Education for Inclusive Societies
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Education in Contexts of Crises: From Immediate Responses to Long-term Strategies

Proceedings of the Tenth Policy Forum

The Tenth Policy Forum of the OECD *Education for Inclusive Societies* Project (hereby the "Project") took place on 29 March 2023 in person and virtually. It gathered almost 100 participants from 23 OECD and 3 non-OECD countries, international organisations, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC), foundations and OECD analysts. Presentations shown in the meeting can be found at https://bit.ly/oecdinclusivesocieties.

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Paulo Santiago, Head of Policy Advice and Implementation Division in the Directorate for Education and Skills at the OECD, provided opening remarks for the Policy Forum. He welcomed the participants to the meeting, and expressed gratitude for their attendance at past events connected to the previous *Strength Through Diversity* phase of the Project, which has helped the OECD to build a rich evidence base on diversity, equity and inclusion in education.

Mr. Santiago highlighted that the *Education for Inclusive Societies* Project aims to build on knowledge gained in the previous stage to help countries reflect on new innovations, examine what has and has not worked in attempts to attain equity and inclusion in education, and to put that learning to use in building more equitable societies. He emphasised the need to review how education systems can move from immediate responses to long-term strategies in the context of crises. Equity and inclusion in and through education have been increasingly discussed in recent years, especially since the war in Syria and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. These events have created new challenges in ensuring inclusion of all students in education systems, but particularly refugee students. Additionally, despite much progress, important gaps remain around policy responses that ensure that education systems are equipped to respond to diverse learners' needs in changing and uncertain environments.

Mr. Santiago outlined four key objectives of the Policy Forum:

- To identify the key policy issues and challenges faced by education systems during and immediately following large influxes of refugee students;

- To reflect on the role of social and emotional learning in supporting learners, particularly in the context of refugee crises;

- To explore data collection tools and approaches that can help ensure education systems are equipped to meet the needs of refugee and immigrant learners; and

- To reflect on the policy issues that need to be considered in ensuring that education systems are equipped to respond to diverse learners' needs in changing and uncertain environments.

Following Mr. Santiago's opening remarks, Ms. Lucie Cerna (OECD Secretariat/Directorate for Education and Skills) presented the Project's work on immigrant and refugee students. Various contextual developments shape diversity, equity and inclusion in education, including ageing populations and urbanisation, increasing migration and refugee crises, digitalisation, weakening trust and social cohesion, well-being and mental health, COVID-19, and climate change and environmental crises. These developments warrant a reflection about the implications that diversity has on education

systems and, conversely, the potential role education systems play in shaping these trends and building more sustainable and inclusive societies for tomorrow.

Refugee and migration crises have seen an increase in scale and occurrence in the last couple of decades. Moreover, persisting disparities exist between immigrant and native students. Students with an immigrant background are at an increased risk of academic underperformance, weak sense of belonging in schools and low life satisfaction. These disparities can also persist into adulthood, and can be detrimental to societal, economic and social outcomes, despite the fact that many students with an immigrant background also show high levels of motivation to achieve.

Ms. Cerna then presented a holistic framework for integrating migrant students, considering their learning, social and emotional needs, as well as individual, interpersonal and school-level factors that could be addressed to include them in classrooms. Various OECD countries already implemented practices that address the above needs, such as individualised curricula tailored to each student's needs in Finland, programmes fostering teacher support and strengthening peer support systems in the Netherlands, and football training sessions for refugee students in Germany. Teachers can also often feel overwhelmed when teaching students with a diverse range of needs. Countries can address this by, for instance, creating web pages with specific guidance to welcome refugee students, and publishing handbooks on how to talk with students about sensitive current events and protect their mental health.

Various policy lessons can be drawn from these practices. It is important to focus on language support that develops refugees' mother tongues and language of instruction. Furthermore, supportive learning environments compatible with students' cultures and identity formation foster students' inclusion. Finally, building capacity and diversity of the teaching workforce, certification and requalification programmes that attract people with an immigrant background can be implemented.

MAIN LESSONS

- Refugee crises have been occurring more often and on a larger scale in the last couple of decades, thus profoundly changing the composition of societies, and accordingly of schools and classrooms. Indeed, education systems now face the challenge of providing effective interventions to support equity and inclusion, having to match resources within schools to individual student learning needs. This Policy Forum aimed to bridge some of the gaps in country and organisations' practices on how to move from immediate responses to refugee crises to long-term strategies. The Forum revealed that flexibility in education laws can be key in allowing for a quicker implementation of support measures that address refugee students' needs. These can include in-service training for teachers on managing diversity in the classroom, Bridging Programmes that facilitate work placements for those with a foreign teaching degree, individual curriculum adaptations, and financial support to address disparities. A crisis is best mitigated when underpinned by an approach in which the whole system works together, while actively engaging all relevant stakeholders.

- When designing responses to refugee crises, it is important to devise long-term strategies to ensure inclusion of students in both education and society. Refugee families meet persistent barriers that prevent them from being included into the society, not least due to their irregular status. This can impede access to other essential services such as health and comprehensive social protection services, which can disadvantage refugee students. Difficulties in accessing other services, such as housing, can also prevent their inclusion into the education system. Therefore, it is important to develop a coordinated response, particularly with health and welfare ministries and institutions, to support refugee students and families holistically. Moreover, establishing an inclusive legislative framework with a clear division of responsibility among the ministries and agencies is fundamental. Finally, it is important to consider students' needs holistically given their often-traumatic experiences they can bring from their home countries.

- By integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) into curricula, education systems can foster the inclusion of all students. SEL is also particularly valuable for the success of refugee students. It can provide them with the necessary psycho-social support to process stress or trauma stemming from fleeing their home countries and adapting to new ones. Students who have participated in SEL programmes have shown improvements in communication, concentration, future orientation, problem solving, interest in learning, learning outcomes and attendance. Nevertheless, despite its advantages, SEL is frequently overlooked in education systems. Importantly, its recognition should extend beyond being a mere short-term support mechanism during the times of a crisis. Instead, SEL should be regarded as a comprehensive curriculum transformation that addresses the everyday needs of all students.

- Greater equity and inclusion cannot be achieved without efforts to collect and analyse data on student needs. Data collections have been essential in identifying which barriers Ukrainian refugees struggle most with when enrolling in different levels of education, and where they can be best supported. Nevertheless, data standards are in great need of improvement. Examining the possible pathways of Ukrainian refugees reveals substantial data gaps at several important milestones in the educational journey. Beyond monitoring the enrolment levels in host country education systems, it is, for instance, important to learn whether refugee students have sufficient language skills to take national assessments. Overall, data collections should be improved if policy makers are to understand the needs of Ukrainian students better. Without sufficient monitoring, there is a high risk that student needs are not responded to and funds are used inefficiently.

SESSIONS

The Policy Forum was structured in four sessions, all of them comprising of presentations by guest speakers and plenary discussions. The first session discussed challenges and policy responses to refugee crises in education. Ms. Eva Arered (National Agency for Education, Sweden) followed by Ms. Laura Limperk-Kütaru (Permanent Representation of Estonia to the OECD and UNESCO) discussed their respective countries' responses to refugee crises. They both shared the challenges their governments encountered, as well as lessons learned. Their presentations were followed by a plenary discussion with participants discussing the main challenges arising from including Ukrainian refugees in classrooms, the crisis' uncertain timeframe, and the shift in focus from temporary inclusion measures to long-term strategies. The session was moderated by Ms. Cerna with the support of Mr. Santiago Puerta (OECD Secretariat/Directorate for Education and Skills) as a note-taker.

The second session focused on the social and emotional learning of refugee learners. Ms. Ulrike Storost (Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission) discussed the increasing need for social and emotional learning in education, and Ms. Sara Hommel (Save the Children) presented the HEART (Healing and Education through the Arts) psycho-social support programme built to address children's social and emotional learning needs through expressive arts and supportive communication. At the plenary discussion, participants conferred on the importance of maintaining staff well-being, specialist supports for refugees and the long-term sustainability of programmes set up to respond to refugee crises. The session was moderated by Ms. Cecilia Mezzanotte (OECD Secretariat/Directorate for Education and Skills) with the support of Mr. Puerta as a note-taker.

During the third session, participants discussed the importance of learning from data to inform education policies in the context of refugee crises. First, Ms. Corinne Heckmann (OECD Secretariat/Directorate for Education and Skills) presented preliminary results from the "Ensuring a long-lasting return of Ukrainian refugee students to learning" survey, identifying key barriers Ukrainian refugee students face across all levels of education. Then, Mr. Artur Krzysztof Borkowski and Ms. Lily Calaycay (both UNESCO) presented data collections on the Ukrainian refugee crisis, examining them from a policy-data nexus perspective. Both outlined how data collections should be improved if policy makers are to understand the needs of Ukrainian refugees better. The presentations were followed by a plenary discussion with participants discussing challenges and practices regarding data collections in their countries. The session was moderated by Mr Samo Varsik (OECD Secretariat/Directorate for Education and Skills) with the support of Mr. Puerta as a note-taker.

The fourth session focused on the transition from initial responses to long-term strategies. Ms. Eliana Chamizo Álvarez (Ministry of Education, Chile) shared Chile's experience in creating long-term policy measures that facilitate the inclusion of immigrant and refugee students. Participants were then divided into small groups to reflect on the presentation and share relevant experiences from their own countries and organisations regarding responses to refugee crises. The session was moderated by Ms. Cerna with the support of Mr. Puerta as a note-taker.

Session 1 – Education in the context of refugee crises: challenges and policy responses

SESSION 1: EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF REFUGEE CRISES: CHALLENGES AND POLICY RESPONSES

In this session, Ms. Eva Arered (National Agency for Education, Sweden) and Ms. Laura Limperk-Kütaru (Permanent Representation of Estonia to the OECD and UNESCO) provided overviews of their respective countries' experiences with refugee crises, including some of the challenges facing the education systems and lessons learned.

Ms. Arered detailed Sweden's history of welcoming immigrants, particularly those seeking humanitarian protection. While she cited an increase in foreign-born individuals in the country since 2000, she highlighted the particular challenges brought on by the immigration spike in 2014 and 2015; introducing a major demographic shift in the population. The education system faced the task of accommodating a large number of newcomer students, responding to their individual learning needs, as well as managing diversity in the classroom and resource allocation. Consequently, the Ministry of Education and the National Agency for Education partnered with government agencies and municipalities to provide assistance in various ways. For instance, they offered support materials that aided in assessing the knowledge and skills of newly arrived students. Multiple other measures were also implemented, such as Bridging Programmes which facilitate work placements for those with a foreign teaching degree, teacher salary increases, in-service trainings on managing diversity in the classroom as well as language and knowledge-enhancing teaching. Furthermore, municipalities, where refugees resided, received state grants (such as the Equity State Grant), and school providers obtained financial support to improve learning outcomes and to address socio-economic disparities. Moreover, the OECD provided policy advice for the development and redesign of current policies. Several lessons can be learned from the responses. Co-operation and collaboration are key in tackling complex challenges. Furthermore, a holistic approach is needed for the whole system to work together, and dialogue with stakeholders should be facilitated. It is also important to consider learning and well-being outcomes of newcomer students, and build capacity at all levels.

Ms Limperk-Kütaru presented Estonia's experience with the reception of refugees following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The presentation highlighted Estonia's key aims in tackling the challenges following the crisis: to enable young people to exercise their constitutional educational right by promoting social inclusion in the education system and to encourage Ukrainian children to participate in the Estonian education system. The policy responses aimed to enrol Ukrainian students in the Estonian education system, so that they benefit from a safe environment and receive various support services (such as social and emotional support). However, a significant proportion of young Ukrainians were hesitant to enrol in the education system and to learn a new language due to, e.g., the uncertain timeframe of the crisis and the expectation that they may return to their home country. For the youth that were enrolled, inclusion was often a challenge given the language barriers and difficulties in accessing post-compulsory education. Moreover, Ukrainian teaching staff often did not meet the Estonian teaching qualifications, presenting barriers to employment in schools. As a response, the Estonian authorities highlighted the need for flexibility in education laws and a focus on students' well-being. The government has thus allocated funds to cover language classes, therapeutic services, youth camps for socialising between native and refugee children, among other support measures. Information campaigns also played a significant role. For instance, information booklets on the education system were shared with refugees at the border to help them orient in the country. Two Ukrainian language-based schools were also constructed.

Plenary discussion

In the plenary discussion, participants congratulated the presenters. The shift from temporary inclusion measures to long-term strategies became a key point of discussion. The unpredictable timeframe of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has resulted in a large number of refugee families living in uncertainty, unable to resume their lives at home, but also hesitant to fully participate in their host communities. Some education systems have incentivised enrolment of refugees into their systems, offering them support services such as language classes, free school meals, digital technologies, assistance from intercultural mediators, and social and psychological support. Individualised curricula have also been developed to help refugee students learn at their own speed. Moreover, Bridging Programmes, which facilitate work placements of Ukrainian teaching staff, can improve learning and well-being outcomes of refugee students. Families have also been offered language classes, which could be used as channels through which parents can be supported in the process of inclusion. For instance, understanding the local language can help build the sense of belonging and trust towards the education system of the host country, which, in turn, can foster participation and academic success of students. Communication and co-operation among countries were also highlighted as important elements in managing crises.

Summary of Session 1: Education in the context of crises: challenges and policy responses

In recent years, countries have experienced refugee crises of a greater magnitude and more frequently. Students with an immigrant background are at an increased risk of academic underperformance and low life satisfaction. These differences can result in disparities that persist into adulthood and be detrimental to future societal, economic and social outcomes. Therefore, it is important to ensure that education systems adopt an inclusive approach that considers students' learning, social and emotional needs holistically.

Refugee crises vary in nature, leading to unique and unforeseen issues and challenges in finding effective responses. However, certain practices and policies can bring in positive results. Support and in-service training on managing diversity can be beneficial for both staff and students. Moreover, facilitating the hiring of support staff familiar with the culture of the refugee students can help in the inclusion process. It is also important to create a safe environment in classrooms, provide students with the necessary social, emotional and academic support, and allow for flexibility in the curriculum, so that students can learn at their own pace. Information campaigns can also play a significant role in ensuring that families know how to access the education system. To successfully implement these policies, additional and targeted funding might be necessary. Overall, these processes should be underpinned by co-operation and collaboration among government bodies and different stakeholders, and allow for flexibility given the inherent uncertainty of refugee crises. This will enable a quick and effective implementation of the policies.

However, there is a strong need for further support and inclusion of refugee families in school life. Parents are often hesitant to encourage their children to integrate into a host country's education system due to language barriers and feelings of alienation. Lack of a common understanding on the true extent of inclusion can result in persisting inclusion barriers of refugee families not only into the education system, but also the society as a whole. Finally, countries could communicate more strongly to share information.

Session 2 – Social and emotional learning of refugee learners

SESSION 2: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING OF REFUGEE LEARNERS

In this session, Ms. Ulrike Storost (Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission) and Ms. Sara Hommel (Save the Children) highlighted the importance of implementing social and emotional learning in an education system, particularly in relation to refugee students.

Ms. Ulrike Storost presented on the social and emotional learning (SEL) of refugee learners. SEL is defined as the knowledge, attitudes and skills to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, build resilience, and make responsible decisions. In light of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the European Commission's (EC) priority to best accommodate refugees from Ukraine was to place the social and emotional needs of refugee students at the core. Furthermore, the EC highlighted the importance of ensuring sufficient capacities in host countries' schools, preparing school staff for the arrival of refugee students, providing psycho-social support as well as extracurricular activities, engaging families, promoting inclusive learning for all, and supporting early childhood education and care. The EC also adopted a multi-layered psycho-social support model to engage the entire community. Layer 3 ensures a safe, inclusive and caring learning environment for all students. Layer 2 covers psycho-social support for students with mild to moderate issues, and layer 1 enacts therapeutic interventions for refugee students with complex and severe mental health issues. Several EU countries introduced support measures to ensure the provision of psycho-social and language support, and include extracurricular activities, on-demand psychological support and counselling, informal adaptation groups and summer camps for building a positive school climate.

Ms. Sara Hommel (Save the Children) presented on the social and emotional well-being of refugee learners. Foundations for SEL in schools can be established through various strategies. These include elevating the role of school counsellors, enhancing classroom assistance (such as implementing SEL techniques and structured psychosocial activities), offering after-school opportunities (such as engaging in social activities like sports, music and art), and prioritising the well-being of staff members. Some of these principles are integrated in HEART (Healing and Education through the Arts), a structured psycho-social support programme developed by Save the Children, which has been delivered in several OECD countries. The programme focuses on expressive arts and supportive communication. It is provided by trained non-mental health professionals, often teachers, and thus addresses the lack of counsellors and social workers in many locations. The programme allows teachers to integrate social and emotional support into their teaching activities, transforming classrooms into emotionally supportive environments where children can process stress, and express, share, understand and support themselves and their peers. Activities within the programme include relaxation activities (breathing, muscle relaxation and meditation), structured activities (art making and sharing circle) and free arts (creative expression and sharing circle). Sessions can be held during or after school. Research highlights neurological benefits for young people of participating in such activities, as well as improvements in self-expression, communication, emotional regulation, concentration, future orientation, problem solving, interest in learning, learning outcomes and attendance.

Plenary discussion

Participants thanked the presenters and highlighted the helpfulness and tangibility of the presentations. The discussion first focused on how language barriers of refugee students can be addressed. While approaches vary among countries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are often involved in the process, and there is the possibility of introducing facilitators who speak the language of the refugees, or engaging in approaches that help children adjust to a new location and language. For instance, the "Team Up" programme, designed by War Child Holland, Save the Children and UNICEF, can be used in mixed-language settings with limited verbal communication. Furthermore, refugee students often require other specialist support, such as trauma-informed care. To this end, it is necessary to provide adequate training for school staff.

In recognising SEL in education systems, various initiatives can be implemented. For instance, curricular reforms that introduce inter-curricular subjects can help in the development of young people's socio-emotional skills. Furthermore, schools can be provided with specialist resources, such as psychologists and music professionals, to address students' social and emotional needs. Countries can also raise awareness and understanding of SEL by supporting projects related to mental health and well-being of both native and Ukrainian students. Moreover, initial teacher education and professional development for school staff can be adapted to provide specialised support to refugee students. While these initiatives are often set up as immediate responses to a crisis, it might be beneficial to consider their permanent implementation to remove the potential stigma against mental health issues and respond to everyday students' needs.

Summary of Session 2: Social and emotional learning of refugee learners

In recent years, social and emotional learning (SEL) for refugee learners has grown in importance. SEL can be overlooked in education systems' responses to crises even though it can enhance the academic achievement of students. Therefore, it is important to work towards its implementation in schools.

Progress has been made in this regard. The European Commission has established a multi-layered psycho-social support intervention model that engages the entire community in addressing students' SEL needs. Moreover, psycho-social support programmes, such as HEART, are actively being implemented in many countries worldwide.

The aims of psycho-social support programmes are to ensure that learning environments are safe, inclusive and caring for all students. This can be achieved by, for instance, better equipping teachers to provide psycho-social support, integrating students' SEL needs into the daily life of the classroom and transforming schools into emotionally supportive environments. Addressing SEL needs can help students become part of the school community, heighten interest in learning, improve learning outcomes and enhance communication.

While addressing SEL is particularly important for refugee students during a crisis, the recognition of SEL should not necessarily be viewed as a temporary support mechanism, but as a larger change in the curriculum which responds to students' everyday needs.

Session 3 – Learning from data to inform education policies

SESSION 3: LEARNING FROM DATA TO INFORM POLICIES

In this session, Ms. Corinne Heckmann from the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, and Mr. Artur Borkowski and Ms. Lily Calaycay from UNESCO discussed the role and value of data in informing education policy responses to crisis situations.

Ms. Heckmann presented preliminary results from the "Ensuring a long-lasting return of Ukrainian refugee students to learning" survey, which aimed to highlight barriers facing Ukrainian refugees to enrol at different levels of education, and the measures taken to reduce them. Insufficient language proficiency and the intention to return to Ukraine were the two main barriers to the enrolment of Ukrainian refugee students in primary and secondary education, followed by teacher shortages. In early childhood education and care (ECEC), countries also faced shortages of places and staff. Language barriers remained an important obstacle in vocational education and training as well as tertiary education, where programmes were often offered in the national language and/or English. In response, several education systems have provided language courses, and hired Ukrainian teaching staff. New settings, particularly in ECEC, have also been opened to address capacity shortages and accommodate new learning groups. Furthermore, written communications in Ukrainian and Russian were produced in certain countries to explain the school system and enrolment procedures. Several host countries also recognised refugee students' prior learning. Finally, in tertiary education, financial aid was offered to those facing financial barriers. Ukrainian students are mostly integrated into classes with national students, with the exception of certain countries, where students may be enrolled in Ukrainian language schools, or in preparatory classes with gradual enrolment in regular classes.

Mr. Borkowski and Ms. Calaycay presented data collections on the Ukrainian refugee crisis, examining them from a policy-data nexus perspective. Mr. Borkowski outlined how policy informs the data we need to collect and vice versa. To this end, Ms. Calaycay presented an overview of policy pathways of refugees from arrival, through access to education, to durable solutions in freedom of movement and residence, access to employment and access to permanent legal status. These pathways highlighted which policies can help refugees to progress through education, and also particular points in the educational journey at which data are available (e.g., the number of enrolled students, the number of students with validated foreign studies). Accordingly, data standards/comparability were identified as a primary challenge and data collections should be improved if policy makers are to understand the needs of Ukrainian refugees better. For instance, while levels of enrolment in several host education systems are consistently low among Ukrainian refugees, levels of participation in Ukrainian online classes are high. However, it is unknown if these data overlap. Overall, there is an absence of information on the updated and more specific location of refugees, their attendance and progress. It is also unknown, to a large extent, how many children study in the Ukrainian online school, what is the absorption capacity of host country schools, and the employment trends of Ukrainian teachers (including their location and language skills). It is important to ensure that analyses in these areas are published and shared. Without coordination and data, there is a high risk that student needs are not responded to, and funds are used inefficiently.

Plenary discussion

In the plenary discussion, participants thanked the presenters, and several discussed the need for more information on whether language courses for Ukrainian children are meeting their needs. In some education systems, Ukrainian students were directly asked about their language needs and were guided towards the appropriate educational paths. The importance of teacher training in language sensitivity was also emphasised. It is important for teachers to be aware of the languages spoken at students' homes to include them in the learning process. Furthermore, language is an important part of a person's identity, and should therefore be seen as a means for young people to be included in the education system and the wider society.

Participants also discussed the extent of co-operation with Ukrainian authorities on data sharing practices. Data on nationality, special education needs, level of education and region are available in many education systems. However, more granular statistics that could help policy makers learn about the movement of refugees through the education system is often missing. Delays also remain a significant issue. Data are not collected frequently enough to reflect essential information such as enrolment levels or the location of refugee students, which can quickly change. Furthermore, information on whether students had sufficient language proficiency in the host country to take national assessments is often absent, and psychological well-being of students is rarely evaluated at national (or sub-national) level.

> ### *Summary of Session 3: Learning from data to inform policies*
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> In light of the refugee crisis following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, data have been indispensable in diagnosing the key barriers refugee learners face and in informing policy responses. Nevertheless, there are substantial gaps in monitoring of the location of refugees, their attendance and progress, the absorption capacity of schools, and difficulties in obtaining updated information.
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> The current data collections can help in identifying the challenges facing Ukrainian refugees when enrolling in different levels of education. These include language barriers and capacity shortages, as well as issues with financing tertiary education studies. Moreover, there is hesitancy among students and parents to enrol in a host country's education system due to the uncertain timeframe of the war. To overcome these barriers, education systems offer language courses, recruit Ukrainian teaching staff, open new settings to accommodate new learning groups and provide financial aid to socio-economically disadvantaged families.
>
> However, challenges remain in improving standards and broadening the databases. While some policy practices have underlying data collection mechanisms, others lack them, and should be improved if policy makers are to understand the needs of Ukrainian refugees better.
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> Overall, it is important to ensure that data are readily shared among ministries. Without sufficient data coordination, there is a high risk that student needs are not responded to and funds are used inefficiently.

Session 4 – Education in the context of crises: from initial responses to long-term strategies

SESSION 4: EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISES: FROM INITIAL RESPONSES TO LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

In this session, Ms. Eliana Chamizo Álvarez from the Ministry of Education of Chile explored how education systems can move from initial short-term policy responses to strategies to facilitate the long-term integration of immigrant and refugee learners. Small group discussions were then held for participants to share relevant experiences from their own countries regarding responses to refugee crises.

Ms. Chamizo presented Chilean long-term policy measures that facilitate the inclusion of immigrant and refugee students, and outlined the ministry's key elements for the facilitation of a fairer and more comprehensive high-quality education system:

- **Educational justice** to assume ownership of the principle of education as a right;

- Incorporating a **vision for comprehensive education**, which highlights creativity, critical thinking and community life that students must develop; and

- **Facing the challenges of the 21st century**: teaching based on experimentation, and some of the current megatrends (climate change and sustainability requirements, technological, social and economic development, and the principles of a democratic society).

To this end, legislation guaranteeing comprehensive protection of the rights of students was introduced. In April 2021, a new law guaranteed access to ECEC, primary and secondary education to foreign students under the same conditions as nationals, irrespective of their or their parents' immigration status. Further legislation in March 2022 guaranteed the protection of the rights of children and adolescents, establishing the framework for the state to adopt all administrative, legislative and other measures for the defence and protection of the rights of children and adolescents from specific social groups (such as students with an immigrant background, Indigenous communities or those in a situation of economic vulnerability). This aimed to guarantee their full development and inclusion in education and society.

One of the measures implemented to ensure access to education for students with an immigrant background is the establishment of the Provisional School Identifier, which allows the system to track students through their educational pathways. Monitoring students' enrolment has become increasingly important as the number of foreign students tripled from 2017 to 2022. Nevertheless, some key barriers in the process of inclusion remain. The irregular status of immigrant families can make it difficult to access comprehensive social protection services. Different cultural norms can make it challenging to break social norms and, for instance, equalise attainment between girls and boys. Moreover, there is a need for more initial teacher education and continuous professional learning, and for improvements in stakeholder engagement (including the immigrants' voice and their experience).

Plenary discussion

Participants were divided into small groups to reflect on the presentation and share relevant experiences from their own countries and organisations regarding responses to refugee crises. Participants considered the following questions:

- Has your organisation or country developed or implemented policies that facilitate the long-term inclusion of immigrant and refugee students in education?

- How can links be strengthened between education and other policy areas to address immigrant and refugee learners' needs more holistically?

Several steps were discussed to facilitate the long-term inclusion of refugee and immigrant students. It is important to have a clear vision and coordination at various government levels, with a clear division of responsibilities of main stakeholders, ministries and agencies. Capacity building is also essential, ensuring that schools have the necessary human resources to receive and include more students. Similarly, spare physical capacity in schools, health systems and transport must be given a greater priority, facilitating an improved management of future crises, and ensuring that the needs of students with an immigrant background are met. Sufficient funding should also underpin resilience plans, initiatives to renovate school infrastructure and support measures for the most vulnerable families. At the same time, it is important to focus on the quality of investments. Moreover, ensuring a focus on well-being and on creating an inclusive culture will allow education systems to be flexible and ready to support all students. Finally, having the basic rights for refugee students is viewed as crucial.

In the second part, the importance of coordinating services for immigrant and refugee students (such as education, migration, social services, health, housing, monitoring, etc.) was explored. The importance of early coordinated actions, particularly with health and welfare institutions to support students holistically was highlighted. These actions should be implemented both at the local and national levels, should share common goals, and provide the space for education providers to guide collaboration on the ground. Legal status of refugees is of fundamental importance. It is crucial for young people to access social security programmes, and for refugee teaching staff to teach in host country schools and thus fill in shortages. Moreover, ensuring housing for refugees cannot be overlooked, as some families may not be able to enrol their children without an address. In addition, the creation of partnerships between government ministries, NGOs and international organisations could support immigrant and refugee students on the ground effectively.

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BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

Summary of Session 4: Education in the context of crises: from initial responses to long term strategies

As refugee learners are an increasingly integral part of education systems, it is important to consider their long-term inclusion by building a fairer and more comprehensive high-quality schooling. This session explored how education systems can move from initial short-term policy responses to long-term strategies, and facilitated a discussion on practices and policies that could help achieve this goal.

International and national co-operation between and within countries is key for success in addressing the barriers to long-term inclusion that refugee families face. Indeed, it is important for institutions to share examples of practices that have been developed so far, and highlight unanswered questions they may have concerning long-term policy measures. For instance, Chile's experience with welcoming refugees highlighted the importance of establishing the necessary legislation to give foreign minors the right to education, but also helped to elucidate certain barriers that can persist, such as issues with immigration status and difficulties in accessing higher education.

Discussions have also allowed for the sharing of strategies to facilitate the long-term inclusion of refugee and immigrant students. These include establishing an inclusive legislative framework, having a clear division of responsibility of main stakeholders/ministries/agencies, relevant initial teacher education and professional development, and shared data collections that facilitate planning (e.g., in building physical capacities of schools).

It is also essential to coordinate services for immigrant and refugee students, such as health, migration, social services, etc. In addition, creating partnerships between government ministries, NGOs and international organisations could support immigrant and refugee students effectively.

CLOSING REMARKS

Mr. Santiago thanked participants for their active involvement and emphasised the role of the Forum as an engaging peer-learning opportunity for countries and organisations. Mr. Santiago also thanked presenters from UNESCO, Save the Children, National Agency for Education of Sweden, the European Commission/Council of Europe, the Permanent Representation of Estonia to the OECD, and the Ministry of Education of Chile for their stimulating insights. Mr. Santiago proceeded with a summary of the activities and discussions and highlighted some of the key take-away points.

The Forum participants emphasised the importance of a holistic approach in the context of refugee crises, as well as capacity building for teachers and school leaders, targeted support for schools, and an attention to creating a sense of belonging and building trust among refugee students. The significance of flexibility in the application of rules during Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine was also highlighted, allowing for the involvement of Ukrainian educators, and the implementation of extra-curricular activities, among other policy actions. The inclusion of refugee learners in the education system must be complemented by a greater investment in their social and emotional learning, which can be facilitated through language assistance, classroom-based activities fostering social and emotional support learning, and peer engagement.

Nevertheless, the Forum stressed that challenges remain in helping refugee learners overcome barriers to inclusion. Some of these include:

- Language barriers;

- The uncertain timeframe of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine;

- Persistent learning gaps;

- Poor data standards and unmet data needs (e.g., in enrolment data, absorption capacity of host country schools, potential learning loss among Ukrainian refugee students, information on language support, etc.); and

- Low levels of enrolment in host country schools.

Therefore, in overcoming these challenges and eliminating barriers to inclusion and participation, more granular and frequent data is required to better understand the needs of refugee students. Resilience-building in education systems and intersectoral co-operation across ministries are also required. Finally, it is important to address school staff needs when teaching diverse students and track the progress of immigrants in and out of the education system.

For more information on **Education for Inclusive Societies**
visit*: https://bit.ly/oecdinclusivesocieties*

If you have questions, you can reach us at
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