Teaching that matters for refugee students

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What we will talk about today

- Who matters in refugee education?
- Concepts that matter: our theoretical underpinnings
- What matters: our development of an inclusive approach for refugee learners
- How teachers matter in refugee education
- How far do you feel this matters for you and your work?

Who matters in refugee education?

Some facts and figures

Over 100 million forcibly displaced people according to UNHCR (2022)

How many refugees are there in the world?

In media and political reporting there is a reliance on the use of numbers. The UNHCR website is a reliable source if you want to know more about the figures behind the headlines:

https://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html

Where in the world do refugees come from?

If you look closely at the legal definition of refugee in the 1951 Refugee Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol you will see that this is founded on humanitarian values. As a result of the increasingly volatile global physical and socio-political landscape, people from across the world are forced to seek sanctuary and refugee protection by crossing national borders and trying to build homes elsewhere.

Pew Research Data 2021

Who are our refugee learners: real lives beyond the statistics?

‘everyday is better than the year before, everyday I'm learning something… education is the only way’

Listen to Amar’s story

(from McIntyre and Abrams, 2021, p. 14-15)

‘Now, as in the mid-twentieth century, the consequences of what is in reality not a refugee crisis, but a crisis of moral and political citizenship, are dire for everyone.’

(Stonebridge, 2018 viii).

What do we mean by refugee education?

*Education **for***

- Consider what schools should do to include learners from refugee backgrounds in all aspects of school life.

*Education **about***

- Consider why it is important that schools are sites for learning about the causes of forced migration and the lived experiences of those who seek sanctuary in the UK

Only by covering both aspects of refugee education can we hope to offer solutions to future humanitarian crises

So Who matters in Refugee Education?

We all do!

We who arrive,

and **We** who are in the societies that people move into.

So how do **We** move from educational responses to refugee ‘crises’ to sustainable inclusive strategies for inclusive practice

Concepts that matter: our theoretical underpinnings

A social justice framing

FRASER'S 'PARTICIPATORY PARITY'- A **MORAL** BASIS FOR SHAPING EQUITY IN SCHOOLS

'social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life …overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalised barriers that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction' (Fraser 2007: 27)

If the barrier is:	*the solution could be:*
viewed as economic	**redistribution** of material or human resources
because of cultural barriers values and promote recognitive justice	**recognition** of cultural measures that
thought of as a political issue increased ways of representation/	**representative** measures, according equitable political voice

I am from Syria
From a land where people pick up a discarded piece of bread
So that it does not get trampled on
From a place where a mother teaches her son not to step on an ant at the end of the day.
From a place where a teenager hides his cigarette from his old brother out of respect.
From a place where old ladies would water jasmine trees at dawn.
From the neighbours' coffee in the morning
From: after you, aunt; as you wish, uncle; with pleasure, sister…
From a place which endured, which waited, which is still waiting for relief.

Syria.
I will not write poetry for anyone else.

Can anyone teach me
how to make a homeland?
Heartfelt thanks if you can,
heartiest thanks,
from the house-sparrows,
the apple-trees of Syria,
and yours very sincerely.

Amineh Abou Kerech

(Clancy, K. 2018 England Poems from a School)

'in becoming forced migrants and refugees, they experience the death of everyday life'
(Kohli, 2014. p85)

RESUMPTION OF ORDINARY LIFE

RAVI KOHLI (2011)

A normative **operational** basis for judging policies and practices for refugee education

What is the role of EDUCATION in the resumption of ordinary life?

What matters: our development of an inclusive approach for refugee learners

RESEARCH DESIGN AND BACK

Broader study: place-based study of two 'dispersal' contexts

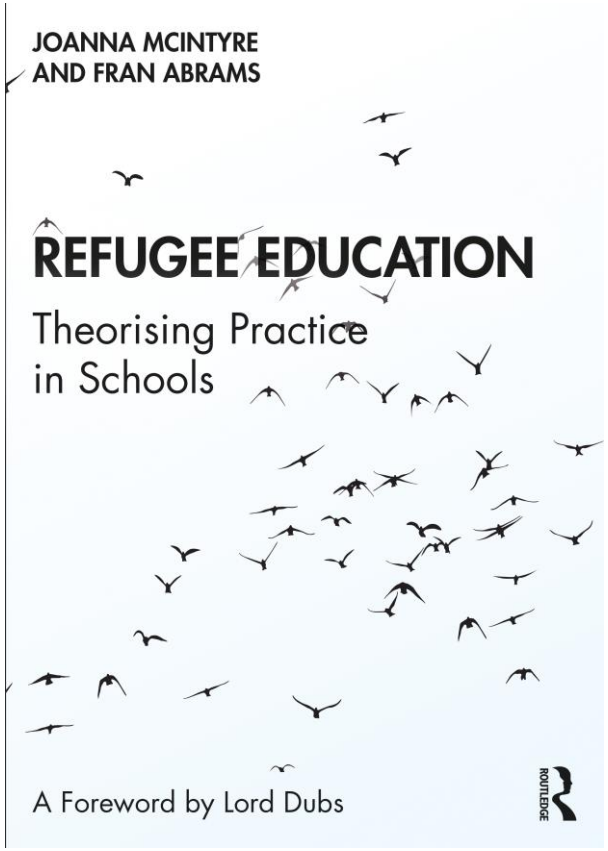
Phase 1: began in 2017 and included a comparison of policy documentation and discourse in each context, drawing on Ball (1998, 2015). This was accompanied by interviews and focus groups with municipal and school leaders and observations of practice in schools in England and Sweden over the period of an academic year. (McIntyre, J., Neuhaus, S. & Blennow, K. 2018).

Phase 2: developed this work further through online communications and video focus groups bringing together Swedish and English practitioners alongside further interviews with key stakeholders in each locality. (McIntyre, J. and Neuhaus, S. 2021).

Phase 3: drew on five case studies of 'good practice' schools and colleges in three cities within England. There were 20 adult participants and around 25 young participants. The work was ethnographic in intent drawing on policy documents, interview data with school leaders, educational practitioners and young people and field notes of meetings and observations of teachers and young people in each school context. (McIntyre, J. and Abrams, F. 2021).

Phase 4: focuses on developing the inclusive model for working with refugee pupils in schools in Sweden. This comprised a series of workshops where the case study work from phase 3 was analysed by the Swedish teachers, generating points of connection and comparison whilst also identifying differences and the possible reasons for these differences in approach (17 participants). A 'core group' from these workshops volunteered to join an online series of workshops with 2 of the English participants from Phase 3.

SHARING OUR LEARNING FROM PHASE 3



TOWARDS A MODEL OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE PUPILS: SAFETY

‘As a new student, school is something mysterious. First you have to adapt to the school system, then you start getting used to the rest.’ (Emir, age 15)

‘People need more help. More mental help. When people first come they feel so alone.’ (Victor, age 15)

‘Routines and consistency. That will provide a feeling of safety in a time in their lives which is unsure, So many things are unpredictable about their current situation and things can change from day to day. So knowing they are safe here is important to them.’ (Teacher Focus Group)

‘I think they enjoy being in the moment, but there is often that sense of guilt about feeling happy or having fun’ (Teacher)

‘I don’t know what is going to happen but today I am happy.’ (Fatima, aged 17)

SAFETY AS AN EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT

Safety – a multifaceted concept which permeates life in and out of the educational setting

Supported by:

- **a physical safe space,**
- **creating environments for trust building, experiential learning; talking (or choosing not to) about their experiences; social and emotional learning; risk-taking**
- **consistent and explicit expectations, high aspirations, with understanding that mistakes/misunderstandings will occur**
- **advocates (peers, teachers and SLT)**

Demonstrated by understanding how this current context will fulfil present needs and prepare for future ambitions

TOWARDS A MODEL OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE PUPILS: BELONGING

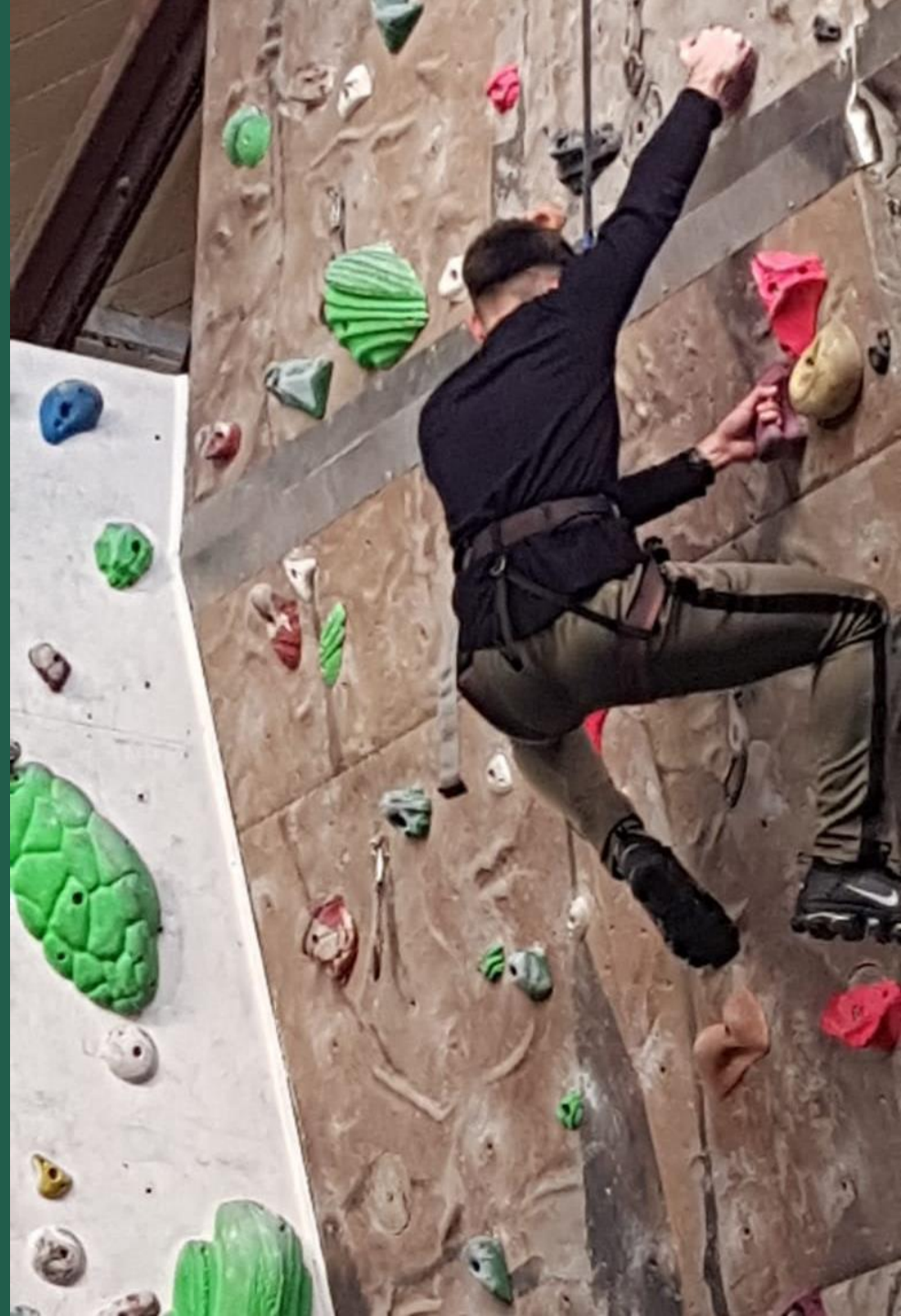
Social belonging- positive relationships with their own self, with new peers, with school communities, and with wider communities:

'you know there is that sense of belonging to a city. So I think as we've tried to take them out into the city, we're trying to develop that sense that it is theirs as well. They're not a kind of visitor. It is their city' (James, Fern College).

the importance of recognizing if the new arrival had a faith, **'*because that is what keeps you grounded and gives you your identity when everything around you is changing*' (focus group);**

the commitment to valuing multilingualism *'**we promote mother tongue and think it is important that they don't lose it' (Gideon, Larkspur Academy);***

and holistic asset-based assessments of the child's prior experiences and existing knowledges and skills



BELONGINGNESS CAN BE CREATED

A senior leader observed, *‘it’s about drawing out things that people have in common rather than the differences that they have so they feel like they belong.’*

Underpinned by pedagogical approaches allowing new arrivals to be ‘*able to contribute to a community in which they are still finding their feet’ (Grace, Lilac Lane Academy)*.

BELONGING AS AN EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT

Belonging – a multi-layered concept based on opportunities for developing positive relationships:

- with self
- with peers (in and out of school)
- with communities (in and out of school)
- with place
- with the new society

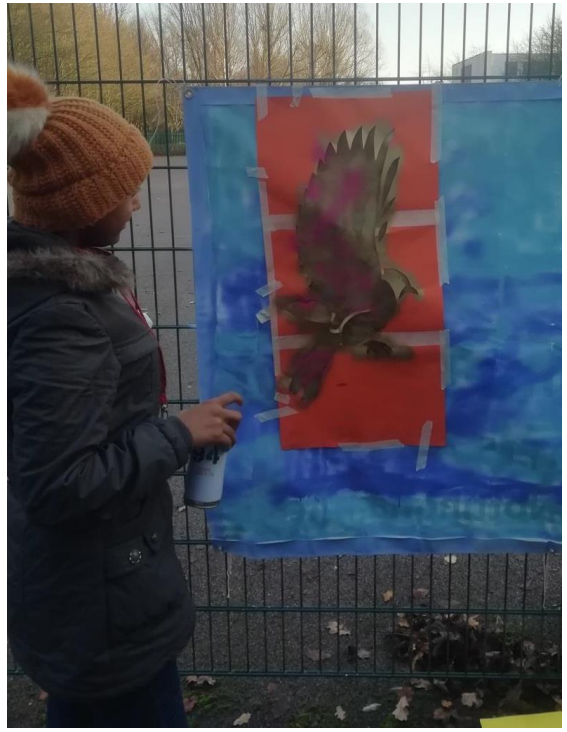
Marked by signifiers of belonging (uniforms, badges, participation in events, activities, exhibitions, teams) along with locational and relational ties.

Belonging is a dialogic process (it has to involve others as well as the individual).

Enhanced by

- making the implicit explicit - understanding of codes and rules, clear signposts and resources for navigating an education system and societal norms
- developing individual assets to promote a feeling of being valued
- teaching tolerance, promoting difference
- working with peers to create a new society where we belong together
- preparing for their future and forming hopes and goals for life.

TOWARDS A MODEL OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE PUPILS: SUCCEEDING



‘ ‘I just want a simple life and that’s it … I will have a wife, a simple job … driving cars, maybe a taxi driver, children … I will have a small house, here in (names city). I love it here.’ (Ali aged 16)

‘For me, autonomy is a big part of success and if they are able to make those choices for themselves rather than having people make the decisions for them. To me, that’s a measure of success because that is what a successful member of society would be able to do.’ (Bella, Fern College)

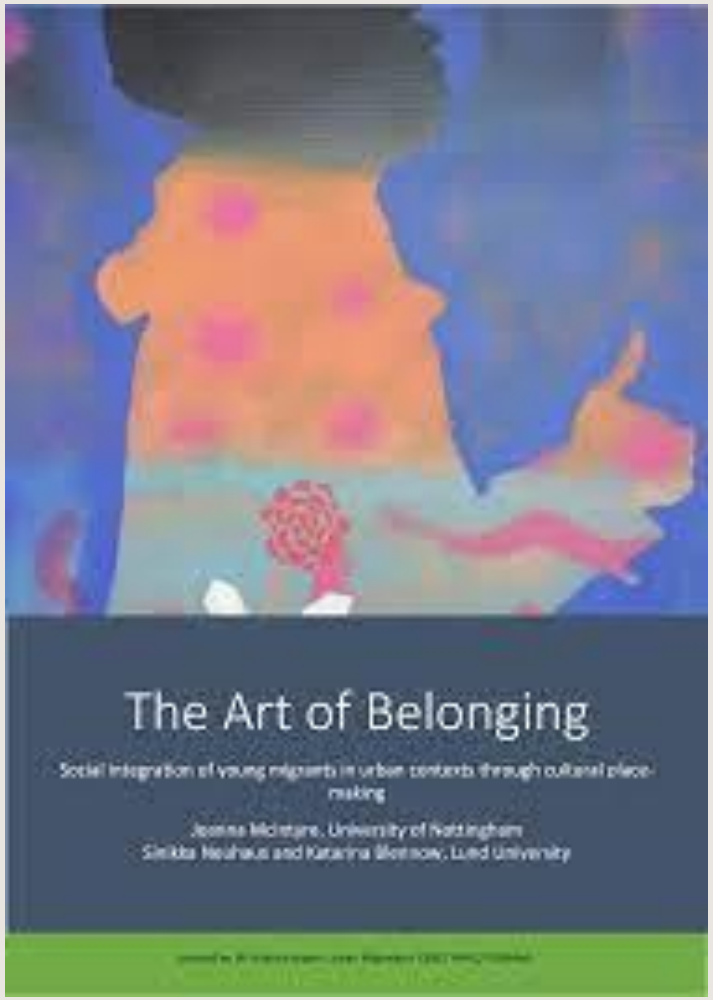
‘*life skills, cooking, carpentry, problem-solving, work experience … it’s all about taking responsibility and being a responsible member of the community.’ (Anna, Fern College)*

‘it is about being able to provide them with a route through…so part of our responsibility is making sure that their journey doesn’t end because they can’t stay with us any longer…how you get these students to have higher self-esteem and to know that what they are achieving is still a form of success’ (Jayne, Jasmine Gardens)

SUCCEEDING AS AN EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT

Succeeding – a dynamic concept, rather than an endpoint, illustrated when individuals feel they

- **can be authentic and have a positive sense of wellbeing**
- **know how to make meaningful choices about next steps**
- **can engage with opportunities for lifelong learning**
- **are valued and able to contribute as members of society**



Sidebar- more on Belonging

The importance of arts and culture and place-making












Migration; ESRC/AHRC/FORTE

Do place-making activities positively impact on self-esteem and wellbeing evidenced through increased levels of participation in events and activities within community and civic locations?

'drawing is memory'

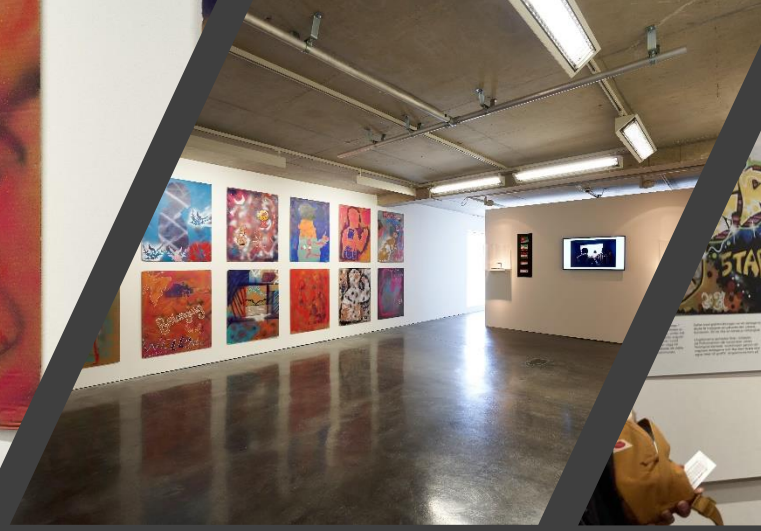
Young new arrivals' involvement with arts activities has a number of benefits associated with positive mental health. These included overcoming isolation, strategies to lessen triggers of past traumas and negative emotions, creating new memories,

- *'It gives me something new to think about.* ***Before when I used to go back to the house I was lonely and I start thinking about things [memories]. Now when I sit and am drawing I forget everything I just think about my drawing'*** (young participant)
- *'I really enjoyed [the project], you can improve your language, you can see different places, you can get different opportunities, and you can learn and improve your skills, it is really useful. And sometimes you can feel bad mentally or physically and … when* ***I am sometimes feeling bad doing this in these places makes me feel better because you focus and forget about bad things'*** (young participant)
- *'the tools that arts projects give young people allow them to be valued and heard and that lifts self-esteem, and confidence and the fact that they are creating something for the community is like they are being part of something bigger than themselves* ***their work is being valued and seen and they can be proud of something that they have created. That in itself is wellbeing'.*** (representative from the cultural sector)
- Some participants explained how they had arrived in the country with nothing, many having lost any belongings on their journeys here. The project helped develop the skills to create artefacts to furnish their homes and create new memories.

'I draw things to put on my walls'

'I have drawn butterflies, made a watch out of paper, I watch videos and copy how to make things. Before I came here people just said 'stay at home' but ***now I come here and I have colour in my house'***

Funded by JPI Urban Migration; ESRC/AHRC/FORTE



The public exhibitions at Kulturen and the New Art Exchange – the importance of celebrating and recognizing

‘What people are seeking is not so much the home they left behind as a place that they feel they can change, a place in which their lives and strivings will make a difference- a place in which to create a home’ (bell hooks 2009, 221)

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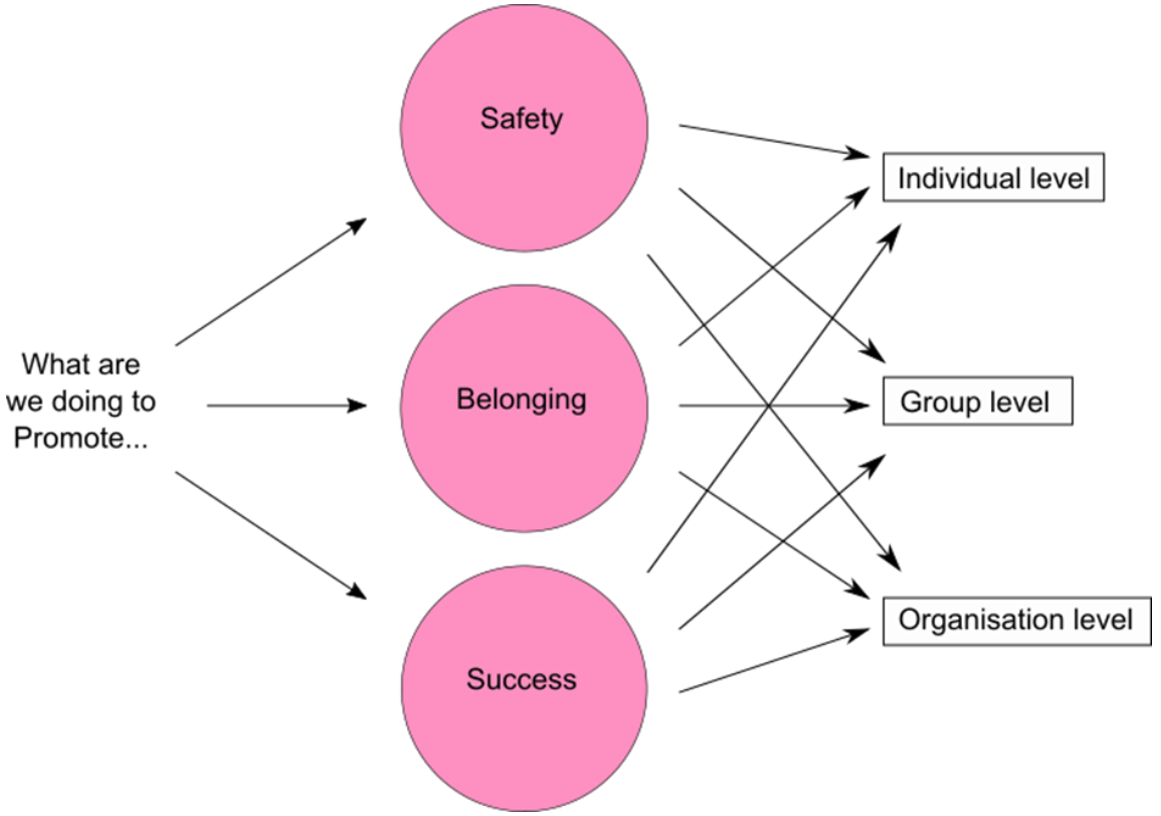
How teachers matter in refugee education

The impact of a global pandemic and a shift in politics…

SHARING OUR LEARNING FROM PHASE FOUR: SWEDISH TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS ON CHANGING TIMES

USING THE CONCEPTS TO QUESTION POLICY AND PRACTICE

"I think the model is interesting since it is more a tool for reflection than coming from “above” – if one wants teachers to work in a way supporting change that will benefit refugee students, it is so important that they can fill in with their own experiences." (T1)



TEACHERS ON SAFETY

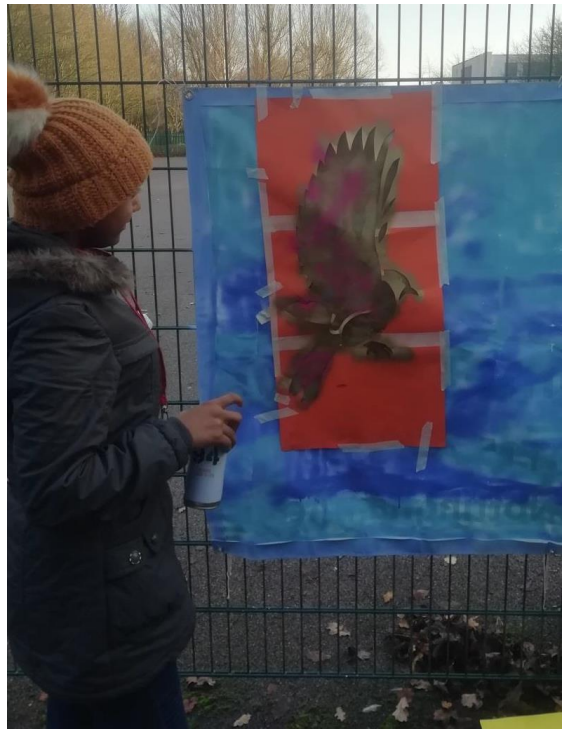
‘Safety. Sounds easy but is not. It demands being realistic about threats and dangers… so as a teacher you handle safety on a small scale, the big threats, you know, making us coping with dehumanizing tendencies without strong reactions… I try to build a safe school environment knowing at the same time schools are not isolated islands but rather mirroring society. Sounds pessimistic but I think there is a lot in reflection together, we can encourage each other, we can build small safe micro cultures, we have to do that. Looking, laughing, crying…but together… yeah. Not giving up. That is safety. Depending on each other.’ (Swedish T4)

TEACHERS ON BELONGING

"Belonging...to be a part of something and that part belongs to me...I had this discussion with some of the newly arrived and we could really talk about belonging as something very important...when I asked for concrete things for schools to do to support belonging I got this list:

'read together, learn together, see together, eat together, walk together'... so it seems to be about sharing experiences" (Swedish T3)

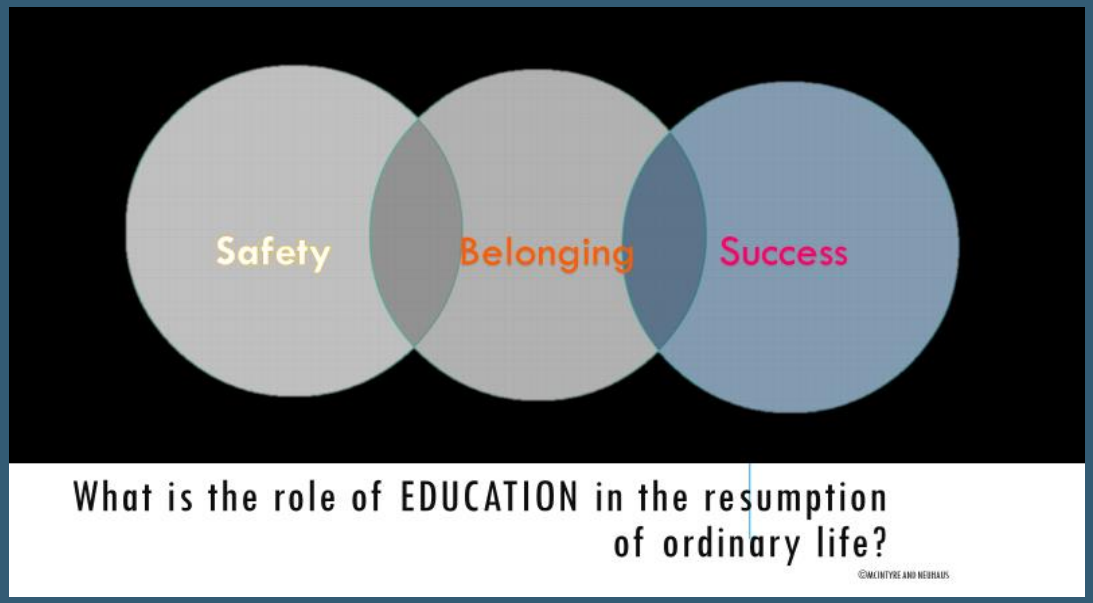
TOWARDS A MODEL OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE PUPILS: SUCCESS



‘We have talked a lot about what we mean with success in an educational setting…sometimes I meet former students…some used to struggle but now they tell me they are working, driving buses, painting, working in nursing homes. They seem rather happy, but there is also the ones who disappeared…so success… well, be able to live a life here, be a part of this society.’ (Swedish T1)

RESUMPTION OF ORDINARY LIFE

RAVI KOHLI (2011)



‘I am wondering whether safety-belonging-and success is differently understood in different contexts… but I guess as teachers we do recognize the balance between general and specific … wouldn´t be of interest if the model is too contextual… no, I like the thought of a model as a reflection model and then trying to look at you own work, our work as teachers and how the school is working with these concepts… give you some kind of analytical language, doesn´t it?’ (Swedish T2)

FRASER'S 'PARTICIPATORY PARITY'- A **MORAL** BASIS FOR SHAPING EQUITY IN SCHOOLS

If the barrier is economic the solution could be redistribution of resources, if the barriers are cultural the solution could be recognition of cultural values and measures to promote recognitive justice and if the barriers are thought of as political issues the solution could be representative measures.

'There are things we can do, in the classroom, face-to-face, in schools, as educators, and even on policy level but we live in challenging times and I cannot help thinking that this is a question on a political level, we need to have societies that, to an extent at least, are fair, it cannot be that we want a society where it is okay that some go under. Why is redistribution so hard for us? In Sweden you sometimes hear that we are injured by peace meaning we have forgotten solidarity in practice…' (Swedish T4)

How can we integrate the global imperative for an inclusive educational response to refugee children at the local level where there are competing agendas?

‘These first years after 2015 were fantastic, we felt strong, that we could help. The world could actually be a safe place and we could be involved in securing that. Of course it wasn’t ..you know… a happy story. Some had difficulties, real difficulties. Struggled. Trauma, home sickness, longing for sisters and brothers, being desperate showing they were worth our investment, cognitive challenges…well you name it… But we laughed a lot. We were together. Saw ourselves. Saw each other… How strange we sometimes behave and we tried to understand… each other …ourselves… tried to be explicit… I learned something about schools and teaching then. That schools can be something really important, that we practice being humans… I liked that and that’s why I think teaching has changed me as a person. I think in a good sense. But I am much angrier now, and sad… these good years were followed by times seeing young persons’ dreams being crushed. Some of them got to stay, and we celebrated… but so many just disappeared. Everything my profession has been about is to believe education can change, change a person, change communities… but we do need to realize that as teachers we need to learn that we live in a very contradicting space. How do you as a professional teacher … again and again…find energy to support when there are so many shouting and making decisions that make our work so difficult…? For me and some of my colleagues we try to go under the radar… you know advise refuge students, open up our classrooms , not asking all questions but the hardest thing is that so many seem to survive mentally without thinking that that boy or girl could be my child’ (Swedish T5)

How far do you feel this matters for you and your work?

Your thoughts, reflections and questions?

Hub for Education for Refugees in Europe (HERE)

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