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# QUALITY EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES IN KENYA: PEDAGOGY IN URBAN NAIROBI AND KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP SETTINGS

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GICHUHI, GRACE NYAGAH, URSULLA OKOTH, AND MARY TANGELDER**

*This article examines the quality of education available to refugees in Kenya, with a particular focus on instruction. By providing empirical data about instruction in a refugee education context, the article supports anecdotal accounts and strengthens agency-led evaluations. It is based on a qualitative case study research project conducted at six primary schools, two in Nairobi and four in the Kakuma refugee camp in northwestern Kenya. The article documents the instructional practices used in these schools to demonstrate the centrality of lecture in lesson presentation; teachers' reliance on factual questions and the lack of open-ended and pupil-initiated questions; limited comprehension checks; and the absence of conceptual learning. Drawing from the perspectives of the teachers who were interviewed, the article argues that quality instructional practices for refugees are constrained by several key factors: limited resources, including low funding, significant overcrowding, and a lack of teaching and learning materials; a lack of pedagogical training and content knowledge; and curriculum and language policies. The article concludes with implications for education policy related to refugee teachers, and the content and structure of teacher training and professional development for these and other teachers working in refugee settings.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is a priority for refugee families across the globe (Ferris and Winthrop 2010; Winthrop and Kirk 2011). It can help to restore a sense of normalcy for children whose lives have been disrupted, impart critical life skills, protect children from violence and exploitation, and contribute to future reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts (Winthrop and Matsui 2013; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2004; Shields and Paulson 2015).

Educational quality depends heavily on teachers and their pedagogical decisions, and yet at present the quality of education available to refugees is very poor (Dryden-Peterson 2011; OECD 2009; Robinson 2011; Smith 2009). Moreover, pedagogy in refugee educational contexts has not received sufficient attention; it is, as Michele Schweisfurth notes, “a neglected priority” (2015, 259) in global discussions of educational quality. This oversight occurs in part because it is difficult to engage with the topic without imposing external notions of quality that are not necessarily contextually relevant. Addressing this topic requires a dual perspective—one that is attentive to broad notions of pedagogical quality and to contextualized notions, as elaborated by educators and students in specific locations. Potential solutions must respond to the constraints of the sociocultural, material, institutional, and policy contexts, and they must consider processes as well as outcomes.

This article examines the instructional techniques used by teachers of refugees in primary schools in Kenya, which are a critical dimension of educational quality. The study asks the following: How do educators teach refugee students in camp-based, community-based, and public schools in Kenya, and what challenges do they face? We focus on classroom practices, examining teachers’ pedagogical techniques and, specifically, teacher-learner interactions. We also explore teachers’ perceptions of their practices and document several material, social, and policy factors that teachers identify as constraints on their classroom practice. As the first study to systematically analyze the classroom practices of teachers of refugees, this article strengthens the existing evidence base that currently consists of anecdotal accounts and agency-led evaluations.

The article is organized as follows. We begin by discussing quality education and pedagogical approaches that can support improved learning. Next we describe the context of refugees and education in Kenya. We then outline the qualitative, multiple case study research project we conducted at six primary schools that host refugee pupils: two in Nairobi and four in the Kakuma refugee camp in

northwestern Kenya. The article then documents instructional practices used in these schools, which demonstrate the centrality of lecture in lesson presentations; teacher reliance on factual questions, which limits open-ended and pupil-initiated questions; limited comprehension checks; and a lack of conceptual learning and higher-order thinking. We next draw from the perspectives of teachers we interviewed to show that instructional practices they used with refugees were constrained by several key factors: limited resources, including low funding, significant overcrowding, and a lack of teaching and learning materials; a lack of pedagogical training and content knowledge; and curriculum and language policy. We conclude by discussing the implications of the study for refugee teacher policy, and for the content and structure of teacher training and professional development.

## TEACHER INSTRUCTION AND REFUGEE CONTEXTS

Teachers are a central dimension of the policies and practices aimed at providing quality education for refugees. The focus on teachers is not unique to refugee contexts, but it does reflect broad trends in educational development. Within the policy realm, conceptualizations of the teachers of refugees have shifted dramatically over the past several years. For example, within the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the global body mandated with protecting and educating refugees, two strategies that were in place from 2005 to 2012 measured teacher impact by the teacher-pupil ratio (UNHCR 2007, 2009a).<sup>1</sup> The current UNHCR Education Strategy, in effect from 2012 to 2016, takes a different view of teachers, one that focuses on their instructional role and the kind of training they need in order to be effective in student learning processes (UNHCR 2012).<sup>2</sup> As noted in this UN strategy, “Teachers matter more than any other single factor to learning and to the on-going, formative assessment that is critical to improving learners’ achievement” (11).

The Minimum Standards for Education, first developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE 2010) in 2004, provide a robust technical framework for the field of education in conflict and the subfield of refugee education. The INEE definition of quality education provides a guide for the UNHCR and the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that implement refugee education, which details the instruction characteristics expected of

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1 A separate UN agency, the Relief and Works Agency, is mandated with educating Palestinian refugees.

2 The same is true of the 2011 UNRWA Education Reform Strategy (see, for example, page iv).

teachers of refugees. The INEE states that teachers will be “competent and well-trained” and “knowledgeable in the subject matter and pedagogy” (122). This knowledge includes “participatory methods of instruction and learning processes that respect the dignity of the learner” and the ability to create “a safe and inclusive learner friendly environment” (122). INEE describes certain environmental elements of quality education over which teachers often have little control, including “an appropriate context-specific curriculum that is comprehensible and culturally, linguistically and socially relevant for the learners,” “adequate and relevant materials for teaching and learning” and “appropriate class sizes and teacher-pupil ratios” (INEE 2010, 122).

The characteristics of a quality education for refugees and the perceived role for teachers in facilitating it mirror definitions used by other global bodies, such as UNESCO, and by national education systems (UNESCO 2004, 2005, 2014). There are two aspects of the refugee context related to conflict and displacement that have a particular influence on instruction: the characteristics of the teaching force, and the choice of language and curriculum.

First, teachers of refugees, be they of national or refugee origin, often lack training and experience. Although the UNHCR Education Strategy proposes that, by 2016, 80 percent of refugees’ teachers will be trained (UNHCR 2012, 3), the current reality is quite different. One of the few studies of teachers of refugees in developing countries found that, in Kenya, South Africa, South Sudan, and Uganda, these teachers generally lacked training and experience and were under-qualified (Commonwealth Secretariat 2013). UNHCR data echo this finding, but they also highlight global variability: in Kenya, 65 percent of teachers of refugees in primary schools had professional teaching qualifications, whereas the figure in Ethiopia was 21 percent (UNHCR 2014b, 2014a). Refugees who have been teachers in their countries of origin or who have acquired a relatively high level of education in refugee settings often do not enter or remain in the teaching profession (Kirk and Winthrop 2007). Government policies often make it challenging for refugees who are teachers to be hired, their payment is often low and unpredictable, and many take better-paying positions in unrelated fields with the NGOs operating in the refugee context (Penson and Sesnan 2012; Goyens et al. 1996). There are often few qualified national (or host country) teachers working in refugee communities, as they are hesitant to work in such unstable and inhospitable environments (Penson and Sesnan 2012). Despite the new policy focus on teachers’ instructional role in refugee settings, there is little evidence to suggest that the short, uncoordinated, and minimally effective workshops of the past (Buckland 2005) have been replaced with more productive training programs (INEE 2015).

Second, the language of instruction and curriculum followed in refugee settings frequently compound the challenges for teachers of refugees who have limited training and qualifications. Departing from historical approaches that featured parallel systems of refugee education, the new UNHCR Education Strategy emphasizes integrating refugees into national systems “where possible and appropriate and as guided by on-going consultation with refugees” (UNHCR 2012, 8). When refugee students are integrated into national systems, they follow the curriculum and language of instruction of the host country. This can be similar to their own, as with Iraqis in Jordan (Bulbul 2008), or dramatically different, as with Congolese in Uganda (Dryden-Peterson 2010). Decisions about language and curriculum, which are both political and practical, impact the kinds of support refugee students need from their teachers. Moreover, the language of instruction and curriculum are new and unfamiliar for refugee teachers, and both national and refugee teachers often have not fully developed the competence to help their students negotiate these linguistic and curricular transitions.

Despite clear aspirations to provide refugees with a quality education, the limited data available point to a lack of learning in refugee settings (Dryden-Peterson 2011). We therefore focus here on teachers’ instructional practices as a means of understanding what constitutes quality education in refugee settings, and to identify mechanisms that may bring improvement.

### **TEACHER- AND LEARNER-CENTERED PEDAGOGY AND ACTIVE LEARNING**

Teaching practice tends to fall along a continuum that ranges from primarily teacher-centered to primarily learner-centered instruction. While teacher- and learner-centered approaches are often used categorically, it is more accurate to pose them as points on a continuum that teachers move across with greater or lesser ease, depending on both the task at hand and their education, training, and experience (Barrett and Tikly 2010; Schweisfurth 2013). Teacher-centered strategies, such as direct instruction, are important educational tools. They primarily transfer information through a lecture format, giving pupils a less active role (Schweisfurth 2013). In contrast, learner-centered pedagogy is rooted in a constructivist theory of knowledge, which assumes that knowledge emerges through learners’ interactions and experiences and by reflecting on prior knowledge (du Plessis and Muzaffar 2010). Learner-centered pedagogy assumes that pupils learn best when they are actively engaged in the curriculum through inquiry and discovery, and when their interests form the foundation on which the

curriculum is built (Paris and Combs 2006). Learner-centered pedagogy began to be widely adopted as part of policy reforms to improve educational quality in Africa following the 1990 Education for All conference and the subsequent 2000 World Education Forum, which produced the Dakar Framework for Action. Since the 1990s, educational reforms in sub-Saharan Africa have flourished, including strong elements of learner-centered pedagogy (see Vavrus and Bartlett 2013 for a discussion).

Despite the evidence that learner-centered pedagogy improves student learning (Hattie 2009; Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005), research has identified a number of common challenges countries face in its implementation. Based on a review of more than 70 studies of learner-centered pedagogy conducted globally, including in Africa, Schweisfurth (2011, 2013) synthesized key implementation challenges: the nature, expectations, and timing of reform; material and human resources; the lack of alignment across pedagogical preparation, curricula, and examination and inspection systems; and social and cultural conditions. Thus, while pedagogical approaches that incorporate more learner-centered strategies when feasible are thought to promote learning, and therefore to increase educational quality, such approaches are hampered by a lack of material resources and of teachers who are prepared to engage them (see also Mtika and Gates 2010; Schweisfurth 2015). The challenges that stem from material and human resources, as well as social and cultural conditions, may be particularly heightened in refugee contexts.

In this article, we adopt an approach to learning that draws directly from four key sources: Robin Alexander's (2001, 2008) research-based notion of dialogic teaching, a review of learning literature conducted by Dan Wagner and colleagues in preparation for the Learning Metrics Task Force discussions (Wagner et al. 2012), Schweisfurth's nuanced discussion of learner-centered education, and Understanding by Design, the popular learning-focused curriculum design approach by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). Alexander's dialogic teaching is rooted in the principle that communication-based learning must be collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful. Dialogic pedagogy draws from key repertoires of strategies and techniques, which depend on the learning task. In dialogic classrooms, teachers may engage in traditional forms of "teaching talk," such as lecture and recitation, but they also employ techniques for discussion and scaffolded dialogue. Dialogic classrooms also feature "learning talk," in which pupils not only answer set questions but also explain, analyze, evaluate, discuss, argue, and (notably) develop and pose their own questions. Alexander's framework is consistent with the review of the learning literature conducted by Wagner and

colleagues, who identify three main principles of effective learning: “individual active involvement, social participation, and meaningful engagement” (Wagner et al. 2012, 2). We meld these two understandings with the “minimum standards” of learner-centered education proposed by Schweisfurth (2013):

1. Lessons are engaging to pupils, motivating them to learn (bearing in mind that different approaches might work in different contexts).
2. Atmosphere and conduct reflect mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Conduct such as punishment and the nature of relationships do not violate rights (bearing in mind that relationships might still be relatively formal and distant).
3. Learning challenges build on learners’ existing knowledge (bearing in mind that this existing knowledge might be seen collectively rather than individualistically).
4. Dialogue (not only transmission) is used in teaching and learning (bearing in mind that the tone of dialogue and who it is between may vary).
5. Curriculum is relevant to learners’ lives and perceived future needs, in a language accessible to them (mother tongue except where practically impossible) (bearing in mind that there will be tensions between global, national, and local understandings of relevance).
6. Curriculum is based on skills and attitude outcomes as well as content. These should include critical and creative thinking skills (bearing in mind that culture-based communication conventions are likely to make the “flavor” of this very different in different places).
7. Assessment follows up these principles by testing skills and by allowing for individual differences. It is not purely content-driven or based only on rote learning (bearing in mind that the demand for common examinations is unlikely to be overcome) (146).

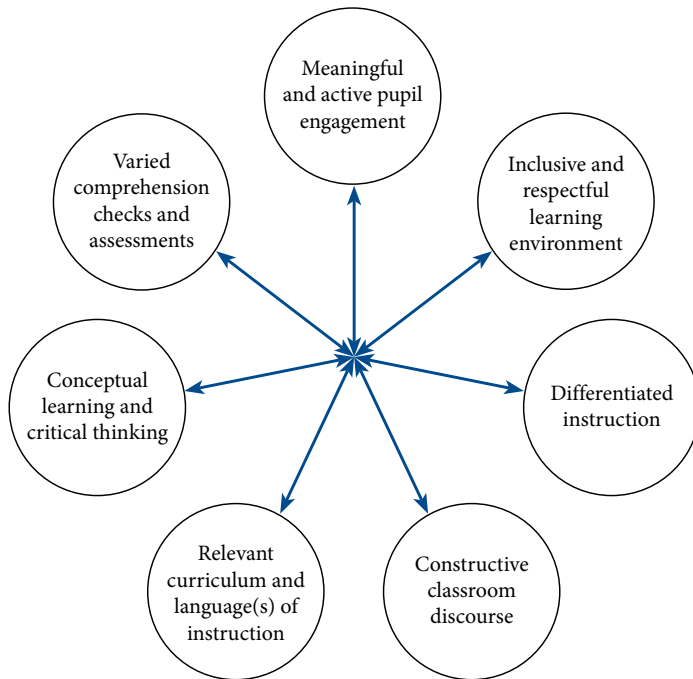


Finally, to develop the conceptual framework, we drew from “understanding by design,” specifically the WHERETO acronym for assessing key elements of learning:

- Where: ensuring that the student sees the big picture, has answers to the “Why?” questions, knows the final performance expectations as soon as possible
- Hook: immersing the student immediately in the ideas and issues of the unit, engaging the student in thought-provoking experiences/challenges/questions at the heart of the unit
- Equip and Experience: providing the student with the tools, resources, skill, and information needed to achieve the desired understandings and successfully accomplish the performance tasks
- Rethink: enhance understanding by shifting perspective, considering different theories, challenging prior assumptions, introducing new evidence and ideas, etc. also: providing the impetus for an opportunity to revise prior work, to polish it
- Evaluate: ensuring that students get diagnostic and formative feedback, and opportunities to self-assess and self-adjust
- Tailor: personalize the learning through differentiated instruction, assignments and assessments without sacrificing validity or rigor
- Organize: sequence the work to suit the understanding goals (e.g., questioning the flow provided by the textbook, which is typically organized around discrete topics) (McTighe and Wiggins 2005, 197-222)

These principles provide the framework for our study and are presented in figure 1. They informed the post-observation assessment tool we used during classroom observations (see appendix 1 for more details), and the analysis we conducted. Like the scholars who inform our conceptual framework, we believe that learner-centered pedagogy on the whole provides greater opportunities for learning. However, we also aim to avoid dichotomous thinking about pedagogy, attend carefully to how teachers understand their pedagogical work and the obstacles they face, and consider the social, political, and material contexts that shape pedagogical choices. For that reason, the final column of the observation tool had space for narrative observations that were more attentive to context.

*figure 1: Core Elements of Learner-Centered Education*



*Source:* based on Schweisfurth (2013); Wagner et al. (2012); Alexander (2008); McTighe and Wiggins (2005)

## REFUGEES AND EDUCATION IN KENYA

Kenya has one of the largest refugee populations in the world. As of January 2014, Kenya was host to 607,223 registered refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Burundi, and Uganda (UNHCR 2014b, 64). The majority of refugees in Kenya are housed in the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, established in 1991 and 1992, respectively. There currently are more than 463,000 refugees in Dadaab (UNHCR 2014b) and approximately 180,000 in Kakuma, some of whom have fled the recurrent violence in South Sudan (field visit, November 2014). Despite the lack of recent statistics, it is estimated that more than 50,000 refugees and asylum seekers live in urban areas of the country (Campbell 2006; Pavanello, Elhawary, and Pantuliano 2010; UNHCR 2009b).

Kenya's policies and laws have adapted to the changing refugee situation and security concerns over time (Lambo 2005; Lindley 2011; Kirui and Mwaruvio 2012). The 2010 Kenyan constitution safeguards the right to an education for all children born and residing in Kenya. The new Education Bill of 2012, signed into law in January 2013, provides children the right of access to a basic education, which is defined as including preschool, primary, and secondary education. Despite these recent national initiatives to protect the right to education, ongoing violence in Kenya that is attributed to the militant group Al-Shabaab has fostered a hostile environment for refugees, particularly those from Somalia. After a spate of violence in 2013-14, the Kenyan government issued a directive that all refugees in Nairobi and other urban centers must return to a refugee camp in Dadaab or Kakuma (Government of Kenya 2014). The recent attack on a Kenyan university has reignited the government's efforts to close Dadaab completely (Sieff 2015). Although UNHCR and other human rights organizations have pursued legal channels to challenge these directives, Somali refugees continue to confront significant challenges in their interactions with Kenyan police and other security personnel. According to a report prepared by the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (2014) in Kenya, which evaluated the government's "Usalama Watch" initiative (also known as "Operation Sanitization Eastleigh," a majority Somali area in Nairobi), refugees have experienced harassment, bribery, extortion, assault, arbitrary arrests, and deportation (Pavanello, Elhawary, and Pantuliano 2010).

In both camp-based and urban locations in Kenya, access to education for refugees is a persistent concern, especially among female children, youth, and adults (Omondi and Emanikor 2012; Pavanello, Elhawary, and Pantuliano 2010). In urban areas, the majority of refugee children attend Kenyan public schools, while others

attend schools set up by refugee communities (see, for example, Karanja 2010; UNHCR 2009b). Families whose children are not attending school may be reluctant to register, given the precarious nature of urban living in Kenya and their lack of identification or other documents required for school enrollment, not to mention not having the money to purchase uniforms and school supplies. Notwithstanding these challenges, UNHCR reported that 90 percent of refugee children of primary school age in Nairobi were enrolled in school in 2013 (UNHCR 2014b). In Kakuma, children also access education at different sites. There are 19 primary schools funded by UNHCR and one community-based school supported entirely by the local community. The 2012 gross enrollment rate in these schools was 45 percent (UNHCR 2014b), while the local district education office in Kakuma reported that over 2,000 refugee children were enrolled in the public schools in nearby Turkana District in May 2012 (Omondi and Emanikor 2012, viii). Once students enroll in school in either Nairobi or Kakuma, they are expected to study the Kenyan curriculum and learn in English and Kiswahili, curricular content and languages with which refugee pupils may be completely unfamiliar.

Furthermore, teacher training in Kenya currently consists of three principal pathways: two-year certificate courses offered by teacher-training colleges; three-year diploma programs offered by teacher-training colleges; and four-year degree programs offered by universities. To teach at the primary level, teachers must have completed secondary school and scored a grade C or above on the Kenya Certificate for Secondary Education. The minimum primary teaching certification, a P1 certificate, is achieved after two years of study in a teacher-training college. However, as we shall see, many teachers of refugee students have not enjoyed such professional development opportunities.

## METHODOLOGY

This study took a multi-site, comparative case study approach to examine the instructional techniques of teachers of refugees in Kenya. A team of researchers from the University of Nairobi, Teachers College/Columbia University, Harvard University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the International Rescue Committee collected data at two locations: Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, and the Kakuma refugee camp, which is located in the Turkana District in northwestern Kenya. While we prioritized public schools, we also selected one community-based school in each location (see table 1).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The two community-based schools in this study were both started and managed by the refugee community, including the teachers' salaries.

Table 1: Case Study School Demographics

School	Type of School	# Pupils	% Refugee Pupils	Countries of Origin	Av. Class Size Observed Classes 5-8 <sup>4</sup>	# Teachers	% Refugee Teachers	% Refugee Teachers Overall Teacher: Pupil Ratio <sup>5</sup>	Mean KCPE Score (2012), Reported
<b>Nairobi</b>									
<i>New Eastleigh</i>	<i>Public</i>	782	85	<i>Somalia, Ethiopia</i>	45	30	0	26	240.51
<i>Sud Academy</i>	<i>Community based</i>	155	66	<i>South Sudan</i>	12	14	71	11	257.0
<b>Kakuma</b>									
<i>Angelina Jolie</i>	<i>Public</i>	247	89	<i>Sudan, DRC, Somalia, Uganda, Ethiopia, Burundi, Rwanda</i>	30	14	64	18	283.8
<i>Fuji</i>	<i>Public</i>	2488	99	<i>Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, DRC, Rwanda</i>	96.6	23	83	108	220.0
<i>Kismayo</i>	<i>Community based</i>	359	100	<i>Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia</i>	40.8	18	33	20	252.98 <sup>6</sup>
<i>Lokitaung</i>	<i>Public</i>	1735	100	<i>Somalia, DRC, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda</i>	108	19	79	91	270.9

n.d = no data

Using a structured observation tool derived from the conceptual framework (see appendix 1), we examined the instructional practices of teachers of refugees as they were employed in the classroom, and we compared their experiences across schools and geographic sites. We used several criteria to choose the sites.

4 Calculated as an average of four to nine lessons we observed at each school, with an average of seven.

5 This ratio is calculated by dividing the total number of pupils by the total number of teachers. Both the numbers of teachers and number of pupils was reported by the head teachers based on their official records.

6 This means score was reported by the school. The official score is unavailable.

First, we selected schools with a significant percentage of refugee students (between 66 percent and 100 percent). Second, given different training programs and degrees of familiarity with the language of instruction and the curriculum, schools differed in the percentage of Kenyan and refugee teachers at their sites. In Nairobi, all teachers at the public school were Kenyan. Sud Academy, a community-based school, had ten Kenyan teachers and four refugee teachers. In Kakuma, however, the schools overwhelmingly employed refugee teachers; they were the majority at the Angelina Jolie (64 percent), Fuji (79 percent), and Lokitaung (83 percent) schools. Finally, as in other refugee education contexts, the size of the schools and the classes differed widely. The smallest school, Sud Academy, had 155 pupils, and the largest, Fuji Primary, had 2,488 pupils. The smallest class in the schools we observed had 12 pupils (Sud Academy), while the largest class had 108 (Lokitaung).

We used five strategies for our data collection. First, to understand the policy and resource context in which teachers of refugees were operating, we conducted key informant interviews in both Nairobi ( $n = 7$ ) and Kakuma ( $n = 9$ ) with UNHCR staff, NGO partners, and Ministry of Education officials at the district level. Second, and related, we analyzed documents that included relevant global, national, and district policies and reports. Together these interviews and the document review indicated some of the challenges facing refugee educators in Kenya. Third, we engaged in structured classroom observations ( $n = 41$ ) of the upper primary classes (5 through 8). True to our desire to capture specificities of classroom interactions while also gathering comparable data about pedagogical strategies, our observation tool began with free-form narrative notes, but it ended with a very structured checklist of learner-centered pedagogical practices, based on the conceptual framework (see figure 1). Fourth, we conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers ( $n = 50$ ) at the focal schools to understand their instructional decision making. Finally, we conducted semi-structured interviews with pupils ( $n = 52$ ) at the focal schools to understand their perspectives on instruction and how it met their needs. We collected data between May and October 2013.

All the interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded thematically using both etic codes derived from the literature (such as teacher training, psychosocial support, and open-ended questions) and emic codes derived inductively from the concepts and perspectives offered by the participants themselves (such as supportive teachers, classroom management, textbooks and school supplies, funding). We then wrote memos identifying thematic families of codes by school site, and the entire research team met in person to discuss emergent findings,

look for discrepant data, and refine our evolving analysis. Notably, while our analysis of instructional quality in the first section of the findings was guided by the conceptual framework of dialogic pedagogy (see figure 1) and the detailed classroom observation guide (see appendix 1), our discussion of the findings on the factors that constrain instructional quality in the second section was informed by emic coding of interviews with the teachers and key informants.

## **FINDINGS**

Consistent with the literature on sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., Tao 2013), we found that lecture and recitation-based teacher presentations dominated the classrooms of our six case study schools. Throughout we noted the centrality of lecture in lessons, as well as teachers' reliance on factual questions to test pupils' comprehension, a minimal amount of learning talk, and few pupil-initiated questions. Taken together, these instructional elements resulted in an imbalance of teaching- and learning-talk repertoires, an absence of activities to promote (and opportunities to demonstrate) conceptual learning, and a lack of active individual involvement, social participation, and meaningful engagement. We explore each of these elements of instruction below.

### **CENTRALITY OF LECTURE IN LESSON PRESENTATION**

Lecture was the primary mode of instruction in the classes we observed across the six case study schools. Of the 41 classes observed, 34 featured lecture quite centrally. In a few, the vast majority of class time was consumed by teacher talk. For example, the social studies teacher at Kismayo began his lesson by reviewing the previous lesson, but he did not involve the learners. He then introduced the new lesson, which entailed the African response to colonial rule, particularly in Uganda and Tanzania. The teacher spent most of the class time reading aloud from the textbook about Kabaka Wanga. The pupils listened attentively; however, with a ratio of one book to ten pupils, only a few were able to follow along. The teacher next introduced the 1891-98 Hehe rebellion in Tanzania, again reading aloud from the textbook. In many of the classes, the teachers similarly controlled the flow of discourse during the entire class. The lecture method was particularly prominent among social studies teachers.

However, across our observations, it was more likely that, while teachers relied primarily on lectures, they interspersed their presentations with comprehension questions that required pupils to repeat facts from the lecture. For example, a

science teacher at Fuji taught a fairly short lesson on mineral salts to the 149 pupils. The lesson consisted entirely of a lecture; there were no varied activities, no guided or independent practice. The teacher copied content from the textbook onto the chalkboard, including the following table:

Minerals	Sources	Use in the Body
Calcium	Milk, millet, <i>matumbo</i> (offal), and small fish eaten whole, for example omena	For making strong bones and teeth. Helps in the clotting of blood to stop bleeding when one is injured.
Phosphorous	Milk, beans, egg	Works together with calcium and vitamin D in the formation of strong bones and teeth
Iron	Meat, eggs, kale, spinach	Helps to make the blood healthy

The teacher then lectured about the material on the board, interspersing his lecture with closed questions—that is, only one correct answer is presumed, such as, “What have I said are some sources of minerals?” The pupils answered in unison by reading from the table. The mathematics classes were most likely to combine lecture with pupil activity. Math teachers regularly explained a principle or an idea and then put a series of problems on the board for the pupils to solve, giving them guided practice. Such classes were highly interactive, though repetitive, and they focused on factual information and “correct” answers. Thus it could not be said that the students experienced active individual involvement or meaningful engagement.

#### **TEACHER RELIANCE ON FACTUAL QUESTIONS TO CHECK LITERAL COMPREHENSION**

The majority of the teachers we observed relied extensively on factual questions, which they posed to check students’ literal comprehension. Even when a lesson was highly interactive, the focus was on “correct” answers. The questions we heard were primarily closed, including in all four lessons we observed at New Eastleigh. For example, a social studies teacher asked, “What is trade?” to which the pupils repeated, in unison, the predefined term. The teacher then asked, “We have two forms of trade, which ones are they? Who can tell me?” The only accepted answers in this case were “domestic” and “international.” In a science class at New Eastleigh, the teacher asked, “Who has an idea about friction?” This question seemed to be more open, but it was in fact intended to elicit a specific definition of friction—again, the only accepted response.



In the classes we observed across the school sites, there was a strong emphasis on the memorization of facts and definitions. For example, in a Christian Religious Education (CRE) lesson on the topic of ability and talent, the teacher asked questions such as, “Who will give us the definition of the term ‘talent’?” and “Who will give us the definition of the term ‘ability’?” Finally, in a math revision class, the teacher asked such questions as, “What are the different types of triangles?”

The vast majority of questions were aimed at determining students’ literal comprehension. Many of these comprehension checks occurred at the group level, with pupils being asked, “Are we together?” “Are we getting it?” “Do you understand?” They were expected to respond with a chorus of “Yes,” which seemed to be more of a habit than a genuine response. For example, in a social studies class at New Eastleigh in Nairobi, when the teacher asked, “Have you finished?” the class chorused, “Yes,” although almost every pupil kept their head bent over their exercise book and continued to write.

During lessons we observed, the majority of the teachers used rising intonation that required pupils to provide the correct answer in a choral response, often by completing the teacher’s sentence. In this transcript from a science class at Fuji, the question mark in the teacher’s lines indicates rising intonation.

T: Please close your books so that you can explain what is written on the board. What have we said about vitamins? I have said that vitamins are protective of our bodies. They protect our bodies from disease. What have I said are some sources of vitamins?

SB: Food.<sup>7</sup>

T: Yeah. Some of the sources of vitamins are fruits and?<sup>7</sup>

SS: Vegetables.

T: So today I want to talk about mineral?

SS: Salts.

T: We have said that mineral salts are present in many types of food.

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<sup>7</sup> In presenting excerpts of classroom dialogue, we use T to mean teacher, SG to mean a girl pupil, SB to mean a boy pupil, and SS to mean multiple pupils.

There are many types of food that contain mineral?

SS: Salts.

T: And mineral salts are present in small quantities. They do not provide energy. So examples of minerals that are needed by our bodies include iron and phosphorous. Our bodies require different types of minerals. Our body requires what?

SS: Iron and phosphorous.

In this instance, the teacher asked only factual questions, and no pupil posed a question. All the questions were posed by the teacher, and none was open-ended. The pupils did not demonstrate any conceptual understanding; they simply repeated factual knowledge.

Many teachers also asked questions of individual pupils as a way to test their factual comprehension. In mathematics classes, individual pupils frequently presented their responses by working out a problem on the chalkboard. Given the size of the classes—usually over 50 pupils and sometimes more than 100—teachers were only able to hear from a small number of the pupils when using this strategy. At Kismayo, a social studies teacher asked pupils to raise their hands to answer questions and discouraged them from simply shouting out their responses. This enabled the teacher to gauge factual comprehension, but only of the pupils who volunteered to participate. However, a few skilled teachers did manage to include many pupils in this kind of exercise. Teachers at Sud Academy and the Angelina Jolie girls' boarding school, where classes were significantly smaller, were more successful at checking pupils' literal comprehension. These teachers at least enabled some students to be actively involved. However, having a large class made doing such comprehension checks quite difficult. At Lokitaung, in an English lesson with 86 pupils, the teacher simply responded to his own questions. For example, he asked, "Difference between man and animals?" and then proceeded to answer, "Animals eat grass, man does not."

### A LACK OF PUPIL-INITIATED QUESTIONS

Pupil-initiated questions were rare in the classrooms of the case study schools. Out of 41 lessons observed, pupils asked questions in only 13, and they posed more than one question in only 6 of the 13. Their questions were factual or definitional in nature. For example, a social studies lesson at Fuji Primary in Kakuma focused on methods of preserving fish, and two male pupils asked questions. One boy asked what the teacher meant by the term “canning,” and the other asked, “What is salting?” In an English lesson on infectious disease, two pupils asked the teacher to define vocabulary terms that had already been explained in the lesson: “What is epidemic?” and “What is carcass?” In a review class on plants at Sud Academy in Nairobi, a pupil asked how plants feed, material that had been covered orally and in notes on the chalkboard. The teacher called the pupil by name and responded that some plants use their roots to feed, while others depend on insects for their food.

In two lessons at two schools, we observed pupil-generated questions that probed conceptual thinking. In a science lesson on friction at New Eastleigh, the teacher—a master’s candidate in education—asked many questions of the pupils over the course of the lesson. Most were factual questions with clear responses; he also followed up with questions intended to have the pupils apply their understanding. Toward the end of the lesson, he posed some questions relative to a real-life example that required further synthesis of the principles of friction. After this interaction, one pupil asked, “How does friction enable a vehicle to move?” Across six schools and 41 lesson observations, we heard only two pupils ask questions that were not factual or definitional.

In contrast, at the Angelina Jolie school in Kakuma, five of the six lessons we observed were distinct in terms of the frequency and kinds of questions posed by pupils, which indicated more individual involvement and meaningful engagement. In a mathematics lesson, for example, a girl asked the teacher to explain the process of working out a math problem. In a CRE lesson focused on Christian youth programs, the teacher presented religion as a set of rules rather than a subject to be debated, including topics like abortion and homosexuality. The teacher’s lecture emphasized duty, discipline, and right versus wrong. Several girls asked questions requiring an explanation: “Teacher, explain to me incest” and “What is the difference between homosexuality and gays?” One girl sought clarification of the rules by asking, “Teacher, if someone says ‘I miss you,’ does it make you become immoral?” This more open exchange between teachers and pupils was not present at other schools, with one exception: In a science lesson

at Sud Academy, a female pupil asked a question about insectivorous plants. The teacher felt comfortable saying that he did not have an immediate answer, but he promised to get it and to discuss it with the pupil later on.

#### **ABSENCE OF ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE (AND OPPORTUNITIES TO DEMONSTRATE) CONCEPTUAL LEARNING**

In the classes we observed, opportunities for conceptual learning and meaningful engagement were extremely limited, regardless of the teachers' training credentials and the type of school setting. For example, at New Eastleigh, only a few teachers made an effort to engage learners in deeper analysis. In a science lesson on water conservation, for example, the teacher primarily asked questions that did not require conceptual understanding, such as "What is irrigation?" She did ask one question that required a synthesis of information on water conservation: "How does polluted water affect animals?" The same was true at the Kakuma schools. For example, during a lesson on industry in eastern Africa at Fuji, a teacher lectured about the importance of industries in the region, listing such reasons as that they offer employment; they produce raw materials such as copper, coffee, and tea; they pay taxes, which provides a source of revenue for the government; and they improve the economy, which helps to support the schools. There was no discussion of industry, employment, taxation, or any related topics, nor was there any mention of specific industries, including the local industries. The pupils' opportunity for meaningful engagement on an important topic was thus lost.

Across our 27 observations in Kakuma, we witnessed only one memorable instance of an activity to promote conceptual learning. In a science class at Kismayo, the teacher used various examples to promote students' conceptual understanding of heat transfer. He first connected the lesson to the pupils' everyday lives by drawing pictures on the board and referring to familiar examples in the camp.

Next he showed the class a piece of metal and asked what would happen if you put it over a candle: “Can you hold the metal after ten minutes? Can you do it?” He then answered his own question: “No, maybe hold it for two minutes, but after conduction happens, no.” The teacher then shared stories that the pupils could relate to, such as the following:

Mr. Kalulu went to the market and bought a colorful vessel, but it was made of plastic. After he set it out to heat his water for his tea, he came back and found that it was gone. He thought someone had bewitched him, but no. Mr. Kalulu had just made bad choices.

The teacher concluded the lesson by asking pupils to bring in examples the following day of good and poor heat conductors, which they would use in a practical training exercise. This lesson required active student involvement and meaningful engagement, and applied an otherwise abstract lesson to the students’ everyday lives.

With smaller classes and better resources, the teachers at Angelina Jolie were able to allow more learner talk and discursive interaction, but the lessons still rarely promoted conceptual thinking. For example, in a CRE lesson on sexual immorality, the teacher controlled the classroom discourse, and both teacher and pupils maintained their assumptions that there were right and wrong answers to each question. Below is an excerpt from this class discussion:

T: So youth must avoid sexual immorality. An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.

SG: Teacher, if a 14-year-old girl prays to God to give her a child, what should be the answer: yes, no, maybe, or next year? Which is right?

[Lots of girls want to give an answer.]

SG: The answer is waiting.

SG: Is it bad to marry as a teen?

T: It is not bad, but it is not wise. Teens don’t have good decision making.

Notably, the teacher answered the girls' questions as if there were a single correct answer. However, the teacher did allow active individual involvement and social participation; moreover, the girls were genuinely engaged in a topic that seemed relevant to their interests.

One indication of the few opportunities for conceptual learning was the relative scarcity of open-ended, inferential questions. A few teachers did pose open questions or create activities to test for inferential comprehension of the materials covered in a particular lesson. One of these rare examples was the lesson on conduction, described above. While the question was intended to promote inferential comprehension, the teacher did not allow pupils time to respond so he could check their actual comprehension. In a few classes, teachers asked pupils to apply the information presented in real-world contexts. For example, at the conclusion of a science lesson on plants at Sud Academy, the teacher posed an open-ended question, asking pupils how they would care for plants. Several pupils responded, noting that they would water the plants and they would avoid deforestation, applying what they had learned in the lesson. Similarly, after making a scripted oral presentation in a science lesson at New Eastleigh, the teacher asked the pupils to write short notes in their exercise books on how to conserve water, without giving them notes to copy. This strategy may have encouraged pupils to do their own thinking about water conservation as they wrote down what they had understood. We did not observe what the teacher did with these notes after the class, if anything, so were unable to judge whether they in fact confirmed students' comprehension.

Overall, the lesson observations and interviews we conducted documented a rather narrow repertoire of teaching talk, which relied primarily on lecture and recitation, and an imbalance between teaching talk and learning talk. In general, the teachers' instructional practices did not seem to promote quality learning through students' active involvement, social participation, and meaningful engagement. While most teachers communicated respect for their students, many did not engage their students' interests or their existing knowledge. The curriculum was largely presented as fact, with few opportunities for critical engagement. Notably, during interviews, teachers discussed how these instructional features are promoted and maintained by a specific set of influences and constraints. We explore those factors in the next section.

## **TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON FACTORS AFFECTING INSTRUCTION**

Teachers identified a number of key factors that they perceived as constraining their instructional practice: limited resources including low funding, significant overcrowding, a dearth of teaching and learning materials; a lack of pedagogical training; the curriculum; and the existing language policy. These factors shape and are shaped by the historical, social, and material contexts of Nairobi and the Kakuma refugee camp, and by national and global policies and decisions. In this section, we discuss each of these factors, how teachers respond to the factors through their instructional practice, and, where possible, point to spaces where teachers exert agency over these factors as they seek to meet the needs of their refugee pupils.

### **LIMITED RESOURCES: LOW FUNDING, OVERCROWDING, AND A DEARTH OF TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS**

Across the case study schools, teachers expressed concerns about the persistent lack of funding. Government schools in Nairobi received the same resources as any government school, with no supplemental funding for refugees. Some refugees in Nairobi received support to buy uniforms from NGOs working in partnership with UNHCR, but this assistance was to individual refugees and not to their schools. The three government schools in Kakuma were funded by UNHCR. The two community-based schools—Kismayo in Kakuma and Sud Academy in Nairobi—faced even graver monetary constraints. All financial support for these two schools, including teacher compensation, was generated by the refugee community; no funds were received from the Kenyan government, UNHCR, or NGO partners. The ability to pay teachers was the primary issue in both schools. The lack of resources within the community led to the decision at Sud Academy to stop offering classes one through four. The pupils in these lower classes thus had no place to continue their education and were out of school.

Teachers were faced with severely overcrowded classrooms, particularly in the government schools in Kakuma, where the average size of the upper classes we observed was approximately 100 pupils (see table 1). The head teacher at Lokitaung described the instructional challenges of these large classes: “When we are preparing the lesson, we are doing a lesson plan . . . [only] to reach a learner who is behind.” As a Kenyan teacher in the same school said, it is simply not possible to “manage” the needs of that many children. Classes were notably less crowded in the community-based schools in Kakuma and Nairobi, undoubtedly due to the high cost of attending.

The confluence of precarious funding and overcrowding meant that teachers had a dearth of teaching and learning materials. The schools also lacked sufficient seating and textbooks, so four or five pupils frequently shared a desk and a book. In the two largest camp-based schools, the lack of textbooks was a critical problem. At Fuji Primary, for example, pupils in class five and class six had to rotate sets of books among the streams of pupils. As a result, in two of the classes we observed, not one pupil had a text. In the Nairobi government school, textbooks were more readily available. Both pupils and teachers in Nairobi and Kakuma expressed the need to have more supplementary learning materials. A Congolese teacher at Lokitaung in Kakuma described the possible use of charts to help pupils understand the lessons, but only trained national teachers spoke of finding creative ways to make and use low- or no-cost teaching aids. One social studies teacher at Kismayo, for example, shared his story of bringing in both real money and some fake bills he had created to teach about currency. Another teacher in the same school spoke about collecting bean and pumpkin leaves to bring into the classroom for the pupils to see and touch.

One case study school had access to far greater resources than the others. This school was started in 2002 with a contribution from UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador and Special Envoy, and school namesake, Angelina Jolie. The money was used to build the school infrastructure, including the classroom blocks, the dormitories, the dining hall, and the kitchen. Pupils board at this school and receive three meals daily. Since its founding, the school has been funded by UNHCR. The teachers have an average of 30 pupils in their classes and say they have sufficient school furniture. The average textbook-to-pupil ratio is 1:2, and there is a small library on the premises.

With fewer pupils and more teaching and learning materials, teachers at Angelina Jolie employed more engaging classroom practices than teachers at the other schools. We also observed more questioning practices in the smaller community-based schools, Kismayo and Sud Academy. Several teachers we interviewed explained that, in the overcrowded classrooms of government schools, which lacked teaching and learning materials, lecture was their only reasonable choice of instructional practice.

### **LACK OF PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING**

Another factor that significantly affected educational quality was the low level of pedagogical training among the majority of the teachers. The teachers complained of how little training they had received; many of those we interviewed



identified a need for more professional development. The government school in Nairobi, where all of the teachers were Kenyan nationals employed by the government, had the most trained teachers. The teachers at the Kakuma schools included some Kenyan nationals who had trained within the national system, but the majority were refugees who had had more limited teacher-training opportunities than the national teachers in terms of options, duration, and quality.<sup>8</sup> At Fuji Primary, for example, 10 of the 25 teachers at the school were completely untrained, and 6 of these 10 untrained teachers were new to the school in the term in which we collected data.

Some of the teachers we observed, particularly those with no training at all, did not know how to put together a lesson, basic classroom management techniques, or even the value of facing students while speaking. Most of these teachers were well aware of their limited training and instructional practices, and those we interviewed were unanimous in their recognition of the need for more and better preparation. They expressed a particular need for training in classroom management, as the Kenyan head teacher at Kismayo explained: “Now that we have banned caning in the schools, it has been replaced by guidance and counseling,” but teachers were struggling to manage their classes without caning as a disciplinary tool. One teacher at Sud Academy explained the need for formal training, not only to meet the needs of his pupils but also for his own job security:

You might be employed right now to be one of the teachers, but tomorrow you might be asked, can you present your paper that show you have gone through those processes, so . . . not to be having any paper the same like you are not qualified. So personally [I think it would be] good in that if we could have got that opportunity so that it can gain that little knowledge . . . even if it is not based on the same career as education system, but a diploma in something.

Teachers said relatively high turnover was related to insufficient preparation and to the lack of opportunity for professional training, in particular among refugee teachers.

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<sup>8</sup> There are strong reasons to hire refugee teachers: they share languages and experiences with at least some of their pupils, and thus stand a good chance of building rapport with the students and understanding what parts of the Kenyan curriculum may be unfamiliar to them. Furthermore, such positions offer valuable employment for refugee adults. However, there are some drawbacks in addition to the limited opportunities for teacher training. Refugee teachers are more likely to have experienced interrupted education and may be relocated at any time, leading to steady turnover. They are also ineligible for full teacher salaries, and the small incentives they receive often require them to find other sources of income that keep them away from their teaching responsibilities.

New teachers often had to rely solely on the five-day induction training held at their own school, which they described as covering how to present a lesson to learners. At Angelina Jolie, all the teachers received a one-week induction course, which covered topics such as how to prepare professional documents (lesson plans and work schemes), ways of handling learners, and teacher roles. Several teachers remarked on the value of the slightly longer and more instruction-focused experience, echoing the words of this untrained teacher:

The most difficult thing [I've experienced at this school was] my first day, when I joined this school, because I have never been in class as a teacher. Yeah, so in my first week I had some challenges. It was not being able to identify the slow learners, and maybe to identify any other challenge that may have [been] problems in the class. But by the time I was given that one-week training, then I was able to at least identify children who have problems in the class, even if they have not [told] me. So . . . [I was] also able to sit [with] them and share their problem and give them some advice, and the way forward.

Another teacher noted her excitement about the training. When asked about her best day as a teacher, she stated:

The best day I had [was] when I was taken for that training, and after I came back. So in my first day here, the way I was teaching, so the children were able to understand and they were actually happy and they participated [during] the lesson. So from that day, I actually feel that way, and I knew that I'm actually trying to take these children somewhere. I knew that they were getting something from me, so that the pupils experience something together here.

The most robust teacher-training opportunity in the context of our case study schools was offered through a collaboration between Lutheran World Federation and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Through this collaboration, refugee teachers and a few national teachers working in Kakuma pursued an accelerated one-year diploma program, which focused on curriculum studies, pedagogy, and content knowledge. These teachers taught in the morning at the camp-based primary schools and attended teacher-training classes in the afternoon. This year-long diploma is the most comprehensive form of training for teachers in the large public schools in Kakuma; however, only a small number of teachers are able to participate each year. Of the 48 teachers who enrolled in the latest training cycle, only 26 successfully completed it. Further research and evaluation needs to be carried

out to explain the high attrition rates for this program. Moreover, the high turnover rates mean the system cannot guarantee that there will be trained teachers in refugee classrooms.

Teachers specifically remarked on the need for specialized training to better address the needs of refugee children “so the environment isn’t harsh.” Another teacher agreed:

Now because of the situation they are going through it has forced us to understand that they are going through [a] hard situation. Therefore, one has totally different ways of handling them. For example, most of them are easily angered. Therefore, when they are angered we have to know the way to handle them, not again to harass them. We calm [them] down and know how to control them. Yes. They are not like normal children down there or outside the camp.

Teachers also expressed concern about managing tensions between groups of students from different countries. As one teacher explained: “Because they are a mixture from different nationalit[ies], we find it difficult to handle them. The type of hardship they are going through, also the background[s], are different from different communities of different nationalities, therefore, at time[s] it might bring crisis in the classroom or out there.” In all the schools, several teachers expressed particular concern about how to guide male teachers in their conduct with female pupils. Given their lack of training, new teachers often relied on the more experienced teachers in the school for “guidelines on how we are supposed to handle students.” A male teacher at Angelina Jolie explained:

Yeah, they really assist us a lot and they also show us what we are supposed to do as a teacher, and how we [are] supposed to relate with the student. Because these are girls, and we are young people, so yeah. So they used to give us the way on how we are supposed to relate with them.

In sum, many of the teachers we interviewed indicated important training needs, including the needs of refugee teachers in general, and how best to relate to female students.

In our analysis, we compared the lesson observations of teachers with different levels of training. Across the case study schools, we found that teachers with more training had clearer learning objectives than those who lacked training. The teachers with a P1 or a diploma were also more likely to encourage student involvement, although usually it was in a choral response rather than individual involvement. The innovative practices we observed, such as the science teacher who gave the lesson on heat transfer or the teachers who brought teaching aids (e.g., fake money, leaves) into the classroom, also tended to be those of trained teachers. Furthermore, although plenty of trained teachers did not encourage meaningful engagement in their lessons, the moments of meaningful engagement that we documented did occur in classrooms with teachers who had some training.

### CURRICULUM

All six case study schools followed the Kenyan curriculum. As recommended by the UNHCR Global Education Strategy, this decision promoted greater integration, certification of learning in the form of a Kenyan Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), and the opportunity to learn English, which pupils overwhelmingly described as a key asset in securing a productive livelihood. More salient to the teachers' instructional practices, however, were the challenges of using the Kenyan curriculum.

Given how tightly the KCPE exam is tied to the curriculum, teachers expressed the impossibility of adapting the curriculum to specific school contexts or to their refugee pupils in any significant way (as noted above, some did try to make it more relevant). For example, in each school, most of the teachers interviewed indicated that their pupils struggled with the subject of Kiswahili, one of the national languages of Kenya and a mandatory subject for all. Teachers said that a lack of knowledge of Kiswahili was a major impediment to success, especially for older pupils just beginning the Kenyan curriculum. In the first term of 2013, pupils' mean scores in Kiswahili were at a low of 34.5 out of 100 in Kismayo, and a high of 57.4 at Angelina Jolie. The mean scores in Kiswahili in general were significantly lower than the mean scores in math, science, and social studies, and they were regularly lower than the scores in English. It is logical that the scores on the English exam were more consistent with those on the math, science, and social studies exams, particularly at the camp schools, where most pupils were refugees. The content-area exams were given in English and thus they tested language knowledge as much as content knowledge.

Teachers also described religious studies as a contentious curricular issue for their refugee pupils. All pupils in Kenya must take Christian Religious Education, Islamic Religious Education (IRE), or Hindu Religious Education to fulfill their religious studies requirement. The teachers at our case study schools made decisions to offer CRE or IRE based on the majority student population and the availability of instructors. CRE was taught at Angelina Jolie, for example, where the majority of pupils are Christian. Several pupils remarked that this curricular choice marginalized pupils in the religious minority, including on their exams. Teachers at the Kismayo community-based school had greater freedom to tailor the curriculum to their pupils' needs and preferences. The vast majority of pupils at this school are Muslim, thus they elected to teach IRE, as well as Arabic.

According to the teachers, some aspects of the curriculum were clearly relevant to the pupils. However, as we observed, other elements of the Kenyan curriculum lacked relevance to the lives of many of the refugee pupils, which both teachers and pupils said was a factor in the challenge of teaching various concepts. At Fuji, one female pupil explained that she did not like social studies because she did not know enough about Kenya to understand the lesson. A few of the refugee teachers themselves described feeling at a loss when they were called on to teach lessons about cultures they had never experienced, historical periods or scientific concepts they had never studied, or geographical features they had never seen. Even where the material could have had relevance to pupils' lives, the teachers often failed to make the connection. For example, a girl at Fuji once developed anemia, and her father had to donate blood for a transfusion. She had just learned in science class that a remedy for an iron deficiency was brown meat and green vegetables, but she shook her head and said, "We have only what the ration card gives," which included millet, oil, and salt, but never meat or green vegetables.

Overall, then, the six case study schools were inflexible about using the Kenyan curriculum, despite its reliance on unfamiliar languages and content that lacked relevance to the students, which was a serious impediment to their receiving a quality education.

### **LANGUAGE POLICY**

Teachers said that language policy had a major influence on their teaching. The official Kenyan language policy provides mother tongue instruction in lower primary grades, while English is the language of instruction in upper primary school, beginning in grade four. However, mother tongue instruction was impractical at the case study schools, given the linguistic diversity at most of them.

The head teacher at Lokitaung described the situation at his school: “You can find that in one class there are seven nationalities, they are [all] speaking different languages.” In the classes observed for this study, content-area instruction was primarily in English, while both Kiswahili and English were taught as subject areas. Most refugee pupils arrived at their schools with little to no knowledge of either language, but they were required to begin instruction in both languages immediately upon enrolling. Moreover, they were expected to demonstrate a high level of competence in two languages simultaneously, although the grammatical structures and vocabularies differed radically from each other and from many of the refugees’ home languages. The senior teacher at New Eastleigh in Nairobi described the instruction challenges in Kiswahili: “[The refugee pupils] could even return to you the paper and say, ‘I have nothing to write. Teacher, take your paper. I can’t write even one sentence in Kiswahili.’”

At the Nairobi schools, teachers had Kenyan certification and demonstrated competence in English and Kiswahili. However, teachers at the camp-based schools were primarily refugees who spoke many languages and taught exclusively in English, in which they had varying degrees of competence. In several camp schools, the school heads remarked that they tried to employ Kenyan teachers who spoke fluent Kiswahili in primary schools, but that this was not always feasible. Notably, despite the linguistic heterogeneity in their classrooms, the teachers we interviewed at each site described their lack of training in how to support second- or third-language acquisition.

Teachers expressed feeling limited in their ability to address their pupils’ linguistic needs through classroom-based instruction. In the camp-based schools, there was no formal language education. Teachers at two schools reported that pupils who did not speak English or Kiswahili were punished. A Kiswahili teacher at Kismayo further lamented the “mother tongue interference” taking place in his classroom, and said that students had to learn the bare minimum to pass the exam.

In contrast, teachers at the urban schools, where refugees studied alongside Kenyan pupils, had implemented remedial teaching, better known as “tuition,” for a fee. Such teaching was done after school or during lunch breaks. Tuition is prohibited in Kenya, thus teachers who were trying to develop strategies to meet the language learning needs of refugee students were engaging in an illegal act, which in fact further exacerbated inequalities between refugees who could afford the classes and those who could not.

In both Nairobi and Kakuma, the lack of language education programs inadvertently exacerbated the problem of having over-age children in lower grades. Head teachers placed some new pupils one or more grades below their age level because they were not prepared linguistically. Refugee children who began their education in Kenya in English at an earlier age said they struggled less than their peers who arrived in Kenya at an older age.

These factors identified by teachers constrained their ability to use more active instructional techniques. With few resources, lack of access to teacher training, and policies that impeded the contextualization of education for refugee populations, and based on our observations, teachers' instructional practices remained focused on lecture and relied on factual questions and limited comprehension checks. Therefore, instructional support that engages pupils' existing knowledge and motivation, provides relevant and accessible curriculum, and promotes conceptual learning among refugee pupils remains elusive.

### CONCLUSION

The paucity of financial and material resources, restrictive curriculum and language policies, and a lack of access to teacher training amount to a crisis in refugee education in Kenya. All three of these challenges are critical, as teachers explained in the course of this research. The lack of access to teacher training, however, is the most pressing, given that it has the potential to act on the first two challenges as well. For example, in this study, we observed that teachers with more training were better able to leverage existing resources and to create their own; we also observed that trained teachers found ways to work with the existing curriculum to make it relevant and meaningful to their refugee students.

Current approaches to teacher professional development and to the pedagogical support teachers receive must be improved. This study reveals that teachers who need the most instructional support are stifled by infrequent, poor quality, and irrelevant training opportunities and limited to no school-based support. Teachers' experiences and perceptions of educating refugees in Kenya illuminate the immense need for teacher-training opportunities that will help teachers acquire the knowledge and skills to develop instructional practices that can contribute to a quality education. Teachers must have the opportunity to learn how to ask open-ended questions, to engage students in higher-order conceptual thinking, and to see each lesson as a lesson in content and language. Teachers of refugees must be given specialized training on second- and third-language acquisition and on managing and appreciating multilingual classrooms,

particularly in camp-based environments, as refugees cannot learn English and Kiswahili simultaneously without additional support. Refugee teachers themselves will often require language support, as they may not be familiar with the official language of instruction in the host country. Teachers also need to learn how to adapt curricular materials to the needs and experiences of refugee pupils without undermining the content knowledge required to perform well on examinations. To accomplish this, teachers need ongoing, repeated, and school-based teacher-training support to help them move from learning to applying these strategies in the classroom.

Clearly, the challenges teachers face and their professional development needs cannot be detached from the larger policy environment surrounding refugee settings. Without complementary efforts to decongest overcrowded classrooms, compensate and certify more teachers, and provide them with relevant and adequate teaching and learning materials, training alone will not solve the problem. Teachers must be included in these policy discussions and in identifying solutions.

Teachers' instructional practice in refugee settings has not been systematically studied to date. In this study, we documented the prevalence of a narrow range of teaching talk, and a relative lack of the type of learning talk essential for promoting quality, dialogic teaching. More studies are urgently needed on the under-researched areas of teacher professional development and teachers of refugees in refugee camps and other crisis settings. Stronger teacher professional development opportunities will likely contribute to improved student learning outcomes (Hattie 2009; Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005), and they also have the potential to mitigate high teacher turnover in these contexts, bolster the overall professionalization of the teaching corps, and increase the value of the profession. Improving pedagogical quality among teachers of refugees is essential to meet the needs and fulfill the rights of refugees, who are among the world's most marginalized populations, and to adequately support the teachers who work with these learners.



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## APPENDIX 1

## List of Classroom Elements (Post-observation assessment checklist)

Element	Yes or No		Evidence (be as detailed as possible)
<b>1. Meaningful and Active Pupil Engagement</b>			
1.1 The lesson included a <b>variety of teaching methods or activities</b> appropriate to the objectives.	Yes	No	
1.2 The lesson has <b>objectives</b> .	Yes	No	
1.3 The <b>objectives are clear</b> .	Yes	No	
1.4 The <b>timing</b> for different parts of the lesson or activities was sufficient for the activity (i.e. the teacher manages the time well).	Yes	No	
1.5 Teacher presented <b>subject matter</b> in a way that was <b>accurate and clear</b> .	Yes	No	
1.6 The content was <b>appropriate</b> to the level of the class	Yes	No	
1.7 Teacher used the <b>chalkboard</b> well.	Yes	No	
1.8 Teacher used <b>teaching aids</b> (e.g. models, posters, worksheets, science equipment) effectively.	Yes	No	
1.9 Teacher gave <b>clear instructions</b> .	Yes	No	
1.10 <b>Students</b> used a <b>variety of means</b> (models, drawings, notes) to <b>represent/engage with</b> the concept or phenomenon under study	Yes	No	
1.11 <b>Students</b> were asked to <b>actively engage</b> with the material (e.g. by making predictions or estimations, by retelling or teaching the content, etc.)	Yes	No	
<b>2. Inclusive and Respectful Learning Environment</b>			
2.1 Teacher demonstrated strategies to promote <b>gender equity</b> , such as calling on girls and boys equally or avoiding negative or disparaging statements about girls/women	Yes	No	

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2.2 Refugee children were involved in the lesson.	Yes	No
2.3 Children of different ethnic backgrounds were involved in the lesson.	Yes	No
2.4 Children of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds were involved in the lesson.	Yes	No
2.5 All children were <b>involved in</b> the lesson	Yes	No
2.6 Teacher was <b>courteous</b> to students, encouraging their learning	Yes	No
2.7 The teacher was <b>patient</b> with the students.	Yes	No
2.8 The teacher <b>managed</b> classroom behavior.	Yes	No
2.9 The teacher <b>disciplined</b> students during lesson (e.g., with words; not corporal punishment).	Yes	No
2.10 The teacher <b>used corporal punishment</b> during lesson.	Yes	No
2.11 The teacher <b>rewarded or praised</b> students during lesson	Yes	No
2.12 The teacher <b>responded to problems</b> between children.	Yes	No
2.13 Teachers <b>demonstrated respect</b> for what students had to say.	Yes	No
2.14 Students <b>demonstrated respect</b> for what other students had to say.	Yes	No
2.15 Students <b>demonstrated respect</b> for what teachers had to say.	Yes	No
<b>3. Differentiated Instruction</b>		
3.1 Lesson was <b>tailored</b> to different learning styles and multiple intelligences (to maximize inclusion)	Yes	No
3.2 <b>Students communicated their ideas</b> to other students through a variety of means.	Yes	No
3.3 <b>Students communicated their ideas</b> to the teacher through a variety of means.	Yes	No
<b>4. Constructive Classroom Discourse</b>		
4.1 Teacher asked <b>clear questions</b> .	Yes	No

4.2 Teacher used <b>correct and appropriate language of instruction</b> in a way that was easy to hear.	Yes	No
4.3 <b>Female students</b> asked <b>appropriate questions</b> during the lesson.	Yes	No
4.4 <b>Male students</b> asked <b>appropriate questions</b> during the lesson.	Yes	No
4.5 The teacher asked <b>factual</b> questions with a yes/no answer about the lesson.	Yes	No
4.6 The teacher asked <b>factual</b> questions with a clear correct answer (not yes/no) about the lesson.	Yes	No
4.7 The teacher asked <b>non-recall or non-closed</b> questions about the lesson.	Yes	No
<b>5. Relevant Curriculum and Language(s) of Instruction</b>		
5.1 Lesson seemed <b>relevant</b> to learners' lives.	Yes	No
5.2 Teacher <b>differentiated</b> tasks for learners of different ability levels.	Yes	No
5.3 Teacher directly <b>supported students' acquisition of language of instruction</b> (English/Kiswahili depending on the year) in class.	Yes	No
<b>6. Conceptual Learning and Critical Thinking</b>		
6.1 The lesson was designed to promote <b>conceptual understanding</b> , not just factual learning.	Yes	No
6.2 Teacher engaged students in oral, written, or practical activities that required <b>critical thinking or problem solving</b> .	Yes	No
<b>7. Varied Comprehension Checks and Assessments</b>		
7.1 The teacher <b>checked for student comprehension</b> .	Yes	No