



Report

How to adapt Education Services from short-term Emergency Response to long-term Inclusionary Services



Introduction

"Because of the increasingly protracted nature of global displacement, education for refugees is both a humanitarian and development challenge." (UNHCR:2022)

Ever since the 1990s, the global community has noticed that emergency situations are becoming longer and longer. Crises become more complex with different causes and effects intertwining. What was originally intended as a short-term emergency response, often lasts much longer than expected. This affects the field of education as much as any other field. Displaced people often spend years or even decades in uncertainty and without access to any education. They don't have the opportunity to acquire qualifications and certificates that would open up opportunities for them. Especially for children, this has a big impact on their personal development, on their understanding of self, and on their socialization. It is therefore essential that state and non-state organizations work together and try to ensure that newcomers to a country have access to quality education. With crises becoming longer and less predictable, short-term emergency education projects are not enough anymore. Education for refugees should be designed in a way that they can offer quality education for a long time to come. In 2001, the UN conducted a report about refugee education and established guidelines for the design and implementation of long-term education programs that target refugees. According to these, education programs for refugees should

- Emphasize respect for the local culture
- Incorporate a community-based approach as well as a participatory approach
- Adapt education programs from "basic education in the classical sense of traditional schooling" towards "education for human rights, peace, democracy, and the environment as well as for a participatory pedagogy." (Kagawa:2005)

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1. The role of NGOs in long-term education for refugees

As every child has a right to education, it is the hosting state's responsibility to provide refugee children with an effective education. This is not only beneficial for the target group but also for the receiving states, as effective education for migrant people supports a sustainable economic and social development as well as lasting positive peace. However, in many cases children with an experience of displacement, cannot easily be integrated into national school systems. Therefore, NGOs are needed to help palliate this gap in providing education to children and adults from the refugee community. Additionally, the UNHCR views it as NGOs' responsibility to advocate for migrant people's access to the national school system in order to ensure that there is no discrimination based on their legal status, nationality, gender, religion, etc. In this process, it should be recognized that education is essential to people of all ages. Especially people fleeing from a crisis might have missed out on years of education while they were in school-age. But also adults who finished school in their home countries have a right to access to further education.

"Ensuring that adults have access to education of all levels is another way of enhancing their independence, self-sufficiency and dignity." (UNHCR:2016)

Often, access to mainstream education depends on certificates of examinations to prove the level of education a person has already attained. As these certificates vary greatly from country to country and might not even be provided by the country of origin of the people of interest, NGOs can assist greatly in providing access to mainstream education by offering programs that provide these certificates and proof of level of education attained. The integration of refugees into national education systems requires resources from receiving states in order to ensure proper access to mainstream education. This includes the following areas:

- Physical access
- Sufficient funding
- Reliable administration
- Well-trained teachers
- Infrastructure
- Learning materials

In cases of a large and sudden arrival of refugees, states might be overwhelmed and unprepared to handle the situation effectively. In these cases, non-state organizations must support the state in establishing these infrastructures. NGOs can assist, for instance, by creating transportation systems for migrant people to reach education facilities, by offering learning materials, or by offering training for educators to be prepared to educate learners with a history of displacement. In some cases, states don't have the willpower to establish such infrastructures and programs. In such cases, NGOs can use their expertise in non-formal education to cover for the gap in services, but most importantly can advocate for the access to education for migrant children.

2. Aims of long-term inclusionary education

"For children who were forced to flee their homes, education provides stability and security when everything else in their lives seems to have fallen apart." (UNHCR:2016)

According to the UNHCR report on education in emergencies, post-crisis education should not only provide education, but also reintroduce them to life without war, discrimination, and flight. The report suggests a couple of aspects that should be integrated into long-term inclusionary education programs.

SAFETY

Education for refugees, for children in particular, should provide the learners with a safe space - in which they can express themselves without fear - to recover from what they have been through and the constant distress they experience at home. This holds true for education in an emergency context, but also for education in a post-conflict, long-term response.

STRUCTURE

Post-conflict education should reintroduce the children to structured learning and a structured life. Structure is essential to children's development, but children affected by a crisis have not experienced any structure in a long time. Providing them with structure will give them a sense of normality and security.

INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

Post-conflict education is also an important way of integration and inclusion of children as well as adults into their host communities. It is therefore essential that educational projects are offered to people from different communities alike - ideally both, newcomers and members of the host community.

"It means that refugee education is fully embedded in the host country education system, with the same cost drivers and constraints that determine quality and efficiency. In terms of teacher quality, school infrastructure, financing, access to learning materials and other resources, inclusion means "no better, no worse" than education for everyone else."

(UNHCR:2022)

FUTURE-ORIENTED

While emergency education should provide children and adults with 'life saving skills - "such as how to avoid danger, how to prevent disease and where to find help" (UNHCR:2016) - post-conflict education should have a more future-oriented approach and teach skills that will help students integrate into their host communities. This can be in the form of language education, learning cultural practices, etc.

3. Accelerated Learning Programs as a means to inclusion

Short-term emergency education should follow the curriculum of the target group's origin country, as it is assumed that the learners will return there soon. This provides the learners with a sense of identity and security. The emphasis should lay with the cognitive aspect of learning, for the learners to miss out as little as possible on their education until they can return to their home country. On the other hand, long-term education programs should follow an inclusionary approach, as it is expected that the learners will remain in their host country for a long period of time. For these "prolonged refugee situations", the UNHCR suggests a curriculum that "can face both ways." It is suggested that organizations support the receiving states in giving education to displaced communities by providing them with "accelerated learning programmes" in order to bring the learners to a level that will help them follow the national curriculum as well as provide them with the necessary language skills. These learning programmes should cover the essential elements of the formal school curriculum that displaced children have missed during the emergency they escaped and their journey to the receiving state.

PEACEBUILDING

According to Kagawa (2005) they should also include themes of peace, tolerance, environment, health, human rights, gender equality, and racial equality into the curriculum. The programs should be designed in a way that conveys an understanding of the local culture and values but at the same time incorporate a connection to the learners' cultural heritage.

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

The teaching methods should include psychosocial elements, in order to respond to possible needs the learners have due to their unique experiences and situation.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Additionally, it is advised to include vocational training to support the inclusion of the displaced community as a whole.

INDIVIDUAL SKILLS

Accelerated learning programs should also aim to support the learners' development of skills such as decision making, critical thinking, self-expression, self-esteem, responsibility, and understanding and responding to their own emotions.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Lastly, long-term educational programs should incorporate the development of social skills such as communication and cooperation.

4. Approaches to long-term Inclusionary Education for Refugees

"In order for the learning process to be effective, learning must be active, the environment must be conducive to learning and the educator must acknowledge and respond to the learners' needs." (Castle et al.:2005)

Educating refugees - particularly refugee children - bears some additional challenges - such as language barriers - and the learners will have additional needs - such as psychosocial support. At the same time, however, education is a great and important way for newcomers to be included in society. Long-term education programs for refugees should therefore aim at supporting the learners in their inclusion into the host society. Castle et al. (2005) suggest a couple of different approaches that inclusionary education programs for refugees should follow.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

A holistic approach to learning includes cognitive, affective, ethical, and physical components. Using a variety of teaching methods is the most effective way to teach and it enables learners to develop in a healthy way.

"Holistic and participatory approaches are more sustainable than traditional teaching methods, in terms of inclusion, learning, and self-development." (Kagawa:2005)

INCLUSIVE APPROACH

Education programs should not be designed for learners from one community only but offer a space where people from different backgrounds meet and interact. Ideally, refugee learners should be integrated into the mainstream education system quickly, for them to have a way to be included in the local community.

RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

Education programs should not be designed for learners from one community only but offer a space where people from different backgrounds meet and interact. Ideally, refugee learners should be integrated into the mainstream education system quickly, for them to have a way to be included in the local community.

PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

Education programs should not be designed for learners from one community only but offer a space where people from different backgrounds meet and interact. Ideally, refugee learners should be integrated into the mainstream education system quickly, for them to have a way to be included in the local community.

CHILD-TO-CHILD APPROACH

A child-to-child approach follows the principles of a participatory approach to an even greater degree. The classes are led by the learners themselves to a higher degree and they are part of creating the content of their education. The educator takes a supportive role rather than a leading role. This approach strengthens learners' confidence, ability to decision-making and problem-solving, ability to teamwork, and independence. Furthermore, it gives them space to learn the things they are interested in, following teaching methods they find engaging and effective. Joyner (2002) suggests the following six steps to implementing a child-to-child approach in an educational project:

- Choosing the right idea: the learners make a decision about the topic they want to work on among themselves with the support of the teacher
- Finding out more: conducting literature and online research, surveys etc.
- Planning the project based on the results
- Taking action
- Discussing the outcome
- Improve

INCLUSIONARY APPROACH

In order for education services to be inclusionary, they should aim to provide newcomers with an understanding of the culture and values of the local community and find ways to integrate them into their education. At the same time, however, education programs targeting refugees should be respectful to the culture and values of the learners and not expect them to compromise those.

"Quality education is not only about cognitive development (basic literacy and numeracy): it should also include the development of a sound values system that reflects universal values and human rights." (Castle et al:2005)

COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH

In order to make the education relevant to the local context and create a connection between locals and newcomers, education targeting refugees should include the community. This way, the local community is being encouraged to engage with the newcomers and the other way around. Additionally, the local community can take part in designing the education in a way they find appropriate and "indigenous knowledge" can be taught to the learners in order to give them knowledge about the local context.

EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE APPROACH

The education for social change approach is a community-based method that aims at including the local community in a way that learners' education will have an impact on wider society. By including the community and relevant topics in the education, the education can raise awareness on topics that are relevant to the context on a larger scale. The learners' knowledge, values, and perception of things are being included so that the education gives new impulses to change to society. One example is Joyner's (2002) study about post-emergency health education in Sierra Leone, in which primary school students raised awareness on hygiene and hygiene related diseases. The study shows that the overall hygiene of the community improved because children implemented what they learned in school at home and made their families aware of the issue.

"A person who has been made aware of a particular problem not only knows and understands it, but sees the importance of doing something about it." (Joyner:2022)

5. Project Development

Long-term inclusionary education programs should be built in a way that aims towards “...effectively responding to the environment in which the learner lives, the challenges the learner faces, the context of their lives and other essential factors that encourage or hinder learning. Within the system of learning, the various components are linked through their potential to affect one another and alter the environment in which learning takes place.”

(Castle et al.:2005)

In order for long-term inclusionary education programs to be successful they have to be designed in a way that is fit to the target group. This requires some additional steps in project planning, which are outlined in the following.

EVALUATION OF CONTEXT

An extensive evaluation of the cultural, political, economic, and social context of the target group is essential to creating effective education programs with an inclusionary aim.

EVALUATION OF THE TRAINING OF EDUCATORS

The training local teachers have received might not offer knowledge and skills necessary to teaching refugees. In order to teach refugees, sensibility to their cultures and values as well as to their psychosocial needs is necessary. An evaluation of the target group's needs should therefore be complemented by an evaluation of the training educators have received, so that it can potentially be complemented with training more specific to teaching the target group.

EVALUATION OF OBSTACLES

Offering quality education to refugees bears obstacles that might not occur when offering education to local communities. Possible obstacles to successful learning - such as language barriers, financial restraints, deficiency of educators, or lack of transportation to learning facilities - should be evaluated beforehand.

ACCESSIBILITY

Education programs must be accessible in the language that people speak, or be made accessible through language education. They must include support for people to be able to access them, especially for people with impairments. This includes means of transportation, financial support for school fees, transportation, etc., and ensuring that there is no discrimination on who can attend them based on gender, nationality, spoken language, etc. Furthermore, quality education requires that students have access to appropriate learning materials, including books and notebooks, but also digital tools.

6. The training of Educators

"Children all over the world need great teachers, but refugees need them all the more"
(UNHCR:2016)

Refugee children don't only need teachers who are well-trained in the subject they teach, they also need teachers who are able to attend to their social and psychological needs, to motivate them and support them in their path of overcoming their past and looking forward to their future. Teachers who teach students recovering from an emergency situation, should be aware of the physical and mental distress that the students have experienced. Especially when working with children and adolescents, the teachers should be trained in how to respond to trauma and should be able to address the students' social and psychological needs. In order to ensure good education for refugee children, teachers need to be motivated. The UNHCR suggests the following ways to achieve this:

- Participation in decision making
- Improvements in working conditions
- Support for substantial professional development and certification
- Access to continual training opportunities to help educators acquire new skills
- Offering training on how to teach learners from different cultural background with different native languages

"Teachers with access to the experience and advice of their colleagues around the world, both online and face-to-face, are getting the professional support they need to succeed in their extremely challenging working environments." (UNHCR:2016)

7. Certification and Nostrification

Qualifications attained in the host country have to be certified in order to give the learners access to further education as well as job opportunities. Further, educational and vocational certificates attained in the country of origin, should be nostrified in the host country without long bureaucratic procedures, in order to ensure a smooth transition and vocational inclusion for the target group. NGOs can have a role in advocating for the nostrification of certificates as a means of recognition and integration.

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