Is There a Pedagogy for Refugee Background Students? A Review of Literature

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Abstract

The existing literature on refugee education lacks a comprehensive synthesis of pedagogical approaches, leaving teachers unprepared to meet the needs of students from refugee backgrounds (SRBs). This study seeks to address this gap by identifying and analyzing existing literature on refugee education pedagogy. A mapping review of 200 articles identified 50 focusing on pedagogical strategies, which were analyzed using open coding to determine 13 core categories. The findings highlight the urgent need for a systematic, evidence-based refugee pedagogy that incorporates SRBs' cultural and linguistic strengths, supports trauma recovery, and fosters inclusive educational environments. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of targeted professional development (PD) for educators at all career stages, equipping them with the knowledge and resources to address the diverse needs of SRBs. This study calls for further research and PD initiatives to better prepare teachers to effectively support SRBs' needs and success.

Keywords: students from refugee backgrounds; refugee education; refugee pedagogy; newcomer education; classroom diversity

Introduction

Since the Refugee Act was passed in 1980, more than 3.1 million refugees have entered the United States (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Historically, 31% of those refugees are under the age of 14, so even in times of low admission rates, thousands of children from refugee experiences are eligible to enter the public school system. While-most refugees settle in gateway cities such as New York City or Los Angeles, a recent trend indicates that refugee families are increasingly relocating in small or mid-size cities and rural areas that need revival and workers but are less prepared for the diversity, under-resourced, and unfamiliar with the distinctive experiences that characterize refugee education (Brown, 2022; Leonard, 2022; Refugee Resettlement in Small Cities, n.d.).

The challenge is compounded by the current context of anti-immigrant discourse and policies that contribute to the perception that refugee education is a burden and to labeling refugee students and their families with limiting terms such as trauma, victim, delinquent, criminal, and unwanted (Akay & Jaffe-Walter, 2021; Cun, 2020). Despite these barriers, educational success is still the greatest aspiration of most young refugees (Boyden et al., 2002; Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008). Creating an environment for refugee students to thrive involves a concerted effort by schools, policymakers, social workers, and local businesses, but it is individual teachers who are essential in recognizing the unique challenges and needs of refugee students and offering the support they need (Kovinthan, 2016; MacNevin, 2012; Strekelova & Hoot, 2008).

By nature and training, teachers appear to be ill-prepared to work with refugee students. Numerous studies over time and across the globe show that few schools and teachers are even minimally prepared to teach refugee background students (Baecher et al., 2019; Ficarra, 2017; Gürel & Büyükşahnm, 2020). Moreover, teacher preparation programs seem to have little commitment to addressing refugee education beyond general references to diversity or multicultural education (Häggström et al., 2020; Kovinthan Levi, 2019; Solomona et al., 2005). Problems related to refugee experience are complex, and preparing teachers to successfully integrate young people into utterly foreign classroom settings cannot be accomplished with a few hours of in-service workshops.

The review that follows is based on the assumption that for teachers to provide optimal experiences for refugee students, they must be informed by a strong research base and an understanding of the experiences of teachers and learners. The purpose of this research is to identify and analyze the existing literature on specific pedagogical approaches or teaching strategies relevant to refugee education. The central question guiding this inquiry is: What pedagogical strategies for refugee education have been documented in the academic literature?

The Missing Research Base

In a previous review of literature, we found little that could be considered a contribution to a research-based pedagogy for refugee students. Sixty-five percent of the articles reviewed could be considered research, varying from a brief reference to the use of case vignettes to thoroughly described, conceptually-grounded, and rigorously designed studies. The research was overwhelmingly qualitative in design, with only 27 articles (50%) based on quantitative or mixed methods. We do not consider quantitative results as a gold standard in determining effectiveness, but we acknowledge the contribution of measurable outcomes to a firmly grounded and well-balanced research base and source

of information for external stakeholders. The potential of the research base was also lessened by small sample sizes and the fact that ten of the 17 studies (59%) relied in part or completely on self-reported data, which is notoriously unreliable (Jobe, 2003; Parry et al, 2021; West, 2014).

It was similarly difficult to determine a widely applicable research base from the much larger sample of qualitative studies. The most common focus was on stories of the refugee teaching and learning experience and perceptual and attitudinal research. The complexity of refugee life and the challenges of teaching and learning in those settings warrant a variety of small and larger-scale qualitative designs, and much can be learned from any one of those designs. While large-scale generalizability is not the purpose of qualitative inquiry, even qualitative researchers have an obligation to demonstrate "truth value" and some degree of applicability to be considered worthwhile (Guba, 1981) and naturalistic inquiry.

Faced with challenges such as trauma, cultural differences, and language barriers, educators often feel unprepared to effectively address the diverse needs of students from refugee backgrounds (Ring & West, 2015). Additionally, the growing number of students from refugee backgrounds (SRBs) in the U.S. educational system underscores the urgent need for teachers to seek out and implement special methods and pedagogies (Barlett et al., 2017; Hayes, 2016). In fact, numerous scholars identify school culture and teacher attitudes and behaviors as one of the most significant challenges faced by SRBs. Teachers often lack knowledge or understanding of the unique aspects of the refugee experience, and some might even perpetuate anti-immigrant bias, resist what they see as preferential treatment, find collaboration with parents difficult, and not understand the impact of trauma on student behaviors (Cummins, 2001; Kovinthan, 2016). When those factors are compounded by a situation that often occurs with little advance notice and amid other high-stakes expectations, there is little chance of meaningful integration of new pedagogies into existing classrooms.

The successful adoption of any new teaching approach relies on prior experience, adequate resources, and ongoing professional development support (DeCoito & Estaiteyeh, 2022; Moser et al., 2021). Even in the absence of the additional pressure and anxiety, the most dedicated and scholarly teachers have little time to find good research and apply it to appropriate teaching strategies (Buckley-Marudas et al., 2021; Tieg et al., 2019).

Beyond the need for research-based, replicable pedagogy, there is also a legal consideration. In *Castañada v Pickard* (1981), Mexican immigrant children and their parents claimed that the Raymondville Independent School District in Texas discriminated against immigrant children because of their ethnicity by placing them in segregated classrooms and special groupings and failing to provide bilingual education programs. As a part of the decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in favor of the plaintiffs, the judges established a three-part assessment to determine if a bilingual education program was sufficient to meet the demands of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974. According to those criteria, a bilingual education must be: (1) based on sound educational theory; (2) implemented effectively with adequate resources for personnel, materials, and space; and (3) proven effective in overcoming language barriers after a trial period. Each of those criteria implies the need for the ongoing use and creation of a research/theory-based refugee pedagogy. What a school cannot do is "simply mingle non-English speaking

children with English speaking children and hope in vain that the immigrant children will somehow learn what they need to learn by osmosis" (Weddle, 2018, p. 448).

A comprehensive review and synthesis of literature in the field of refugee education is needed in order to provide a systemic, well-informed, and strongly grounded approach to preparing teachers for the effective teaching of this group of young people. However, as Koyama (2021) noted, the existing literature on refugee education is limited in its contribution to creating a cross-cultural body of research on effective pedagogy and schooling of children from refugee experiences. Even the best policies and commitments to refugees have little impact when it is educational success that is the greatest aspiration of most young refugees (Boyden et al.2002; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008). Schools bear the primary responsibility for socialization into American culture, creating a national identity, and providing a safe environment where young refugees can explore their own language and racial and ethnic identities in the context of acculturating into their new home and identity – made more difficult in the context of urgency and multiple new roles (Frater-Mathieson, 2004; Moll & Ruiz, 2002; Moselsson, 2001).

The Review Process

Data for the review were drawn from an earlier mapping review of 200 articles on refugee education in general, encompassing January 2000 – March 2022. (Authors, in press). The delimitations in that study included: (1) only published, peer-reviewed sources, (2) only articles focused on refugee students in grades PK-12 in traditional school settings, (3) research-based and non-research sources would be included, (4) only sources that were accessed directly without cost as a PDF full text or HTML document. Of the 200 sources reviewed for the initial study, we identified 101 sources that made some reference to refugee pedagogy or practice-based teaching strategies for educators working with refugee background students. The search used six databases: Academic Search Complete, Education Index, Education Research Complete, ERIC, and Professional Development Collection. The parameters within those databases included: peer-reviewed, full-text availability, academic journals, elementary/secondary education, and English language.

One of the coding categories in the original review identified articles that focused on pedagogy or included implications for the effective teaching of refugee background students. There were general suggestions about the importance of a welcoming environment in the classroom, having the right dispositions, and considering social-emotional factors, but there appeared to be less attention to how teachers might accomplish those goals. Numerous authors also referred to the lack of attention to refugee characteristics and needs in teacher education programs. Consequently, this study aimed to initiate the development of a well-informed and systematic search of the body of research.

The first step of the revised review was to further limit the sample for careful analysis to only those sources in which pedagogy was a primary or significant topic of discussion. They were sources that might have been miscoded in the initial study and contained no reference to pedagogy that could contribute to implications for the effective teaching of those students. The result of the culling of sources was a total of 57 articles for final review.

Data Analysis

The close analysis began with pre-determined coding categories based on general topics or terms identified in or informed by the original review. The

process began with each researcher reading a sample of ten articles. We used an eclectic form of coding in which we began with the categories identified in our earlier research and then moved to open or free coding when those initial codes were inadequate or too broad for the purpose of identifying specific, teaching activities (Saldaña, 2021). The thirteen categories that resulted from the open coding were more numerous than originally desired but were viewed as necessary to capture the wide variety of teaching strategies and activities presented in the article (see Table 1).

The initial consistency between the researchers' coding was nearly 100%, but since the majority of the articles were reviewed by only one researcher, periodic mutual reviews were conducted, and weekly meetings provided an opportunity to clarify uncertain areas of discrepancy. Additionally, all 57 articles were reviewed once more by two graduate assistants. Their task was to identify and describe examples of specific teaching activities from each category, but in the process of their review, additional questions were raised regarding the original coding and terminology. Those discrepancies were reconciled during weekly meetings with the researchers. As a result of the final review and discussions, it was agreed that seven additional articles would be removed from the sample because of a lack of an adequate discussion of pedagogy, leaving a final reviewed sample of 50 articles.

Table 1

Types of Instruction

Instructional Characteristic	Definition
Arts-based activity	Using visual, performing, and media arts to teach content or express learning
Collaborative learning	Using various groupings and peer-based learning opportunities
Culture-specific	Taking into consideration distinctive cultural roles and expectations related to schooling and teacher and student roles
Experiential learning	Using physically engaged, real-life experiences and resources
Extracurricular/out-of-class activities	Using outside of class or extracurricular activities
Family/Community	Teaching that integrates refugee families and communities into learning

Instructional Characteristic	Definition
Inclusive education	Teaching methods that take into consideration and are adapted to students' linguistic, cultural, social, and gender diversity
Individualization	Teaching with a one-to-one focus
Literacy focused	Instruction with a focus on the development of literacy in the new language
Play	Using free, imaginative play, as well as organized games
Social-emotional focus	Activities that focus on the holistic growth and needs of SRBs
Storytelling/Narrative	The use of oral, written, or performed personal narratives
Subject-specific learning	Considers the special needs of refugees in learning content area knowledge and skills

Results

The focus in this study was on identifying research-based teaching strategies for teaching refugee background students that teachers with little or no experience with those students can use in their classrooms while moving toward greater knowledge and understanding of SRBs and the ability to design their own research-informed practices. It is important to note that those teaching strategies will not guarantee success if attempted without consideration for the larger context of SRB needs and experiences.

Prerequisite Conditions

Based on the literature in this and our previous study, the context in which SRBs are taught is likely more important than the teaching methods themselves. SRBs have typically witnessed or experienced violence, the death of or separation from family members, and inadequate food and shelter before they even arrive in a country they do not know and where they are often misunderstood and unwelcome (Akay & Jaffe-Walter, 2021; Arvanitis, 2021; Cun, 2020). The conditions under which refugee students learn are exacerbated by the deficit-oriented storyline in which even well-intentioned educators use labels such as trauma, victimization, and limited or interrupted education. As a result, the rich linguistic and cultural backgrounds, strengths, and skills the children and their families bring to the U.S. are often dismissed (Duran, 2016). Even worse are labels such as delinquent, criminal, and invaders used by anti-immigrant and refugee groups (Gilhooly et al., 2019; Shapiro, 2018).

There is consensus among those who work with SRBs that they require educationally safe, welcoming, open, and supportive environments (Anders, 2012; Kovinthan 2016; Koyama & Ghosh, 2018). Creating an environment in which SRBs can

thrive requires a concerted effort on the part of schools, policymakers, social workers, local businesses, and more but, ultimately, it is individual teachers who create a sense of belonging within the learning community, identifying the unique challenges and needs of SRBs, and providing the necessary support for those students (Kovinthan, 2016; MacNevin, 2012).

Ironically, we decided to exclude articles discussing those important conditions. Our decision was based on two factors. First, while there is extensive writing describing the refugee experiences and the need for a special kind of school environment, there is little written to help teachers know how to nurture those settings. As observed by Koyama and Ghosh (2018), there is only "An emerging, but small, recent body of literature addresses how American schools can create safe learning environments, supportive curriculum, and culturally responsive pedagogy and leadership (p. 97). The second factor relates to the immediate needs of teachers in a setting driven by standardized curriculum and assessment results. Changing personal dispositions and the culture of a classroom is not easily or quickly accomplished, nor is it measured by a test score or even a supervision observation. As important as environmental factors might be, many teachers are going to first feel the need for teaching strategies that will make the instructional time less stressful and more effective.

Toward a Refugee Pedagogy

The review of teaching practices did not reveal any clearly dominant approaches. Additionally, it is important to note that there was no strong or extensive research base supporting any of the 13 pedagogical categories listed in Table 1. Many describe the most commonly used practices based on small-sample, site-specific research, anecdotal evidence, and the personal perceptions of students and teachers. In most cases, they were selected by researchers and teachers to address specific needs of the student group, and no claims were made regarding their effectiveness beyond those particular needs. For example, while the use of arts-based methods was common, it was typically used to address the limited language skills and the emotionally difficult background experiences of students, with no particular claims for direct impact on academic skills. That said, the strategies listed later in Table 2 align with well-supported pedagogical theory and occurred frequently across a wide range of grade levels and international settings. As a result, a convincing argument can be made for their overall effectiveness.

The following sections provide general examples of each strategy as found in the reviewed articles, highlighting a few that offer enough detail for teachers to potentially implement the practices in their own classrooms. The strategies are presented in alphabetical order and do not reflect any preference or indicate the relative strength of the research supporting each approach.

Table 2

Instructional Strategies by Article

Instructional Strategy	Occurrence by Article
Arts-based activities	Baker & Jones, 2006; Cassity & Gow, 2005; Dachyshyn & Kirova, 2021; Day, 2002; Dwyer & McCloskey, 2012; Gagñe, 2017; Hones, 2007; Hope, 2018; Jang & Kang, 2019; Kevers et al., 2022; Sharif, 2020; Simsar, 2021; Strekalova & Hoot, 2008; Strekalova-Hughes & Peterman, 2020; Szente, Hoot, & Taylor, 2006; Trimboli, 2017
Collaborative learning	DeBruin-Parecki & Klein, 2003; Dwyer & McCloskie, 2012; Gicheru, 2014; Hope, 2018; Lee, 2016; Mendenhall & Barlett, 2017; McBrien, 2005; Rose & Shevlin, 2004; Sharif, 2020; Solario, 2020; Strekalova & Hoot, 2008; Townsend & Fu, 2001; Ward, 2022; Weddle, 2018;
Culture-specific	Balaghi, et al., 2017; DeBruin-Parecki & Klein, 2003; Dooly, 2009; Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011; Fruja Amthor & Roxas, 2016; Gagné, et al., 2017; Hope, 2018; McBrien, 2005; Petrón & Ates, 2016; Robbins, 2004; Weddle 2018
Extracurricular/ out-of-class activity	Bajaj et al., 2017; Cassity & Gow, 2005; Dwyer & McCloskey, 2012; Hones, 2007; Jang & Kang, 2019; Kupzyk et al., 2016; Lerner, 2016; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Rose & Shevlin, 2004; Simopoulos & Magos, 2020; Simsar, 2021; Szente, et al.k 2006; Trimboli, 2017; Ward, 2022
Experiential learning	Clark, 2001; Hones, 2007; Kostoulas-Makrakis & Makrakis, 2020; Trimboli, 2017; McBrien, 2005; Mendenhall & Bartlett, 2017; Simsar, 2021; Weddle, 2018
Family/Community	Debruin-Parecki & Klein, 2003; Kevers, et al., 2022; Kostoulas-Makrkis & Makrkis, 2020; Kupzyk, et al., 2016; McBrien, 2005; Oleson, 2004; Strekalova & Hoot, 2008; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Trimboli, 2017; Weddle, 2018

Instructional Strategy	Occurrence by Article
Comprehensive education	Dooley, 2009; Fruja Amthor & Roxas, 2016; Gagné, et al., 2017; Gichiru, 2014; Mendenhall & Bartlett, 2017; Oleson, 2004; Park, 2000; Petrón & Ates, 2016; Solario, 2020; Strekalova & Hoot, 2008; Ward & Warren, 2020; Weddle, 2018; Windle & Miller, 2012
Language literacy focus	Dachyshyn & Kirova, 2021; Edwards, 2017; Hones; 2007; Hope, 2017, McDonald, 2000; Mendenhall & Bartlett, 2017; Park 2000; Petròn & Ates, 2016; Roberts & Locke, 2001; Simopoulos & Magos, 2020; Solario, 2020; Strekalova & Hoot, 2008; Strekalova Hughes & Peterman, 2020; Szente et al., 2006; Townsend & Fu, 2001; Trimboli, 2017; Ward & Warren, 2020; Windle & Miller, 2012
Play & game learning	Dachyshyn & Kirova, 2021; Ferreira, Kendrick, & Early, 2021; McBrien, 2005; Oleson, 2004; Simsar, 2021; Szente, Hoot, & Taylor 2006; Weddle, 2018
Social-emotional learning	Baker & Jones, 2006; Day, 2002; Fruja Amthor & Roxas, 2016; Hones, 2007; Kevers, et al., 2022; Mendenhall & Bartlett, 2017; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Trimboli, 2017; Ward, 2022
Storytelling/ Narrative	Arvanitis, 2021; Dachyshyn & Kirova, 2021; DeBruin Parecki & Klein, 2003; Edwards, 2017; Fruja Anthor & Roxas, 2016; Gagné et al., 2017; Hope, 2018; Kevers et al., 2022; Mendenhall & Bartlett, 2017; Petròn & Ates, 2016; Sharif, 2020; Simopoulos & Magos, 2020; Strekalova Hughes & Peterman, 2020; Townsend & Fu, 200; Ward & Warren2020
Subject-specific learning	Dooley, 2009; Ferreira et al., 2021; Hones, 2007; Jang & Kang, 2019; Miller et al., 2014; Simsar, 2021; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012

Arts-Based Activities

Arts-based approaches were among the most common strategies (n= 15) used by teachers of SRBs. The arts were considered especially effective in addressing the traumatic experiences and socially tentative positions of those students and helped compensate for language deficiency and nurture empathy, identity formation, multicultural understanding, and critical perspective (Gagne et al., 2017; Hope, 2018, Simsar, 2021). For example, Cassity and Gow (2005), in their work with South Sudanese students in Australia, found that portfolios containing paintings, drawings, and plays helped students address difficult topics more sensitively than direct discussions.

In South Korea, Jang and Kang (2019) found that developing an authentic and sustainable identity was a key challenge for North Korean SRBs and that media education was an important tool for "empowering youths situated in disempowering social contexts" (p. 84). They provide a detailed description of how they used a media club to create a "third space" (Bhabha, 1994) "wherein two different cultural groups, which are tied to a broader context, interact and negotiate with each other" (p. 83). In that third space, students used photography, collages, and music videos to "re-picture" themselves in a positive way. Dachyshyn and Kirova (2011) documented a Canadian program in which Somali, Sudanese, and Kurdish preschool children learned about their own and each other's indigenous cultures by integrating cultural arts and activities into other real-life skills. The children used native music, dance, and fashion to recreate traditional weddings, replaced plastic toys with cultural artifacts, painted traditional henna designs on children's hands, and reenacted folk tales that communicated the same message in different ways across cultures.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning activities were suggested in 14 articles, more if we consider passing references in other articles. Collaborative learning includes peer tutoring and mentoring, small group projects, and heterogeneous and ability grouping (Gichiru, 2014; Hope, 2018; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Solorio, 2020; Strekalova & Hoot, 2008). Authors repeatedly referred to communities of learners where different cultures could explore emotions, build respect and trust, and increase understanding of each other's skills, beliefs, and aspirations (Brown, 1990; DeBruin-Parecki & Klein, 2003; Rogoff, 1990).

Ward (2022) referred to helping SRBs become part of the classroom as, ". . . a relationship thing" (p. 322). This idea was reinforced by Townsend and Fu's (2001) case study of a young Laotian woman who was placed on a remedial track solely due to her limited English skills in high school without consideration for her unique needs as a refugee. This placement left her surrounded by peers who were often bored, resentful, and angry, and in a curriculum irrelevant to her.

DeBruin-Parecki and Klein (2003) offered a detailed description of the "Making Friends" project that was created to promote the integration of Bosnian refugees into a middle school in Iowa. Refugee background and nonrefugee students collaborated on art activities, story writing, and film discussions; shared in social activities; and hosted a Family Literacy Fest. Another well-outlined activity (Lee, 2016), referred to as Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), integrated whole group, individual, and small group strategy practice, and reading.

Culture-Specific Pedagogy

Despite some shared characteristics, there are important differences between refugee groups and from one family to

another (El Yafouri-Kreuzer, 2017). There are obvious differences in the journeys taken to their destination country, but also differences in cognition, social-emotional factors, and resilience (Høy-Petersen & Woodward, 2018; Keiko et al., 2017; Kwaśniewska et al., 2022). While it is not possible to adapt pedagogy to every difference with which a refugee student enters a classroom, it is important to be aware of at least the larger cultural factors that distinguish Ukrainian, Somali, Haitian, and Afghan students sitting in the same row of a classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

There is no single refugee experience, and the level of trauma experienced by the SRBs can vary widely (DeBruin-Parecki & Klein, 2003; Dooley, 2009; Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011). The perception and type of welcome received by the arriving groups is also determined largely by their background experiences and countries of origin. McBrien (2005) described the range of reactions based on ethnicity and timing. He explained that the earliest Vietnamese refugees were accepted because of their social standing, level of intelligence, and more peaceful, gradual arrival. This was a sharp contrast to the post-war Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees, who were from a wide swath of society, more desperate in their leaving and arrival, and more associated with our "enemies" in the just-ended conflict. Similar differences exist in the generally warm and supportive welcome of recent Ukrainian refugees as opposed to the more hostile reception of refugees from Central America and other Islamic countries.

A range of cultural differences related to gender, parental expectations and involvement, social-emotional support systems, and discrimination based on the type of English spoken were also identified, but too numerous to discuss here (Petrón & Ates, 2016; Townsend & Fu, 2001; Weddle, 2018). Two examples provided by Smith-Hefner (1990) suggested that it might be difficult for a teacher to understand that Khmer (an ethnic group and a language primarily associated with Cambodia) parents can be reluctant to push their children who are failing or toward certain careers. Many of those parents believe an individual's identity and personal qualities emerge from within the child, and parents help discover, but do not direct, these qualities. Furthermore, parents who believe in reincarnation often believe that their child's present position was determined by a life lived previously.

Fruja et al. (2016) pointed out teachers' lack of experience with refugees and knowledge of the experiences often lead to stereotypes and poorly-informed expectations. Citing numerous studies, they explain how teachers are likely to overlook complexities in the migration experience and respond to students according to popular rather than well-informed perceptions of specific immigrant groups. For example, Asian refugees are labeled as *model minorities* and admired by teachers, but Latinx students may be seen as disengaged and unruly. These binaries may also result in juxtaposing refugees' desirable behaviors with native minorities who then fall short of the newcomers' positive attitudes, exemplary work ethic, and adaptation.

One of the more thorough treatments of culturally specific considerations was by Robbins (2004), who examined gender differences in adolescent Vietnamese students. Robbins found that men studied harder, missed fewer classes, and used more learning strategies, probably due to the complacency behaviors expected of women. Traditional Vietnamese philosophy emphasizes the social environment over inherent personality characteristics, and individual success is linked to the family unit rather than individual effort. Because

refugee resettlement disrupts the extended family unit, much of the motivation for and support of academic success is missing, and when schools encourage Vietnamese girls to move beyond virtues such as good housework and appearance to greater autonomy and accomplishment, traditional family structures are further disrupted.

In an article focused on Arab refugee youth, Balaghi et al. (2017) looked closely at psychological factors that could impact Arab refugees' mental health and, consequently, school success and cultural adaptation. Here, too, family plays a role different from what might be expected with nonrefugee American students. Family honor is crucial. Parents may be reluctant to consent to special education accommodations for their children, or students might not share negative descriptions of their home life. On the positive side, that same family provides a sense of social and economic support, belongingness, and values, which can protect youth from depression, anxiety, and PTSD. In the school environment, Arab refugee students are particularly susceptible to anti-Muslim bias, anti-Arab bias, mockery of religious attire, and association with terrorism.

Experiential/Authentic Learning

While a small number of articles were coded into this category (n=8), the value of the activities should not be underestimated. This category includes activities that emphasize authentic language use and the importance of a learning environment that promotes exploration and real-life problem-solving (Oleson, 2004). Clark (2001) focused on using the first World Refugee Day to teach nonrefugee students about the refugee experience and the SRBs they might meet in school. The activities she described used original and authentic source material from oral histories, current media coverage, and stories from childrens' own refugee ancestors. Hone's (2007) article focused on SRBs' learning and the use of observing other refugees at community centers where they were learning vocational skills and the language needed for that training.

Trimboli's (2017) arts-based activities were also coded into this category because of their emphasis on map-making, which used English vocabulary related to a critical pedagogy of place, directions, and practical neighborhood language. Content area teaching can be a good source of authentic language use, especially for young children, because of their natural curiosity and interest in their own bodies, pets, other animals, and natural phenomena offer opportunities to teach relevant vocabulary and descriptive language (Simsar, 2021). Other sources highlighted the importance of real-life practice in communicating questions and problems, community service, and translating documents and forms as the family's translator (McBrien, 2005; Kostoulas-Makrakis & Makrakis, 2020; Mendenhall & Bartlett, 2018).

Extracurricular/Out-of-School Activity

SRBs commonly find themselves excluded from the curriculum and extracurricular activities because of a lack of language, marginalization, and other academic and cultural barriers (Rose & Shevlin, 2004). However, it is important that those students experience language and interaction outside of the traditional academic setting. Moving out of the classroom and into after-school or public spaces provides multiple benefits to SRBs. Those settings can provide a hybrid space between the students' in-school and out-of-school lives (Gutiérrez et al., 1995). Spending time in the neighborhood outside of school can nurture a sense of connection to the community and create links between key support centers, such as the church and the school (Kupzyk et al., 2016; Trimboli,

2017). After-school clubs and practice sessions provide a safe, more comfortable environment where students can receive tutoring, build individual relationships, and practice informal language use (Mendenhall et al., 2017; Simopoulos & Magos, 2020).

The articles reviewed in this area (n=14) highlighted successful out-of-school and after-school activities, including tutoring, a variety of cultural and content area clubs, field study trips (Hones, 2007; Simsar, 2021), and a summer sports camp that integrated language acquisition (Dwyer & McCloskey, 2013). Three articles stood out for providing detailed descriptions that could be easily replicated in a variety of similar settings. One program at a newcomer high school in Oakland, California, used a weekly after-school initiative to help refugee and immigrant students explore human rights education (HRE) in the context of their own migration and transnational schooling experiences (Bajaj et al., 2017). The program was offered as an after-school activity due to the school's focus on rapid English proficiency and content mastery during the regular school day. In the club setting, students visited local rights-related exhibits, discussed films and case studies, and used photos that illustrated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They described their approach as "action ethnography" (Erickson, 2006) that effectively provided "spaces for critical thinking and reflection" (Bajaj et al., 2017, p, 137) rather than dictating perspectives.

Dwyer and McCloskey (2012) examined an out-of-school program in Atlanta, Georgia, that combined young male refugees' shared interest in soccer and the need for English language acquisition. It not only offered intensive athletic and literacy training but also provided essential support for parents who worked multiple jobs and could not afford traditional summer camps and supervision for their children. Moreover, it offered enjoyable and engaging ways for the children to continue their language development, preventing learning loss that occurs during the summer break. The article offers a description of each day's six-hour schedule that includes two soccer workouts, independent reading time, small group classes, journal writing, content learning, an Art or Green (environmental) club, a field trip, and other fun activities. Research on the program showed significant literacy improvements as well as indirect benefits, such as health issues that were noted, the emergence of peer teaching, and discussions of difficulties with neighborhood bullying and theft.

Cassity and Gow (2005) featured a useful description of an in-school, extracurricular program in Australian middle and high schools serving primarily South Sudanese high school students. The focus of this program was on how refugee young people "relationally negotiated new learning in public school contexts and . . . contributed to the cultural dynamics of the schools" (p. 52). The students used drawing, writing, and textiles to reflect on their past experiences, their transitions to new schools, and their expectations and future pathways. As a result, students suggested experiences that could aid their transitions – peer mentoring, community consultations and partnerships, and presentations of a larger variety of tertiary study options for achieving their goals.

Family and Community

Eleven articles made references to the importance of engaging the family and/or community in classroom instruction. Extensive research concludes that programs that provide a safe, encouraging environment for refugee students promote intercultural friendships among students and encourage participation of the students' families (Nieto, 1992). Parents of refugee children often do not feel they are welcomed

in local schools (Kostoulas et al., 2020). However, when invited, they do work with teachers and share their stories and experiences (DeBruin-Parecki & Klein, 2003; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Oleson, 2004). It is especially important that school leaders not only advocate for refugee students but also create schools that promote positive images of refugees, extending their efforts beyond the school environment to the local community (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Reakes & Powell, 2004; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

While communication can be difficult given the numerous languages and lack of interpreters, the reviewed sources repeatedly stated the importance of two-way communication between schools and teachers, preferably without relying on school children to translate. As important as communication to parents might be, listening to communication *from* them might be even more important. Establishing trust and rapport is foundational (Kupzyk et al., 2016), and it is more easily achieved when parents are not just given instructions and expectations but are also invited to share their own insights, suggestions, and expectations.

As noted when discussing culture-specific factors, the level of support and involvement parents assume in the parent-teacher relationship can differ significantly from one culture to another. Some parents will want to share their stories; others will not. Some will share information about their children, while others might feel it is inappropriate or a source of shame. Some might view schooling as the teacher's responsibility rather than a shared role with parents, and so on (Kevers et al., 2022; McBrien, 2005; Strekalova & Hoot, 2008). Our study found that when the school respected parents' input and experiences of parents and actively involved them in school activities, worked toward understanding how the refugee and resettlement process had disrupted family structure, and collaboratively found a role that respected and encouraged the home culture and language, parents became willing and supportive partners (Kevers et al., 2022; McBrien, 2005; Weddle, 2018).

Ongoing projects, described by Debruin-Perecki and Klein (2003) and Trimboli (2017), use writing, reading, storytelling, the arts, and community involvement to learn the language while gaining cultural knowledge and forging relationships among refugees from different groups, nonrefugees, and family and community members from refugee and nonrefugee groups. Taylor and Sidhu (2012) discussed the educational challenges facing refugee youth and used a case study of four Australian schools that were trying to address those challenges. Based on those studies, six features appear to be important in any attempt to help refugees adapt to resettlement and transition to citizenship: a school ethos of caring and hope, celebration of diversity and inclusion, a commitment to social justice, targeted policies and system support related to refugee education, a holistic approach to education including involvement of parents and community, and working with community agencies.

The programs described by Kupzyk et al. (2016) and Oleson (2004) emphasized the crucial role of parent involvement. Kupzk et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of family literacy, with particular attention to supporting family literacy in the midst of a disrupted family structure. Among the challenges discussed were creating trust and rapport, providing transportation, considering scheduling and accessibility, providing adequate translators, and developing collaborative practices that meet both the needs of home and school. Oleson's (2004) work described a Burmese project for Karen refugees (an ethnic minority from Myanmar who have fled

persecution and violence), in which parents played a foundational role in planning new village schools that featured Parent Play groups for the youngest children, all the way to traditional academic classes for secondary-level students.

While the project is probably not directly relevant to the long-established schools that receive refugees in countries like the U.S., the extensive involvement of parents and respect for what they have to offer could be applied in ways more relevant to the schools. It was especially encouraging to see how teachers went from not valuing parents as shareholders until they heard their insights and contributions, at which point, the relationship was strengthened among all parties.

Comprehensive Education

The category we labeled as "Comprehensive" (n=13) encompassed teaching strategies and considerations that either were not mentioned specifically enough to warrant a separate category or were already coded into another category but implied a significance beyond its original category. This category tried to capture the need to attend to holistic needs by addressing social-emotional and cognitive dimensions of learning and individualizing and differentiating instruction. While it is true that all students benefit from that type of teaching, more deliberate attention might need to be given to do so for refugees.

The label, *refugee*, is often weighted with negative, deficit assumptions and lumped with immigrants, asylum-seekers, and "diversity" overall (Bonet, 2018; Gilhooley & Lee, 2017; McBrien, 2005). Worse is the evidence that finds that "they are expected to function like most other students, yet are often categorized as lesser, as victims, foreign, different" (Lerner, 2012, p. 12). Teachers are often overwhelmed by them or misinterpret either their misbehaviors or reserved nature (Miller et al., 2014; Vang, 2005). It is understandable that teachers who are under excessive pressure in the best of situations might respond to the complex needs of students with refugee backgrounds through the improvisation of quick-fix solutions without considering the long-term effects of the problems or the solutions (Hatton, 1989).

Differentiation is especially important for refugee learners in terms of linguistic, cultural, and social-emotional factors. Translanguaging was suggested in numerous articles as a highly effective adaptation for second language learners (Bartlett, 2017; Park, 2000; Petròn & Ates, 2016; Solario, 2020). This approach is a strategy for differentiating and is very natural in that it reflects how multilingual people actually think and communicate, and it encourages students to use each other and speakers of both languages as a resource for learning. According to Ealjournal (2016), translanguaging pedagogy:

> sees languages as a property of the community: the language resources that are relevant to the classroom are those shared by the students and the teacher. We can use our classroom repertoire to learn, share and communicate, coming to focus on the language of the curriculum (highly formal and accurate English, for example) as necessary (Beginnings section).

Culturally relevant pedagogy, characterized by the conceptions of self and others, the structuring of social relationships, and the understanding of knowledge held by culturally relevant teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1995), was directly mentioned in nine of the reviewed articles and implicitly referenced in many others (Dooley, 2009; Fruja Amthor & Roxas, 2016; Gagné et al., 2017; Oleson, 2004; Park, 2000).

Literacy and Language Focus

As important as it is to address the cultural, social, and emotional challenges, facilitating the acquisition of the new language (L2) is a top priority. Doing so in a way that respects the particular situation of the refugee family makes that process all the more difficult:

> ... second language (L2) and literacy development are the gateway to successful educational outcomes, which affects the life course and opportunities that children and youth are offered. It also affects how well they will perform in the labor market and a whole series of social, cultural, and economic outcomes. At the same time, maintenance of the heritage first language (L1) is essential for family well-being and cohesion (Paradis et al., 2020, p. 1251).

Translanguaging is suggested as a more appropriate language learning approach than the more common rigid separation of the home language (L1) and L2 because SRBs are often learning L2 while maintaining home stability, learning content knowledge, and may not even be fully literate in L1 (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Lin, 2020). Translanguaging, however, requires a disposition toward critical language awareness, general openness toward language difference and humility, and "willingness to negotiate language difference on an equal footing" (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019, p. 352).

Six articles referred to translanguaging approaches (see Table 2) but none provided enough details for a teacher unfamiliar with the approach to feel comfortable with translanguaging pedagogy. Other articles suggested techniques that fit with the translanguage approach, especially putting an emphasis on opportunities for informal conversation where students of both languages communicate without anxiety and use their natural linguistic tools to talk about topics meaningful to them (Edwards, 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Simopoulos & Magos, 2020; Szente et al., 2006).

Critical literacy, or the ability to analyze and question texts in relation to power structures (Freire, 1970), and the use of high-quality children's literature are two other emphases found in the review. Developing critical literacy in the process of applying new language skills was viewed as especially important for adolescent and young adult refugees who must "build resources for conceptually deep and critical tasks while still acquiring basic reading and writing skills" (Dooley, 2008, p. 5). Of the authors who advocated for critical literacy, Dooley (2008) and Dooly and Thangaperumal (2011) laid out a strong conceptual argument for a critical literacy approach while also providing specific pedagogical tasks for teachers. They argued that the aim of a critical literacy approach is to "valorise and interrogate student voice and knowledge about race, gender, and other power relations in North American societies, so they are simultaneously acculturated and empowered for their new lives" (Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011, p. 388).

Children's literature about the refugee experience that does not further stereotypes or poorly represent the experience can be a useful tool in developing critical literacy, as well as building empathy and understanding in nonrefugee students and stimulating the sharing of students' own stories (Hope, 2018; Stekalova-Hughes & Peterman, 2020; Trimboli, 2017; Ward & Warren, 2020). Finding children's books that portray the many dimensions of the refugee experience is not easy. Strekalova-Hughes and Peterman (2020) suggest that many of those texts "reinforce colorblind narratives . . . reduce human complexity to one

essentialized experience, erase the significance of cultural identities and nurture colonialist stereotypes" (p. 325). Ward and Warren (2020) found too much emphasis on escape and suffering and not enough on personality and resettlement. Fortunately, several articles provide thorough, well-supported criteria for selecting children's books to use with both refugee background and nonrefugee students. Ward and Warren (2020) offer this compact list of six criteria relevant to any book on the refugee experience.

- Who is telling the story of seeking refuge? How? For what purpose?
- Where does the story take place?
- How visible are the characters' linguistic practices in the text?
- Will the text inform students' thinking and global awareness or perpetuate stereotypes?
- How are the country of resettlement and the interactions of the main character with the new environment portrayed?
- How complex or unidimensional are the characters?

For teachers interested in finding a series of activities for one book that can be generalized to a number of other refugee experience books, Hope (2017) describes teaching activities and accompanying research on the outcomes for a book titled *The Colour of Home* by Mary Hoffman.

Play and Game-Based Learning

A refugee background makes it unlikely that a young child will experience whatever innocence and playfulness other children might experience during the first few years of life (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Samara et al., 2020). Moreover, the trauma of that experience does not end with resettlement, even in the most welcoming countries (Anders, 2012; Balaghi et al., 2017; Hos, 2020). That situation makes it all the more important to ensure that refugee children have opportunities to play and imagine during whatever is left of their childhood.

Play is often preferred by young refugee children because they are sensitive and vulnerable (Güven et al., 2018). Involvement in games, sports, and play eases some of that sensitivity and vulnerability by providing enjoyable, non-verbal settings where children can build confidence and form social connections (Weddle, 2018). Moreover, child-centered play therapy (CCPT) can be particularly effective in addressing adverse childhood experiences by redirecting attention from deficits to fostering resilience, self-regulation, and self-concept through encouragement (Ray, et al., 2022). Simsar (2021) found that hands-on content, such as science, was embraced more quickly when Syrian refugee children used their science-related process skills during structured play. Teachers in that study even viewed the use of play as one of the more important things to be taught to preservice or in-service teachers.

Social-Emotional Learning

The degree and type of trauma experienced by SRBs vary widely, but it is rare for a child refugee to have had no direct trauma-inducing experience (Rutter, 2003). It is typical for young refugees to have experienced persecution, violence, or war, and the loss or even murder of family members. However, Hart (2009) emphasizes that potential sources of trauma are not limited to pre-migration events; post-migration challenges, including displacement, family and community separation, and discrimination and racism, can also be significant contributors to trauma (Kevers et al., 2022; Reed et al., 2012). In fact, recent studies have found that anywhere from 35% to 50% of refugee and asylum-seeking children suffer from PTSD,

anxiety, or depression disorders (Yektaş et al., 2021). Many nonrefugee students share similar stressors, but refugee children's "life histories of collective violence" (p. 600) and coping with trauma in a context of exile and cultural change warrant sensitivity to their specific mental health needs (Kevers et al., 2022).

The challenge for the classroom teacher is to know how to address the social and emotional needs of SRBs within the scope of their abilities and training without overstepping into the role of a therapist for which they are not equipped. To support SRBs effectively, teachers can use tools that allow students to express themselves, such as story-writing and arts-based reflections (Dachyshin & Kirova, 2021; Hope, 2018; Kevers et al., 2022). Petron and Ates (2016) caution that teachers should avoid following the narrative portrayed in popular films, which suggests that students work through their trauma simply by writing or drawing about it. Few teachers have training as therapists and should not attempt to take on that role (Carello & Butler, 2014). In the following section are recommendations for using those tools appropriately and effectively.

Storytelling/Narrative

Sharing personal stories orally or in writing, as well as reading the refugee stories of others, emerged as a key theme across different countries and age groups. Fourteen sources made direct references to or provided specific teaching strategies for using narrative to address social and emotional issues, work through trauma, practice oral language skills, nurture empathy for and among SRBs, and foster community ties. At least 11 more made brief references to narrative-implicit activities. Three points in particular are worth noting. As mentioned in previous sections, the content of oral or written stories should be the choice of the students. No SRBs should be required or pressured to recount possibly traumatic stories without the presence of trained therapists (Carello & Butler, 2014; Petron & Ates, 2016). As many teachers want to be seen as their students' counselors or confidants, few are trained for that role and should not attempt to take it on. Moreover, students should not feel as though they must share their refugee experiences, especially if their families consider it culturally inappropriate or unacceptable to tell those stories (Kovinthan, 2016).

Some articles caution against an uninformed approach to selecting refugee stories for students. Many children's books based on refugee experience oversimplify the challenges, focusing on happy endings while minimizing the complexities of migration and resettlement. These studies recommend specific guidelines for selecting books that are sensitive to the realities faced by SRBs (Strekalova-Hughes & Peterman, 2020; Ward & Warren, 2020)

Subject-Specific Learning

The final category, while not representing a significant portion of the review, underscores a notable gap in the literature. Only five articles in the sample focused on teaching content classes to SRBs with limited L2 ability. Given that content instruction makes up a significant portion of the school day, particularly at the middle and high school levels, the lack of attention is concerning. The secondary education years are especially challenging for SRBs, making this an area in need of further research and development. By the time they reach early adolescence, only 37 percent are enrolled in high school (UNHCR, 2024). Moreover, content teachers are typically highly resistant to devoting class time to content area literacy – even with native speakers – and fewer than 20% of all teachers feel prepared to teach English

language learners (Nutta et al., 2012; Pule, 2020; Smith & Robinson, 2020).

Four of the seven articles had a high school focus (Dooley, 2009; Hones, 2007; Jang & Kang, 2019; Miller et al., 2014). Dooley (2009) emphasized the need for stand-alone language classes to help with content learning and did not offer specific teaching ideas for content area teachers. Jang and Kang (2019) described a high school media literacy class that utilized the arts and narrative to foster cross-cultural understanding and coexistence among students. On the other hand, Miller et al. (2014) did not focus on content-specific teaching but emphasized how inadequate or poor planning complicates the integration of literacy development into academic content-specific instruction for SRBs. Their findings highlight the ongoing tensions between meeting standards-driven content requirements and the equally necessary language needs of growing numbers of SRBs. Similarly, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) offer some specific recommendations but primarily focus on what is missing in current approaches. Due to the limited language expertise among content teachers, they emphasize the need for a more comprehensive integration of ESL teachers throughout the entire curriculum, extending beyond just literacy learning. This integration is critical for addressing the language development needs of SRBs while also supporting content instruction across all subject areas.

Hones (2007) also addressed the tension between content instruction and language development, focusing on research that shows how content-based instruction can support second language learners in mastering the language. However, that opportunity is often lost because these learners are frequently separated from rigorous academic courses throughout much of their high school education. In his description of teaching in an Australian newcomer high school, Hones described how language and content learning are integrated through the use of the arts, multiple intelligence theory, and critical pedagogy of place. The latter is intended to help both refugee and nonrefugee students they meet in high school "understand the roots of refugee situations . . . or we resign ourselves to a world where refugee crises are accepted as normal byproducts of doing business in the world" (p. 14).

The remaining articles describe teaching science to SRBs in prekindergarten and elementary school, respectively. Both articles focus on the value of the content areas, science in particular, in helping refugee learners "develop interest and early learning skills by improving their basic science process skills, such as observing, classifying, communicating, measuring, and predicting" (Simsar, 2021, p. 220) and create spaces "where learners can share their lifeworld experiences" with "strengths-based pedagogies" (p. 453) to nurture a sense of belonging in their new country (Ferreira et al., 2021). In both settings, there was an emphasis on play, exploration, and the process of learning that did not require high levels of language ability. Both articles provide a helpful amount of detail and specific learning activities for readers who want to replicate the programs.

Conclusions & Implications

The growing number of students from refugee backgrounds (SRBs) presents a significant need that requires immediate attention and informed action to meet their diverse and complex needs (Bartlett et al., 2017; Taylor & Sidhu, 2011; Vostanis, 2016). Schools are often the first social institutions that SRBs encounter in their newly resettled host countries, playing a critical role in ensuring their integration and educational success. Consequently, the

necessity of timely knowledge and practical guidance for educators is critical. Ideally, that need would be addressed by well-trained teachers who are committed to teaching SRBs and are equipped with a repertoire of research-supported pedagogy. What exists at present is a largely unprepared body of teachers who are generally uncomfortable teaching SRBs and often make poorly planned decisions based on instinct and speculation (Miller et al., 2014; Townsend & Fu, 2001).

Our review supported previous research on refugee education that found a lack of large-scale reviews of literature and pedagogical research based mostly on small-scale, localized studies focusing on one refugee group. More importantly, preservice and in-service training for teachers of refugees remains inadequate or even non-existent in some cases (Levi, 2019; Solomona et al., 2005). The problem is exasperated by the fact that relatively little has been written about how adequate preparation should take place, especially in preservice preparation. The pedagogy of refugee education requires a specialized approach that considers the unique challenges and experiences of SRBs. As such, there is a critical need for targeted professional development (PD) for educators at all stages of their careers, from preservice to in-service, to effectively support SRBs. This need underscores the importance of equipping teachers with the skills, knowledge, and strategies necessary to meet SRBs' diverse needs. Schools and educational institutions should implement regular PD programs that provide educators with up-to-date research, pedagogical strategies, and resources tailored to the special needs of SRBs. The commitment of teacher preparation programs to strengthening refugee education pedagogy and aligning theory with practice is crucial for the success of students' educational pathways. What follows is a discussion of several key implications that emerged from our findings.

A Stopgap Approach

To recruit and prepare teachers who are motivated to work with SRBs, understand their needs, and know how to create impactful learning experiences for them, there is a need for a more systematic and synthesized body of research that provides a classroom-refined, evidence-based foundation of knowledge. The knowledge and experiences that could inform that synthesis come from across the globe. Some of that work is setting-specific, but much of it can be reinterpreted for a variety of settings and translated into globally relevant practices. The review presented here could be the next step in moving in that direction. We acknowledge, however, that the review offers only a stopgap solution to the problem.

Our work addresses the immediate needs of teachers by offering insights for short-term practices and informing future research. We identified gaps in refugee education pedagogy, observed current practice trends, and suggested future directions. While this research provides guidance based on existing evidence, it is primarily a short-term resource for teachers needing practical strategies. It is not a substitute for comprehensive professional preparation but a starting point for deeper exploration into refugee education pedagogy.

One Size Does Not Fit All

One key finding underscores the importance of recognizing the diverse needs and contexts of SRBs, as there is no refugee monoculture. Overgeneralizing certain effective practices to all refugee groups, and even members within groups, runs the risk of being ineffective or counterproductive. A number of authors pointed out the fact that refugee groups have unique languages,

cultures, educational histories, and trauma experiences, but most studies still described the results of an activity on a specific group or referred to activities that seemed to address all the refugee groups in a given setting.

It is helpful to know practices that will be effective in settings that include a variety of SRBs. However, if we acknowledge important differences between refugee groups, then we need to better understand where generalized practices provide an adequate experience and where distinctive, differentiated pedagogy is needed for an optimal experience. By adopting flexible, context-specific, and culturally sensitive approaches, educators and policymakers can better support the educational success and well-being of SRBs, ultimately facilitating their integration and empowerment within their new communities. Moreover, since differentiating instruction is difficult in the best of situations, it would be helpful to have more specific, enacted examples of group-specific practices on which to model future practices.

Some Promising Directions

We were not able to identify what could be considered a strong research base, either qualitative or quantitative, for any specific teaching practice, as most claims of effectiveness were based on anecdotal descriptions of teacher practices and preferences or small, localized studies focused on specific refugee groups. That said, there are practices that appeared often enough with sufficient supporting evidence to suggest that additional, wider-scale research is warranted. While individual strategies for supporting refugee learners are well-documented, the literature lacks a comprehensive synthesis to offer an overview of the field of refugee education pedagogy.

One factor that permeates every decision related to the teaching of SRBs is the fact that the impact of the refugee experience is inherently traumatic and does not simply end with resettlement in even the best of settings (Anders, 2012; Hos, 2020). As first responders to the needs of SRBs, teachers must be equipped to address their holistic needs. This includes using teaching methods that acknowledge both the challenges and strengths of SRBs, integrating expressive arts and play, and personal experiences to support social, emotional, and academic growth. Twenty-one articles featured the use of visual or performing arts, creative play, or storytelling. More than 20 articles referred to the necessity of culturally responsive pedagogy that would make constructive use of the students' backgrounds, experiences, and languages – seeing those characteristics as positive sources of learning in the new culture rather than deficits or barriers to learning. Arts-based or informed teaching and culturally responsive teaching are not unfamiliar to educators, but the distinctive ways they can be used for SRBs and the adaptations that might be needed when using them in a classroom with a wide range of students – refugee and otherwise – need more study.

Additionally, we suggest the need for research in the following specific areas of refugee pedagogy:

- More examination of how trauma-informed pedagogy can be applied to the unique experiences of refugee and other newcomer students is needed.
- Numerous studies have shown the importance of connecting the school experiences of SRBs to their family and community lives. More examples of how those connections can be developed into teaching

activities that provide reciprocal support for both refugee families and the teachers of their children are needed.

- Most of what we found in our review reflected short-term activities with relatively small groups of teachers, researchers, and students. Research is needed into the long-term sustainability and broader expansion of those activities. Longitudinal research is also needed to determine their long-term impact.
- The development of comprehensive theories of refugee education pedagogy, translated into research-tested practices, is crucial. This supports that practitioners base their teaching decisions on a conceptual understanding of SRBs, rather than relying on isolated tools from a toolkit to address an immediate problem.

Toward an SRB Pedagogy

While this study indicated a lack of research-supported pedagogical guidance for teaching SRBs, it's crucial to acknowledge the dedicated and effective work being done globally. Excellent resources exist in books (Bajaj et al., 2022; Wolsey & Karkouti, 2023) and credible websites (e.g., Edutopia, International Rescue Committee, U.S. D.O.E.), which were not reviewed here. Additionally, valuable research is published in languages other than English, such as German and Turkish. Many effective strategies are likely being developed in refugee camps and resettlement sites by teachers who lack the time and resources to document their work.

We must not overlook the urgent need for a growing knowledge base on the educational needs of refugees, asylum-seekers, and immigrants, as well as the need for teachers prepared to serve them. The "new normal" in education will likely involve a significant shift in the student population, especially in the Global North. Countries like the U.S., Europe, and others are seeing declining birth rates (The World Bank, 2022) and increasing global migration. By 2040, one-third of U.S. students could be from immigrant households (Gangone, n.d.), underscoring the critical need for informed and adaptable teaching strategies.

To effectively teach students from refugee backgrounds, we must go beyond limited preservice teacher preparation and reactive in-service training. There is an urgent need for ongoing, systematic identification of research-based teaching approaches that can be adapted to various refugee populations. Refugee-responsive pedagogy demands a holistic, systemic, and transformative approach grounded in human rights (Kostoulas-Makrakis & Makrakis, 2020). Most importantly, it requires educators who understand and are deeply committed to the unique needs of newcomer students, driven by compassion and belief in their potential.

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