

# REFUGEE EDUCATION RESEARCH DIGEST

*The Education Research Digest features the latest evidence on refugee education, with a focus on thematic areas. The digest aims to provide a balanced and comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge and practice on each thematic area, as well as to identify gaps and priorities for future research and action. The digest presents a brief overview of the main findings from a number of relevant publications, from academia and grey literature, with links to the full texts (where available). The publications covering the year 2024 are selected based on criteria such as relevance, quality, timeliness and diversity of sources and perspectives. The recommendations for policy and practice and research made in this digest are taken directly from the cited literature. They reflect the findings of the authors of the literature and should not be interpreted as recommendations made by the authors of the digest or endorsed by UNHCR. The second and third parts of the digest include information on relevant resources and forthcoming events on refugee education.*

## Latest Research

### IN BRIEF

#### **Victors not victims! Ethical challenges in educational research with refugee children: a systematic literature review**

Author, Publication, Year: Hrvatska, Z., *Ljetopis socijalnog rada*, 2024

**Abstract:** The aim of this systematic literature review was to identify ethical challenges in educational research with refugee children. Using a systematic review of a descriptive type, 16 journal articles, extracted from three social sciences bibliographic databases, and through additional backward and forward searches, were selected on the grounds of the set of inclusion criteria. The articles were then analysed using document analysis of an inductive type. The analysis identified two major ethical challenges in educational research with refugee children: language barriers and the positioning of refugee children in research. Language-related issues were pervasive, impacting informed consent, data collection, and communication throughout the research process. Refugee children and their guardians often struggled to understand participation details due to linguistic limitations, which raised concerns about

the validity of consent. Researchers addressed these issues by simplifying data collection tools, employing interpreters and translators, and using arts-based and visual methodologies to improve accessibility. However, ensuring accurate translation and cultural relevance remained a challenge, necessitating additional validation through participant feedback. The second challenge centred on how refugee children are engaged and perceived in research. Building trust with participants was essential, given their potential mistrust of unfamiliar environments, and many researchers spent significant time fostering rapport. Ethical concerns also emerged around balancing the perception of refugee children as vulnerable with recognizing



their agency and resilience. Some studies countered deficit-based narratives by framing participants as “victors, not victims” and adopting inclusive, participatory methods such as photovoice, which empowered children as active contributors to the research. The importance of ongoing assent alongside parental consent was also highlighted, although this practice was inconsistently applied. These findings underscore the need for culturally sensitive, child-

centred approaches that both protect and empower refugee children within the research process. Keeping in mind the way the identified challenges were addressed in the analysed research, ethical choices in future research involving refugee children as participants should be approached creatively, flexibly, and reflexively.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Include refugee children’s voices in education and research:** Ensure refugee children are actively involved in shaping policies and research. Recognize them as experts in their own experiences, aligning with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to respect and amplify their perspectives.

**Address language barriers holistically:** Develop linguistically sensitive tools and methodologies, such as arts-based approaches and visual communication, while providing professional training for interpreters and cultural mediators to support effective communication and inclusion.

**Use anti-deficit and inclusive approaches:** Shift the narrative from vulnerability to resilience by emphasizing refugee children’s strengths and potential. Promote diversity and belonging through inclusive educational environments and non-stigmatizing research practices.

**Implement dynamic consent processes:** Treat consent and assent as ongoing, interactive processes. Continuously seek verbal and nonverbal feedback from children to ensure their understanding and willingness to participate, rather than relying on one-time approvals.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Design research with ethical reflexivity:** Researchers should approach studies with a focus on relational ethics, recognizing the unique vulnerabilities and contexts of refugee children. Ethics should go beyond procedural compliance to continuous reflection on power dynamics, cultural sensitivities, and participants' needs.

**Overcome language barriers:** Simplify data collection tools and ensure linguistic sensitivity by using translated materials, professional interpreters, and culturally relevant methodologies. Arts-based and visual approaches can help overcome communication challenges.

**Develop multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches:** Encourage cross-sectoral collaborations between education, psychology, and social sciences to holistically address the diverse needs of refugee children and their communities.

**Integrate reflexive positionality in research:** Researchers should critically evaluate their own biases and positionality, acknowledging how these factors influence the research design, data collection, and interpretation.

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Tag: Basic Education / Secondary Education / Tertiary Education / Emergencies / Connected Education

## IN BRIEF

### How to improve education outcomes most efficiently? a review of the evidence using a unified metric

Author, Publication, Year: Angrist, N. et al., *Journal of Development Economics*, 2024

**Abstract:** Many low- and middle-income countries lag far behind high-income countries in educational access and student learning. Policymakers must make tough choices about which investments to make to improve education with limited resources. Although hundreds of education interventions have been rigorously evaluated, making comparisons between the results is challenging. This paper provides the most recent and comprehensive review of the literature on effective education programmes, with a novel emphasis on cost-effectiveness. Authors analyse the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions from over 200 impact evaluations across 52 countries. They use a unified measure — learning-adjusted years of schooling (LAYS) — that combines access and quality and compares gains to an absolute, cross-country standard. The results identify programmes and policies that can be up to an order of magnitude more cost-effective than business-as-usual approaches. Examples of some of the most cost-effective approaches include targeting instruction to students' learning level rather than grade as well as structured

pedagogy approaches. These results can enable policymakers to improve education outcomes substantially more efficiently.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Prioritize cost-effective interventions:** Focus on high-impact interventions like "Teaching at the Right Level," structured pedagogy, and adaptive learning technologies, which provide significant learning gains at relatively low costs.

**Shift funding toward productivity-enhancing interventions:** Invest in policies that improve learning outcomes per year of schooling, such as tailored teacher training and adaptive computer-assisted learning, rather than solely increasing attendance.

**Design context-specific and multi-component solutions:** Adapt programmes to local needs and conditions, and integrate health, nutrition, and learning components for holistic impact.

**Adopt evidence-based metrics:** Use Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS) to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of education interventions across countries and contexts.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Expand cost-effectiveness data collection:** Future studies should systematically gather cost data alongside impact assessments to enable comprehensive comparisons across interventions.

**Focus on long-term impacts and scalability:** Research should explore the persistence of intervention impacts over time and assess their effectiveness when scaled nationally to inform sustainable education reforms.

**Standardize metrics across studies:** Studies should use frameworks like Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS) to harmonize outcomes and improve cross-country and cross-context comparisons.

**Explore contextual factors:** More research is needed to investigate how local conditions, such as socioeconomic or cultural variables, affect intervention outcomes and adapt strategies to different environments.

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## IN BRIEF

## Refugees' labour market integration in Kenya

Author, Publication, Year: Simiyu, K., *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 2024

**Abstract:** Author analyses labour market outcomes among refugees in Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analyses are based on eight waves of the COVID-19 Rapid Response Phone Surveys conducted by UNHCR and the World Bank from May 2020 to June 2022. The author employs static panel regression, and tests for robustness of the results in a staggered difference-in-difference regression. Findings suggest that employment



rate, hours worked, and labour income differed across the waves. The employment rate rose in the last four waves relative to the first four waves of the pandemic. Average hours worked declined relative to the level at the onset of the pandemic. Whereas gender insignificantly affected employment rate, women worked fewer hours compared to men. The higher the educational attainment, the likelier the refugee was employed. College graduates earned higher incomes compared to refugees without formal education. Men and women had similar labour market outcomes for the same level of education. In terms of coping actions, those who adopted coping mechanisms were less likely to be employed in waves 5-8, worked fewer hours, and had lower labour incomes compared to those who did not adapt coping mechanisms. In line with the findings, the author recommends the implementation of job interventions that target refugees, proper targeting of social protection and education programmes to incentivize work, and raising refugees' human capital, amongst others.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Design targeted job interventions:** Design employment programmes specifically for refugees to bridge the gap in labour market access and ensure inclusion. This may involve creating sector-specific job opportunities aligned with refugees' skills.

**Educational and skills development programmes:** Implement educational initiatives to improve refugees' human capital. Special attention should be given to formal education, as higher educational attainment correlates with better employment and income outcomes.

**Provide support for sustainable coping mechanisms:** Encourage and support sustainable coping actions among refugee households, such as borrowing strategies. Exogenous interventions like remittances and aid from NGOs or faith-based organizations should complement these efforts.

**Use gender-inclusive approaches:** Address gender disparities in employment opportunities and income among refugees. Tailored policies should ensure that female refugees gain equitable access to education, training, and employment.

**Recommendations for research:**

**Document the impact of coping mechanisms on labour market outcomes:** Research is needed to investigate how specific coping mechanisms, such as reliance on remittances or adopting sustainable actions, affect long-term employment and income among refugees.

**Document role of gender in labour market integration:** Conduct gender-focused studies to examine disparities in hours worked, wages, and employment rates, especially the nuanced impacts of education and coping mechanisms on male versus female refugees.

**Further document educational attainment and economic mobility:** Study the extent to which educational attainment levels influence refugees' ability to transition to formal employment or higher-paying jobs.

**Identify barriers to formal employment:** Analyse structural and policy-related barriers that hinder refugees' integration into formal labour markets, including documentation challenges, employer biases, and non-recognition of foreign qualifications.

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Tag: Tertiary Education

## IN BRIEF

### Investigating language learning strategy use in adult L2 literacy: a constructivist grounded theory

Author, Publication, Year: Dalderop, K., *AILA Review*, 2024

**Abstract:** The study focuses on the language learning experiences of adult migrants from refugee backgrounds with limited educational experiences before migration. This group is often referred to as LESLLA (Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults) learners. The study used Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) — a data driven, bottom-up methodology for qualitative research — to gain understanding of the conditions that help or hinder LESLLA learners' language development and of the strategies they use to enhance learning and to overcome obstacles. The dataset is comprised of 30 interviews with adult refugees from Syria and Eritrea learning Dutch in the Netherlands. The analyses identified self-efficacy as a core category, differentiating between learners who showed contentment about

their language learning achievements and expressed confidence in further learning, and those who expressed little confidence and a sense of failure. Conditions hindering self-efficacy include the cognitive conditions ‘forgetting’ and ‘stress’, and the social condition ‘isolation’. Facilitative conditions in the cognitive realm are ‘motivation’ and ‘language learning strategies’. ‘Social strategies in new social networks’ is the condition that stands out as strongly supportive for self-efficacy. Key strategies include practicing with native speakers, where interactions with Dutch-speaking neighbours, colleagues, and friends promoted language proficiency and enhanced self-efficacy through informal conversations and shared activities. The data showed how LESLLA learners are often not in the position of power to build their networks. This means that social strategies are not an individuals’ asset but rather a condition that is distributed in a social system.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Provide holistic civic integration support:** Extend language learning opportunities for LESLLA learners beyond mandatory hours, offering pathways for continuous development. Policies should also prioritize integrating structured social networks to reduce isolation and promote language use.

**Provide workplace integration opportunities:** Enable refugees to participate in part-time employment during their integration period to gain professional and language skills while reducing economic and emotional stress.

**Provide teacher training and curricular innovations:** Train teachers to address the specific needs of LESLLA learners, including overcoming stress and building self-efficacy. Incorporate practical, social learning approaches such as role-playing and collaborative projects into curricula.

**Make accessible and tailored resources available:** Provide language learning tools suited to LESLLA learners, including interactive and culturally relevant materials, alongside training in metacognitive and social strategies to enhance learning autonomy.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Carry out longitudinal studies on LESLLA learners:** Conduct longitudinal research to track the development of language learning strategies and self-efficacy over time, providing a deeper understanding of how learners adapt and progress in different integration settings.

**Explore impact of social networks on language learning:** Investigate the role of social networks in facilitating or hindering LESLLA learners’ language acquisition, focusing on how relationships with Dutch-speaking individuals influence language outcomes and self-efficacy.

**Document impact of stress and mental health interventions:** Particularly, look at their impact on LESLLA learners’ language learning, including the effectiveness of embedded mental health support in language programmes.

**Civic integration policy analysis:** Examine the effects of civic integration policies on LESLLA learners, particularly policies that restrict employment or enforce housing placements, to understand how systemic factors shape language learning investment and outcomes.

**Document effectiveness of innovative teaching methods and tools:** This includes, documenting the effectiveness of digital tools, gamified learning, and community-based programmes in addressing the unique needs of LESLLA learners.

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Tag: Tertiary Education / Emergencies / Connected Education

## IN BRIEF

### Refugee education: aligning access, learning & opportunity

Author, Publication, Year: Dryden-Peterson, S., *Daedalus*, 2024

Abstract: Access, learning, and opportunity are usually conceptualized in a sequential and linear way: with access to school, comes learning, and with learning comes opportunity. But for most refugee students—and for most marginalized students globally—this model simply does not hold. In settings where students' mobility and their social, economic, and political rights have massive restrictions, access to school does not translate into learning, and learning does not translate into opportunities. Creating education that enables refugee young people to feel a sense of belonging and prepares them to help build more peaceful and equitable futures requires us to address these misalignments, which are rooted across the ecosystem, from macrolevel geopolitical arrangements to micro-level interactions in classrooms.

The author poses three questions as central in understanding these misalignments: 1) Who is allowed to be where and for how long? Refugees are often confined to resource-scarce regions due to restrictive migration policies, creating barriers to education and long-term opportunities. 2) Who is responsible for refugee education? While governments are traditionally tasked with providing education, refugee contexts demand shared responsibility, yet host countries often face underfunded systems and inadequate international support. 3) Who can feel a sense of belonging? Refugee students frequently encounter exclusion in schools through discriminatory curricula, strained peer relationships, and systemic inequities. Teachers play a pivotal role in encouraging belonging, navigating the tension between national policies and the needs of refugee learners. Answering these questions informs how we might work, through policy and practice, toward alignment.

#### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Align access, learning, and opportunities:** Refugee education should not only ensure access to schools but also align this access with meaningful learning outcomes and opportunities for

economic, social, and civic participation. Policies must address the systemic barriers that prevent this alignment, such as restrictive policies and inadequate resource allocation.

**Prioritise refugee inclusion in national education systems:** Host countries should prioritize the integration of refugees into national education systems with appropriate funding and resource support from the international community. Inclusion models must consider both the immediate educational needs and long-term opportunities of refugees, avoiding segregation or second-class educational experiences.

**Teacher training and professional development:** Investing in teacher training is critical for equipping educators to address the unique needs of refugee students. This includes financial support and professional development opportunities, enabling teachers to bridge gaps between existing curricula and the lived realities of their students.

#### Recommendations for research:

**Understand impact of pedagogies of belonging:** Investigate how "pedagogies of belonging" influence refugee students' sense of inclusion, learning outcomes, and future opportunities. Research could explore the specific strategies teachers use to build relationships and adapt curricula and how these strategies vary across contexts.

**Analyse international responsibility sharing in refugee education:** Analyse the effectiveness of international frameworks like the Global Compact on Refugees in ensuring equitable resource distribution and shared responsibility. Research could focus on the gaps in funding commitments and their impact on host countries' ability to provide quality education.

**Explore refugee futures and temporal mobility:** Research how refugee students and their educators navigate uncertainty and prepare for multiple potential futures ("here, there, or somewhere else"). Studies should examine how education systems can better equip students for mobility across geographies and timeframes.

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## IN BRIEF

### Revisiting education resilience of Syrian children in Turkish education ecosystem

Author, Publication, Year: Çalhan, M., *Learning, Media and Technology*, 2024

Abstract: Resilience is studied by researchers from various disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, and biological disciplines. Though the resiliency literature has expanded to a considerable extent, only a few studies have examined the resilience patterns in child asylum-seekers/refugees. Using the constructivist perspective, the aim of the research to identify whether Syrian asylum-seeker children are able to develop resilience in the Turkish education system. The data for this research were collected through a comprehensive field work based on interviews with a total of 100 Syrian children who are in the

Turkish education system, aged 13–18, and residing in Kocaeli province, Türkiye. In the study, participants identified eight resilience strategies to deal with current traumatic stress generators and five education resilience parameters. The strategies include: (1) developing a sense of belonging, (2) fostering self-confidence, (3) accessing education, (4) practicing religious activities, (5) building positive peer relationships, (6) maintaining family functionality, (7) planning for the future, and (8) achieving emotional regulation. These strategies positively influenced Syrian children to strengthen their sense of belonging, self-confidence and self-esteem. Based on the results, 64% of the participants believed that education is a significant tool to deal with struggles in host society; 61% stated that education enabled them to find out their abilities; 82% emphasized if they did not join a class, they could feel more anxious and depressed; 82% reported that they have a fulfilling relationship with their teachers. A large share, 89%, stated that they feel safe in the school environment.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Provide Turkish language support:** Provide comprehensive language support programmes to address the Turkish language barrier, which is a significant obstacle to academic success for Syrian refugee children. This includes offering remedial language classes and integrating language learning into regular curriculum delivery.

**Provide teacher training for multicultural classrooms:** Develop training programmes for teachers to manage multicultural classrooms effectively. Teachers need tools and resources to address the socio-emotional needs of refugee children, address bullying, and promote inclusive learning environments.

**Encourage parental engagement:** Help Syrian parents overcome language and cultural barriers. Parental interest and motivation were shown to significantly impact children's academic performance and resilience.

**Safe and inclusive schools:** Develop policies to ensure schools are safe and inclusive spaces for Syrian children. This involves addressing bullying and discrimination, fostering peer support networks, and promoting positive relationships between Syrian and Turkish students.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Longitudinal educational outcomes:** Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of educational resilience strategies on Syrian refugee children. This includes examining how resilience developed during schooling influences their social integration, higher education access, and career opportunities.

**Gender-specific resilience pathways:** Examine the gendered experiences of resilience among refugee children, focusing on how cultural roles, family responsibilities, and educational challenges differ for boys and girls. This can guide tailored interventions for both genders.

**Socio-cultural integration factors:** Study the broader socio-cultural factors that affect Syrian children's resilience beyond the classroom, such as peer relationships, discrimination, and the influence of community support networks. This can provide insights into holistic resilience-building strategies.

**Teacher and curriculum effectiveness:** Investigate the effectiveness of current teacher training programmes and curriculum adaptations in meeting the needs of Syrian refugee students. Research should include teacher perspectives and how these adaptations influence student outcomes.

**Focus on language acquisition and academic success:** Explore the relationship between second-language acquisition and academic performance in detail. This includes understanding the challenges faced by students in mastering the language of instruction and how this impacts their ability to access the curriculum and succeed academically.

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## IN BRIEF

### The integration of ICT for effective implementation of the competence-based curriculum among secondary schools in Kyaka II refugee settlement, Uganda

Author, Publication, Year: Kagambe, E., et al., *East African Journal of Information Technology*, 2024

**Abstract:** This study examined the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) in secondary schools within Kyaka II Refugee Settlement, Uganda. Despite the potential of ICTs to enhance learning experiences, their usage remains limited. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 102 respondents through surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. The findings reveal that while teachers adhere to CBC guidelines, the integration of ICTs into teaching practices is inconsistent. ICTs were utilized in less than 40% of observed lessons, and despite teachers receiving training from the project, only 25% felt confident in using ICT tools effectively. However, when ICTs were employed, there was a strong moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.67$ ) between ICT use and student engagement and motivation. Approximately 76% of students preferred ICT-enhanced lessons over traditional methods. Challenges such as limited ICT resources, including inadequate equipment, limited internet connectivity, negative attitudes, the digital divide, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient access to up-to-date instructional technology, continue to hinder effective implementation. The study recommends increased investment in ICT infrastructure, comprehensive teacher training, and targeted student orientation to optimize CBC delivery. Addressing these issues is crucial for leveraging ICT's full potential to improve educational outcomes in refugee settings.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Investment in ICT infrastructure:** Allocate sufficient resources to provide computers, tablets, internet connectivity, and other ICT tools necessary for effective CBC implementation in schools.

**Comprehensive teacher training:** Establish structured and ongoing professional development programmes focused on ICT integration into pedagogy.

**Collaboration and partnerships:** Strengthen collaborations between government agencies, NGOs, and private sector stakeholders to pool resources and expertise.

**Student orientation and community involvement:** Conduct orientation programmes for students to familiarize them with ICT tools and encourage active participation in digital learning. Crucial to involve community leaders and parents in supporting ICT initiatives to create a supportive learning environment.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Document impact of ICT on learning outcomes:** Investigate the specific impact of ICT tools and resources on student performance, engagement, and skill development in CBC contexts.

**Research ICT resource optimization:** Research ways to optimize limited ICT tools for maximum educational impact in resource-constrained environments.

**Explore impact of policy and governance:** Investigate how national and local education policies influence ICT integration in refugee schools. Studying the role of governance structures in facilitating or hindering the effective use of ICT in education.

**Conduct cross-country comparisons:** Conduct comparative research between Uganda's ICT integration efforts and those in other countries with similar refugee education contexts. Analyse best practices and lessons learned from international experiences to improve local strategies.

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## IN BRIEF

### The role of ICT in refugee governance in Bangladesh

Author, Publication, Year: Zakir Hossain, A., *Public Administration*, 2024

**Abstract:** The study discusses the evolving role of information and communication technology (ICT) in refugee crisis management, transitioning from a humanitarian to an enabling model. The focus is on how ICT contributes to education, self-reliance, skill development and entrepreneurship among refugees, marking a shift in the paradigm of how refugee crises are addressed. The study, centred in Bangladesh, explores the intricate connection between ICT and the governance of refugee landscapes. It delves into questions about how ICT ensures safety and dignity for refugees in camps during transitory settlement, as well as considering its impact on future refugee management and resettlement. The research, conducted through content analysis and based on secondary data, sourced from academic literature, conference papers, and reports by international organizations such as the UNHCR, reveals that ICT interventions offer comprehensive benefits. They create a platform involving various stakeholders, emphasising a trade-off in Rohingya refugee governance, providing geo-localised support, aiding in adverse situations, and identifying harmonised ideas for coordinated actions.

#### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Integrate ICT infrastructure to benefit refugees:** Develop a robust policy framework that integrates ICT solutions into national refugee governance, focusing on expanding mobile network connectivity and internet access, particularly in rural camps. This will enable refugees to access essential services, such as healthcare, education, and communication, while ensuring data security and ethical use.

**Use biometric identity systems for resource distribution:** Enhance the use of biometric registration systems to ensure accurate identification, streamline service delivery, and prevent duplication or misuse of resources. Keeping in mind protection concerns, systems like smart cards or iris scans should be expanded to facilitate fair distribution of food, healthcare, and other essentials while maintaining data protection standards.

**Implement ICT-driven education programmes:** Implement ICT-supported education policies that provide refugee children with access to structured curricula, digital learning resources, and teacher training. Strengthen online education and vocational training programmes to equip refugees, particularly youth, with skills for self-reliance and future integration or repatriation.

**Gender inclusion and empowerment via ICT:** Ensure that ICT programmes address gender disparities by empowering women through digital tools and training. For example, allocate e-vouchers or SCOPE cards directly to women and provide them with decision-making authority, promoting gender equity within households and communities.

#### **Recommendations for research:**

**Explore impacts of ICT-enabled skill development:** Explore the long-term effects of ICT-based vocational training and education programmes on the livelihoods and integration of refugees. Research should track refugees' transitions after repatriation or settlement in third countries.

**Focus on data privacy and ethical use of ICT in refugee camps:** Examine the ethical implications of collecting, storing, and using biometric and personal data in refugee governance.

Research should propose frameworks for data protection and address concerns about surveillance or misuse.

**Barriers to ICT adoption in low-resource settings:** Investigate the challenges faced by refugees and host governments in adopting and scaling ICT infrastructure, particularly in resource-constrained environments like Bangladesh.

**ICT's role in social inclusion and community building:** Analyse how ICT tools, such as social media and mobile networks, foster social inclusion and community engagement among refugees. Research should identify the best practices for strengthening refugees' agency and voice.

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## IN BRIEF

### Re-contextualizing the official framework for refugee education in Greece: identifying the gaps in teachers' views towards the implementation of the official guidelines and curricula in mainstream and reception classes

Author, Publication, Year: Lytrivi, F. & Papadopoulou, M., *Selected Papers of ISTAL*, 2024



**Abstract:** The current research discusses findings from a case study with teachers in Mainstream (MC) and Reception Classes (RC) regarding the implementation of the official guidelines for children with refugee experience and, more specifically, teachers' views towards: a) the conditions under which culturally and linguistically diverse students attend primary education and, b) the implementation of the curricula for MC and RC, respectively. Findings reveal that teachers in

both mainstream and reception classes face significant challenges due to the lack of specialized training in refugee education and second language learning. This training gap, coupled with temporary employment contracts, undermines continuity and stability in teaching. Furthermore, the absence of a comprehensive, official curriculum tailored to second language learners exacerbates difficulties, leaving educators reliant on improvised materials often misaligned with students' needs. Students' placement in educational settings is another concern, as decisions are frequently based solely on Greek language proficiency, ignoring their prior schooling, literacy, or broader educational background. This mismatch often isolates students, impeding their integration. Overcrowded classrooms and insufficient resources further

hinder personalized instruction, highlighting the need for smaller class sizes and better resource allocation. The results highlight the need to re-contextualize the official context for refugee education with the aim to improve the operating framework in terms of the implementation of the official guidelines regarding the enrolment criteria and curriculum within the school context.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Teacher training in intercultural education and second language learning:** Policymakers should mandate long-term, systematic training programmes focusing on inclusive education strategies, intercultural competencies, and second language acquisition to equip teachers to address the diverse needs of their students.

**Development of a comprehensive, multilingual curriculum:** Authorities should prioritize creating detailed, multilingual learning materials that cater to the linguistic diversity of students, integrating students' native languages to support smoother transitions and better language acquisition outcomes.

**Individualized and flexible student placement:** Current student placement criteria often disregard prior educational experiences and literacy skills, relying predominantly on Greek language proficiency. A comprehensive assessment framework should be implemented to ensure placement in appropriate educational settings that address individual needs, advancing inclusivity and reducing feelings of isolation among students.

**Consistent and long-term teacher employment policies:** The temporary status of reception class teachers undermines the continuity and quality of education. Introducing permanent positions for these roles, combined with competitive benefits, could attract experienced educators and enhance stability in refugee education programmes.

**Resource allocation for smaller class sizes and tailored support:** Overcrowded mainstream classrooms limit teachers' ability to provide individualized support. Policy changes should focus on reducing class sizes and ensuring adequate resources, such as additional teaching aides or technology, to enhance engagement and learning outcomes for refugee students.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Explore long-term outcomes of refugee education programmes:** Conduct longitudinal studies to track the academic, linguistic, and social integration outcomes of refugee students who have attended mainstream and reception classes. This would provide insights into the effectiveness of current practices and inform future improvements.

**Understand the impact of teacher training on refugee education:** Research the relationship between specialized training for teachers in refugee education and student outcomes. Studies should explore how training in intercultural competencies and second language teaching translates into classroom practices and impacts on refugee students' learning experiences.

**Explore the role of multilingual curricula in promoting integration:** Evaluate how integrating students' native languages into the curriculum affects their language acquisition, academic progress, and sense of belonging in order to inform the development of multilingual and culturally responsive teaching materials.

**Effective student placement strategies:** Investigate alternative placement models that consider students' prior educational experiences, literacy levels, and other factors beyond language proficiency. Comparative studies across different regions or countries could identify best practices for balancing educational equity with logistical feasibility.

**Resource allocation and classroom dynamics:** Study the impact of classroom size, teaching aids, and resource availability on the learning outcomes of refugee and migrant students. Research could focus on understanding how resource constraints influence teachers' ability to implement differentiated instruction and support diverse learners effectively.

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Tag: Basic Education / Emergencies

## IN BRIEF

### What's pushing them out of school? a mixed methods approach to examining primary school dropout in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya

Author, Publication, Year: Cha, J., *International Journal of Educational Development*, 2024

Abstract: Using an integrated sequential mixed methods design, this research examined the case of children and youth in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya in relation to factors that influence school dropout. The author used purposive and snowball sampling to recruit children and youth who were enrolled in a formal education system but were no longer attending and/or had not completed primary school. Drawing from 685 student surveys and 46 semi-structured interviews with out-of-school individuals, results suggest that factors such as inability to pay school-related fees, strict school policy on uniforms and supplies, poverty, and family responsibilities contributed to primary school dropout in Kakuma Refugee Camp. The study revealed that school dropout among children and youth in Kakuma refugee camp is primarily driven by indirect schooling costs, strict school policies, and family-level challenges. Over 63% of participants cited the inability to afford school uniforms and supplies as a significant barrier, exacerbated by punitive school practices such as denying entry to students without proper attire. Family responsibilities, particularly for girls, and extreme poverty further hindered educational access, with many children forced to leave school to care for siblings or support household income. Gender disparities were evident, with early pregnancy and forced marriage disproportionately affecting girls, while unaccompanied minors and orphans faced unique vulnerabilities due to the lack of parental support. Additionally, negative teacher-student relationships and bullying contributed to academic demotivation, while re-entry into school following prolonged absences was often complicated by inflexible school policies. The research revealed that 3.6% of participants explicitly identified bullying as a major reason for leaving school. Qualitative

interviews highlighted the pervasive nature of bullying, with some students reporting repeated verbal and physical harassment. Despite these challenges, over 93% of out-of-school youth expressed a strong desire to return to education, underscoring the need for targeted interventions and systemic reforms. This article concludes with implications for addressing school dropout issues in a camp setting through ongoing professional development and intersectoral and collaborative approaches to refugee education.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Eliminate indirect costs of schooling:** Eliminate the requirement for school uniforms and reduce or subsidize the costs of essential school supplies.

**Provide targeted support for vulnerable groups:** Develop programmes specifically for marginalized groups such as unaccompanied minors, girls at risk of early marriage or pregnancy, and students with disabilities.

**Adopt inclusive school policies:** Adopt flexible school re-entry policies for students who have temporarily dropped out and remove punitive measures like denial of entry for lack of uniforms.

**Provide teacher training and professional development:** Provide ongoing professional development for teachers and school leaders, focusing on positive disciplinary practices, student engagement, and sensitivity to refugee challenges.

**Community and parental engagement:** Conduct regular community outreach and parental education programmes emphasizing the value of education and child protection.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Conduct longitudinal studies on dropout trends:** Track the educational trajectories of refugee children, including those who re-enter school after dropping out.

**Conduct comparative analyses across refugee contexts:** Compare school dropout factors in different refugee camps and host countries.

**Document gender-specific challenges:** Investigate the unique barriers faced by girls in accessing and persisting in education, such as early pregnancy, family responsibilities, and cultural expectations.

**Understand effects teacher training and school leadership:** Assess the impact of teacher training and leadership development on student retention and dropout rates.

**Examine role of community and parental engagement:** Examine how parental attitudes, family dynamics, and community engagement influence school participation among refugee children.

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# Additional Reading

*Other interesting readings selected by our team (\*= not open access).*

Chowdhury, M. A., Biswas, T., Rahman, T., Mupenzi, A., and Baker, S., 2024. [Conflicting Demands of Settlement and Tertiary Education in Australia for Refugee Background Students? A Critical Metaphor Analysis](#). In *Silencing Refugees' Voices in Educational Practices: Perspectives on School Textbooks*, pp. 153-175. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Chowdhury, Mohiuddin A K et al., 2024. [Cancer prevention, care, and outreach among the Rohingya refugee population in Bangladesh](#). *The Lancet Oncology*, 25(12), pp. 1533-1536.

Karantalis, N., and Koukopoulos, D., 2024. [The role of cultural heritage and digital media in the inclusive education of refugee students](#). *SN Social Sciences*, 4(11), p. 214.

Oxford Analytica, 2024. [Humanitarian aid flows to Jordan are in jeopardy](#). *Emerald Expert Briefings*, (oxandb).

Vlachadi, M., Mitoula, R., and Salvati, L., 2024. [Rural development, economic growth, and the acceptance of immigrants: the quest for a comprehensive framework](#). In *Environmental Sustainability and Global Change*, pp. 193-204. Elsevier.

## RESOURCES

[UNHCR Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa Education Newsletter Q3 2024](#)



## EVENTS

### [National Immigrant Inclusion Conference](#)

This conference focuses on immigrant and refugee inclusion, with workshops and discussions.

**Organiser:** National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA)

**Date:** December 8-10, 2024

**Location:** Houston, Texas (USA)

### [IMISCOE Spring Conference: The Regularity of Irregularity](#)

**Organiser:** IMISCOE This conference will examine migration paradigms, including the education of migrants and refugees. It is highly relevant for academics and policymakers focused on migration studies.

**Date:** March 17–19, 2025

**Location:** University for Continuing Education Krems, Austria

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