



Refugee education in Flanders

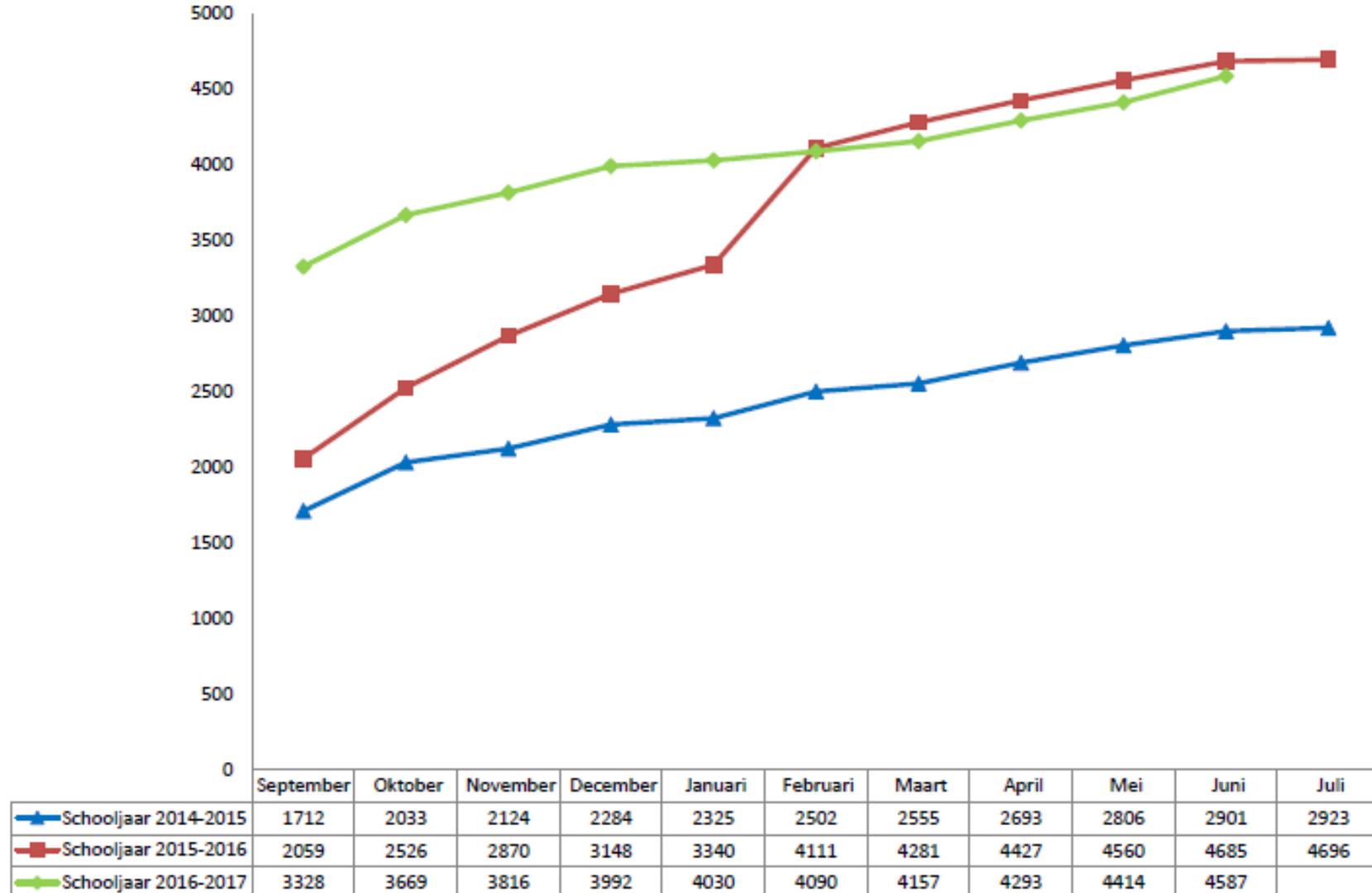
Stiene Ravn

Ward Nouwen, Christiane Timmerman, Noel Clycq

CeMIS

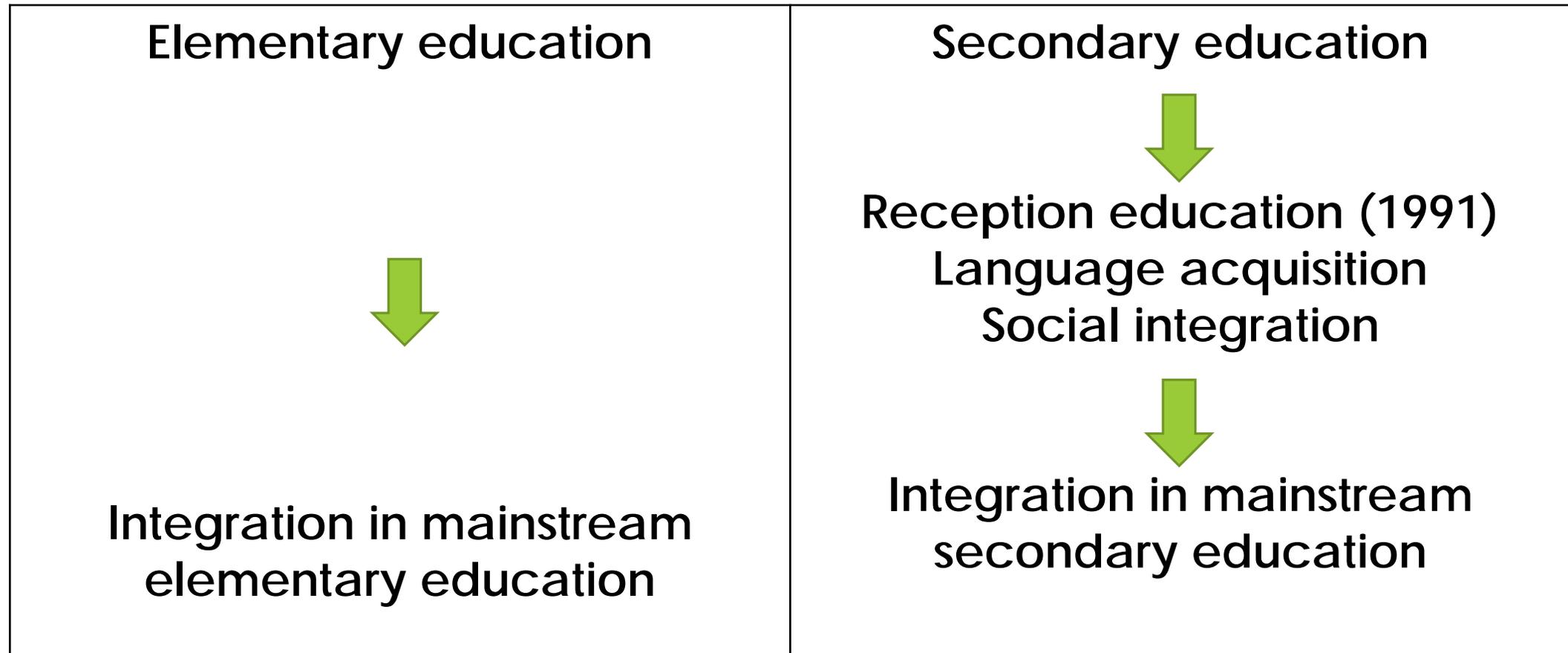


Evolution in the amount of foreign-speaking newcomers in full time secondary education



Source: Agodi

Policy context





Methodology

- Two urban schools
- 15 in-depth interviews
- Participatory observations
- Focus group discussion

Research focus

- Impact recent refugee influx
- Challenges & practices at 3 different stages:
 1. First arrival
 2. Reception education
 3. Transition to mainstream education

Impact recent refugee influx

“There are Syrians that have had good education home, there are Afghan unaccompanied minors that are unschooled, there are Moroccan immigrants from Spain. And they all end up in the same class room.”
(school principal)



Impact recent refugee influx

- **increasing diversification**
 - nationalities, learning profiles
 - rise in unschooled/illiterate students
 - rise in # UM's
 - fluctuating class size
- need for specific training of teachers



Reception education

- **organizing reception education**
 - limited government support
 - flexibility & creativity
 - ability grouping (differentiation)
 - 'pop-up reception education' in rural/suburban areas
 - lack of know-how
 - not enough students for ability grouping
 - negative impact on educational outcomes
 - urbanisation

"We started with nothing 16 years ago. We started without any experience. We succeeded, but it wasn't easy"
(Teacher)



Reception education

- **vulnerable profile of refugee students**
 - socio-psychological difficulties
 - uncertainty about asylum procedure
 - many responsibilities



Reception education

- **social integration within school**
 - in reception class: “warm atmosphere”
 - newcomers & other students
- **social integration outside of school**
 - stimulated by school & reception centre
 - but: difficult!

*“I’ve been here for two years
and I haven’t got any friends
outside of this class”
(refugee student)*



Transition to mainstream education

- **organizing transition classes**
 - focus on language acquisition
 - preparation for general or vocational programs

But... **Major challenge!**



Transition to mainstream education

- language deficiency
 - lack of integrated language policy

“You have to understand that, other students just acquire the knowledge by studying the courses. Our students first have to translate everything before they can start studying.”
(Follow-up coach)



Transition to mainstream education

- **lack of flexible trajectories/curricula**
 - large drop out & overrepresentation in vocational tracks
 - waterfall effect
 - suggestion: irregular trajectories & curricula
 - legally possible, but difficult in practice



Transition to mainstream education

- **particular difficulties for newcomers aged 15+**
 - gap with other students is too large
 - suggestions:
 - extra transition classes for 15 - 18 years old
 - post reception classes for + 18



Conclusion

Transition to mainstream education = biggest obstacle

Compensatory support model

“measures are compensatory and are aimed at incorporating NAMS into the existing system without adjusting the system itself. These measures thus address the gap between NAMS and native students rather than the reasons that cause these gaps”

(PPMI study)