



ANADOLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ

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# Learning Diversity: A Case Study of Refugee Students in Primary School

Turkish Group

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The Project called “LEARNING DIVERSITY: A CASE STUDY OF REFUGEE STUDENTS IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL” carried out at the case school “İbrahim Karaođlanođlu Pirmary School” located in Eskişehir, Türkiye.

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## Case School

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- The school has 800 students, 20 classrooms, one multi-purpose hall and one library.
- *The vision of the school* is development by making differences and becoming pioneer.
- *The mission of the school* is to train individuals who adopt democratic values, are sensitive to the requirements of the era, are equipped with the contemporary scientific knowledge, are the ones who cherish Turkish culture, and are those who love and protect their country.

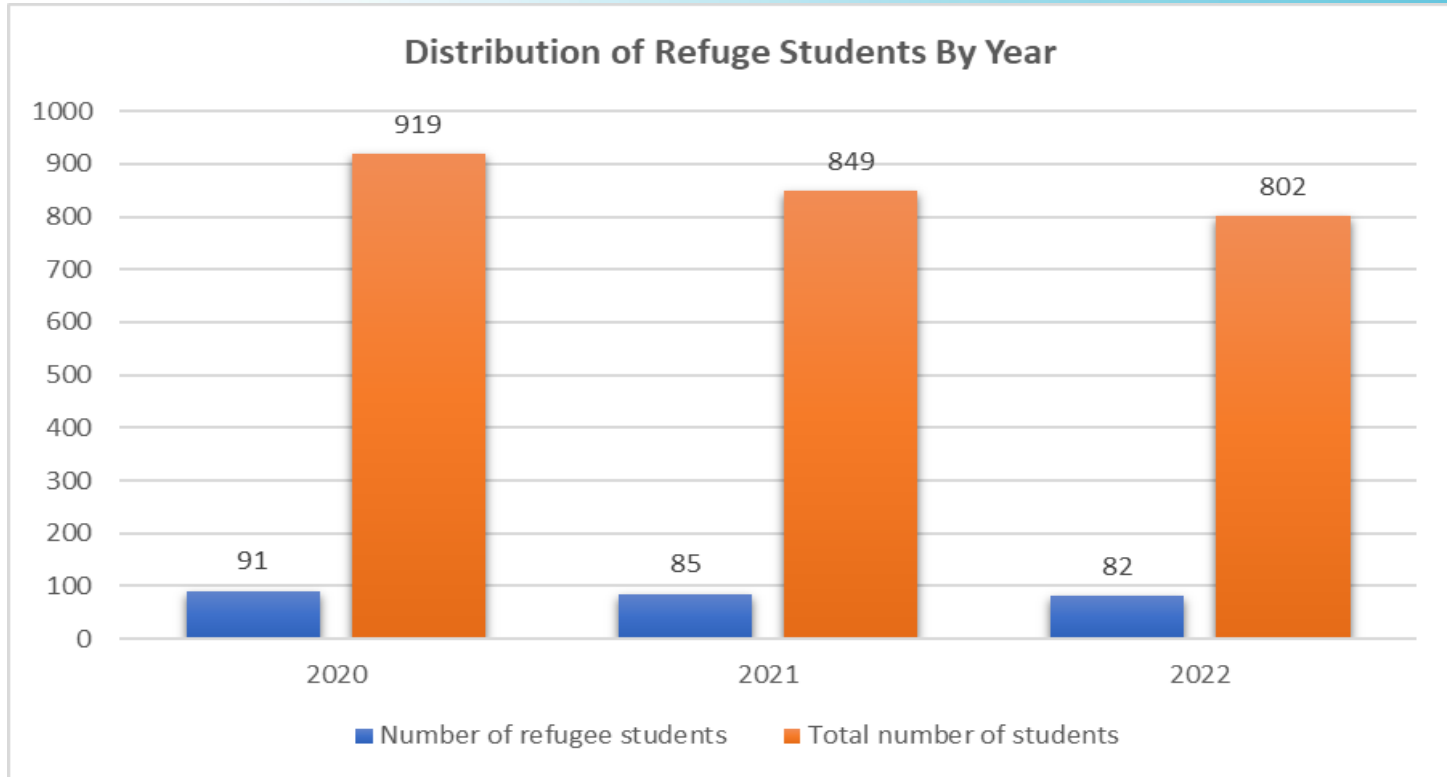
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## Case School

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The school is administered by a principal and two assistant principals.

The school staff consists of 28 primary school teachers, three subject-matter teachers, three counselors, and three support personnel.



The participants of the study were;

- 18 refugee students who came from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria,
- eight parents,
- two vice principals,
- three teachers teaching those refugee students.

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## Researchers

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The research was conducted by three experts (in the fields of pre-school teaching, primary school teaching and curriculum and instruction) in educational sciences who are currently working for Anadolu University, Faculty of Education, which is one of the three partners of the project with Odunpazarı Provincial Directorate of National Education and İbrahim Karaođlanođlu Primary School.

- We have conducted semi-structured interviews with 18 children at school in a room provided by the school administration.
- Interviews were conducted in person.
- All interviews were audio-taped upon consent



- We have conducted semi-structured interviews with refugee students' parents in İbrahim Karaoğlanoğlu Primary School in a room provided by the school administration.
- The interviews with mothers of the refugee students were carried out by a female researcher.
- Interviews were conducted in person and audio-taped upon consent.

- The interviews with teachers and vice-principals were conducted as written interviews due to high COVID 19 incidents on that date.
- The written interview forms were sent to the teachers and vice-principals via internet and upon responding to the questions, these forms were sent back to the researchers via internet, too.

- An inductive approach was deployed to analyze the data from interviews.
- The researchers agreed on certain themes. The findings are presented according to the themes emerged from the interviews with the participants.

Findings of the study obtained from the participants (children, parents, teachers and school principals) are presented under three main headings:

- 1) Challenges and Barriers,
- 2) Opportunities and Good Practices,
- 3) Suggestions and Recommendations.

The challenges and barriers faced by refugee students are explained from the perspectives of the stakeholders of the process; educators (teachers and administrators), students and parents.

- **Educators:** Language (reading-writing), communication and parent involvement
- **Refugee Students:** Language (speaking) and peer relations
- **Refugee Parents:** No challenges regarding the school

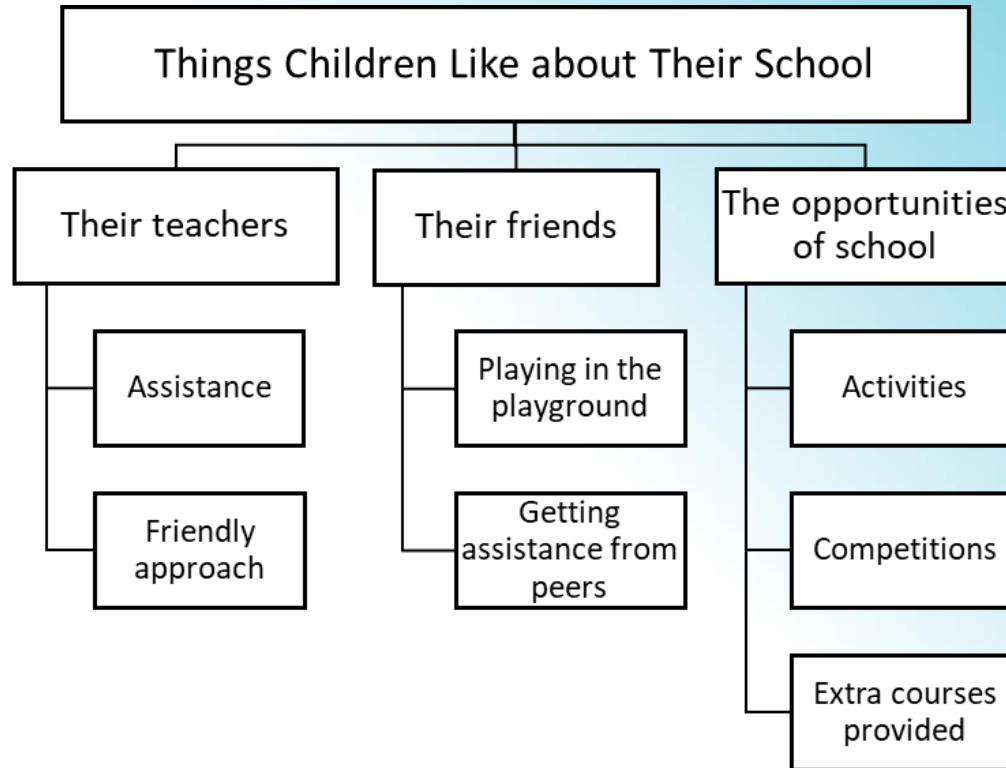
The opportunities and good practices faced by refugee students are explained from the perspectives of the stakeholders of the process; educators (teachers and administrators), students and parents.

- **Educators:** Emotional, Educational, Integration, Financial Opportunities and Practices
- **Refugee Students:** Teachers, friends, school
- **Refugee Parents:** Instruction, Social-Emotional Setting, Physical Setting and Communication with Teachers

- **Educators:** The teachers and administrators thought that the opportunities and good practices provided by the case school fall under four major domains;
  - (1) emotional
  - (2) educational,
  - (3) integrative and
  - (4) financial opportunities and good practices respectively.

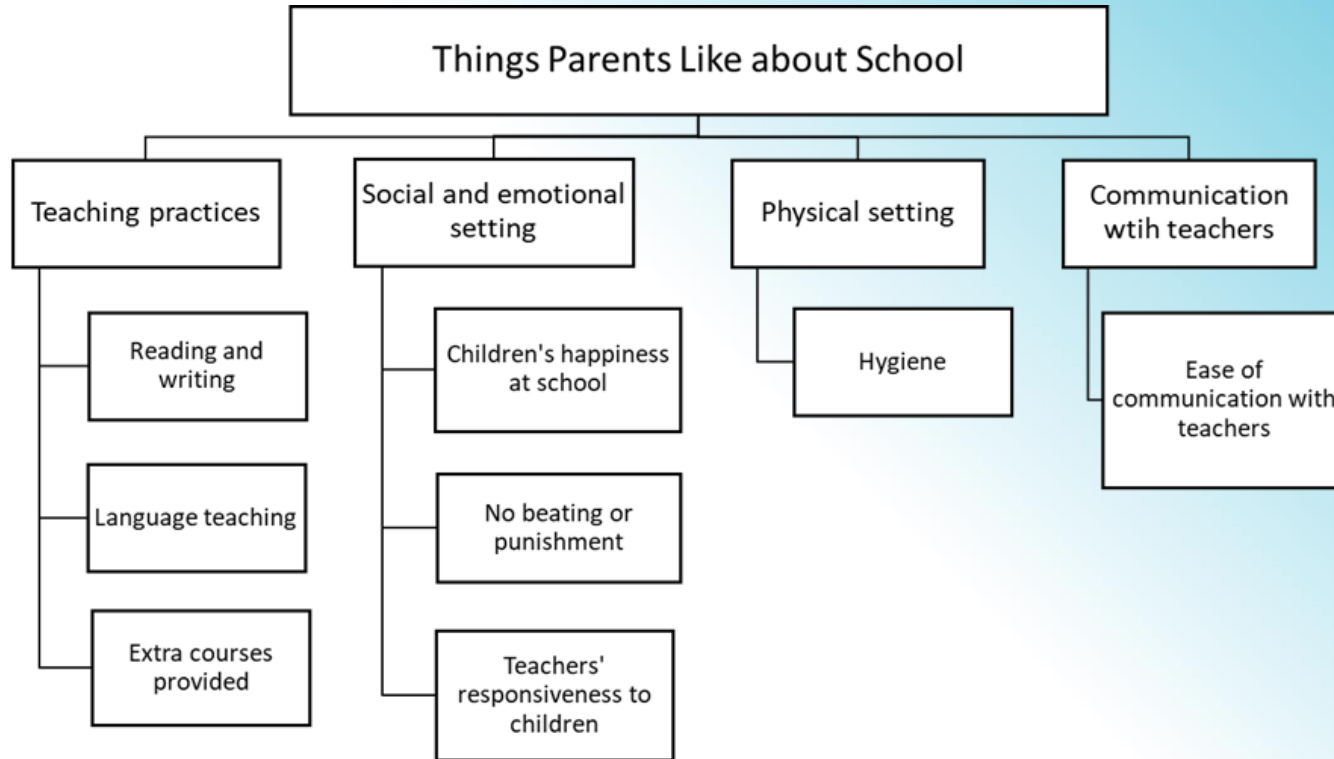
# Findings - Opportunities and Good Practices

## ➤ Refugee Students: Teachers, friends, school





## Refugee Parents: Instruction, Social-Emotional Setting, Physical Setting and Communication with Teachers



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## Findings – Suggestions and Recommendations

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Based on the findings obtained from the study, the following suggestions can be put into practice for further educational implementations regarding refugee students:

1- The supplementary literacy education should start at the beginning of the primary school instead of the third grade. Teaching Turkish should even start prior to the first grade (similar to preparatory language classes or TOMER (Center for Teaching Turkish to Foreigners) classes, which are specifically designed for teaching Turkish to foreign students who will study university in Turkey). In this respect, the orientation classes carried out in Malta can be a good model.

**2-** In order for refugee children to have the full benefit of education, their parents should also be involved in the process actively. Unless their parents read and write in Turkish, it is very difficult for children to practice the language. Besides, it is almost impossible for teachers to communicate with them without the help of an interpreter.

**3-** Inclusive education is a good and practical idea for refugee students; however, teachers have difficulty in showing special attention to them especially in crowded classes. Therefore, having assistant teachers in these teachers' classrooms or allocating assistant educators for them might ease their workload and help refugee students to take more quality education.

4- The education services and processes presented to refugee students heavily rely on the good-will and patience of teachers. Therefore, they should have further assistance and education like in-service education on individual differences; more specifically teaching to refugee students. They should also be provided with moral and material support for their extra efforts.

**5-** Peer interaction should be encouraged and rewarded through various strategies in order for refugee students to learn the target language easily and rapidly. It should be extended to the outside of the school through different activities because the refugee families speak their own languages in their communities.

**6-** In communicating with parents, teachers should be encouraged to use a variety of ways and tools including technology like smart phones and voice messages so that any of the family members who knows Turkish can be informed of the announcements of teachers and school related issues or the assignments of the pupils.

Alternatively, to lessen the work-load of teachers, these kinds of extra notifications can be made by volunteered parents who are called as “classroom mothers or fathers” -an application widely used in Turkish primary schools- or by the assistants who will be provided for the teachers.



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## Limitations of the study

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- 1) Covid-19 Pandemic
- 2) The Language Barrier of Refugee Students and their Families
- 3) The Hesitations of Refugee Students and their Families



**Thank you 😊**