Danish Social Policy Between Civil Society and State (1849–2022)," *Voluntas* 34, no. 3 (2023).

69 Petersen, Christiansen and Petersen (2012).

70 E.g. DF, "DFs arbejde," 1973, DRCHA; Wald (1976); Andreas Kamm, *Den store udfordring: Erindringer fra 40 års liv med flygtninge* (København: Gad, 2019).

71 Padovan-Özdemir and Øland (2022a), 220.

72 Quoted in Mette Damgaard, *Retssikkerhed i integrationsarbejdet for flygtninge* (København: Retsvidenskabeligt Institut B, Københavns universitet, 1989), 6.

73 DF, "DFs arbejde," 1973, DRCHA; Pihl, memo: Gerdal 18 November 1971, DF, DNA; DF, 76/77 årsberetning; DF, 77/78 årsberetning II.

74 Hanne Reintoft, *Samfundsstøtte eller socialpolitisk avantgarde: Et tilbageblik over 40 års socialrådgivning* (København: Dansk Socialrådgiverforening, 1978), 75.

fits. The committee had found that the benefits' generosity (even though they were at the minimum level in accordance with the act) risked having a passivating effect, hence working against the cause. Therefore, the committee recommended exerting "positive pedagogical influence" in order to encourage refugees to take accountability in their own situation, in the spirit of help to self-help.<sup>75</sup>

### *Language education for refugees and the bureaucracy of the Leisure-Time Act*

Whereas DRC's educational social integration was intertwined with the Social Assistance Act, the counterpart for DRC's language education was the 1968 Act on Leisure-Time Education<sup>76</sup>, the Leisure-Time Act (*fritidsloven*) for short. Using this legislation as a governing instrument in this particular context might seem counter-intuitive, given that language education was a prerequisite for receiving integration support from DRC. In other words, language education was not a voluntary leisure activity for refugees. Nonetheless, the Leisure-Time Act was the applicable law until the 1986 Act on Education for Adult Immigrants<sup>77</sup>.

The 1968 Leisure-Time Act was initially heralded as the "best legislation on leisure in the world".<sup>78</sup> It codified societal support for privately organised leisure and cultural activities, particularly informal adult and youth education., which obligated municipalities to finance and otherwise enable leisure-time activities (e.g. by providing locales), in part through state subsidies. The goal to improve practical conditions for leisure activities and adult education through the Leisure-Time Act also cemented civic activity as a core value in the Danish society, epitomising the Grundtvigian spirit of individual self-development and "folk education" (*folkeoplysning*).<sup>79</sup>

The Leisure-Time Act was prepared and enacted in the same period as the Social Reform Committee was working on an extensive social reform, in turn representing the establishment of "the world's best welfare state". Both reforms were a part of the expansion and consolidation of the Danish state apparatus.<sup>80</sup> As a municipally rooted institution, the Leisure-Time Act also reflected a long-going process of public decentralisation, in which the modernising welfare state redistributed autonomy, power and responsibilities to municipalities and counties, notably manifested in the extensive Municipal Reform of 1970.

75 René Albeck and Jørn Kristensen, memorandum from DRC's benefit committee (6 May 1981), app. IC 14 August 1981, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives.

76 L 233 af 6.6.1968.

77 L 355 af 4.6.1986.

78 Lars Bo Kaspersen and Laila Ottesen, "Associationalism for 150 years and Still Alive and Kicking: Some Reflections on Danish Civil Society," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 4, no. 1 (2001), 122.

79 Kaspersen and Ottesen (2001), 122; Christiane Mossin, "Past and Present Futures of Democracy: The Danish Peasants' Movement as Democracy Instigator and Cultural Mythologizer," in *Civil Society: Between Concepts and Empirical Grounds*, ed. Liv Egholm and Lars Bo Kaspersen (London & New York: Routledge, 2021); Ove Korsgaard, *Kampen om lyset: Dansk voksenoplysning gennem 500 år* (København: Gyldendal, 1997), 403–4.

80 Lars Bo Kaspersen and Anders Sevelsted, "The 'Long History' of Civil Society in Denmark and Western Europe," in *Civil Society: Between Concepts and Empirical Grounds*, ed. Liv Egholm and Lars Bo Kaspersen (London & New York: Routledge, 2021), 65.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the operating conditions for language education were novel and still finding their form, including the Leisure-Time Act and its remit. It was a new legislative framework, fuelled with enlightened optimism. Yet, at the same time, it was also suffering from significant growing pains. Its administration was heavy and convoluted, whereby the law was debated and revised in the parliament almost annually. At the other end of the pipeline, the ambiguous legislation was occasionally interpreted and implemented with localised creativity.<sup>81</sup> This was not necessarily against the Leisure-Time Act's essence, as it often did not provide precise parameters for implementation (e.g. specify exact numbers for group size requirements) – and even if it did, the Ministry of Education had access to discretionary back doors.

In 1971, the institutional framework for organising adult education for foreigners was finally officially set, as the Directorate for Youth and Adult Education (*Direktoratet for ungdomsundervisningen*), which operated under the Ministry of Education, determined that the Leisure-Time Act was a suitable instrument for governing language education for guestworkers and, a bit later, also refugees.<sup>82</sup> Thus, guestworkers and refugees were brought under the same institutional roof. Introductory courses in Danish and social orientation for guestworkers and refugees were deemed to fall under “discretionary special education for adults” (*hensyntagende specialundervisning*). According to the Directorate, “not knowing the language used in the workplace, or one's rights and responsibilities as a Danish taxpayer” constituted a “severe handicap” for foreigners entering Danish work life,<sup>83</sup> whereby it was warranted to use the label of “special education”, albeit in a somewhat unconventional interpretation.

Special education operated under significantly more lenient requirements than general leisure-time education. Whereas the general provisions of the Leisure-Time Act fluctuated on a yearly basis, the basic framework for special education remained stable: no course fees (as the municipality and the state jointly covered instructor remunerations) and moreover, it could be arranged with small group sizes.<sup>84</sup> Both aspects were necessary concessions for the intensive language education regime in DRC's language schools. However, whereas the legislative level remained constant, ministerial guidelines that set the practical parameters were significantly fickle.

Compared to the discretionary autonomy in DRC's social integration work, owing in particular to the organisation's direct relations with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Leisure-Time Act was not quite as accommodating, despite its seeming flexibility. Initially, however, the fluctuating legal frameworks hardly affected DRC's language education. It was covered by the relatively more stable shield of “special education”, and DRC was also able to negotiate special arrangements with the Ministry of Education.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, the Leisure-Time Act dictated the working conditions for all educators and managers under its auspices. In addition to salary levels, the law stipulated a variety

81 Kaspersen and Ottesen (2001); Petersen (2010), 32–5.

82 Direktoratet for ungdomsundervisningen, “Vedr. loven om fritidsundervisning m.v. (§ 37),” 6 April 1971 & “Vedr. loven om fritidsundervisning m.v. (§ 52),” 23 June 1971.

83 Direktoratet for ungdomsundervisningen, “Vedr. fritidsloven,” 6 April 1971.

84 Lov nr. 177 af 28. april 1971 om ændring af lov om fritidsundervisning m.v.

85 ExC 4 May 1974, DRK & DF, DNA; Pihl, Chairman's review 13 November 1972, DRCHA; Siegumfeldt (1973), 3.

of employment conditions, for instance that teachers could only work on an hourly and part-time basis and that they were ineligible for annual holiday accrual. Essentially, working as a leisure-time teachers in accordance with the act entailed accepting a non-negotiable, artificially precarious employment status. For DRC and its language educators, organising language education in accordance with the Leisure-Time Act also meant that technically, the teaching personnel was not DRC's personnel. A central notion in DRC's integration work was the collaboration between the language schools and integration departments, yet the Leisure-Time Act's intricacies were a hampering rather than facilitating factor in this picture.

From the mid-1970s, increasingly stricter requirements regarding group sizes and the extent (in hours) of introductory Danish and social orientation also became a source of deep consternation. In December 1976, the Evening School of the Copenhagen Municipality (KKA, *Københavns Kommunale Aftenskole*), which acted as the administrative body for DRC's language education in Copenhagen, relayed bad news: in response to increasing demands on municipal budgeting, new limitations were imposed on DRC's special education groups, both drastically reducing hours as well as increasing the minimum number of course participants to levels that were simply impossible for DRC to implement.<sup>86</sup> Similar regulations were enforced by the Municipality of Århus.

DRC pleaded with the Ministry of Education for some kind of resolution. The ministry would have been able to issue exemptions fully within the boundaries of the Leisure-Time Act, yet it was reluctant to do so, or even to engage with DRC in general.<sup>87</sup> DRC repeatedly tried to negotiate with the Ministry of Education as well as the Ministry of Social Affairs, yet to no immediate avail – the situation remained essentially unresolved for several years. While the Ministry of Social Affairs occasionally jumped in with temporary and ad hoc emergency measures, DRC's language education was practically ground to a halt from time to time.<sup>88</sup> DRC thus found itself in a particularly sour pickle, especially considering the aforementioned demands for language proficiency imposed on refugees.

In the early 1980s, the Ministry of Education partially rolled back the stricter requirements, and the Ministry of Social Affairs took a more active role in covering costs for occupationally orientated courses that fell beyond the Leisure-Time Act.<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless, the Leisure-Time Act remained a fundamentally unsuitable framework for governing integrative refugee education. It introduced bureaucratic hoops into the language

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86 Hans Juul Christensen, "Vedr. undervisning af flygtninge," letter from to KKA to DRC's language school, 6 December 1961, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives.

87 Minutes from DRC's integration committee meeting 9 February 1978, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives.

88 Elon Henriksen, "Vedr: Dansk Flygtningehjælps sprogskole i København," letter from DRC to the Ministry of Social Affairs 21 January 1977, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives; letter from DRC to Minister of Education Ritt Bjerregaard 9 March 1978, Collection of Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives; meetings from DRC's integration committee 1977–80, Collections of Dansk Flygtningehjælp / Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives.

89 Meetings from DRC's integration committee 1980, Collection of Dansk Røde Kors & Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Danish National Archives.

schools' operations that hampered and even directly prevented language educators from implementing and developing their expertise. In the end, issue was not solved until the 1986 Act on Education for Adult Immigrants came into force.

### **Conclusions: Integration as a two-way educational process constructed from the margins**

During the studied period, DRC formed the hub of an active arena of educational integration knowledge. Knowledge on integrating various refugee groups was circulated internally and in collaboration with other knowledge actors, mostly the Ministry of Social Affairs and DRC's member organisations. Pioneering activities within refugee language education also entailed localising and circulating international pedagogical knowledge into the sub-arena of integrative language education knowledge.

The integration professionals' expertise across DRC also included institutional knowledge that encompassed legal as well as political know-how. Social workers and language educators not only had to understand the applicable legislation but also its implementation in the context of educational integration. Moreover, negotiations with the state about the parameters of implementation required a strategic eye. In other words, despite – or due to – their marginal position in relation to the welfare state, integration professionals and DRC's management also had to operate as political actors.

Slightly paradoxically, DRC's political and knowledge autonomy directly correlated with the perceived marginality of refugee integration in the welfare state. The late 1960s and early 1970s were a period of expansion and development of the welfare state and public governance, manifested in lengthily prepared large public policy reforms. In this context, refugee integration constituted such a low-stakes niche that the government delegated it to a specialised civil association.

Initially, this marginal position came with relatively free rein to pursue pioneering and applied knowledge work. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the legislative apparatus in social and education policy was under development (and refugee integration barely recognised in the reforms), whereby DRC had significant discretionary freedom in defining the parameters and methodology for its work. Educational social integration was also backed by generous resources provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs. However, the pioneering status also entailed limited professional and educational support from established institutions, knowledge traditions and practices, whereby DRC had to develop its own specialised field of expertise.

By contrast, the late 1970s and in the early 1980s were a period of consolidating and streamlining the welfare state apparatus. The planning optimism fuelled by the 1960s economic boom was replaced by economic downturns from 1973 and increasingly critical views on the welfare state and public governance in general towards the end of the decade. Demands for efficiency and structural conformity also pushed educational refugee integration to conform to the increasingly rigid institutional structures of the welfare state. Thus, DRC's discretionary autonomy correlated inversely with the expansion and consolidation of the welfare state.

Educational integration knowledge hence saw a dual development of professionalisation and institutionalisation in both pedagogical social integration and language education for refugees, but with rather different outcomes. In other words, the discretionary autonomy of DRC's knowledge actors not only diminished over the 1970s

but also diverged between the two dimensions of educational integration, which was linked to the organisation's relationship with the respective ministry. Well-established and close ties with the Ministry of Social Affairs allowed DRC more liberties in implementing and developing its pedagogical social integration, effectively acting as a pioneering experimental arena. In the 1970s, integrative social work followed the general professionalisation trend in social work, as it became intertwined with policy expertise: knowing the law and how to apply it. Moreover, refugee work entailed a particularly intricate form of expertise, as the clientele included many "atypical" and vulnerable people needing tailored approaches – yet while maintaining conformity with the law as well as respecting and protecting the client's rights.

However, the development of DRC's educational social integration work vis-à-vis social legislation also had some streaks of irony. Firstly, DRC did away with pioneering practices developed by its social workers, instead restructured its operations into a model of welfare mediation crystallised in the somewhat anachronic idea of "help to self-help". Meanwhile, ideas previously implemented in DRC were consolidated in the new social legislation. Secondly, while the Social Assistance Act was based on an individualised and client-focused ethos, requirements for DRC's refugee work to conform with regulations and practices that were becoming established made it harder for DRC's social workers to address their clients' individual needs.

DRC's language education, for its part, developed an even more antagonistic relationship with the legislative framework of leisure-time education. By the mid-1970s, it had developed from loosely interpreted parameters to an institutional straitjacket that hindered language educators from pursuing their professional knowledge and responsibility in integrating refugees.

The principle of multicultural integration entailed that a significant aspect of educational integration work was managing expectations and attitudes by means of education – not only of refugees, but also of authorities and the general public. Moreover, since refugee integration was a moving target, educational integration fundamentally relied on the integration professionals' continuous self-education and adaptive knowledge. This educational integration knowledge was, in turn, circulated across the arena of educational integration knowledge.

In other words, education and knowledge *about* refugees, not just *for* refugees, was an integral part of DRC's integration work – a two-way educational street.

### **About the author**

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**Appendix: Abbreviations**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| App.   | Appendix to meeting minutes   |
| DF     | Dansk Flygtningehjælp (Danish Refugee Council)                                  |
| DNA    | Danish National Archives [ <i>Rigsarkivet</i> ]                                 |
| DRCHA  | The Danish Refugee Council's Historical Archive                                 |
| DRK    | Dansk Røde Kors (Danish Red Cross)  |
| ExC    | DRC's executive committee [ <i>forretningsudvalget</i> ]                        |
| FWC    | DRC's finance and working committee [ <i>økonomi- og arbejdsudvalget</i> ]      |
| IC     | DRC's integration committee [ <i>integrationsudvalget</i> ]                     |
| KKA    | Københavns Kommunale Aftenskole (Evening School of the Copenhagen Municipality) |
| OffCom | Officials Committee on Refugees   |
| RC     | Danish Red Cross [ <i>Dansk Røde Kors</i> ]                                     |
| SocMin | Ministry of Social Affairs [ <i>socialministeriet</i> ]                         |

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