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To cite this article: Stephen Dobson , Gabriella Agrusti & Marta Pinto (2021) Supporting the inclusion of refugees: policies, theories and actions, International Journal of Inclusive Education, 25:1, 1-6, DOI: [10.1080/13603116.2019.1678804](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1678804)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1678804>



Published online: 21 Oct 2019.



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EDITORIAL



Supporting the inclusion of refugees: policies, theories and actions

If refugees are unexpected and undesired arrivals, there is a risk that they will be regarded as *grit* in the smooth functioning of existing society, institutional arrangements and culture. Of course, we are not talking of the *grit* of resilience and coping strategies of refugees (Credé, Tynan, and Harms 2017), and we are not talking of the *grit* that is increasingly identified as the key ingredient missing in the over-protected members of different generations, such as the *Generation-Z* following the *Millennials* (Lukianoff and Haidt 2018). When refugees are considered the ‘surplus population’ (Bauman 2004) to be disciplined into the host society, the risk is that well-meaning inclusion can result in the reverse and what has been termed ‘inclusive exclusion’ (Dobson 2004). So, we give with one hand the discourse of humanity, peace and inclusion and with the other hand, competitive individualism is expressed in practice in schools and other institutions where refugees must compete for scarce resources and more easily experience failure and exclusion. There is in such a case a disjuncture between the language of inclusion, the policy, the rhetoric, the communication strategy (the so-called *comms and the creation of the right narrative*) and the practice, existential experience and short, medium and longer-term consequences of exclusion.

In this introduction to the special issue, we are less concerned with definitional matters; who are we to decide politically, morally and ethically who has the right to flee and who has the right to determine another’s right to asylum in a new country? We look away from the much-debated causes of massive refugee movements and look to the efficacy and assessment of actions directed towards inclusion. We are therefore interested in the efficacy of policies, theories and actions to support authentic refugee experiences of inclusion and belonging. This includes the following, which is by no means an exhaustive list:

- Globally differentiated and connected refugee policies of inclusion (we are still judged by the colour of our passport if we have one; long gone are the days of the Nansen Passport Gatrell 2017).
- The inter-relationship between different professions working with refugees (no single profession works with refugees).
- The role of cultural and inter-cultural practices of sensitivity and appropriateness (moving beyond saying or doing nothing in the face of uncertainty, resistance or the fear of offending).
- The practice of language, literacy, numeracy and ICT in areas such as education, health and employment and wellbeing are topics of particular interest.
- The methodologies and initiatives generating robust, valid, just and sustainable resources to facilitate and support authentic experiences of inclusion and belonging.

Slee (2019) has raised the important point that what is often obscured in policies, practices and conceptual debates on inclusion is the importance of belonging. Belonging constitutes an operational value and organising practice that acts as an indicator of inclusion. In what follows

we too are interested in what constitutes inclusion for refugees and how it can be measured by particular indicators where the key point is, do we ‘measure what we value or value only what we can measure’? Such an approach signals and notices the importance of understanding refugee-related concepts of inclusion; and secondly, understanding how we might use these concepts to measure inclusion in terms of indicators of a formative and summative character.

Put differently, in order to understand the efficacy of policies, theories and actions to support authentic refugee experiences of inclusion and belonging, it is necessary to pose and answer two questions: What concepts support a language and practice of authentic experience of inclusion and belonging for refugees? Secondly, how can these concepts support the creation of indicators to measure the success of refugee inclusion and belonging compared with other groups in society or in ipsative terms, by comparison with themselves? (Isaacs et al. 2013).

Concepts and measures to support a language and practice of authentic refugee inclusion

Refugee inclusion as belonging and wellbeing

If authentic inclusion of refugee means to belong, and to belong *well* means to experience a flourishing sense of *wellbeing*, what indicators can we develop to measure this? Wellbeing can be conceptualised in societal terms as the level of economic capital possessed by refugees (e.g. the level of man-made assets), and it can also be understood as natural capital (e.g. use of the natural environment for recreation), human capital (e.g. skills) and social capital (e.g. collaboration) (OECD 2013). Recently there has been a move to view wellbeing as ‘capabilities’ (opportunities with respect to functioning) (Adler and Fleurbaey 2016) that are less congruent with the prosperity of national society and its collective values. Moreover, Diener (2018) has sought to expand these understandings of wellbeing to include psychological and non-capital components. Considering these terms, belonging as the experience of wellbeing can be a form of societal capital measured quantitatively; skills or capabilities measured in terms of performance in different contexts, or as a subjective sense of wellbeing measured in terms of character traits; and mindfulness and social relationships and social networks characterised by kindness, gratitude and reciprocity.

An example to enhance belonging and wellbeing are the initiatives that address refugee experiences of interrupted education, including access, participation and completion of qualifications. Of central importance is the support offered by communities, institutions and organisations to navigate the transitions between formal, informal and non-formal education.

Youth perceptions, social media and mobilising support for inclusion

Youth perceptions are not always in step with those of older societal cohorts. Adorno noted famously in the 1950s, ‘today we are faced with a generation purporting to be young, yet in all its reactions insufferably more grown-up than its parents ever were’ (Adorno 1974, 2). However, even this observation seems out-dated: the intensification of mass society and the role of mass media has led to a quantitative and qualitative change: the visibility and pace of messages and events can go ‘viral’ and then disappear just as quickly as they arrive.

What of youth perceptions with respect to refugees? According to the 2016 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) which measured among other things, respondents’ attitudes toward migrants and refugees, between 81% and 95% of youth in 24 education systems agreed that their countries should cooperate to provide shelter to refugees (Losito et al.

2018). We are increasingly witnessing the emergence of an intergenerational divergence and fracture of attitudes between younger and older generations. This is supported by the analysis of the European Social Survey (ESS) 2002/03–2016/17, and Heath and Richards (2019, 29) have noted, ‘the younger people are more favourable to immigration than are older people’. The views of youth and their inter-connectivity to social media must not be under-estimated as digitally informed and empowered movements garner support for refugee policies and accompanying actions of inclusion.

Skill development and inclusion in society

The European Social Survey also noted that receiving populations are more positive to refugees when they perceive that they bring with them skills and human capital in demand. Yet, we know that structures are not always in place to include and find places of employment commensurate with these skills:

Ignoring the education of migrants squanders a great deal of human potential. Sometimes simple paperwork, lack of data or bureaucratic and uncoordinated systems mean many people fall through administrative cracks. Yet investing in the education of the highly talented and driven migrants and refugees can boost development and economic growth not only in host countries but also countries of origin. (UNESCO 2018, 4)

Policies to increase the number of refugees who attend tertiary education, to take an example, indicate a recognition of the future-directed inclusion of refugees in national economies (Agrusti 2018). This is important given that among refugees of university age ‘according to the UNHCR only 1% will ever transition into, or back into, tertiary education, compared with the global average of 36%’ (Streitwieser et al. 2018, 2).

Measurement and data that makes a difference

It is our suggestion that the reader of the papers in this special edition of the journal keep in mind the importance of policies, theories and actions directed towards respectively (a) refugee belonging and wellbeing; (b) mobilising youth support for refugee inclusion; and (c) the importance of refugee skill development for inclusion in the host society. The reader might also bring to mind other concepts and we would support such an endeavour.

Additionally, we are supportive of the European Commission (2016) view that improved national, regional and global data is required for mapping the qualifications and human capital of asylum seekers. This will make it possible to recognise their existing and future-directed qualifications in all their breadth. As our own work evidences (Agrusti and Dobson 2017; Agrusti and Damiani 2019a; Pinto et al. 2018), in developing e-learning resources for refugees and migrants to enhance human capital and skills, it is also important to research and invest in innovation that exploits the learning opportunities of digital technologies and social media (Damiani and Agrusti 2018; Damiani and Agrusti 2019; Agrusti and Damiani 2019b).

The mention of data suggests a focus upon not only undertaking policies and actions, but also drawing attention to measurement, indicators and specifically ‘measuring what we value and not merely what we can measure’. With this in mind, we will close our introduction with the following questions that seek to bridge conceptual understanding with opportunities to propose indicators to measure policies, theories and actions and their efficacy to promote refugee inclusion. Understanding the parameters in which measurement and indicators are to work is the first challenge and the opening question is thus:

How can understanding the conceptual difference between social integration (society for all, everybody has a role), social cohesion (sense of belonging and opportunities for upward mobility) and social inclusion (providing the means for specific disadvantaged groups to access resources and experience wellbeing) provide us with the tools and indicators to identify and measure what we value?

One answer to this question might be that: Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon not limited to material deprivation, and poverty is an important dimension of exclusion, albeit only one dimension. Accordingly, social inclusion processes involve more than improving access to economic resources. It might include qualitative and subjective measures of wellbeing and belonging. Thus understood, social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for refugees who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, authentic experiences of belonging and wellbeing and voicing respect for human rights.

What are the practical implications and direction for educational interventions targeting refugees?

In answering this question from a measurement perspective, we might seek at the outset to identify indicators to measure disparities among refugees across countries (e.g. levels of education); unbalanced/asymmetrical relationships between teachers and refugee learners; and social identity threats, such as the fear of being less capable because of cultural/ethnic background. Simply put, the answers will inform the manner in which the educational interventions proposed seek to empower refugees as they form their first understandings of the host country and gradually develop more confidence and a sense of belonging and wellbeing. The next stage is to develop indicators to track and measure the educational interventions as they are implemented. These indicators will possess a formative character (assessment for learning), measuring for example intrinsic motivation and collecting different forms of feedback. In due course summative assessment (assessment of learning) will be undertaken as final goals are achieved e.g. refugees have gained qualifications and/or exposure to authentic experiences of inclusion and belonging and have begun to search for or have gained employment of a meaningful and not merely temporary character.

Articles in this special edition

The contributions present a number of findings with a central focus on measuring the value of integration practices for the inclusion of refugees in the receiving countries. This is done in qualitative approaches by hearing the voices and experiences of refugees (with the exception of one paper) and professionals or volunteers from NGOs who are involved in the practices of integration (half of the articles).

How are the conceptions of inclusion being conceived by the six different country contexts? Many of the researchers in this collection conceive inclusion as the navigation in the social structures of the host society, mainly centred on communication in the new language (Ireland, Italy, Turkey), employment (Finland, Italy), being involved in education and training and interaction with the host community (Portugal, Norway). As there are many activities that point towards the promotion of social inclusion, such as community based (Portugal), online learning (Italy, Norway, Portugal) and face to face formal education opportunities (Ireland, Finland), the focal point of effectiveness is fundamentally related to the inter-cultural awareness and sensitivity of all involved. When this does not happen, actions seem to generate exclusionary inclusion.

By way of contrast, inclusionary actions are united in understanding the well-balanced and yet critically informed importance of professionals and volunteers who together with refugees

envision new realities of inclusion in all its breadth. The common hope and aspiration is that social inclusion, integration and cohesion of refugees will move towards a sense of wellbeing and belonging, fostered by autonomy, independence and cultural exchange. Indicators and measures that encompass these are of vital importance moving forwards and to miss this opportunity will ultimately impoverish the longer-term experience of all.


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