A LITERATURE REVIEW

What are the educational needs and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children, including those who are unaccompanied, with a particular focus on inclusion?

Andrew Peterson, Catherine Meehan, Zulfi Ali and Ian Durrant
Canterbury Christ Church University

NNCO
National Networks for Collaborative Outreach

KMPF
KENT & MEDWAY PROGRESSION FEDERATION

Canterbury Christ Church University

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

In a context of mass displacement and flows of asylum-seeking and refugee peoples across national borders, the need to respond and attend to the education of asylum-seeking and refugee children is urgent and pressing, though it is not without its challenges. This literature review focuses on the educational experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children, including those who are unaccompanied, with a particular focus on inclusion. It seeks to respond to the following three interconnected questions:

1. What does current educational literature tell us about the educational needs and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children as they relate to inclusion?
2. What does current educational literature tell us about the educational needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children as they relate to inclusion?
3. What implications and recommendations can be drawn from existing literature?

The review has a particular interest in the needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children, but recognises that though there is a developing literature specifically on unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children (see, for example, Stanley, 2001; Derluyn and Broekaert, 2008; Pastoor, 2015) such needs must be understood and positioned in relation to the wider educational needs and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children more generally. While other literature reviews on asylum-seeking and refugee children are available (see, for example, Hek, 2005; McBrien, 2005), the present review adds to existing work by:

- including an explicit focus on the educational needs and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children who are unaccompanied;
- providing an up-to-date review of literature which analyses and reports the educational needs and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children.

The review focuses in particular on post-migration experiences within school settings as they relate to asylum-seeking and refugee children's social inclusion.

MAIN FINDINGS

The current educational literature tells us the following about the educational needs and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children:

- Education and schooling are essential sites through which asylum-seeking and refugee children are – or indeed may not be – included within their new communities;
- Asylum-seeking and refugee children have a range of educational needs and experiences which may not be accounted for without proper recognition of their particular status and experiences;
- Asylum-seeking and refugee children's engagement with and experiences of education and schooling is a complex, on-going and dynamic process, involving multiple acts of meaning-making in relation to past and current experiences, as well as future hopes and goals;
- Educational responses are influenced by, and at times serve to challenge, perceptions and discourses present within the wider socio-political contexts within which schools operate;
- A varied range of existing practices within schools are employed to respond to the educational needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children, and these work best where they are (1) framed by hospitable and holistic understandings which recognise their uniqueness and humanity; (2) move beyond, and where appropriate actively challenge, simple and essentialised categorisations such as 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee; and, (3) are part of a whole-school response;
- Many asylum-seeking and refugee children report and exhibit a strong commitment to education and schooling and have high aspirations regarding their progression into further and higher education, despite the existence of often significant barriers to their educational pathways;
- Good quality and accessible educational guidance and counselling relating to pathways into higher education is not always available to asylum-seeking and refugee children, yet is understood to provide a key mechanism for supporting educational transitions into higher education.

In addition to these findings regarding asylum-seeking and refugee children, the current educational literature tells us the following about the specific educational needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children:

- Processes of educational inclusion, adaptation and acculturation are impacted upon by the absence of parental/immediate family support;
- The educational provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children is implicated by processes associated with living in care;
- Where the provision of care is more stable, commitment to, and engagement with, education results;
- Education and schooling for unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children takes place in the context of, and often needs to challenge, particular characterisations and (mis)representations of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children;
- Educational pathways into higher education for unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children require additional support, including through the provision of effective education guidance and counselling and through the availability of role-models.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main conclusions and recommendations arising from this literature review for **educators and educational institutions** are that:

- Education and schooling plays a crucial role in supporting the inclusion of asylum-seeking and refugee children within their new communities;
- Schools, school leaders and teachers therefore need to take seriously their role in responding to the educational needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children – including those who are unaccompanied;
- Whole-school approaches built on hospitable and holistic responses to asylum-seeking and refugee children are productive, and can challenge wider discourses and practices which are hostile to asylum-seeking and refugee people and children;
- Schools and teachers (including pre-service teachers) are likely to need and benefit from professional learning and development activities through which they can build and enhance their understanding of the educational and cultural histories, needs and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children;
- Asylum-seeking and refugee children require, and stand to gain substantially from, more focused support for their educational pathways into further and higher education in ways which engage with their high aspirations. Such support is likely to include focused guidance and counselling, as well as the availability of supportive role-models.

The main conclusions and recommendations arising from this literature review for **educational researchers** are that more research is needed concerning:

- The ways in which schools manage their educational responses to asylum-seeking and refugee children – including those who are unaccompanied – given a range of other pressures which may impact on their work. Such pressures include, but are not limited to, wider government (national and local) immigration and border policies and practices, other (often competing) educational policies and agendas, the work of other service providers, (mis)representations of asylum-seeking and refugee people within the media, and local community relationships;
- The sociological conceptualising and everyday education and schooling experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children themselves as well as their teachers and peers;
- The extent to which, and ways in which, asylum-seeking and refugee children understand and accept/reject their conceptualisation as 'refugees' and the way in which the concept provides an identity which they may or may not wish to be associated with;
- The educational aspirations and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children in regard to their pathway/s into further and higher education, including the barriers faced and the support mechanisms through which such barriers are managed.

THE REVIEW

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In 2016, the world is witnessing the highest level of displacement on record. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees[1], 'an unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18'. The UNHCR also reports that 'nearly 34,000 people are forcibly displaced every day as a result of conflict or persecution'. Hosting forcibly displaced people falls inequitably on different nations. For example, figures obtained at the end of 2015 suggest that of the more than 4.5 million people who have been displaced from Syria, Turkey hosts approximately 2.5 million, Jordan and Lebanon 1.7 million, and the United Kingdom 1000[2].

In the United Kingdom, figures provided by the Refugee Council in August 2016 showed that there were 32,661 in asylum applications in 2015, and 16,038 in the first half of 2016[3]. The top ten UK asylum applicant producing[4] countries in the second quarter of 2016 were, in order: Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bangladesh, Syria, Albania, India, Nigeria, and Sudan[5]. In 2015, 3,253 children designated as separated claimed asylum in the UK[6]. Home Office figures published by the Refugee Council indicate that while between 2010 and 2013 there was a 'downward trend' in the number of applications from unaccompanied children, in 2014 and 2015 such claims 'rose significantly' and 'accounted for just over 10% of all asylum applications in 2015'[7]. In 2015, over 90% of child applicants were male, with 62% aged 16-17, 24% 14-15, 7% aged under 14, and 6% age unknown[8]. In April 2016, the UK government committed to host around 3,000 refugees, a majority of whom would be vulnerable children, from Syria by 2020. An amendment to the Immigration Bill in 2016 tabled by the opposition which aimed at hosting an additional 3,000 unaccompanied children already in Europe was narrowly defeated[9]. In October 2016, the UK government committed to ensure the safe refuge of eligible unaccompanied children in the Calais refuge and migration encampment[10].

Recognising this context, this literature review focuses on the educational needs and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children, including those who are unaccompanied, with a particular focus on inclusion. Clearly, education and schooling represents a key process through which asylum-seeking and refugee children may – or indeed may not – experience inclusive attitudes and practices. A number of global institutions and forums have maintained the importance of ensuring fair and equal access to education for those subject to forced migration. The World Declaration on Education for All (United Nations, 1990; emphasis added), adopted by the World Conference in Jomtein, Thailand in 1990 asserts that:

> An active commitment must be made to removing educational disparities. Underserved groups: the poor; street and working children; rural and remote populations; nomads and migrant workers; indigenous peoples; ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities; refugees; those displaced by war; and people under occupation, should not suffer any discrimination in access to learning opportunities.

The actual numbers of refugee and asylum-seeking children in the UK education system are not clear. In 2006, Rutter estimated there to be at least 60,000 asylum-seeking and refugee children of school age in the UK (Pinson and Arnot, 2010), a figure repeated by Rutter and Alexandrova (2012). Section 14 of the UK Education Act (1996) provides that authorities are legally required to provide education for 5-16 year olds whatever their immigration status, though the extent to which this actually occurs is not fully clear (Pinson and Arnot, 2010), particularly where children are residing in initial, temporary accommodation (Taylor, 2016).

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1   http://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html
2   https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_research/the_truth_about_asylum/facts_about_asylum_-_page_6
3   http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/4620/Asylum_Statistics_May_2015.pdf;
    http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/8736/Asylum_Statistics_August_2016.pdf
4   This is the term currently employed by the Refugee Council.
5   http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/8736/Asylum_Statistics_August_2016.pdf
6   http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/what_we_do/childrens_services
7   http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/8739/Children_in_the_Asylum_System_August_2016.pdf
8   http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/8739/Children_in_the_Asylum_System_August_2016.pdf
9   http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36134837
10 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37609973

WHO ARE ASYLUM-SEEKING AND REFUGEE CHILDREN?

Given the current contestation around and (mis)use of terms, it is essential to offer some definitional clarity from the outset. In this literature review, we use the following **definition of a refugee**[11], provided by the UNHCR[12]:

> A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

We also use the following **definition of an asylum seeker,** also provided by the UNHCR[13]:

> When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in another country, they apply for asylum – the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance. An asylum seeker must demonstrate that his or her fear of persecution in his or her home country is well-founded.

For the purpose of this literature review, and following Pinson, Arnot and Candappa (2010) we use the term asylum-seeking and refugee (ASR) children to refer to young people who are categorised, and who experience such categories, as refugees and/or asylum seekers.

While this review draws on literature that focuses on ASR children, it has a particular interest in the educational needs, experiences and pathways of unaccompanied ASR (UASR) children. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1997: 1) adopts the following **definition of unaccompanied children:**

> "Unaccompanied children" (also referred to as "unaccompanied minors") are children under 18 years of age who have been separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible to do so.

This is the definition currently employed by the United Kingdom Home Office (UKHO, 2016), and is the definition which informs this review.

AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This literature review focuses on the educational experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children, including those who are unaccompanied. It seeks to respond to the following three, interconnected questions:

1. What does current educational literature tell us about the educational needs and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children as they relate to inclusion?
2. What does current educational literature tell us about the educational needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children as they relate to inclusion?
3. What implications and recommendations can be drawn from existing literature?

While other literature reviews on ASR children are available (see, for example, Hek, 2005; McBrien, 2005), the present review adds to existing work by:

- including an explicit focus on the educational needs and experiences of ASR children who are unaccompanied;
- providing an up-to-date review of literature which analyses and reports the educational needs and experiences of ASR children.

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11 This definition is derived from that offered in the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. We use the definition here given its importance as a reference point, though we note the concern raised by others (see, for example, McBrien, 2016) that the Refugee Convention may be outdated.
12 http://www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee/
13 http://www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee/

METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

The literature review reported here responds to the three questions outlined in the previous section by synthesising literature drawn from western, English speaking nations that analyses and reports the educational needs and experiences of ASR children as they relate to inclusion. The review has a particular interest in the needs and experiences of UASR children, but recognises that though there is a developing literature specifically on UASR (see, for example, Derluyn and Broekaert, 2008; Pastoor, 2015) such needs must be understood and positioned in relation to the wider educational needs and experiences of ASR children more generally.

The review adopted an initially inclusive approach to literature, using electronic academic databases, online searches, and the authors' existing knowledge of the field to identify sources. Searches were conducted using the following terms, either individually or in combination: 'refugee', 'asylum-seeking/er', 'unaccompanied', 'education', and 'school/ing'. Often analysis of one source or piece of literature led to the identification of further sources to consider.

To be included in the review, studies needed to focus on ASR children between the ages of 5 and 18. Most studies included in the review have been published since 2000, though the authors were mindful that significant, frequently cited research which pre-date the new millennium should be included. Typically, and shaped by the overall focus of this review, the literature located was concentrated within English-speaking nations, predominantly though not exclusively, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. While the review did not deliberately exclude quantitative studies, there is a dearth of such studies in the existing literature. For this reason, the literature included in the review typically consisted of: existing literature reviews, small-scale qualitative studies, and analyses of policy and practice.

In including/excluding literature from this review, we were also mindful of further important factors. First, that the review focuses on post-migration experiences within school settings. While we are mindful that ASR children, and indeed their families, receive education in a range of contexts – including pre-school and tertiary settings as well as those outside the formal education and schooling system (see, for example, Demirdjian, 2012; Dada, 2012), our focus is on formal schooling and education. Second, while we would not wish to diminish or neglect their importance, this review is not directly concerned with experiences of trauma and loss, nor with levels of physical health, experienced by ASR children (for existing literature on trauma and loss see, for example, Eisenbruch, 1988; Frater-Mathieson, 2004; Ehnolt, Smith and Yule, 2005, Murray et al., 2008; Derluyn and Broekaert, 2008; Block et al., 2014; Pastoor, 2015; for existing literature on physical health see, for example, Woodland et al., 2015).

Before concluding this methodology, it should be acknowledged that this review is exploratory in its nature. While we have sought to include relevant literature from a range of contexts, the main criteria for inclusion/exclusion is the extent to which the literature was deemed helpful in responding to the research questions. Such an approach typically stops short of claiming the level of objectivity and replicability required of a fully systematic review.

MAIN FINDINGS

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees places education as central to asylum-seeking and refugee (hereafter ASR) children's inclusion and development. To this end, research points to a range of significant educational outcomes for ASR children, including second language development and social and emotional learning. Research also points, however, to the complex and challenging educational needs and experiences of ASR children, including the disparity between such needs and existing educational provision. In this section, and in order to respond to the research questions that focus this review, we identify and explore four themes that are attended to commonly within the existing literature. Through these themes, we seek to make sense of the educational needs and experiences of ASR children, including those who are unaccompanied (hereafter UASR) children. The themes, which are now considered in turn, are: supporting inclusion, adaptations and acculturation; hostile vs hospitable and holistic responses to ASR/UASR children; whole-school approaches; and, educational pathways.

SUPPORTING INCLUSION, ADAPTATION(S)[14] AND ACCULTURATION

Gardner (1995: 228) suggests that adapting to the host environment requires the development of 'cultural competence' (see also Anderson, 2004). With this in mind, a compelling and central finding within and throughout the literature is that schools can and do play a crucial role as key sites in ASR children's adaptation and acculturation within their new communities (Vantilburg et al., 1996; Zhou, 2001; Pinson and Arnot, 2010; Block et al., 2014). Studies typically assert the view that the tasks and experiences associated with adapting and becoming acculturated within a new community are both complex and challenging for ASR, and therefore are too for UASR children. Adaptation and acculturation are multifaceted processes, requiring attention to both how ASR children view and experience their new settings and how others already within those settings view and experience the ASR children themselves (including, for example, how physical environments are positioned and experienced). A crucial distinction we might make from the outset here is the significant difference between ASR children *being in school and the community and actually being part of the school and the community*[15].

The extent to which, and ways in which, ASR children settle into a new school environment is crucial for their wider social acculturation and inclusion within communities and society (see, for example, Anderson et al. 2004; Doyle and O'Toole, 2013; Pastoor, 2015). Initial and ongoing educational experiences are also likely to affect how ASR children perceive the new culture and communities (Hyman et al., 2000; Hek, 2005; Oikonomidoy, 2010). In summarising the importance of schools and schooling to ASR children in Australia, for example, Block et al. (2014: 1339) suggest that, without the requisite support and approach by schools, ASR children 'may demonstrate lack of engagement, feelings of disempowerment, absenteeism, failure to establish and sustain healthy relationships, early exit from school and risk significantly poorer achievement and associated poor long-term prospects in terms of employment and overall socio-economic status'. This statement provides a powerful provocation of the educational needs of ASR children, and alludes to the sorts of educational responses required to meet them.

In an earlier review of research on the education of refugee students in the United States, McBrien (2005: 335) reminds us that responses to refugees can be 'welcoming or rejecting'. Similarly, Anderson (2004: 66-67) suggests that 'existing structures within a locality (including schools) might either hinder or facilitate the accomplishment of the adaptation task faced by refugees' (we return to this later, but wish to raise here the interconnectedness between adaptation/acculturation on the one hand, and responses to ASR children on the other). A number of studies suggest that a crucial factor shaping adaptation and acculturation is the management of the differences which exist between young refugee's previous educational experiences, and those of their new school settings (Humpage, 1998; Rutter, 1994; Hamilton and Moore, 2004; Hamilton, 2010). Two older studies conducted with Indo-Chinese refugees in Australia, for example, found that young refugees and their parents felt unprepared for the new education system (Kelly and Bennoun, 1984; Jupp and Luckey, 1990).

More recent studies also report the ongoing meaning-making and evaluations of ASR children as they encounter and engage with different facets of school life – including relationships with peers and teachers. Often sense of new experiences is made though, and in relation to, prior educational encounters from ASR children's home countries. In her study with refugee students in the United States, Oikonomidoy (2010) reports the importance of refugee children's perception of their teachers in terms of both conveying academic knowledge and exhibiting an approachable/friendly demeanour. For the respondents in Oikonomidoy's study, the narratives of the refugee children in relation to their teachers involved forms of comparison with teachers/teaching in their home countries. Such comparisons played an important role in the children's meaning-making of their educational experiences in their new setting. Research conducted by Chung et al. (2000) with Vietnamese refugees in the United States reports that both age and gender affected the process of acculturation. Younger refugees found the process easier than those who were older, while young women found it easier than young men.

According to Anderson (2004: 66) 'refugees might... bring with them social support structures and contextual factors that could help them relocate successfully. These can include intact family units or close friends and neighbours who all make the same journey'. A number of studies point to the importance of both family and family-school relations in supporting young migrants to settle and participate in their new communities (see, for example, Vincent and Warren, 1998; Warren and Dechasa, 2001; Hamilton and Moore, 2004; Hek, 2005;

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14   We use the term adaptation(s) here to refer to the multifarious processes of adaptation which occur as part of movement and resettlement. These include adaptations by host communities, ASR children and their families, educational and social institutions, and others.
15   We are grateful to Alex Ntung for highlighting this distinction.

Demirdjian, 2012; Block et al., 2014). Studies also suggest that the degree to which parents of ASR children adapt and acculturate impact on the extent to which their children do so (Timm, 1994; McBrien, 2005; Fanning, Veale and O'Connor, 2001). Often cited are the educational cultures within which parents and families are used to operating and the differences between these and those of the new culture (see McBrien, 2005 for a US-based summary). Of course, for UASR children's relationships to and with families are likely to be more complex. As Derluyn and Broekaert (2008: 323) highlight 'children might lose their entire social infrastructure: not only their parents and relatives, but also the security of grandparents, neighbours, teachers… The world of significant adults is lost, and with it goes much of the security and stability, safety and roots of the child'. Adding to this complexity are a number of other post-migration factors, including the nature and causes of disconnection with immediate family, the availability and level of contact with family outside of the host country, and the experiences of care within their new settings. With regard to the latter, Wade et al's. (2005) study suggests that those UASR children who experienced more positive and stable care evidenced more consistent engagement with education (see also Stanley, 2001; Brownless and Finch, 2010; Wade, 2011). This said, as McBrien (2005: 346) suggests, 'all refugees encounter a crises of identity when they leave behind their communities, lifestyles, livelihoods, and ancestral places of worship… refugee teens may not have the traditional adult support on which to rely as they search for a sense of self, because adults with whom they live may be undergoing a similar search for self in their new host country'.

Adjustment to new expectations, rules and cultures within schools seems therefore both crucial and potentially problematic. Moreover, the actions of young refugees may be challenging for teachers to understand with, at times, certain behaviours interpreted as problematic. McBrien (2005: 346), for example, suggests that such behaviours are 'likely to result from adjustment problems… acts of prejudice by… classmates and the refugee students' attempts to assimilate rapidly'. It is important to note that in making the transition into the new culture, ASR children are performing a complex act at multiple levels, which requires them to manage their own identities and culture/s with the new, including when these are in any form of conflict or tension. While adjustments to new procedures, practices and relationships are important, a range of studies suggest that ASR children hold very positive views regarding the importance of education, and are aspirational with regards to attainment and progression – a finding to which we return in more detail later when we explore educational pathways (Gateley, 2015; see, for example, Hek, 2005; Walker, 2011; Refugee Support Network, 2012; Doyle and O'Toole, 2013)[16].

Across the literature, many studies evidence a clear correlation between language acquisition and levels of adaptation/acculturation, also positing an interdependent relationship between second language learning and social inclusion (Candappa and Egharevba, 2000; Marriott, 2001; Stanley, 2001; Loewen, 2004). To put this another way, a lack of second language acquisition is identified as in turn leading to greater possibilities for marginalisation and exclusion (Anderson, 2004; Hyman et al., 2000). A number of researchers point to the importance of ensuring that second language learning makes use of the students' own language/s, interests and strengths (for example, Friere and Macedo, 1987; Loewen, 2004). In addition, studies focusing on English-speaking contexts emphasise the need to differentiate ASR children's ability in some forms of English language (such as spoken and/or colloquial English) and others (such as academic/formal English) (see in particular Allen, 2002; Cummins, 2007). A number of studies remind us, however, that it is 'the language of instruction, typically the majority language, [which] is the one in which refugees need to acquire proficiency in order to… complete their academic studies with success' (McBrien, 2016: 151; see also Roxas, 2011; Hauck, Lo, Maxwell and Preston, 2014).

Crucial here too, and with important reference to acculturation, is the view that 'helping refugee children with the task of learning a second language and acculturating to the new society should be seen as the responsibility of all teachers' (Loewen, 2004: 50; see also Rutter, 1994). This work does, of course, present significant challenges. Not least is the need for schools to recognise and take seriously (1) the presence of cultural misunderstandings, whether these misunderstandings are held by the wider student body, teachers and other school workers, students' families, members of the wider school community, or indeed ASR children themselves, and (2) the use of first languages both within and outside of the home setting/s.

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16 In making this suggestion, we recognise the need to be mindful that such positive views sit in relation with varied perspectives regarding the differences between the educational systems ASR children have experienced before and after arriving in their new contexts.

HOSTILE VS HOSPITABLE AND HOLISTIC RESPONSES TO ASR/UASR CHILDREN

A defining feature of the existing literature is that in being and becoming sites which support ASR children's inclusion, adaptation and acculturation, schools must develop hospitable responses which conceive ASR children in holistic terms as unique human beings. Such practice needs to be positioned in wider contexts in which hostility to asylum-seekers and refugees may manifest. For this reason, and as Pinson, Arnot and Candappa (2010: 115) suggest, 'the education of migrant children cannot be isolated from the general politics of asylum' (see also Bloch, 2000; Dada, 2012). Indeed, the same authors locate their work on teachers and refugee children in the context of 'national hostility to the "non-citizen"' (Arnot, Pinson and Candappa, 2009) and the need to move from 'hostile to holistic models' (Arnot and Pinson, 2010). With this in mind, it is important to remember that there are significant processes and practices at play in the wider social and political context which shape, inform and impact on the educational and social experiences of young refugees. These include, but are not limited to, national government policy, the provision of local services, and (mis)representations of asylum-seeker and refugee people and children (including children who are unaccompanied, in mainstream media. In such conditions, Pinson, Arnot and Candappa (2010: 19) offer the following reflection:

> Today, most developed countries still honour their moral obligation to promote human rights by allowing asylum-seekers to claim asylum. However, at the same time, they vigorously act to reduce the numbers of those receiving the status of refuge (those allowed to settle and find a home at least temporarily) and use access to social rights as a mechanism of deterrence and exclusion from full membership…This has major implications for the education of ASR [asylum-seeking and refugee] children.

Spicer (2008: 493) points to a range of social factors which can serve to exclude and marginalise asylum and refugee families and young people:

> Studies suggest that asylum-seekers and refugees living in industrialised countries such as the UK experience many problems of social exclusion, in particular poverty, poor housing, poor access to health and social welfare services, limited English language support, isolation and limited supportive social networks.

Moreover, the placement of ASR children in particular schools may not be guided primarily by educational considerations. For schools and local authorities, this may raise particular challenges, including whether the main concern is education provision rather than the precise content of that provision and how it responds to the needs of ASR and UASR children. Pinson and Arnot (2010) highlight issues including school (un)availability, the suitability of particular school settings (the lack of expertise and/or resources, for example), the different times of the school year in which ASR children may enter schooling and the lack of dedicated funding for ASR pupils. All of these features point to the importance of recognising and engaging with the socio-political contexts which shape and variously enable/prevent ASR children's educational experiences. Writing in the Australian context, Matthews (2008: 32) writes that:

> In Australia, refugee education is piecemeal and dominated by psychological approaches that overemphasise pre-displacement conditions of trauma. Preoccupations with therapeutic interventions locate issues at an individual level and overlook broader dimensions of inequality and disadvantage.

Concern is also expressed commonly about (mis)representations of asylum-seekers and refugees, particularly within mainstream media and, in turn, the effect this has on public attitudes (Pinson, Arnot and Candappa, 2010; Dada, 2012; Block et al., 2014). Kundnani (2001: 52) contends that 'the image of asylum seekers is defined not by what they are, but simply by the fact that they are 'not one of us', and are, therefore, a threat to 'our way of life'. The emphasis is not on who is to be excluded but on what is to be protected'. Similarly, McBrien (2005) cites the work of Stephan and Stephan (2000) who identified prejudicial and discriminatory responses to refugees as resulting from perceptions of "threat". Such perceptions of threat may manifest in a myriad of ways.

A number of commentators highlight the need to look beyond categories and definitions. Pinson and Arnot (2010), for example, cite Rutter's (2001: 33) suggestion that 'being a refugee is a bureaucratic entity… rather than an experiential one'. A key appeal in literature on the education of ASR children is the need to actively resist and challenge those discourses which position refugee children as being "a problem" (Pinson, Arnot and Candappa, 2010). Similarly, Sinclair (2001) positions education as a humanitarian response, and as working

primarily to support ASR students social and emotional needs. McBrien (2005: 339) reminds us that focusing on refugee students' wellbeing is multifaceted, and includes 'a sense of safety, a sense of self, and an adjustment to the cultural expectations of a new country while maintaining a connection to their heritage' (see also, Fanning, Veale and O'Connor, 2001).

Once again, these findings signify the crucial role played by schools in creating and enacting hospitable and holistic responses to ASR and UASR children. Matthews (2008: 32) reminds us that 'schools are a stabilising feature in the unsettled lives of refugee young people'. To this end, a number of studies question the extent to which ASR children in various contexts felt welcomed by and within their schools (see, for example, Birman et al. 2001, cited in McBrien, 2005; Gunderson, 2007; Matthews, 2008). From a school-based perspective, central to adopting hospitable and holistic responses is the need to focus not only on the ASR child (their language learning, individual needs, acculturation etc.) but also on 'the transformation of the school culture and its values' (Pinson and Arnot, 2010: 254). Surveying 58 LEA support service offices and their policy documents, Pinson and Arnot (2010: 254-255; emphasis in original) identified seven frameworks – not mutually exclusive – through which LEAs framed their approaches: *'English as an Additional Language (EAL) Framework; Minority Ethnic Achievement Framework; Race Equality Framework; New Arrivals Framework; Vulnerable Children Framework;* and, *Holistic Approaches*. The latter – Holistic Approaches – perhaps most clearly speaks to transformative notions of school ethos and values. According to Pinson and Arnot (2010: 255) 'here the concept of the school is being challenged to work with the realities of migration and displacement. The focus of this approach derives from humanitarian and humanistic concern for the child, on the one hand, and the principle of social inclusion through the recognition of difference on the other'.

A key practice through which holistic approaches are enacted involves cultivating and maintaining a 'strong positive image of asylum-seeking and refugee pupils' (Pinson and Arnot, 2010: 257; see also, Mott, 2000; OfSTED, 2003; Reakes and Powell, 2004; Remsbery, 2003). Central here is the need to recognise ASR children's pre-migration experiences and associated trauma, without adopting 'a deficit model that treats people from refugee backgrounds as victims rather than recognises their potential and builds on their strengths and resilience' (Block et al., 2014: 1340; see also Ferfolja. 2009). Similarly, Keddie (2012a: 1297) writes of 'a discourse of deficit' which focus on ASR children's 'lack (in relation to, for instance, language, culture and social capital)'. Keddie reminds us that such deficit discourses can 'invariably lead to a degraded form of pedagogy based on low expectations and low demandingness' (1298), which may indeed stem from attitudes based on outdated and negative stereotypes.). There are also clear tensions involved for schools and teachers concerning drawing on refugee students' prior experiences and cultures. Here, teachers require sensitivity, shaped by appropriate dialogue, which recognise and allow experiential and cultural knowledge to be shared in ways which do not open up stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination or further vulnerabilities (Arnot, Pinson and Candappa, 2009).

Existing literature also points to the importance of holistic approaches which do not essentialise or homogenise ASR children, and which recognise their individual 'backgrounds and corresponding needs' (Block et al., 2014: 1350) as well as their uniqueness as human beings (Barnes and Ntung, 2016). Papadopoulos (2000: 9) highlights that the 'loss of home is the only condition that all refugees share' (Hek, 2005). In his study of UASR children in Norway, Pastoor (2015: 251) warns that:

> the social constructions and discourses surrounding unaccompanied young refugees are characterised by ambivalence and dissonance; they may be represented as being vulnerable and/or resourceful, as being victims and/or strategic minors, which in turn brings about ambivalent representations and attitudes… Such inconsistent representations may impede the mediation of adequate support to refugee students.

Once we accept that the concepts of 'ASR children' and 'UASR children' represent heterogeneous and diverse groups, we can see that those who comprise both 'come from many different socioeconomic backgrounds, have varying religious beliefs' and have a range of educational experiences and histories (Gateley, 2015). A further concern is that ASR children become subsumed within wider categories which do not pay full attention to their particular needs and experiences. In the Australian context, Sidhu and Taylor (2007) and Keddie (2012b: 199) have pointed to the ways in which 'refugee students' learning and social needs' are rendered 'invisible' through their assignation as, for example, migrants or EAL (English as an Additional Language) learners.

WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACHES

In the previous section, some initial comments were made regarding the extent to which hospitable and holistic responses to ASR and UASR children required whole-school approaches. In this section, we consider this aspect of the existing literature in more detail.

Clearly, school leaders and teachers play a crucial role in establishing schools as safe, hospitable and protective environments. Developing hospitable and holistic approaches involves – indeed maybe even requires – a particular mind-set concerning the nature and purpose of both education and teaching, as well as the development of appropriately framed policies, practices and culture. Pinson and Arnot (2010: 257; emphasis in original) ask what it is that leads to such a (re)conceptualisation and identify three common characteristics as central:

- 'valuing cultural diversity and the active promotion of cultural diversity as an educational goal';
- 'constructing new indicators of integration';
- 'adopting a caring/compassionate ethos and a maximal approach to the role proscribed for the school or local authority'.

Writing in the Australian context, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) similarly highlight the importance of school ethos in promoting an inclusive environment (see also Keddie, 2012a). The role of the head teacher or principal (hereafter head teacher) is vital in creating the conditions under which such a climate can be fostered and sustained (Rutter, 1994; Hamilton, 2004). Also writing in Australia, Pugh, Every and Hattam (2012) also emphasise the importance of school leadership and the development of whole school approaches and commitment.

Teachers, and teacher knowledge and expertise, are also identified as crucial in the development of effective and meaningful whole-school approaches to the inclusion of ASR and UASR children. As McBrien (2005: 330) reminds us, 'when teachers have not been sufficiently trained to understand the difficulties and experiences of refugee children, they frequently misinterpret the students and families' culturally inappropriate attempts to succeed in their new environment' (see also, Hones, 2002). Matthews (2008: 31) reports that 'teachers and students are unfamiliar with the historical and political circumstances of intra-national conflict and forced migration… as well as ethnic and cultural differences' (see also Humpage, 2009; Andres, 2012; MacNevin, 2012. This suggests a need for teachers to be supported in appropriate professional development opportunities (a point also made by Barnes and Ntung, 2016). Research by Theilheimer (2001), for example, reports a teacher education programme in the United States which emphasised the responsibility and value of teachers' learning about refugee students through direct engagement with refugee children, their histories, and their experiences.

As the previous section highlighted, a range of research points to the benefits of hospitable and holistic responses, which pay attention to, and value, ASR children's voice and experiences through caring and dialogical approaches (Pinson, Arnot and Candappa, 2010). However, the existing literature suggests that we know less about the actual conceptualisations of ASR children held by key educational actors, including teachers. Reflecting on research and policy literature in the UK context, Pinson and Arnot (2010: 248) suggest that 'what is noticeable is the lack of sociological study of the ways in which the needs of these pupils, and LEA's and schools', responsibilities towards them are conceptualised – for example, whether they employ discourses of inclusion and social justice, or work strictly within performance-oriented school regimes'. In seeking to address this gap, Pinson and Arnot (2010: see also, Arnot, Pinson and Candappa, 2010; Pinson, Arnot and Candappa, 2010) found that teachers with whom they spoke approached their role and work through responses based on caring and attention to the individual needs of the young people within supportive wider environments.

The ability of school leaders and teachers to respond to refugee children in humanistic ways may well be restricted and undermined by other educational processes and agendas (Arnot, Pinson and Candappa, 2009). Accountability measures and pressures can act as barriers to schools' support for ASR children, including the extent to which they can work in partnership with other agencies (Cheminais, 2009; Pinson, Arnot and Candappa, 2010; Block et al., 2014). In this regard, school leaders and teachers work in a context in which different, and often competing, pressures are in operation. In her research in a single Primary school in Queensland, Australia, Keddie (2012a: 1305) reports the stance adopted by the schools' Principal, Ms A, who prioritised social outcomes as a way of challenging deficit understandings of ASR children. A key part of this approach is the way in which the school (re)considered competing agendas. According to Ms A:

> A lot of schools find the bureaucratic imperatives really demanding…they're very focused on academic performance, and that's how they measure themselves… (but) focusing just on standardised testing, the quality of the curriculum is diluted. It becomes awful. It's just very narrow… that's not the way we operate here… (we are about) ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, is given an opportunity to succeed however they can. We focus on the whole child. (It's about) identifying strengths. What is this child good at doing and what can they do to succeed in an area that may not be academic? Because the whole child is academic, social, emotional, spiritual… we do believe in helping kids develop that sense of self, which is the spirituality of themselves, and that is about 'learning to be' who you are, learning to be together… (Ms A).

As alluded to above, a number of studies suggest that teachers may not have the necessary knowledge and skills to work effectively with ASR children and/or that there is a pressing need for teacher professional education and development to build teacher knowledge and competence (Ferfolja, 2009; Matthews, 2009; Sidhu and Taylor, 2009; Pastoor, 2015). Clearly, there is value in schools and teachers working collaboratively. Reporting on interviews with educators involved in a programme to support ASR children in Victoria, Australia, Block et al. (2014: 1346), for example, found that the 'shared knowledge, resources and expertise and the relationships developed through networking with other schools and with agencies were highly valued by interviewees. School staff reported feeling less isolated with the realisation that other schools were facing similar challenges'.

EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS

Though often not the main focus of existing research concerning ASR children, the literature surveyed for this review highlights the disrupted nature of ASR children's post-migration educational pathways. US-based studies, for example, report a range of reasons to explain the disrupted educational pathways of ASR children, including perceptions of educational ability (held by themselves or others), social/relational difficulties, and the absence of programmes and interventions to support educational pathways (House, 2001; French and Conrad, 2001; McBrien, 2005).

Research on the educational pathways of ASR children also raises some important findings regarding aspirations. Studies from a variety of contexts report that ASR children typically identify education and schooling as crucial to their aspirations and futures – both in terms of academic and social outcomes (see, for example, McBrien, 2005; Stevenson and Willott, 2007; Winthrop and Kirk, 2008; Brownless and Finch, 2010). Stevenson and Willott (2007: 681) report the following response from a participant who was a member of Refugee Youth:

> For many young refugees, the decision to go to University is critical – for us, and for our parents – it feels like all our futures depend on it! We're very motivated! We've already overcome masses of obstacles to get to the point of making this decision in our lives. And, with help in the right places, we can do it!

A study by Doyle and O'Toole (2013) reports the positive intentions of ASR children in post-16 settings to progress into higher education and employment in addition to other social outcomes. Other research specifically with UASR children reports that they are more likely to follow educational pathways beyond schooling than other cared-for children (see Brownless and Finch, 2010; Wade, 2011). Such studies support the findings of Stevenson and Willott (2007) who explored the perceptions and intentions of ASR children in England as they relate to higher education. This study found that ASR children had high aspirations, despite the presence of significant barriers. Indeed, across studies barriers reported include tuition fee status and costs, uneven student support, immigration controls, lack of appropriate advice, and concerns regarding English language levels (Stevenson and Willott, 2007; Refugee Support Network, 2012). These studies also report that despite significant barriers, the ASR children in their sample had highly positive aspirations regarding entry into HE – aspirations which are often under-supported by the expectations of their schools and other support providers.

Studies also point to the crucial role which guidance and counselling can, or at least should, play in supporting the educational aspirations and transitions of ASR children (Stevenson and Willott, 2007). According to the Refugee Support Network (2012: 12) while ASR children have high aspirations, they often 'report struggles in accessing relevant educational advice, and are frequently given inaccurate or confused information when they do'. Rutter (2001) has also argued that refugee children may be misadvised with regard to further and higher education courses. Stevenson and Willott (2007) highlight in particular the effect of the vast complexities concerning funding rights and entitlements, course information, and social concerns (and indeed the receipt of conflicting information) as all acting upon ASR children.

In their study on refugees, asylum-seekers and post-16 learning Doyle and O'Toole (2013: 5) report that:

> There is a lack of formal [information, advice and guidance] support specifically targeted at refugees and asylum seekers, and marking materials tend not to have information that this group would benefit from. The majority of providers either had no specific support processes in place to support refugees and asylum seekers through the application process, or were unaware of having any.

Though resources are becoming available for ASR and UASR children to support their understanding of entry into higher education (see, for example, the UK's Refugee Support Network's *Thinking Ahead to Higher Education* initiative[17]) the need for focused and supportive career guidance and counselling appears especially significant for UASR children. In their study, Stevenson and Willott (2007: 681) report the following assertion from a representative of a refugee and asylum support organisation:

> If your parents aren't here you're more disadvantaged in terms of getting supportive provision. You have further to go and less to push you back up. You're unaware of services and the services that are available are often not attuned to picking up on the additional issue of being a refugee or asylum seeker.

Stevenson and Willott (2007) also relate that for the one UASR child in their sample, the lack of available role-models and the challenges associated with being a looked after child were particularly significant.

The evidence in the literature above needs to be considered carefully in terms of pre- and post-application experiences. Reporting on their qualitative data in England, Doyle and O'Toole (2013: 7) report that 'most of the refugees and asylum seekers interviewed described their experiences of post-16 [education] positively and found the staff to be 'supportive', 'helpful' and 'friendly', although some added the caveat that this was only the case after they had actually got on the course but not before'. Doyle and O'Toole also point to the need for greater understanding of refugee and asylum seeking students within post-16 institutions, and the accompanying need for further information and professional development regarding the precise needs and experiences of ASR students.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This literature review has sought to explore the educational experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children, including those who are unaccompanied, with a particular focus on inclusion. In addressing the three research questions outlined at the outset through an exploration of the available existing literature, it makes the draws the following conclusions and recommendations.

The main conclusions and recommendations arising from this literature review for **educators and educational institutions** are that:

- Education and schooling plays a crucial role in supporting the inclusion of asylum-seeking and refugee children within their new communities;
- Schools, school leaders and teachers therefore need to take seriously their role in responding to the educational needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children – including those who are unaccompanied;
- Whole-school approaches built on hospitable and holistic responses to asylum-seeking and refugee children are productive, and can challenge wider discourses and practices which are hostile to asylum-seeking and refugee people and children;
- Schools and teachers (including pre-service teachers) are likely to need and benefit from, professional learning and development activities through which they can build and enhance their understanding of the educational and cultural histories, needs and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children;
- Asylum-seeking and refugee children require, and stand to gain substantially from more focused support for their educational pathways into further and higher education in ways which engage with their high aspirations. Such support is likely to include focused guidance and counselling, as well as the availability of supportive role-models.

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17   http://www.refugeesupportnetwork.org/news/toolkit

The main conclusions and recommendations arising from this literature review for **educational researchers** are that more research is needed concerning:

- The ways in which schools manage their educational responses to asylum-seeking and refugee children – including those who are unaccompanied – given a range of other pressures which may impact on their work. Such pressures include, but are not limited to, wider government (national and local) immigration and border policies and practices, other (often competing) educational policies and agendas, the work of other service providers, (mis)representations of asylum-seeking and refugee people within the media, and local community relationships;
- The sociological conceptualising and everyday education and schooling experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children themselves as well as their teachers and peers;
- The extent to which, and ways in which, asylum-seeking and refugee children understand and accept/reject their conceptualisation as 'refugees' and the way in which the concept provides an identity which they may or may not wish to be associated with;
- The educational aspirations and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children in regard to their pathway/s into further and higher education, including the barriers faced and the support mechanisms through which such barriers are managed.

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