Looking beyond the bigger picture:
Implications of classroom micro-level activities for the inclusion of refugees in education in host countries

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ABSTRACT

Many forcibly displaced children arrive in Western host countries are in education systems. However, little is known regarding the implications of micro or classroom activities for the inclusion of students from refugee backgrounds (SRBs) in new education systems. This chapter aims at exploring this issue to further the understanding of the role of daily practices on the inclusion of refugees in education. The author employed a scoping review as the main method; and care theory and inclusion theory were used as theoretical framework. The findings indicate that refugees can be subject to both desirable and negative experiences due to their relationships with their peers and teachers. The desirable experiences facilitate the inclusion of refugees, and the negative ones impede their inclusion in education systems. Therefore, in addition to investing in educational technologies, all concerned bodies should consider the micro-level activities to create genuine inclusive environments of learning for refugees.

Keywords: Resilience, Care Theory, Belonging, Hasche, Noddings, Attentiveness, Responsiveness, Respect, Attachment, Commitment, Involvement, Belief, Scandinavia.

INTRODUCTION

A significantly high number of forcibly displaced people is registered in the world as a result of conflicts, violence, human rights violations, and persecutions (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2022). Many people are internally displaced while others have crossed international borders and become refugees. Refugees face several challenges at different phases of their flight; and interrupted education is one of the significant challenges they encounter (Sunata & Abdulla, 2020). Moreover, the inclusion of refugees into host countries' education systems is not an easy task due to various reasons such as language barrier, new education system, lack of documents, lack of information, wide-spread anti-refugee sentiments, marginalisation and

discrimination, and traumatic experiences (McBrien, 2005; Lee, 2021). It is also noteworthy that "educational systems came under tremendous pressure to accommodate refugee children and their diverse needs/competences" (Arvanitis, 2021, p. 925). Two points need emphasis irrespective of the situations refugees find themselves in. First, education is one of the most important tools to integrate refugees into host society and build their future (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019); and second, many refugees are not only motivated to get education (Cha, 2020; Bonet, 2018), but they are also resilient in many contexts (Boit et al., 2021; Karaman et al., 2022). These are often referred to as students from refugee backgrounds (SRBs).

There is a growing body of literature on the significance of education for refugees (Naidoo, 2009; Kohli, 2011; Dávila, 2021), their resilience in adversities (Güngör & Strohmeier, 2020), challenges refugees face in accessing (higher) education (Abamosa, 2020; Aydin & Kaya, 2017; McBrien, 2005), provision of, or lack thereof, refugee education in global and protracted contexts (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; 2016b; 2020). All this and other related areas of education – such as investment in modern infrastructure and educational technologies – in the literature can be categorised as part of the "bigger picture", something many scholars focus on. In contrast, a systematic study and presentation of the implications of micro-activities in schools and classrooms for inclusion or exclusion of SRBs in/from education systems in host countries is virtually absent from the literature. This chapter aims at filling this lacuna by addressing three interrelated questions: How do SRBs experience teaching-learning activities in classrooms in host countries? How do SRBs describe their experiences on relationships with their peers and teachers in schools? What implications do these experiences have for the inclusion of SRBs into education systems in host countries?

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the term refugee may refer to three types of people. First, those who are outside of their countries of nationality and have either been granted protection upon application for asylum on the ground of "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in particular social group or political opinion" (UNHCR, 2010, p. 14). Second, people who have been resettled in third countries from different refugee camps across the world in cooperation with the UNHCR, and finally, people who have been resettled through private sponsorship in various countries such as "Australia, Canada and the United States" (Cerna, 2019, p. 9). Needless to mention, the accompanying family members of all the above groups may be understood as refugees.

The right to education is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, art. 26) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, art. 28). This right is irrefutable in the most countries, irrespective of the immigration status of a child. Dryden-Peterson (2016a) writes,

> In theory, this postnational conceptualization legitimates the rights of individuals—in this case, the right to education—beyond a particular nation-state or set of institutions […]. Yet, the implementation of these rights generally continues to be the domain of the nation-state (p. 479).

This indicates that the recognition of refugees' right to education is not problematic; it is rather the practice or implementation of the rights which needs further attention. This chapter argues that classrooms are the main practice and implementation areas where real inclusion of refugees can be made. Hence, micro-activities in classrooms need due emphasis in host countries. In this chapter, education may be understood broadly to include primary, secondary, and post-secondary or higher education. Refugee education can refer to "education in camps, introductory classes or long-term provisions" (Cerna, 2019, p. 8). Here, the focus is more on the long-term provisions in the formal education systems of host nations. Micro-activities refer to all formal and informal activities SRBs experience by virtue of their vertical relationships with school personnel including teachers and their horizontal relationships with their peers (Derli, 2022). Inclusion may be broadly understood as the belongingness SRBs feel at school because of, or lack thereof, micro-level activities (Haug, 2014).

REFUGEE EDUCATION IN PRE-SETTLEMENT CONTEXTS

People with forcibly displaced background come from various walks of life, including students, who had to interrupt their education due to flight (Sunata & Abdulla, 2020). In many cases, the existing literature on refugee education focuses mainly on post-settlement characteristics of refugees. Dryden-Peterson (2016b) underscores that pre-settlement educational experiences of refugees are overshadowed by overemphasis on other issues such as language barriers, cultural mismatches, and discrimination. Moreover, Huss et al. (2020) indicate that literature on refugee education in pre-settlement phase is meager because many researchers focus on post-settlement contexts and it is difficult to conduct research in pre-settlement contexts as these are "volatile, improvised and changing" (482). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to delve into this matter. However, it is important to highlight pre-settlement educational experiences of SRBs to better understand their educational experiences in the settlement contexts to provide relevant and improved services (Hopkins & Hill, 2008).

Most refugees live in refugee camps for extended period of time before their resettlement in third countries (Milner, 2014). Noteworthily, the provision of education in the refugee camps remain limited particularly at secondary and higher education levels (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017). In some cases, SRBs are isolated from national students and attend under-resourced and informal schools (See for example, Horst & Aden, 2021). Moreover, provisions of refugee education in camps are characterised by ad hoc initiatives with the main aim of preparing the refugees to return to their countries of origin as swiftly as possible (Dryden-Peterson, 2016b). Lack of qualified teachers and physical resources, unmet needs for education at different levels, low quality of instruction, security issues, and lack of funding are other features of refugee education in camps (Huss et al., 2020; Kirk & Winthrop, 2007). In such contexts, the main concerns of the policymakers and national authorities are infrastructure such as schools and security than, for example, the implications of micro-level practices in the classroom on the inclusion of SRBs into the education system. The situation for higher education is no different (Crea & McFarland, 2015; Zeus, 2011). Therefore, the transition to post-settlement educational context is not always smooth for SRBs (Taş & Minaz, 2021). As a result, host nations, in addition to settling refugees, must "provide inclusive classrooms and a sense of belonging" for the successful transition of refugees into meaningful life (Aydin & Kaya, 2019, p. 50). In this regard, there is very little research synthesising relevant literature on experiences of SRBs in the classrooms and their belonging in schools (Block et al., 2014; Due et al., 2016). It is within this context that this chapter proponents the shifting of focus from macro- to micro-level issues to improve the understanding of the inclusion SRBs in host countries' education systems.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter employed a theoretical framework constructed from care theory and social inclusion theory. The main rationale behind the combination of these theories is to understand comprehensively the implications of creating better environments (care theory) on the participation and empowerment of refugees (inclusion theory). Care theory posits that sympathetic relationships between the one caring and the cared-for have great contributions in fostering better environments (for example, classrooms) (Noddings, 2002). Various scholars from various fields including philosophy, development psychology, and education have used and contributed to the refinement of care theory (Owens & Ennis, 2005).

Caring can be defined as "a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realisation, growth, development, protection, empowerment, and human community, culture, and possibility" (Moen et al., 2019, p. 3). Even though, caring is often framed as a phenomenon taking place between two or more people, Engster (2005) argues that care of self also constitutes a legitimate

aim because people who do not attend their own needs may not be able to or willing to provide good care to others. One interesting aspect of caring is that it is contagious. Students can learn from their teachers how to interact with people; and caring teachers on their part convey their feelings to their students (Owens & Ennis, 2005). Noddings (2005) argues that caring relations provide the foundations for successful pedagogical practices in the sense that teachers—through listening to their students—can gain the students' trust, and in an on-going relationship of care and trust, students will likely accept what teachers try to teach.

In this chapter, the care theory is operationalised through its core virtues identified by Engster (2005). Engster (2005) described three core virtues that various definitions of caring share: *attentiveness, responsiveness*, and *respect*. *Attentiveness* refers to "sensitivity to situations that call for a moral response" (p. 54). A person with attentiveness virtue notices when another person is in need and responds positively by showing empathy and anticipation of the needs that another person might have. Lack of attentiveness may lead to limited or ineffective caring because the one-caring will fail to notice when others are in need or will respond in incomplete or inappropriate ways. *Responsiveness* may be understood as maintaining dialogue with others to understand the exact nature of their needs and monitoring their responses to the care provided to ensure that they receive the care they need. In this sense, responsiveness requires engaging with the concerned people before providing care for them and checking their reactions to the care. *Respect* refers to valuing and recognising agencies of others in understanding and expressing their needs. People are in no way lesser being just because they have needs that they cannot meet. It is about treating others in ways that do not humiliate them. Nodding (2012) also noted that even when the other is wrong, it is important to respond with care to his or her need for human regard; and this is one of the features of receptive listening, a powerful intellectual tool in the care theory.

In addition to caring aspects, it is important to understand SRBs' experiences of school belonging to bring about a genuine inclusive educational environment (Sobitan, 2022; Due et al., 2016). To this end, the chapter employed the inclusion theory. In this context, inclusion looks beyond getting access to education, and it includes SRBs' feelings of belonging and how empowered they feel in getting their voices heard (Haug, 2014). School belonging can be defined in various ways. For example, Barnes et al. (2021) define school belonging as the feelings students have about being accepted and supported as well as possibilities of active participation in school environments. Similarly, Due et al. (2016) define school belonging as "student's level of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief in their school" (p. 34). Here, attachment to school refers to connection to the broader school and students' investment in the school life, in the form of, for example,

interpersonal relationships. Commitment refers to situations such as how willing students are to comply with the rules and expectations of their schools and to remain at school or leave. Involvement refers to students' engagement in various activities including academic work and school-related extracurricular activities. Belief refers to the extent to which students feel schools are valuable and significant for them. Both definitions of school belonging are relevant in this chapter.

SCOPING REVIEW

This chapter employed scoping review (also called scoping study) as the main methodology. Scoping review may refer to a multi-task process of identifying and mapping relevant evidences based on pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criteria applied to the topic, context or issue under review (Peters et al., 2021). Arksey & O'Malley (2005) identified four main reasons why scoping study might be undertaken one of which is to summarise and disseminate research findings through a detail description of the findings in particular areas of study. In the context of refugee education, Ramsy and Baker (2019) have used scoping review. Five stages developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) in conducting scoping review were utilised in this chapter: identifying the research question, identifying relevant studies, selecting relevant studies, charting the data, and collating, summarizing and reporting the result. Once the relevant research questions were developed and refined, relevant literature was identified and eventually selected. These steps were rather back and forth than linear. To identify the relevant literature, many electronic databases, and a compilation of literature on refugees (Baker, 2022) were used. *Google Scholar*, *DOAJ*, *ERIC*, *IDUNN*, and *JSTOR* were the main electronic databases used to search for relevant studies. To narrow down the search of the studies, key words such as "refugee education", "refugees in classrooms", "post-settlement access to education", "refugee higher education", "inclusion of refugees in education", "role of teachers in refugee education", and "challenges refugees face in education" were used. After three weeks back and forth search and abstract reading, 28 studies were selected from 423 articles, books, book chapters, and other literature. The main inclusion criteria were language (English), geography (the Global North including Turkey), and type (published, not grey literature). All other types of work were excluded. Some articles were also excluded because they did not provide new information (Levac et al., 2010).

The next step was charting the data, which was done by reading all the selected studies to identify key information including authors, year of publication, study location or context, aims of the studies, key questions addressed by the studies, target groups or participants of the studies, methodologies, main results, and conclusion of the studies. At this stage, the data was charted under major preliminary themes which were further refined to form the findings of the chapter. This thematic

grouping was not linear process, it was rather iterative. This included revisiting the already collected texts to ensure emerging themes were regrouped under the major themes with the principle of "best fit" in broader sense (Ramsay & Baker, 2019, p. 8). Finally, the findings had been summarised and written with more refined themes built from codes. In addition to the numerical analysis of the number of studies supporting main points, qualitative thematic data analysis was employed as a complementary method to come up with concrete specific themes (Levac et al., 2010). Each article was read, and data was coded openly by marking relevant sentences and paragraphs which latter were grouped together based on their similarities using axial coding. These codes were further categorised into specific themes which were finally written as main findings of the chapter (Braun & Clarke, 2006), addressing to "the overall…research question [s]" (Levac et al., 2010, p. 4).

LOOKING BEYOND THE BIGGER PICTURE: THE REAL DEAL

Educational technologies, building new schools and modernising universities are all important to advance the teaching-learning objectives in the contemporary context (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2022). However, beyond these bigger pictures, this chapter argues, there must be a close attention and genuine investment on improving micro-level activities in the classroom to achieve the real inclusion of SRBs in education. These micro-activities can be seen at different levels and from different angels.

Functional horizontal relations with other students or peers

Drawing upon the work of Hasche et al. (2021), this chapter defines horizontal relationships as "relationships among peers" (p. 1770). Hence, the horizontal relationship may be understood as the voluntary relationship the SRBs have with fellow classmates or school mates for a reasonably durable time rather than few times interactions. A study from the UK on the role of education in settlement of young refugees (Hek, 2005) indicated that all SRBs interviewed for the study agreed that having friends, either from their home countries or from different backgrounds, at school was important to adapt to a new school. Most students reported that having friends from the same countries of origin made them feel more comfortable. This is supported by a study from Australia (Due et al., 2016), which indicated that SRBs' friendships with children from similar cultural, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds "help build attachments to the school", and as a result belongingness, through for example frequently using school environments such as classrooms, libraries, playgrounds, school gym, and art room (p. 38).

Similarly, mixing with students from a variety of backgrounds was also found to be beneficial in getting help on lessons, particularly language. For example, a 15-year-old SRB said, "…one of my

English friends, well it was my best friend who was helping me with English and give me help so that I'm going to do my best" (Hek, 2005, p. 165). In similar vein, a study from Italy (Biasutti et al., 2020) corroboratively underscored the importance of peer interactions in classrooms in creating an inclusive school environment. Peer-tutoring involving an Italian and an SRB was encouraged at a school level to enabling linguistic literacy. This is in line with other findings from three qualitative studies from Sweden (Cseplö et al., 2022), Austria (Bešić et al., 2020), and the UK (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017). Cseplö et al. (2022) indicated that SRBs appreciate being included by their Swedish classmates because it assists them to better understand various subjects and reflect on school experiences. Similarly, Bešić et al. (2020) highlighted that forming friendship with native students could help SRBs to study and learn host countries' languages, in this case German. One of the SRBs said, "I have friends with whom I can speak German and learn German. That is good for me" (Iranian boy in Bešić et al., 2020, p. 727). Madziva and Thondhlana (2017) on their part also noted that friendship and peer relationships SRBs build with native speakers of English, facilitate not only learning, but also integration process of the newcomers. A 12-year-old girl cited in Madziva & Thondhlana (2017) said,

> … the education system here is good but at the beginning I didn't know anyone here, … now that I can communicate with others, there is an English girl who helps me, and she stays with me in the classes … (p. 953).

In some cases, as a study from the US (Dávila, 2021) indicated, SRBs use their relationships with their classmates to engage in discussions of complex issues such as the questions of "civic awareness and engagement", which eventually help them to understand their position in the global migration context and foster inclusion in new contexts (p. 866).

In addition to facilitating learning, the healthy relationships SRBs have with other students help them to build a sense of community and develop self-confidence even when they make mistakes in the teaching-learning processes, as one SRB stated,

> If sometimes we did wrong, we laugh…So, it's fun when we laugh together…if everyone around you is happy, you feel happy too. It feels like we stick together. We dance in a group and we are happy (Parveen in Cseplö et al., 2022, p. 539).

In a similar fashion, a study conducted in Australian (Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010) found that SRBs are comfortable when they work together and that they are not afraid of making mistakes.

Good peer relationships are also found to be the sources of psychological functioning and coping strategies for social and emotional challenges (Sobitan, 2022). Other benefits of having friends at school are playing together, overcoming solitude, sharing "secrets and talks about topics that could not be discussed with family" (Bešić et al., 2020, p. 727), executing school projects collaboratively

(Dhillon & Ulmer, 2022), and finding alternative means of inclusion to contribute to creating a positive and inclusive learning environment. A study from Australia (Harwood et al., 2021a) indicated that SRBs, connected through basketball games, found an opportunity to demonstrate their strategic mastery and resourcefulness to become included members of a school. Moreover, they used the games as a resistance against everyday racism and symbolic violence they were subjected to because of their refugee backgrounds.

Dysfunctional or Lack of Good Relationships with Other Students

In contrast to the benefits having good relationships with peers offer SRBs, a lack of friends or unhealthy relationships with other students can be a deterrence to their inclusion in schools. Bešic et al. (2020) indicated that peer interactions can have negative consequences such as bullying, which can marginalise SRBs and lead to stigmatisation or even total exclusion. Moreover, bullying can have a detrimental impact on SRBs' happiness, mental health, and overall wellbeing (McDiarmid et al., 2022). In the long term, limited relationships with peers may put SRBs at risk of failure to adaptation to new school systems and increase risk of low-economic outcomes and involvement in criminal activities (Biasutti et al., 2020). One of the concrete examples in this case is a lack of motivation to go to school, as a young SRB states in Hek (2005),

> When you first come to England and you don't speak English you don't have anyone to talk to, no friends or anything and you're like really, really lonely and by yourself. So, I don't know this is just a personal thing. It's like, I didn't have any friends for two years, you know, and it was, my life wasn't good. You know, you come to school everyday, and you don't look forward to going to school, but you have to come to school, you have to learn English, and learning English is not fun because you don't have any friends. And I think refugee children who have no friends, you know, because they can't speak English; it's not easy for them, being by yourself. That's it. (15-year-old Kurdish young woman) (p. 165).

Physical altercations are reported to be the results of dysfunctional relationships with other students. Harwood et al. (2021b) based on their ethnography study in a state high school in Brisbane, Australia, indicated that SRBs can react physically to an interpersonal racism from fellow classmates, as Yasmiin, a refugee student from Somalia, recalled,

> This boy in primary school was annoying me by calling me "Yasmiin Attack", so I pushed him over and started to fight him. A teacher came over and broke us [up] and said, "You bloody African kids are always causing trouble" (Harwood et al., 2021b, p. 181).

Guo et al. (2019) from Canada and Bourgonje (2010) from some Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (Australia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) found that SRBs were subjected to prejudice and reported feelings of sadness, hurt, and anger resulting from the verbal assault and the actions of peers from host countries. These types of experiences

can inhibit SRBs developing a sense of belonging with the school community (Harwood et al., 2021a; 2021b).

In addition to the interpersonal and horizontal relationships between the students, other important dimensions to consider are the relationships SRBs have with their teachers. Teachers are key players in the school context because they evaluate students' progresses, create learning possibilities, and participate in decisions that influence students' learning (Glock & Böhmer, 2018). However, teachers are not without biases and prejudices (McDiarmid et al., 2022), which can influence their roles in facilitating the inclusion of SRBs in schools.

The Significance of Good Vertical Relationships with Teachers

Warren et al. (2021) argue that individual teachers who have good relationships with SRBs could serve as sanctuary for SRBs. Vertical relationships may refer to the relationships between "subordinates and superiors" (Hasche et al., 2021, p. 1770). Even though this chapter does not draw the relationship between teachers and students as superiors and subordinates, it acknowledges the asymmetrical power relationships between teachers and students, where teachers are often portrayed as superiors due to their, among others, knowledge, experience, roles, responsibilities, authority, and status (Rees et al., 2020).

Students from refugee background feel safe and establish trust with teachers who have positive attitudes towards them, as one of the SRBs participated in a qualitative study conducted in the UK indicated, "[the teacher] knows more of my story, so he's like more careful what he says to me and staff" (Sobitan, 2022, p. 268). Moreover, Kaukko et al. (2022) found that an SRB felt safe, seen, and recognised from the very beginning by her teacher's actions and attitudes,

> My teacher was very nice, so like, 'Whenever you need help, put your hands up.' And I was like, why? She was like, 'Put your hand up and say "help". I was like 'help', every day; I was just checking her, if she would come or not (p. 738).

This is corroborated by another qualitative study from Sweden (Cseplö et al., 2022), which showed that teachers' positive attitudes and friendly actions could make SRBs feel safe and comfortable in the classroom. Two SRBs—Levi and Sarah—narrated,

> I told you I was nervous because of the language, but it is important to feel safe. It is the teacher who must show you and make you safe as well … they should show caring, not just doing the lesson and going home. (Levi) Maybe because she makes us feel like we are all like family. There are no boundaries between us, we and she. She is not just a teacher, she is also a friend, you can say. (Sarah) (Cseplö et al., 2022, p. 538).

In the same vein, Barnes et al., (2021) indicated that the friendly relationships SRBs created with their teachers, for example by approaching their teachers at recess and lunchtimes to spend time

talking with them, led to the feelings of being valued, safe and connected to their schools. In some extreme cases, SRBs might feel safer and more welcomed in schools by the mere presence of teachers from the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Hek, 2005).

Some teachers are aware of the benefit of creating such atmospheres to ensure that SRBs feel safe and focus on their lessons because in most cases they do not come from secured environments (Kaukko et al., 2022). One of the teachers participated in the research stated that,

> These children [refugee students] do not come to school 'ready to learn' from a safe and secure environment. The learning at first can be a real struggle. But we can create those safe and secure places for them (Kaukko et al., 2022, p. 740).

Biasutti et al. (2020), by examining the practices and methodologies of Italian teachers regarding school activities involving migrant and refugee students, reported similar finding where one teacher stated, "It's necessary to create a good relationship with the [migrant/refugee] student" (p. 12). According to Baak (2016), when SRBs feel safe, secure and cared for, and valued, they are encouraged to form good relationships with their teachers and peers, which in turn result in good classroom culture and improved learning situations. For example, Thommessen and Todd (2018) reported that the good relationship SRBs had with teachers provided support and encouragement to the students, as one of the students participated in the research stated,

> So what he used to do was at lunchtimes take me aside to do presentations for him so that my English improved, my pronunciation improved. And he used to give me a reading list to do; he was a nice guy (p. 232).

Another benefit of having good relationships with teachers is developing a sense of belonging. A study from Turkey (Derli, 2022) indicated that Syrian refugee students felt not only part of the university community but also the wider society due to the functional vertical relationship they developed with their teachers. Strikingly, SRBs tend to disregard the negative experiences they endured elsewhere due to the encouragement and positive attitudes they get from the university faculty and staff. Kaukko et al. (2022) on their part argued that SRBs can feel a sense of belonging and connectedness in the classroom as a result of teachers' good relationships with them, for example, by meeting the students as valuable human beings. Due et al. (2016) documented the same results, which indicated respectful relationships with teachers help SRBs build attachments to and improve their belonging in the school.

Other benefits of SRBs having good relationship with teachers include the possibility of understanding complex issues such as civic participation and governance in new contexts, which would otherwise be not simple to tackle (Dávila, 2021), better mental health, better learning outcomes (McDiarmid et al., 2022), and long-term vital or "warm" help that advanced their academic

performances (Baker et al., 2018). However, the relationships SRBs have with teachers and vice versa are not always benign. In fact, due to power imbalance between teachers and SRBs, the latter may suffer from the negative or dysfunctional vertical relationships as presented below.

Dysfunctional Vertical Relationship with Teachers

One of the serious challenges SRBs face due to dysfunctional relationship with teachers is rejection or being ignored when they needed help in their lessons. Hek (2005) stated that SRBs "felt teachers failed to listen and treated them unjustly", which had a counter-productive results in addressing the SRBs' difficulty of adjusting to the range of subjects and in understanding the complexities of what was happing in class (p. 166). Racism and racialised views are other issues that SRBs must deal with in schools. Harwood et al. (2021a) indicated in their ethnography study that SRBs' academic ability, intelligence, and behaviours were undermined due to racialised views of some teachers. For example, after observing a large number of refugee students in a school, a teacher commented on their academic achievements and efforts by saying, "It is not as if we are getting any, I dare say, Australian-born smarter kids coming" (pp. 11-12). Miller et al. (2018) also documented the low expectations teachers had on the capability and future success of SRBs. This is in line with the findings from a focus-group based study from Canada (Guo et al., 2019) and a qualitative interview-based study from Sweden (Osman et al., 2020), which indicated that teachers had low expectations of SRBs capacities and abilities. For example, Hafsa, a participant in Osman et al.'s (2020) study, stated,

> If you wrote everything correctly in your task and the exam, the teachers would not believe that you did it, and they think that someone else helped you (p. 6).

Similar stories were reported from Austria (Bešic et al., 2020), where teachers associated SRBs with unproductive working habits and thereby subjected them to unfavourable judgments, contributing to their overall disadvantage. Indeed, discriminatory attitude of teachers was found to be among the main factors leading to social isolation and separation of SRBs from the mainstream students (Guo et al., 2019).

Other challenges SRBs face due to dysfunctional relationship with teachers were the latter's lack of empathy or indifferences to negative experiences SRBs face due to discrimination and bullying (Guo et al., 2019), inaccessibility of teachers when SRBs need assistance, as one SRB described "it was difficult to get information, professors were inaccessible" (Bajaj et al., 2017), carelessness of teachers in the classroom even when SRB ask for help, as one SRB describe,

> The teachers don't like to answer our questions. So sometimes, when the teacher is talking and explaining something, and I can't understand it, I ask someone, a student, who knows Arabic and English so he can translate and help me understand what the teacher is talking

> about. So the teacher sees me talking, and he looks at me, and he says "Well, you get a zero, that's it." I am only talking so I can understand what is happening in the classroom, to know what the teacher is teaching, so that I can learn something, anything in the class. I say that, I try to explain, but no. The teacher doesn't listen to me, and gives me a zero in the class. And this is how it goes there. So now, I sit quietly in the class. I don't understand anything, but at least I am not getting in trouble (Bonet, 2018, p. 60).

These findings are in stark contrast to what should be done to create inclusive classrooms, i.e., effective utilisation and adaptation of teachers' expertise (Block et al., 2014).

DISCUSSION

Desirable Micro-Activities

The findings presented above highlight important points that need a close attention. Students from refugee backgrounds' experiences related to teaching-learning activities in the classrooms can be seen from two broad categories: *positive* experiences and *negative* experiences. Both experiences are manifested through the relationships the SRB have with their peers and teachers, i.e., horizontal and vertical relationships respectively. Students with refugee backgrounds benefited from their good relationships with their peers in the form of improving their linguistic competencies or literacies, which can be used as a milestone to other academic activities. Soft skills – such as competence in group work without being afraid of making mistakes – are other experiences of SRBs worthwhile to mention. These types of experiences are of utmost importance specifically for SRBs because they have been through many difficulties, which might negatively influence their self-esteem and self-confidence (Samara et al., 2020). Turtiainen (2013) noted that refugees must reshape their relationships with others and get esteem in both formal and informal settings because resettlement processes have affected their lives. The findings also showed that SRBs experience healthy teaching-learning processes due to their good horizontal relationships. All this indicates SRBs' improved psychological functioning, coping strategies for social and emotional challenges, overcoming of solitude, and problem-solving skills.

Seen through the lens of care theory, contrary to common assumptions that only adults can care for children or only someone with more power can care for a less powerful person, the very positive relationships native students have with SRBs and the SRBs have among themselves as peers (in-group's interpersonal relationships) are an epitome of caring. Through their relationships, SRBs have mutually recognised each other as fellow human beings with a (common) goal, for example, getting an education in this context. The care they provide each other is therefore framed within this recognition and is aimed at achieving this goal. The attentive dimension of care theory is illustrated through the native students' conscious response to the SRBs' needs as stated by the 12-year-old

girl in Madziva & Thondhlana (2017). The fact that this girl does not know anyone at the beginning, but now the English girl helps her and stays with her in the classes indicates that students can show empathy and anticipate the help other fellow students may need and respond positively. Interestingly, the care the students provide each other is not a one-episode event, rather it is a continuous act, which indicates that the students have done it with intention of creating a lasting good situation.

Students from refugee background have also reported positive experiences due to their good vertical relationships with their teachers. Feeling safe in the teaching-learning process is one of the key experiences SRBs get from the good relationships they have with teachers. Feeling safety in turn opens door to an active participation in the classroom and asking for help whenever necessary without any fear for rejection by teachers. Even when SRBs are conscious about their struggle with new language and are nervous as a result, the teachers can make them comfortable by creating family like situation in the classroom. There is possibility of expanding learning-teaching activities beyond the classrooms through good relationships between teachers and SRBs. Teachers use lunchtime breaks as an opportunity to provide SRBs additional supports to help them improve their linguistic literacy.

This practice is appealing for at least four reasons. First, SRBs get more freedom and relaxed atmosphere of learning because they know the teachers are supportive, i.e. not demotivating; and thereby improve their learning (Waite, 2011). The very act of taking time to offer SRBs extra activities during lunchtime is an indication of great support. Second, even though it may seem what Wilkinson and Kaukko (2020) call “unremarkable shift in pedagogical practice” (p. 73), such practice may symbolise a significant change in the experiences of SRBs, many of whom are not used to such alternatives. Third, it illustrates that SRBs are resilient after flight from violence and are motivated to improve their linguistic competencies even if they must forego free time (Warren et al., 2021). Finally, teachers can use such practices as a chance to develop “more experiential teaching techniques” by situating a teaching-learning activities outside the classrooms (Waite & Rea, 2007, p. 61). The role of teachers in creating safety, comfort, and alternative learning arena are all in line with the attentive dimension of caring. The teachers go beyond “meeting the basic need” of SRBs – in this case, access to school – to make sure that SRBs’ underlying needs are met in the form of feeling safe, overcoming nervousness, and improving linguistic literacy (Engster, 2005, p. 68).

Developing the sense of belonging in a classroom, and by extension a school, is another benefit SRBs experience due to their good relationship with their teachers. Barnes et al. (2021) indicated

that school belonging influence the overall well-being of SRBs and their academic performance. Certainly, the students have also mentioned better health and learning outcomes as benefits of their positive relationships with their teachers. This is in line with McDiarmid et al.'s (2022) argument that teachers in high income host countries are becoming key players in supporting refugees' wellbeing. All this indicates that some teachers are caring about SRBs. In some cases, good attitudes from teachers provide a buffering effect from the surrounding negative or hostile environments. It can be argued that some teachers sympathise with refugees to reduce all the pressures the anti-refugee sentiments and policies might have on the SRBs (Erden, 2020). Strikingly, the mere presence of teachers from similar socio-cultural background, irrespective of the nature of relationships SRBs have with them, makes SRBs feel safe.

Non-Desirable Micro-Activities

In contrary to the desirable micro-activities discussed above, the findings suggest that SRB can be subject to a range of non-desirable micro-activities. This meta sentence indicates that being granted a refugee status (or protection) does not necessarily constitute a challenge-free school life for refugees. This supports the argument that "refugees face numerous tasks and challenges once they arrive in their host countries" (Zacher, 2019, p. 360; see also Igarashi, 2021). Some of the serious challenges SRBs face due to dysfunctional relationships with other students are prejudice, stigmatisation, and bullying. It can be argued that many other students who are not from refugee backgrounds can also face these challenges, which is a valid argument (e.g., Walker et al., 2013). However, SRBs' vulnerability because of their socio-cultural and linguistic characteristics such as ethnicity and accent compounded the challenges. Racial bullying in particular "works by positing the ethnicity, country of origin and cultural identities of refugee students as inferior to the dominant culture" (Sobitan, 2022, p. 271). This is an antithesis of the respect dimension of caring. The moment somebody is categorised as inferior, he or she has already been categorised as, in Sue's (2010) terms, "lesser human beings" (p. 3). Interestingly, not all SRBs are passive recipients of injustices. Some may resist in various forms including physical violence. Therefore, it is important to prevent, or at least, tackle the causes of the injustices as early as possible.

Teachers have also displayed undesirable behaviors towards SRBs. Racism and racialised views teachers have towards SRB have made teachers frame these students as intellectually inferior in the form of low expectations and doubts about the academic performances of SRBs (Shapiro, 2014). Moreover, the teachers tend to reject and ignore SRBs requests for help during their classes, indicating lack of empathy. All these negative experiences can adversely affect school completion

and perceptions SRBs have about schools (Miller et al., 2018). As expected, considering SRBs as intellectually inferior, ignoring their needs, and lack of empathy are all not in line with the dimensions of caring. This indicates that not all teachers care about SRBs in host countries. This in turn implies that investing in education technologies and sophisticated infrastructure alone does not constitute an inclusive school environment for SRBs.

Implications of Micro-activities for the Inclusion of SRBs in Schools

The micro-activities and resulted experiences of SRBs discussed above have a couple of implications for the inclusion or belongingness of SRBs in schools. First, it must be borne in mind that every policy and practices must have elements that are directed at individuals as well as at groups. One of the main reasons for this is the fact that inclusion is the sum result of actions and reactions of individuals. For example, a refugee who is motivated to learn a host country's language at school may feel included (belonging) in a complete way if both the teachers and students have caring attitudes. In other words, a good gesture of a teacher alone may not be enough if non-SRB students are bullies or if they treat their SRB peers as "inferiors". The same is true for the students. If all the students are inclusive towards their SRB peers while, for example, a language teacher has negative (racist) views towards SRBs, genuine inclusion cannot be achieved.

Second, it must be underlined that in some Western host countries, although basic education is compulsory, attending school is not mandatory (Volmari, 2019). This may have great implications for students from refugee backgrounds, particularly at the lower education level. In the contexts of steadily continuing negative micro-activities, SRBs may be forced out of school or lose interest in attending one. The alternative is thus home-schooling. However, this may compound the challenge the SRBs face because in some cases, these students come from families with little formal educational backgrounds, or even "parents who have never experienced formal education" (Sellars and Imig, 2021, p. 424). In other words, SRBs cannot get the educational help they need to compensate for the loss they endure. Hence, the best, if not the only, alternative for them should be to stay at school. Unfortunately, staying at school alone does not necessarily constitute a meaningful inclusion for SRBs. At levels of education where it is not compulsory to get education, the result will be to drop-out or discontinue studies, at least in the short term (McBrien, 2005).

Third, good relationships SRBs have with their peers and teachers have meaningful implications for the former's inclusion in the form of solid connection to the school by developing feeling of family (attachment), trying their best to learn by using available opportunities such as lunchtime (commitment), participating in plays and sports or physical education (involvement), and attending

school on regular basis or frequently using available resources to benefit from education (belief). Not unexpectedly, the negative relationships SRBs have with their peers and teachers have detrimental implications for the former's inclusion. Students from refugee background can exhibit various symptoms and reactions, most of which indicate the presence of less inclusive environment or classroom. For example, SRBs may resort to physical violence to protect themselves and not look forward to going to school (against the concept of commitment). They may also feel sad, hurt, and angry in contrast to what the attachment dimension of inclusion calls for. Moreover, they may withdraw efforts of learning due to negligence or avoidance from teachers. This runs parallel with the involvement aspect of inclusion. Finally, they may lose hope of worthiness due to discrimination and racism they are subject to, and in so doing, they no longer uphold the belief dimension of inclusion.

Finally, doing inclusion can be anything but simple. It may not be that challenging to devise good inclusive educational policies. However, policies need to be translated into action at a micro-level. In democratic societies, including many Western host countries, it is difficult to micro-manage people who are responsible for executing the policies (Maassen, 2003). Hence, a disjuncture between policies and practices should be expected. While there is no panacea to all the challenges related to this discrepancy, listening to the stories and experiences of students with refugee backgrounds (and their parents') must not be overlooked. Afterall, it is the SRBs who are on the receiving end. Therefore, anything that has to do with SRBs must involve their voices and concerns to be successful. Moreover, success of inclusion should be measured from bottom-up (from SRBs' perspectives to policy level) not the other way around. It is equally important to recognise that all education levels are potential targets for the improvement of inclusion policies and practices (Miller et al., 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter tries to address three interrelated questions on the teaching-learning experiences of students with refugee backgrounds, their experiences in horizontal and vertical relationships with peers and teachers respectively, and the implications of these experiences for inclusion of refugees into education systems in host countries. As indicated above, SRBs have "all kinds" of teaching-learning related experiences. These experiences are embedded in SRBs' relationships with their peer (horizontal) and teachers (vertical). One the one hand, some of these experiences are desirable and come in the form of friendship with either other SRBs or native students, support from native students in linguistic literacy, having family-like relationships, getting extra assistance during lunchtime, feeling of belonging and safety in the school community, developing interpersonal

relationships through extracurricular activities such as playing basketball, and enjoying overall wellbeing. On the other hand, SRBs are subject to undesirable experiences in the form bullying, rejection, avoidance, prejudices, racialised views, and being seen as less humans or inferiors. The positive experiences have a facilitating role in the inclusion of SRBs in schools, but the undesirable experiences have impeding roles in this regard. As mentioned in the introduction part, it is important to invest in educational technologies and other advanced infrastructure to modernise the education provision. However, looking beyond these bigger pictures must be part and parcel of the national education policies in ways that enable to have access to the micro-level and daily experiences of learners (at all levels of education), which can be used as a key resource in creating (more) inclusive classrooms and schools. It may also be useful to understand the concept of inclusion as “unfinished, in the sense that it should be continually evolving” (Hausstätter, 2014, p. 425), alongside new and advanced solutions to the questions it raises.

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