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Theorising policy and practice in refugee education: Conceptualising ‘safety’, ‘belonging’, ‘success’ and ‘participatory parity’ in England and Sweden

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Across the world, children are forced to leave their homes for far-flung destinations. This global phenomenon has particular impact in Europe, where there are now more child refugees than since World War II. Education plays an important role for children with extraordinary experiences seeking to build meaningful lives in their new context. This article offers a new theoretical approach to underpin reforms to educational policy and practice for refugees in schools in resettlement contexts in Europe. The new conceptual framing is grounded in empirical work in England and Sweden, and brings two theories together: ‘participatory parity’ (Fraser) and ‘resumption of an ordinary life’ (Kohli). Kohli’s concepts of ‘safety’, ‘belonging’ and ‘success’ have resonance with practitioners from Sweden and England as they work to meet the needs of their new arrivals. Fraser’s conceptual lenses of redistribution, recognition and representation highlight the barriers to achieving the right to inclusive education for refugee children in each context. The interdependence of both theories shapes a new framework. The theoretical understandings offered in this article have been developed with practitioners and add to the field by offering a robust moral and operational approach to shaping pedagogical principles for policymakers and educators working in resettlement communities.

Keywords: Fraser; Kohli; refugee education; theorising policy and practice

Introduction

Whilst human movement within and across borders is not a new phenomenon, recent global events have led to an increase in forced migration, resulting in more than 12,500,000 displaced children across the world (UNHCR, 2018). Young refugees have an entitlement to an ‘inclusive and equitable quality education’ in their resettlement context (United Nations, 2015), and this shared commitment has implications for national education systems in destination countries. This article offers a new theoretical approach to underpin reforms to educational policy and practice for refugees in schools in resettlement contexts in Europe. The new theoretical framing is grounded in the authors’ empirical work in England and Sweden.

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In February 2018, an article reporting this empirical work was published in an English newspaper, *The Guardian*. The article focused on the experiences of Noor and Ammar, unaccompanied asylum seekers arriving in Sweden and England, respectively, at the age of 16. The story, which contrasted the ways in which Sweden and England responded to the needs of young asylum seekers arriving in their communities, provided a useful summary of the effects of contrasting policies on the reception of new arrivals in each context. In Sweden, Noor was given swift access to education and supported to develop his existing skills in textiles and design subjects: ‘*When I started school it became better and better for me*’. In England, Ammar struggled to gain access to appropriate education provision that would meet his needs to resume an academic education to fulfil his ambition of becoming a doctor: ‘*Education is really important for me. I was just bored and frustrated*’ (Abrams, 2018). However, whilst the article reported that our initial comparison of policy landscapes suggested that Noor was better served than Ammar, it also illustrated important issues that the empirical work raised about integration and inclusive classroom practices for newly arrived pupils in each context, and what practitioners in each context could learn from each other. The article highlighted questions at the heart of our ongoing project: exploring the barriers and opportunities for quality inclusive education provision for young refugees and asylum seekers in Swedish and English schools. Whilst the article focused on the perspectives of young people in our broader study, it raised important questions about what practitioners were able to do to support refugee youth in their educational settings. The broader project has since evolved to develop a conceptual model of practice drawn from empirical data and close work with practitioners in both contexts. This conceptual model is the focus of our article.

Refugee education

At the global level, successive frameworks of international agreement have sought to protect all children’s rights to non-discriminatory quality education. Since the Convention Related to the Status of Refugees in 1951, differing treaties have stipulated education for refugees, with the most widely ratified text being the Convention for the Rights of the Child in 1989. By 2012, it became clear that children on forced migration journeys were unlikely to return to their countries of origin and this led to global policy shifts to ensure that refugee children are included within national education systems (UNHCR, 2012). In 2015, the World Education Forum agreed sustainable development goals (SDGs). SDG4 states that by 2030 all should experience ‘inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong opportunities for all... including... refugees’ (United Nations, 2015). Despite this, non-refugee children are on average five times more likely to attend school than refugee children (Bergin, 2017). Studies indicate that enactment of this global commitment is dependent upon how individual nation-states interpret their responsibilities towards these international declarations and treaties (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Dryden-Peterson *et al.* (2019) outline a typology of models of refugee education which relates to the ‘possible futures’ governments imagine for refugees and their likely length of stay. According to this typology, high-income countries such as

England and Sweden are 'resettlement contexts', as refugee children are likely to view their futures with a sense of permanency.

Many studies of refugee education in high-income resettlement countries focus on the prominence or absence of targeted education policy for refugee children (McIntyre *et al.*, 2020). A comprehensive analysis of educational policies and practices for refugee children in six English-speaking resettlement countries indicates that social and educational 'best practices are currently in conflict with national policies' which are increasingly based on fear and hostility to displaced people (McBrien, 2019). In Europe, 'regulations stipulate that [refugee] children should be included in education within three months' (Crul *et al.*, 2017: 65), but this international policy is variously interpreted and education policies for refugee children differ across European contexts. Koehler and Schneider (2019) highlight the 'ad-hoc' policy responses to the large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe since 2015. In England, the absence of a refugee education policy foregrounds refugee children within policies of immigration, with a focus on exclusionary policies and welfare policies which highlight experiences of trauma and psychological need (Pinson & Arnot, 2007; Watters, 2008). This is echoed in studies of policies in other high-income contexts. For example, in the USA, O'Turner and Mangual Figueroa (2019) explore the intersections of education and immigration policy, arguing that they each shape the other; whilst in Australia, the absence of a national refugee education policy frames the treatment of refugee children as a series of protective acts for Australian citizens, as the children receive different entitlements, including access to education, according to how they are classified, creating a preferred type of refugee (Christie & Sidhu, 2006). By contrast, in Canada, refugee education is visible in policies and school systems which 'welcome refugees', with best practice identified as provinces with an asset-based approach (Ratkovic *et al.*, 2017).

National and local instantiations of the global rights of all refugee children to education are reflected in empirical studies of refugee education and schooling. Key themes which are repeated across studies of refugee education in resettlement contexts are the importance of models of inclusive education (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012), including those which recognise that holistic inclusive models incorporate learning contexts in and out of school (Pastoor, 2017); education which recognises the heterogeneous backgrounds of refugee children (Rutter, 2006; Leo, 2019); the role of school leadership (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Wilkinson & Kaukko, 2019); the multi-layered academic, social and psychological challenges refugee children and their educators navigate (Stewart, 2011); the ways in which schools and individual teachers can create welcoming and compassionate environments (Pinson *et al.*, 2010; McIntyre & Hall, 2020) and understanding of how schools can support equity and recognition for new arrivals (Keddie & Niesche, 2012). This includes studies which foreground how children from refugee backgrounds can be capable and resilient, bringing many strengths and experiences which teachers should recognise and build upon (Darmody & Arnold, 2019; Hayward, 2019), challenging deficit representations of refugee children as supplicant victims (Ingamells & Westoby, 2008; Basharati & Dore, 2019). This all requires holistic consideration of provision in which 'policy, structural, contextual and resource-based factors come together' (Baak, 2019a: 288). An Australian review of international research identifies six areas of effective practice for students

from refugee backgrounds (Baak *et al.*, 2019). However, there are concerns that there is still much to do to address what Pinson *et al.* (2010) describe as a ‘gaping hole’ in sociological research in the area, the ‘knowledge gap’ in published research on the education of refugee children and a concomitant lack of overall policy framework (Ratkovic *et al.*, 2017). In addition, what can be learned from theoretical research ‘is not easily conveyed to practising teachers’ (Hamilton & Moore, 2004: 116).

What follows acknowledges both the need to work with practitioners to address the perceived theoretical knowledge gap and the impact of forced migration on policy-makers and schools. Drawing on our work with schools in England and Sweden, we offer a conceptual model for practitioners, schools and policymakers which uses two complementary theoretical frames to conceptualise best practice for refugee children and their ‘possible futures’ (Dryden-Peterson *et al.*, 2019).

Theoretical foundations

This article brings together two theories which both have utility for considering a future-focused approach to refugee education: ‘participatory parity’ (Fraser, 2003) and ‘resumption of an ordinary life’ (Kohli, 2014).

Kohli argues that the reality for many children who have left their homes because of forced migration is that their search for an ordinary existence still continues, despite reaching their resettlement context. He conceptualises their experiences as transitions through ‘safety’, ‘belonging’ and ‘success’, as the children move within and across spatial, temporal and maturational dimensions of change (Kohli, 2011, 2014). Kohli’s three concepts are recognised within the literature on refugee education. For example, schools as places of safety with the potential for providing spaces for healing are well documented (e.g. Hayward, 2019). These can be associated with mental health support within schools to alleviate psychological distress (e.g. Sullivan & Simonsen, 2016) associated with pre-migration experiences. Threats to a sense of safety once in a resettlement context endure through insecure status (Sleijpen *et al.*, 2017), through experiences of bullying (Guo *et al.*, 2019) and through culturally unfamiliar pedagogies and practices and lack of specialised teachers (Hek, 2005).

The literature demonstrates that post-migration, schools have a key role to play in fostering a sense of belonging for new arrivals (Gifford *et al.*, 2009), and that this is most likely when there is a recognition of each new arrival’s individual experiences and identity (Due *et al.*, 2016). Baak (2019b) argues that for new arrivals to feel a sense of belonging, inclusion of students from refugee backgrounds needs to be based on embedding practices and processes which are unambiguously targeted at eliminating racism and ‘othering’. Studies illustrate that belonging is a complex and prolonged process (Hiorth, 2019), based on the development of webs of connection across a range of systems (Stewart, 2019). Wernesjö (2020) explores how belonging is a dynamic process which is constantly negotiated by new arrivals in relation to how others perceive them, because of otherness and racism, and that there is often the need to express gratitude and demonstrate ‘deservingness’ and commitment to educational orientation—so refugee students experience a sense of ‘conditional belonging’. Wernesjö’s writings on conditional belonging resonate with

Kolhi's depictions of unaccompanied children presenting 'thin' versions of themselves on first arrival, before they feel confident enough to offer authentic 'thick' descriptions of themselves in their resettlement context (Kohli, 2006). Kohli (2011: 315) writes that this is usually an indicator they are on their 'journeys that will take them towards success'.

Educational success for children from refugee backgrounds is complex and national education systems which are oriented towards high-stakes test outcomes are not necessarily able to readily accommodate the needs of new arrivals (McIntyre *et al.*, 2020), with perceived barriers to success being: a lack of recognition of prior educational experience (Rutter, 2006), requirement to achieve proficiency in majority language before accessing broader curriculum (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016), lack of appropriate teacher training (McBrien, 2016), poor home-school communication and lack of recognition of diversity of cultural traditions (Hek, 2005). These barriers are usually predicated upon depictions of refugee children as deficit. There is insufficient space to fully explore the literature which challenges this, but some examples look at how schools can learn from refugee children's experiences and learning in non-formal learning environments such as home, faith organisations and community groups, acknowledging what they bring with them from prior informal learning experiences (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2017; Kaukko & Wilkinson, 2020). Definitions of educational success differ, and the work of Vervliet *et al.* (2015), amongst others, serves as a reminder that refugees' aspirations for education are multi-faceted and differ at key transition points of their pre- and post-migration experience.

Kohli brings together the concepts of safety, belonging and success within the field of social work, observing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's transitions towards a sense of ordinariness in their resettlement context. In what follows, we adapt Kolhi's model from the field of social work to that of refugee education. We bring his theory of resumption of ordinary life to our empirical work to establish a normative operational basis for understanding educational policies and practices for new arrivals (McIntyre *et al.*, 2020). In doing so there is also a need to have a conceptual framework for exploring what material and social conditions need to be in place to allow for this to be enacted, in other words a theory of social justice. Theories of social justice have tended towards redressing inequities related to economics and the market (theories of distributive justice; Rawls, 1971; Olsaretti, 2018) and those which are related to cultural inequities within society, leading to calls for cultural recognition of collective identity for those disenfranchised by normative views of who or what is culturally valued (theories of recognition, e.g. Taylor, 1991). Theories of the struggle for recognition (Honneth, 1995) have also been described as politics of identity, because these identities are dependent on the recognition of others. Nancy Fraser argues that there are flaws within this because of the danger of 'reification' of group identities, which can lead to othering of identities that do not accord with the cultural 'norm'; also, focusing on struggles for recognition during rising economic disparity leads to displacement of the issues associated with maldistribution (Fraser, 2000, 2003). Fraser argues that both redistribution and recognition need to be considered and proposes a theory of social justice based on a 'status model', where the aim is for all social actors to be capable of participating in society on a par with the rest (Fraser, 2000). In addition to the two conditions of economic distribution and cultural

recognition, Fraser argues that there needs to be equity within a third condition, what she calls representation within the political sphere (Fraser, 2009).

We have mobilised Fraser's theory of 'participatory parity' alongside Kohli's model to consider how far pupils from refugee backgrounds are treated as full members of society, capable of participating and interacting as peers in school and society. This theory of social justice and its three components of recognition, redistribution and representation are lenses through which to ensure equitable access and inclusion for refugee children in education. Fraser establishes a normative moral basis against which policies and practices can be measured.

This article explores the utility of Kohli's model in conjunction with Fraser's model for educational practitioners. The theoretical understandings offered in this article have been developed with practitioners; they aim to add to the field by offering a robust moral and operational approach to shaping pedagogical principles for policy-makers and educators working in resettlement communities.

Methodological underpinnings

The research draws on an ongoing project which compares the experiences of educational practitioners supporting upper secondary aged refugees resettling in Nottingham (England) and Helsingborg (Sweden). The next stage, focused on here, was working with school leaders and key practitioners in schools identified to us as sites of good practice (in terms of their reputation for an inclusive stance towards new arrivals) by those working in the community to support refugee and unaccompanied asylum seekers in each location. This included four schools in Sweden and three schools in England. Interviews were conducted with each school leader and focus group interviews with lead practitioners from each school were conducted in each location. The school leaders and research team visited each other's schools in each country. This was followed by a virtual focus group bringing together the school leaders and researchers from each context. Following this the field work was extended in England to include an additional three schools, during which time the Swedish and English researchers joined a 2-day workshop in England with practitioners from the English schools. In total, this activity involved 9 school leaders (4 Swedish; 6 English) and 11 lead practitioners (4 Swedish; 8 English). Through this series of interviews and focus groups, we distilled the theoretical framing for the project, discussed this with participants and negotiated some principles for future policymaking and practice. The empirical aspects and findings of the work are more fully explained elsewhere (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021). For the purposes of this article, the empirical data is drawn upon for illustrative purposes.

There are obvious limitations to this research design. Firstly, the voices are those of practitioners and school leaders, and so the perspectives of the new arrivals themselves are not represented in the conceptualisations of safety, belonging, success and barriers to participation in social life in what follows. Secondly, the small sample size of participants means that their viewpoints cannot be said to be generalisable, though we hope they do offer an insight into the views of practitioners and school leaders striving to meaningfully include new arrivals in schools situated in national education systems in high-income countries.

Shaping the operational concepts: a discursive process

In our discussions with our participants about the theoretical concepts outlined above, their instinct was to home in on the operational frame and Kohli's concepts of safety, belonging and success. We now draw on the ways they have defined and reconceptualised each of these dimensions to make sense of and develop their practice.

The concept of safety through education

Young people arriving in resettlement contexts after periods of forced migration experience insecurity as they continue to face threats to their legal, emotional and psychological safety. To achieve 'participatory parity' with their new peers and to resume a sense of ordinariness, the act of going to school is an important step. Consequently, access to educational provision can be seen as an early indicator that the new society is committed to 'bringing safety to people' (Kjaergaard, 1994) who have experienced periods of instability and insecurity. Kohli articulates how school contributes to establishing routines so that newly arrived children 'begin to feel safe in the day to day by finding predictable patterns, shapes and rhythms of living' (Kohli, 2011: 317). We were interested to discover if the concept of 'safety' resonated with our practitioners.

The practitioners shared stories of how young new arrivals had experienced a lack of safety outside of school because of risks to their status if they were 'paperless' in Sweden, or because of the risks they had encountered on their journeys: '*we have a student who was trafficked to the UK and so for him safety in school means quite concrete things—so is he actually safe?*' (English practitioner). In these circumstances, the schools felt it was their responsibility to ensure that the students felt physically and psychologically safe within school. One English principal said: '*feeling physically safe can also allow them to feel emotionally safe and that will have a huge impact on their mental health. So you need the physical safety in place as well as the routines and then comes the emotional safety*'. This was partly achieved by considering the spatial aspects of creating a safe environment; they talked of the ways in which language bases or reception classes for new arrivals functioned as safe spaces within schools, spaces where new arrivals could begin to make relationships with peers facing similar challenges, learn the new language and learn about the rules and expectations of classrooms in their new environment: '*I try to communicate the rules—one is of course allowed to do mistakes but there has to be clarity so that the room is safe*' (Swedish practitioner). These bases are transitional spaces to support the new arrivals in bridging relationships across to the wider school.

After periods of uncertainty, schools are places which represent continuity and where hope can be restored, contributing to psychological aspects of safety for refugee children. The practitioners felt it was important that children had experiences that built trust and acknowledged risk-taking. Recognising that some children had and were continuing to experience trauma—'*we try to create an environment where it's okay to I guess to be yourself but to kind of to be vulnerable as well... we kind of try to make it okay to be struggling*' (English practitioner)—they shared ways of working with

external agencies and counsellors to support them. But they also wanted to challenge the view that refugee children should automatically be regarded as vulnerable and needy; they sought ways to help them to develop a sense of agency, recognising that some of the unaccompanied young people had acted independently for the majority of their migration journeys. The practitioners observed that this was most marked with unaccompanied children who on arrival became looked after by the state, leading to *'lots of restrictions put upon them imposed by social care, which can be seen as a big contrast after travelling through the world alone, will they be able to cross the road safely if they leave school during lunch time—I think so!'* (English practitioner). The practitioners spoke about the ways in which the homogenising labels 'refugee', 'new arrival' masked the individuals' experiences and needs.

There is a temporal aspect to the concept of safety too. The practitioners shared concerns about how to manage the expectations many new arrivals have of how education can help them to resume not just an ordinary life, but in many cases ambitions for an extraordinary life. They spoke of the guilt that unaccompanied asylum seekers have in being the 'chosen one' and the need to prove that the family's sacrifice was worth it. One of the Swedish senior leaders commented: *'they all want to be lawyers, doctors and engineers'* yet in the time available in the school system, achieving these ambitions is very difficult and the new arrivals perceived they lagged behind peers with similar goals. One of the Swedish educators said she responded to this by *'not saying everything is possible but showing this is possible. That journey was an extraordinary experience, but settling here, sometimes not knowing whether you can stay. . . the future once was a destination but is now uncertain. That's difficult and has to be recognised'*. Whilst teachers in some school settings might have relatively low expectations of children from refugee backgrounds—and this is clearly a real and serious concern—this was not seemingly the case being made in these exchanges. How to support ambitions within a restricted timeframe of opportunity in formalised education was a discussion revisited many times in the focus groups: that it was incumbent on those working with the newly arrived to provide clarity about what could be achieved in the short term in the educational setting, but also to extend this by being very transparent about what the next possible steps could be. This seemed to provide some security for those who were anxious that time had been wasted on the journey, then in waiting for a school place and then in achieving the qualifications for their career ambitions. Having confidence in a future after experiencing instability in the past and present was considered to be a very important aspect of making the young person feel a sense of safety.

Key to this was understanding that the search for safety is a continuous process. The teachers commented that it was very hard for the children to feel a prolonged sense of security when they could only live in the moment. One English practitioner recalled a student saying *'I don't know what is going to happen but today I am happy'*. The practitioners had all supported children who experienced insecurity if their status was under review and their length of stay in the country was unclear. In these cases, they felt they had to work harder to engender a sense of security and wellbeing.

Safety is a concept that has particular resonance in refugee education. It is a multi-faceted concept (physical, emotional, psychological), which permeates life in and out of educational settings. Schools can support a sense of safety by creating safe spaces and environments for trust building through experiential learning; providing explicit

opportunities for social and emotional learning and risk-taking; being consistent and explicit about expectations; being flexible about curriculum access and having high aspirations for the new arrivals (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021).

The concept of belonging through education

How can schools and colleges begin to support a sense of belonging and affinity for individuals whose personal landscapes of belonging have been altered as they have left behind places, people and communities? The Swedes, when visiting English schools, noticed newly arrived children displaying visible markers of belonging to a common school community through uniforms, badges, house affiliations and positive indicators of diversity in public displays and documentation. They commented that it seems easier to see what is typical in the English context—*‘in England there are more visible signs that support inclusiveness. As uniforms, colours, the house-system with the badges...’* (Swedish school leader)—than in Sweden, where newcomers have to decode so much because there are fewer visible affiliation markers. However, English school leaders observed a much more public shared discourse of welcome and belonging in municipal places such as train stations for new arrivals in Sweden. This perhaps echoes the high visibility and attention given to education of new arrivals in Swedish policy in comparison to the relative invisibility or absence of refugee children in educational policy discourse in England (McIntyre *et al.*, 2020).

Beyond visible markers, the practitioners described ongoing practices and strategies for engendering a sense of social belonging. This was geared around students’ positive relationships with their own self, with new peers—*‘belonging is very much connecting the individual with aspects within myself but also with others’* (Swedish practitioner), with school communities and with wider communities beyond. As they shared their experiences, the dialogues and debates centred on the role of culturally relevant pedagogies and curricula, especially if the new arrival’s prior experience had been very different to the new context. In addition, they spoke of the importance of recognising 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’* (English practitioner); the development of Swedish or English and the commitment to valuing multilingualism, *‘we promote mother tongue and think it is important that they don’t lose it’* (Swedish practitioner); and holistic asset-based assessments of the child’s prior experiences and existing knowledges and skills. Finding opportunities for new arrivals to show what they can do in an environment where so much is challenging was an important aspect of developing self-esteem and wellbeing. Whilst this asset-based approach develops self-belief, the practitioners felt it also helps the young person to engage with their peers in the school, especially in arts, sports and practical subjects:

they will be given all the opportunities that every other student has and they will be encouraged actively to blend in and take part in all matters inside and outside the classroom. So if they have a talent for football then we need them to be included so that they feel that they belong to the school team. If they have a talent for music we can encourage them to bring aspects of music from where they are from but for that to be shared within the whole entire school community. (English school leader)

Despite all these strategies, it is clear that older new arrivals still struggle to develop meaningful friendships with peers in their new context and that practitioners are aware of this, and feel a responsibility to try and facilitate these.

As well as finding ways of engendering a sense of connectedness within school or college, the practitioners also invested in activities designed to encourage connections to and belonging within local communities and the wider society. This was achieved in various ways, through trips and activities: *'So I think as we've tried to take them out, we're trying to develop that sense that it is theirs as well. They're not kind of visitors. It is their city. And I think just students have said that it seems like a lot of them feel like they're very accepted'* (English practitioner). This place-based pedagogical approach was supported by senior leaders in school who often found ways to publicly celebrate activities that allowed the refugees to be *'able to contribute to a community in which they are still finding their feet'* (English school leader). In preparing children for these activities, the practitioners spoke about their sense of responsibility for making sure that new arrivals understood the ways of being and conventions of their new society. They felt it was incumbent on them to help break down potential misunderstandings; they knew how much the young people wanted to feel accepted.

However, the practitioners were also committed to demonstrating that belonging was dialogic, a two-way process for both the individual and the school. They were oriented towards inclusion, acknowledging that school communities with new arrivals became more tolerant and diverse, with greater connectedness to the wider world as a result. As one senior leader in England 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'*.

The practitioners' debates about their practice show how belongingness can be created. One Swedish practitioner observed that schools have a particular role to play in this: *'Belonging—I like that word. It's what it's about. Feeling that one belongs to something. . . if we as a school can lay a foundation of belonging I guess safety and success can be handled easier—belonging is. . . like a linking system. I think that education could be that linking system.'*

In this context, for new arrivals, belonging is a multi-layered concept based on opportunities for developing positive relationships with self, with peers and communities (in and out of school), with the new place and with the new society. Belonging is a dialogic social process enhanced by an asset-based and inclusive ethos, culturally relevant pedagogies and explicit strategies for relationship and community building (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021).

The concept of success through education

In England, an individual's and a school's academic success is publicly recognised through high-stakes examination results. Children in English schools are meticulously tracked to check that they are making the expected progress, based on prior school assessments. Although new arrivals sit outside of this process unless they have been in the school system for 2 years or more, the English practitioners resorted to dominant discourses when trying to define success in education and initially spoke of grades and progress. Initially, the Swedes said it was strange to conceptualise success in terms of one individual's achievement, observing that *'the English heads describe their*

work more like “a big thing”, maybe because they to a higher extent define themselves as against the system or against the national discourses about education’. However, as the discussions developed it became clear that in Swedish schools, ‘it has changed over time. Now much more focus is put on the students’ academic accomplishment pressures’ (Swedish school leader). In both contexts, practitioners were finding ways of navigating this and making sense of it for their students and for their colleagues: ‘Sometimes teachers will say “oh they’re not doing very well and they are not making progress” because they have not made the same amount of progress as UK born students and I will say “But they’ve only been in the country for a year. Have they made progress for them?”’ (English practitioner).

New arrivals are also acutely aware of pressures to attain academic qualifications and for those who arrive during a year of public examinations, these pressures are extreme. All of the teachers recalled examples of children who had beaten the odds to achieve grades which were good enough to move to the next stage of education with their peers, but these were unusual. And those who did were conscious that they could have achieved more had they had more time. Many new arrivals are ambitious and are frustrated when they arrive in their resettlement context and feel that they cannot progress their ambitions. The practitioners reflected on this and one English practitioner spoke of there being a ‘dilemma for every student’, the sense of responsibility and ‘guilt’ they carried to make ‘the right choice’ for their students and their anxieties about putting them on an educational pathway where they were ‘doomed to fail’. Sometimes the child had simply not been in the country long enough to study the required content for high-stakes exams, or their current level of language in the new context was not yet accomplished enough for the grading system:

they [newly arrived] who are very good at sewing or have been working in a factory or something like that in their home country and they came to our school and the teachers tell them that they are very good at sewing or doing handicraft work and everything. But then we have this system that they are supposed to describe the process in Swedish to write down the process, reflecting. So not the thing they have created, it’s not that important in Sweden, it’s important the way they reflect on what they can do better and so on. So they fail in the theoretical writing and I’ve seen a lot of students that get very disappointed feel like a failure. (Swedish practitioner)

In Sweden and England, children progress through phases of education according to age. The practitioners recognised the importance of being explicit about the stage of the refugee child’s education and what could be achieved and what could not during their time with them. They spoke of the need to explain the education system of the country and to help the new arrivals see that their educational journey did not need to stop at the end of the stage: to help them recognise further study or training as an option—‘I think 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’ (English practitioner). They talked particularly about how they needed to outline different pathways and career options for the new arrivals to ensure that their students could make ‘meaningful choices about next steps’ (English practitioner) when they needed to do so. Reflecting on one focus group debate, a Swedish practitioner summarised the conversation:

Success is about confidence, finding that new future. Didn't we talk about a point of departure—I like that. That the school prepares and then you can—hopefully—fly. Have an ordinary life. Build it. Because they have to build it up. Very much on their own but the school can be supportive, show different ways to establish it in a new context.

For the practitioners, success meant much more than academic success. They spoke of deliberately creating opportunities for new arrivals to experience a range of activities in which they could be successful. These usually took the form of celebrations of enrichment activities, sports, arts or creative performances. They also spoke about technical or practical activities where the young person could be seen to have particular skills. The Swedes shared examples of Afghan unaccompanied arrivals who had been tailors and who were now encouraged to participate in a whole-school fashion event and to make and sell bags for charity. Similarly, the English teachers talked of a bike maintenance project where some of the Eritrean students demonstrated real skill and competence in the engineering aspects of the work. For the practitioners, this is about *'how you get these students to have higher self-esteem and to know that what they are achieving is still a form of success'* (English school leader).

Another key area where young people can experience success is in feeling part of a communal, social activity. The practitioners sought ways of engaging meaningfully with groups in the community through projects such as gardening or cookery. Activities of this type showed the young people that what they were doing was valued by members of their new context and indicated that, as one English practitioner observed, *'these children can fly and be fully contributing members of society'*.

Success through the lens of education takes many forms and is not restricted to the dominant discourse of academic performance. Succeeding is predicated upon feeling authentic, knowing how to make meaningful choices about next steps, and feeling valued. Refugee children should be given opportunities to experience successes in order to develop confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing, and ultimately agency and a sense of autonomy. For those working with new arrivals, considering how to conceptualise succeeding in the present paves the way for future successes; consequently, the notion of possible futures is key to conceptualising success in educational terms. Educators need to lay the foundations for lifelong learning based on holistic recognition of what it is to become 'ordinary' when prior experiences have been extraordinary. Newly arrived children need to learn the rules of the dominant narratives of success in order to understand how their route might need to be different. They need to learn to conceptualise success in a variety of forms and to eventually feel that they are able to live lives of value and meaning. Achieving the resumption of ordinariness involves a sense of reciprocation, where they can take part and contribute to society using their strengths and talents (Kohli, 2011).

The need for the moral frame

Working with the operational frame, it transpired that the concepts of safety, belonging and success resonated with practitioners' reflections on their work with new arrivals. Their conversations and deliberations progressed through three stages. First, they systematised the individual concepts and their relationships to each other,

agreeing that these are not linear and that individual pupils experience the resumption of ordinary life differently. Second, they (re)defined and clarified the meaning of the concepts through the lenses of their experience. Third, they worked with each concept to interrogate and refine their own practice. The concepts allowed them a language to discuss and make visible their work with new arrivals. They realised that they had important roles to play in the pursuit of ordinary lives, as this comment from a Swedish practitioner illustrates:

As long as we teach and support learning, we actually keep hope alive. And I'm convinced every society needs professionals—teachers—keeping hope alive. Of course, there are other groups keeping the hope alive, but education is a corner stone. Safety, belonging and a will to learn (rather than success) are essential for teaching and learning. We need to facilitate these processes and schools and education could be the institution where we don't abandon these values just because it's uneasy and difficult.

They began to use the concepts to question where there were barriers to ensuring that the framework could be operationalised; they considered this to be about questioning different levels of the system in which they worked. This is illustrated from one English practitioner's observation during the workshop about the concept of safety, but could be applied to each concept:

If that is our model for asking questions, can that also help us to also arrive at some principles? If we are promoting safety what does the individual have to do? What is it, in concrete terms, or is it something that the organisation has to do? If we are talking about promoting safety at an organisational level, what do we want the organisation to do to ensure that the safety of this group of people is ensured? What concrete things do they have to do? If we worked in the ideal school what would they have in place to achieve this?

The conversations developed to apply this questioning to each of the concepts and to consider at what levels responsibility for removing the barriers might be (Figure 1). In effect, in raising these questions, the practitioners were interrogating institutional and/or policy barriers and were exploring how new arrivals faced different aspects and layers of injustice in their attempts to achieve ordinariness through education—and thus to have participatory parity in their present and future society with peers born in that context. When the barriers were at the group or organisational level, it became clear that the practitioners felt that their capacity to operationalise Kohli's conceptual framework was compromised. We utilised Fraser's theory as a moral framing to interrogate inequalities and help identify the sources of these inequalities through the lenses of redistribution (economic resource), (cultural) recognition and (political) representation (Figure 2).

Redistribution: economic injustice as a barrier to schools facilitating ordinary lives

For Fraser, if the barrier is economic, the solution lies in the redistribution of human and material resources. For our purposes this would be how people, place, time and material resources are organised in school provision for new arrivals.

To achieve a sense of *safety*, the empirical data shows that there are resourcing implications for creating a safe space and that there needs to be flexibility in staffing

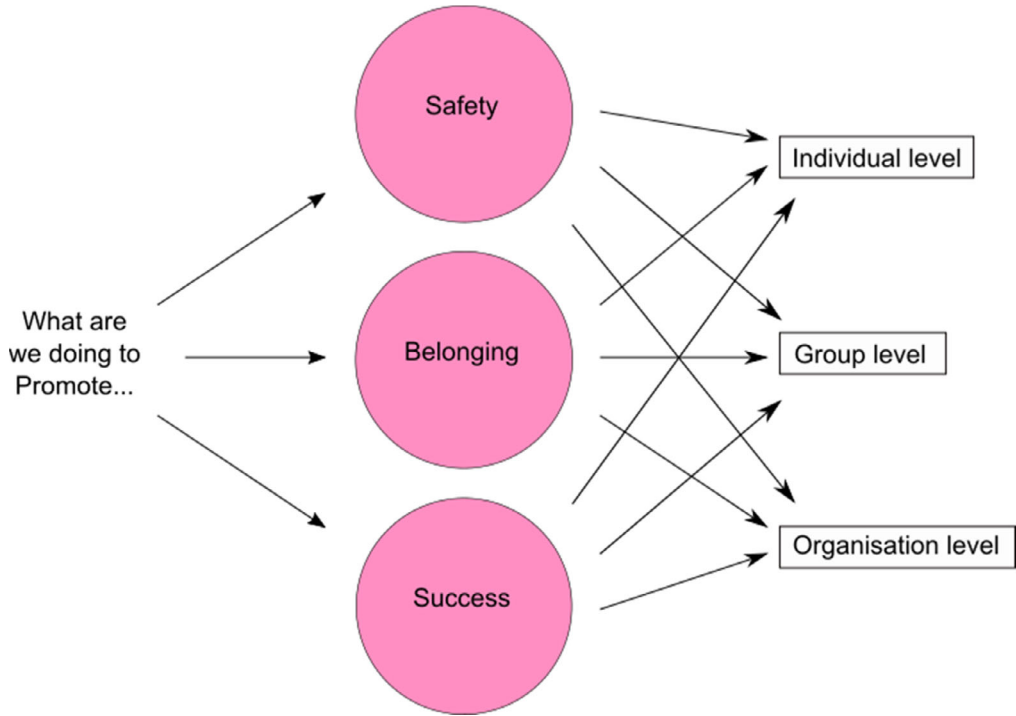


Figure 1. Identifying the barriers to the operational frame [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

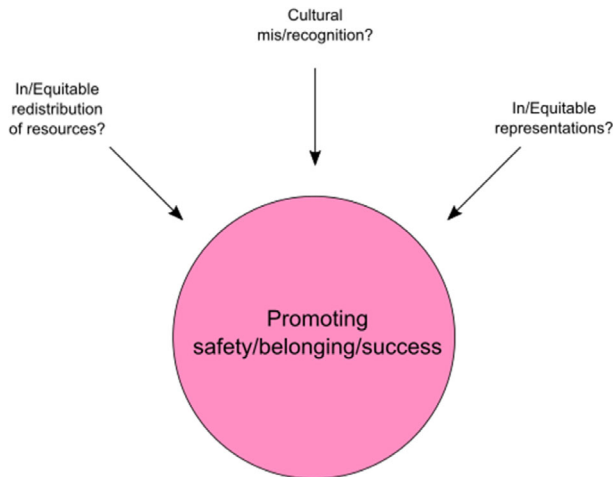


Figure 2. Bringing in the moral frame [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

and timetabling for the new arrival. There also needs to be investment in appropriately trained staff who can best meet the needs of the children academically and pastorally. Economic injustice also encompasses how bureaucracies function to allow equal distribution of access to appropriate education provision. In a previous article

we compared how quickly new arrivals could access meaningful education provision in Sweden and England (McIntyre *et al.*, 2020), arguing that the invisibility of refugee provision in English education policy means that access to schooling is predicated on, and delayed by, immigration and welfare bureaucratic processes.

With regard to *belonging*, there is a need for opportunities for engagement with a range of activities that engender social relations and connection with place. These are activities which need financial resources and staff time. Some will take place outside of school space and outside of the school day, and so require staffing flexibility. They do not necessarily lead to immediate gains, and therefore leadership needs to have a long-term commitment to an enrichment ethos. In schools where this is already the case, the resourcing implications are lessened.

Success is dominated by notions of academic performance. Schools in both England and Sweden devote huge resource to ensuring that they can compete using normative measures of student success, prioritising funding targeted at measures which aim to ensure pupils achieve high-stakes examination results. In marketised school landscapes where schools compete for parents to choose them, exam results are highly prized commodities. In both contexts, there is less emphasis on the distribution of resources for social and relational experiences of success, future-focused commitments to lifelong learning and preparing people to be able to live lives of value and meaning.

In current policy contexts in England there is limited funding targeted towards refugee children. Each school's budget is decided centrally and allocated as a single sum. Within this, schools can be allocated up to 3 years' funding for English as an Additional Language (EAL) students. If a refugee child qualifies for this support, then funding goes into the general school budget. If they arrive after the age of 14, the school will not receive the full 3 years' entitlement. Schools also receive resources if the refugee child meets the criteria for pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils. This is aimed at improving academic outcomes; again, this is part of the whole school budget. For new arrivals over 16, the Vulnerable Student Bursary is available to asylum seekers or refugees in local authority care, but not to those living with families. If students arrive in England as part of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), there is specific funding for their education. As one participant observes, this complex distribution of resources is '*mysterious funding*'. In Sweden, there is a lengthy list of National Agency funding streams to support new arrivals, but individual schools cannot apply for these. The application process is time-consuming and can only be applied for at the municipal level.

The operational concepts of safety and success are particularly affected by resource maldistribution. In both contexts, redistribution of resources for new arrivals is compromised by policy inconsistencies in the standards agenda, parental choice and a social mobility agenda defined in terms of academic outcomes for individuals. A discourse of education for public good carries little value. Providing safety for refugee children has resource implications. If prevailing discourses prioritise individual and school outcome data, then it takes brave leadership to be able to say—as one English participant did: '*we can take the hit, we accept that that's the right thing for those individuals whereas there are some schools would have said no it's about results*'.

Recognition: cultural injustice as a barrier to schools facilitating ordinary lives

The barriers to participatory parity are not limited to socio-economic resourcing for refugee children. Fraser's principle of parity of participation brings recognition and redistribution together as two mutually irreducible moments of justice. Recognition of cultural, linguistic and socio-ecological experiences is imperative to the new arrival's wellbeing and participation in society.

In terms of *safety*, it is extremely important to acknowledge that the child needs a safe space in which they can feel that they can resume their education, develop their linguistic repertoire and be valued for the skills and experiences they bring. Recognition of skills, through a considered holistic assessment and then individualised provision to demonstrate what they can bring, contributes to refugees' potential to be able to contribute to their new society, and ultimately their experiences of *succeeding* in the new context. So whilst it is important immediately to ensure that the child feels secure in their new environment, and that they have a future-focused understanding of how they can live meaningful lives, it is when we consider the concept of *belonging* that Fraser's notion of recognition becomes really important. Recognising the need for social relationships as a key aspect of belonging underpinned much of the practitioners' work, and they developed a range of strategies to foster webs of connections with peers, with the wider school and with their new place, and society. Importantly, these were explicitly strategic rather than ad hoc. Recognition of the challenges of this for older children, coming into groupings where friendships were long established, was particularly evident.

The role of first language dominated much of the discussion. In Sweden, recognition of the benefits to society of multilingualism is widespread and so policies and practice to maintain first language interested the practitioners from England, where dominant practices seem to encourage the child to become monolingual in English. The Swedish and English practitioners felt this was short-sighted, and an example of misrecognition within policy. In both contexts, pressures to perform in international comparisons—underpinned by economic measures of educational outcomes such as PISA—privilege particular knowledge and pedagogies which often do not accord with refugee students' prior experiences. Whilst there seems to be a longer tradition of diversity in English classrooms, there were schools in the Swedish context which had worked with waves of new arrivals at key points in time and whilst the numbers were not on the scale of the 2015 influx, there was a shared memory to draw upon. Interestingly, a number of practitioners in key strategic roles supporting new arrivals had been working in schools with diverse populations for some time, and these practitioners could draw on policy memory of multiculturalism and culturally relevant pedagogies, in the English context particularly, to help shape their recognition of what was needed to foster an inclusive environment to help new arrivals develop a sense of belonging. There were concerns that, in more rural areas where schools had less experience with recognising the needs of immigrant communities, this might be more difficult.

Throughout, the practitioners focused on what they needed to do and on the cultural barriers preventing new arrivals from achieving parity of participation in the present and in the future. They focused on strategies to develop relationships, self-

esteem and a sense of social connectedness through recognition of assets and skills that young refugees bring. By facilitating opportunities for working with peers in school and with people from the wider community, the new arrival and their new society are encouraged to think critically about themselves and the broader social world. Such an approach foregrounds high expectations and finds ways to help new arrivals to achieve and maximise their future capacity.

Representation: political injustice as a barrier to schools facilitating ordinary lives

To enable refugees to navigate individual cultural barriers, there needs to be a policy landscape which nurtures approaches that prioritise recognition. Such a landscape would be adequately resourced so that the needs of young refugees in our education systems are met. Whilst there is a symbiotic relationship between Fraser's lenses of redistribution and recognition, in order to fully achieve participatory parity, new arrivals need to be properly represented in policy and data. The latter is especially true in contexts where individual academic progress is so important in dominant discourses. We have written previously about how well represented and visible new arrivals are in Swedish policy discourse, and the relative invisibility of refugee children in English policy since 2010 (McIntyre *et al.*, 2020). There is no national data to show how many refugee children are in school in England. If the new arrival is unaccompanied and in the care of the state, then there are some mechanisms for looking at whether or not they have access to schools. One study shows that a year after arriving in England, over half of unaccompanied new arrivals are not yet in school (Ott & O'Higgins, 2019). Clearly, this invisibility impacts on how much we know and do not know about how far the education system in England is able to provide a sense of *safety* through access to a school place.

Children are more likely to feel like they can *belong* if they feel that they are represented by those who work with them in educational settings. Most schools in Europe are overwhelmingly populated by white middle-class teachers. This is the case in England. Moves to increase the diversity of the teaching population are hindered by problems with teacher shortages, and also by bureaucratic and technical barriers to recognising previous teaching experience and qualifications outside the UK. However, in Sweden, there are policies in place to quickly recognise prior teaching experience and qualifications from the adult refugee population and a number of teaching guides, who work in the child's preferred language, are from refugee communities.

In order to *successfully* participate with peers in the school setting, new arrivals should be represented on school councils and other activities that prioritise student voice. In both contexts, the teachers felt that their refugee students were not equitably represented. They felt that this could be due to assumptions about language barriers or cultural barriers (to sharing 'issues' or 'concerns' if the young person is from a culture where traditionally such practices were not encouraged). This acknowledgement led the practitioners in both contexts to consider how they could refine their approaches so that students could be accorded equal voice in decision-making in the early stages of their arrival. They felt that this might help them and the schools to be able to better understand what their students' aspirations for success are and to better signpost how to realise them.

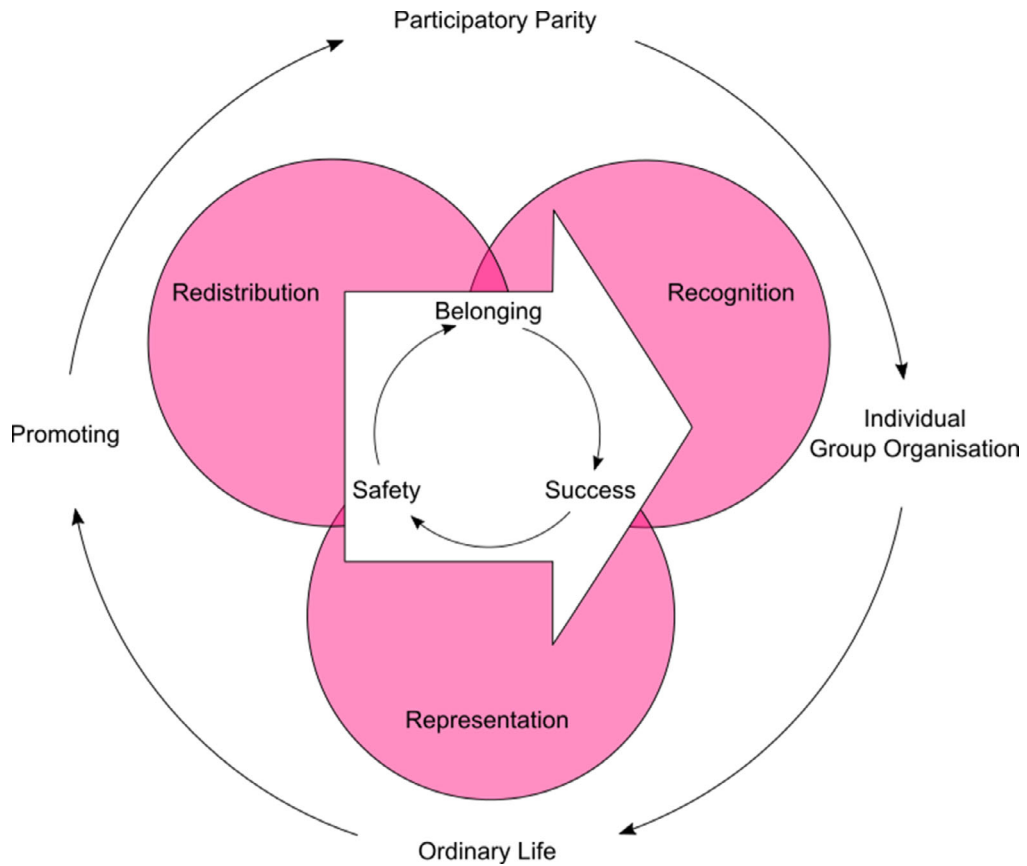


Figure 3. Interdependence of the operational and moral frames: a new conceptual framework
[Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Conclusion

This empirical study has demonstrated that both conceptual frames help practitioners to consider their everyday practices and to reshape them accordingly (Figure 3). Their questioning of the barriers to operationalising aspects of Kohli's model illustrates the need to explore and interrogate normative moral framing of their work. Fraser's theory of participatory parity helps in doing this and illustrates that there is a 'crucial interdependence' (Janks, 2000) between the two theoretical frames. Working through different lenses of injustice, the practitioners drew on memories of policy and practices and resolved that attention needed to be given to where these had been successful, before the policy memories became too distant. This also shed light on the impact on day-to-day lives of what might seem distant global policy drives, such as neoliberal foci on standards, marketisation and what is in/visible as a consequence in relation to refugee education. In contexts which prioritise performativity over education for the public good, it becomes clear that there is a need for brave leadership to champion new arrivals, in order to promote their experiences of safety, belonging and ultimately long-term success on a par with others in society.

Attending school marks the beginning of transitions for children with extraordinary experiences towards resuming ordinary, meaningful lives in their new context. Given their experiences and the trauma they have often encountered, refugee children deserve an education of value which helps them become lifelong learners able to contribute to their new societies and lead meaningful lives in which they can fully participate. Three years on from *The Guardian* article, Ammar has started his degree in medicine, whilst Noor is on a vocational training course for painting. They were helped by practitioners who were committed to supporting them in their ambitions. The theoretical understandings in the article offer a robust moral and operational approach to shaping pedagogical principles for policymakers and practitioners working so that all new arrivals in resettlement communities are able to become ordinary and to fully participate. Whilst each theory is useful in its own right, the confluence of both offers a framework for developing more nuanced understanding of how practitioners enact policy and helps shape questions for policymakers to consider when developing new policies and principles to ensure that the right to education of refugee children in resettlement contexts is realised.

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