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## **Schooling and Refugees: engaging with the complex trajectories of globalisation**

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**ABSTRACT** This article examines the complexities associated with educating a mobile and politically marginalised population, refugee students, in the state of Queensland, Australia. Historically, schools have been national institutions concerned with social reproduction and citizenship formation with a focus on spatially fixed populations. While education authorities in much of the developed world now acknowledge the need to prepare students for a more interconnected world of work and opportunity, they have largely failed to provide systemic support for one category of children on the move – refugees. This article begins with a discussion of forced migration and its links with ‘globalisation’. It then present the authors’ research findings about the educational challenges confronting individual refugee youth and schools in Queensland. This is followed with a summary of good practice in refugee education. The article concludes with a discussion of how nation-states might play a more active role in facilitating transitions to citizenship for refugee youth.

### **Introduction**

In 2009, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2010a) estimated that some 43.3 million people were involuntary migrants who had been forcibly displaced. Within this group 15.2 million people met the official classification of ‘refugee’ according to the criteria of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. A further one million people were seeking asylum, and 27.1 million were internally displaced (UNHCR, 2010a). These statistics are of great concern particularly given the assumptions in the developed world that the era of great wars is over and that we live in a time of peace. Eighty per cent of the world’s refugee population are living in developing countries that do not have financial resources to provide them with education, health and welfare services (UNHCR, 2010a).

The effect of war and civil strife on children and adolescents has been well documented (see Boyden & de Berry, 2004). Children frequently witness the deaths of loved ones; they experience loss of security when their communities are divided and when their families lose the capacity to care for them. They are especially vulnerable to atrocities, as mistreating the young is used as a technique to undermine adult resistance (p. xii). What kind of reception then do refugee children encounter when they are resettled in developed countries like Australia? This article examines how schools respond to, and engage with refugee children in the state of Queensland. It reports on research conducted from 2005 to 2008 on the educational challenges facing children from refugee backgrounds, and the policies and provision in place to support their schooling. Our broader intention is to analyse the relationship between globalisation, the provision of schooling by the

state, and the conditions for citizen formation, using the schooling experiences of refugee children as a focal point.

In both developed and developing countries, nationalist sentiments are increasingly being manipulated by politicians in a climate of worsening economic uncertainty and increasing inequality, creating hostile and sometimes violent public responses to refugees and asylum seekers. The xenophobic attacks against refugees in South Africa are a case in point, raising the question of how a young democracy which aspires to be an egalitarian, non-racialised society is vulnerable to xenophobia (see Hassim et al, 2008). The developed world has not been immune to these currents. Recent Australian election campaigns have been marked by the mobilisation of community fears about illegal immigration and global terrorism by the major political parties. These fears ultimately have an impact on how citizens and institutions receive refugees and asylum seekers.

Australia's ambivalence towards the plight of displaced people such as refugees and asylum seekers reflects an ongoing tension between its desire to control immigration and its aspirations to be a good global citizen. A signatory to a number of human rights frameworks which relate to refugees such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia also prescribes mandatory detention of 'unauthorised arrivals'. Transgressing Australia's maritime boundaries is regarded as a particularly subversive act and those who seek asylum after travelling by boat to Australia excite the greatest anxieties from the government and the broader population. The events of September 11 2001 and the London and Bali bombings by terrorist groups, have been used by the popular press and politicians to manipulate and exacerbate community fears about terrorists, and frequently asylum seekers and refugees are caught in this maelstrom of fear.

In the 2009/2010 financial year Australia issued 9236 offshore refugee and humanitarian visas and 4534 onshore protection and humanitarian visas. The largest offshore humanitarian entrants were from Burma (1959), Iraq (1688), Bhutan (1144), and Afghanistan (951). Refugees from Africa were also represented, coming from Congo (584), Ethiopia (392), Somalia (317), Sudan (298), Liberia (258) and Sierra Leone (237) (DIAC, 2010). Given the large numbers of refugees and displaced people, globally, it is clear that Australia receives a very small share of the world's refugee populations, the majority of whom are never resettled in a third country, either returning to their country of origin or remaining for long periods in countries of asylum.

The article proceeds as follows. In the next section we discuss the conceptual links between globalisation and forced migration. We then provide an overview of how nation-states respond to 'the refugee problem', and highlight the limitations of global human rights frameworks. This provides the context for section three, which examines education policy and provision for refugee students. We use interview data to describe how schools are responding to the challenges of educating refugee children. Section four discusses what constitutes good practice in educating refugee children, before concluding.

### **Forced Migration Using a Globalisation Optic**

Forced migration is a general term used to describe population displacements resulting from conflicts, environmental and natural disasters, famines, chemical and nuclear disasters and development-induced displacements such as the construction of infrastructural projects (e.g. dams) (FMO, 2011). It should be acknowledged that not all of those who are internally displaced are considered refugees. The term refugee has a narrow legal definition, a point we return to later. Stephen Castles (2003) observes that forced migration needs to be studied in the context of *social transformations* associated with processes of globalisation in both the global North and South. For postcolonial scholars, contemporary processes of globalisation have been shaped by the politico-economic and cultural legacies of colonialism. Mahmud Mamdani's work (1996) shows how the desire for resources for a globalising colonial economy led British colonial authorities to strategically manipulate tribal conflicts. Mamdani was writing about East and South Africa, however, similar techniques of indirect rule were deployed in South and Southeast Asia. Installing the colonial plantation economy as the basic unit of production required indigenous economies and livelihoods to be dismantled; it also required the displacement of entire populations. The insertion of slaves and indentured labour into the circuits of agricultural production radically altered the

ethnocultural demographics of entire regions. Competition for scarce resources among colonial populations perpetuated identity struggles over ethnicity, class and religion (Castles, 2003; Nally, 2011).

Decolonisation, which took place in the context of Cold War tensions and struggles, presided over the emergence of new conflicts and the resurrection of old disharmonies as competition intensified for space and various economic assets. These 'local' struggles came to be co-articulated with the military and economic interests of the global North. Internal wars in the new states were largely explained in primordialist terms and portrayed as 'age-old hatreds'. However a more accurate analysis is offered by Summerfield (1999), who suggest that these conflicts are best understood as elements of a dysfunctional modernising global economy (Summerfield, cited by Castles, 2003, p. 18). Collectively, these forces and influences placed significant pressures on nation- and state-building projects within the newly independent countries, which responded by adopting institutional forms which mirrored that of the colonial state (Mamdani, 1996).

By the end of the Cold War, forced migration had come to be associated with underdevelopment in significant parts of the global South, as global trade, investment and intellectual property regimes reduced opportunities for advancement and increased poverty and inequality (Castles, 2003; Marfleet, 2006). Manuel Castells' (1996) trilogy of the global economy is a comprehensive picture of the unevenness of contemporary globalisation and illustrates how underdevelopment perpetuates the globalised networks of crime, people smuggling and human trafficking. The global reach of neoliberal policies such as deregulation, privatisation and financialisation [1] has intensified economic uncertainties and insecurities. Populations in developed countries like Australia are increasingly hostile to those perceived to be 'strangers' (see Christie & Sidhu, 2006). In significant parts of the global South, a series of political and economic upheavals has led to a surge in migration. In weak states with failed economies, structural adjustment programmes, predatory cliques and human rights abuses have acted as 'push' factors, blurring the division between the (undeserving) economic migrant and the (deserving) political refugee (Castles, 2003).

Regions like East and Southeast Asia, home to rapidly industrialising countries, defy neat binaries between 'North' and 'South'. Geographically in the South these countries are not beset by underdevelopment facing parts of Africa and Latin America, having witnessed industrial take-off. However, they are not immune to the challenges confronting many other societies on how to deal with forced migration, in particular, how to safeguard the human rights of refugees, ethnic minorities, unskilled labour migrants and the victims of human trafficking.

Having described the utility of using a globalisation 'optic' to understand forced migration and its links with underdevelopment and warfare, in the next section we examine responses by the international system of states to global flows of refugees and asylum seekers.

### **Human Rights and Social Justice Frameworks: limitations**

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 2010b) is a by-product of the bipolar world order which followed the Second World War. The Convention employs fairly narrow criteria to determine who can be considered a refugee, namely:

Any person who owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR, 2010b)

The Convention was devised with a particular kind of refugee in mind, namely, a person escaping political persecution from Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, who it was assumed could be easily resettled into the 'free world'. The proliferation of refugees from the developing world in the 1970s was accompanied by changed attitudes to their plight by developed countries. In contrast to the cold war 'freedom fighter', refugees from the developing world were regarded as subjects of underdevelopment, anticipated to have limited aptitude and skills to resettle in the 'modern' west. They were to be encouraged to either remain in neighbouring countries of first asylum or to return to their country of origin (see Lui, 2004, pp. 128-129). Practices of 'containment' or 'warehousing' thus became a central part of the international refugee management regime. These involve the

housing of large groups of displaced people in UNHCR-coordinated camps in poor neighbouring countries for years on end (Lui, 2004; Brown, 2006).

Perhaps the most disadvantaged refugee populations to be resettled in Australia in recent times are groups of people from regions which have experienced protracted wars and civil strife. A 2006 discussion paper produced by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs observed that refugee and humanitarian entrants from Africa faced significant settlement challenges arising from their pre-migration experiences of poverty, torture and trauma, low levels of education, health problems and long periods spent in limbo in refugee camps (DIMA, 2006). While official government reports in Australia made mention of refugees from Africa, teachers in our study reported that recent cohorts of Afghan, Kurdish and Burmese refugee children are also experiencing problems adjusting to schooling. This is not surprising given that most refugee camps offer little or no access to education (Kagawa, 2005; Wrigley, 2006; Oh & Van der Stouwe, 2008). Martone (2007) observes that donor countries tend to privilege humanitarian or emergency relief assistance, focusing on short-term outcomes at the expense of other kinds of aid, 'educational interventions for children and youth are treated as a lower tier priority'. This, in spite of evidence that access to education mitigates the psychosocial impact of conflict and displacement and creates a sense of stability and hope for the future (see also INEE, 2004).

### **The Study**

The research discussed in this article was part of a larger project with three broad objectives: First, examine the policy context that informed the provision of education to refugee young people in Queensland state schools. Second, analyse partnerships between schools and those community organisations providing settlement assistance to refugee families. Third, document the experiences and realities of young people from a refugee background, using a visual analysis of their narratives. Data collection involved interviews of teachers, principals and deputy principals, community sector workers (e.g. social workers and youth workers), and government bureaucrats involved in the broader areas of immigration, refugee settlement and education. In addition we examined website postings of state education departments throughout Australia to ascertain policies and programmes relating to refugee education. This article attempts to provide a summary of key findings relating to educational policy and provision.

### **The Policy Context: educating culturally diverse populations**

The schooling experience of refugee children must be read against the politics surrounding cultural diversity and multiculturalism in the period extending from white occupation of Australia some 200 years ago to the present. Loss of the American colonies intensified Britain's efforts to find another penal settlement, and in 1788 the first shipment of convicts arrived. The settlement of Australia by Europeans led to the social, economic and political marginalisation of indigenous Australians. Colonisation consolidated British cultural hegemony in most aspects of institutional life, including schooling (Tsolidis, 2008; Jakubowicz, 2009). Australian immigration policy favoured British immigrants up until the post-war period when, facing labour shortages for its proposed industrialisation projects, the government started to recruit first northern Europeans and thereafter southern Europeans as immigrants. Australia maintained a 'whites only' immigration policy until the start of the 1970s. Since then it has favoured skilled migration and privileged English-language competencies in prospective migrants.

Given these historical legacies, it is not surprising that a conservative engagement with multiculturalism has prevailed instead of a more radical 'race equality' approach, designed to tackle structural inequalities (Tsolidis, 2008). While there have been periods of policy activism during which the state has attempted to provide more opportunities for ethnic minorities and indigenous people using education to spearhead social reform, for the greater part the official Australian position has veered towards managing rather than valuing cultural diversity (Tsolidis, 2008, pp. 211-212). For much of the 1990s, debates about the value of Australian multiculturalism have been framed around the globalising imperatives of economic activity, and the need to mobilise the

'productive' dimensions of Australia's cultural and linguistic diversity to increase employment and trade opportunities.

Periodically, there have been virulent criticisms by self-serving politicians on the right and left of the political spectrum about multiculturalism's potential to erode social cohesion by promoting enduring tribalisms. Given this backdrop, it is not surprising that policymakers have left the education of refugee children and young people to chance (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007).

### **Education for Refugees: left to chance?**

When this research was conducted, there were no policies in any Australian state that specifically targeted the education of refugee children, and this situation has not changed. Refugee students continue to be largely invisible in policy discourses. If mentioned at all, they are referred to in the context of policies seeking to implement a social justice agenda by increasing social inclusion or to support multicultural education through the provision of English as a Second Language (ESL). Our examination of educational equity policies in 2006 showed that South Australia and Western Australia were using the language of social justice and equity; New South Wales and Victoria placed education for refugees under the category of 'multicultural education strategies' (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). Queensland's Department of Education and Training (formerly known as Education Queensland) has an inclusive education policy, but it does not make specific reference to students from refugee backgrounds (DET, 2005). In 2004, the Queensland government launched a multicultural policy which was framed in social justice terms and included references to 'refugees and asylum seekers' (Queensland Government, 2004). However, it is significant this policy was not publicised on the Education Department website, nor was it mentioned by any of the education bureaucrats that we interviewed.

As a general observation, ESL programmes have a high visibility in many Education Department websites, where they are invested with the power to contribute towards social cohesion by creating literate subjects and active citizens. These are laudable objectives, but as our study confirms ESL funding, particularly for refugee children, falls short of what is required. This view is reiterated by a variety of stakeholders, such as teacher unions, ethnic community organisations, and the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA).

In Australia both Federal and State Governments fund education. Both arms of government contribute ESL funding for students. In 2005/2006, there were three funding schemes accessed by Queensland schools to support refugee students: the New Arrivals Programme from the Federal Government; the ESL Allocative Model, which uses similar criteria to and supplements the New Arrivals Programme; and the Refugee Support Funding Programme, which can be used by schools to support language tuition, homework clubs, counselling, interpreter services, job preparation initiatives, and intensive teaching or teacher-aide support.

New Arrivals funding equates to a one-off grant of \$5039 per student, which is premised on the provision of 510 hours of ESL tuition. Refugee and humanitarian entrants can access an additional 400 hours of ESL tuition under the Special Preparatory Programme if they are considered to have special needs arising from their pre-migration experiences. A 2005 study of ESL funding by MCEETYA's Schools Resources Taskforce (SRT) estimated that the actual cost for the delivery of ESL services to newly arrived students in 2005 was \$6160 for non-refugee students and \$10,349 for refugee and humanitarian students. The SRT criticised the use of a similar funding model for migrant and refugee students and highlighted the need for a differential funding formula in recognition of the additional educational needs of recent populations of refugee students (MCEETYA, 2006).

Refugee and migrant students who have settled in urban areas can be placed in an Intensive English Centre if they require English-language assistance. In Brisbane a special reception school Milperra State High School provides intensive English-language preparation to high school students before they move onto one of nine high schools in Queensland with an intensive ESL unit (DET, 2010). In the past a student from a refugee background would have spent six months at the reception school, but the more educationally disadvantaged populations of students are known to stay for periods of 12 to 18 months, before leaving for a mainstream high school where they

typically spend one to two terms in the ESL unit. There are no intensive English-language centres or reception schools for primary school children; the official assumption is that children will be able to pick up a new language relatively easily. The Department of Education and Training in Queensland observes that 'An ESL teacher may be assigned to give support and advice to the mainstream classroom teacher, or teach as required' (DET, 2010).

The situation is more complicated for refugee students in rural and regional Australia, where there are significantly fewer resources for the provision of intensive English assistance. Outside of the Brisbane metropolitan area, there are only two high schools with ESL units in the state. This is a significant shortcoming, given that in recent years the Federal Government has encouraged the dispersal of refugees and asylum seekers into rural and regional areas as a broader immigration and population strategy to encourage newcomers to consider settlement outside major cities. As in the United Kingdom, policies of dispersal have had mixed responses, in some cases inciting hostility against refugees and asylum seekers; in other cases communities have galvanised to counteract these negative campaigns and welcome refugees and asylum seekers (SBS, 2010; Tomlinson, 2010).

Gaining access to the additional ESL funding beyond the standard 510 hours for new arrivals is not without complications, as our interviewees observed:

There is no guarantee. We don't start the year with certainty. There have been situations where we are wondering if we are getting any money. We might get a bonus of money coming in and [then] we can employ someone. We don't start well into the school year. (Deputy principal, high school)

It is significant that principals and teachers interviewed in our study were united in their complaints about the complexity of the submission process for all kinds of government funding:

The major problem with [Refugee Support Funding Programme] has been the way in which it has been allocated. [We] could not access money till week 5 of the term because of this process but the children were here from Day One. (ESL teacher in high school)

There's a certain amount of time and capacity in any school, [and] that time and capacity has got to be directed where you make a difference in the learning of students. Not in the writing of submissions. (Principal, high school)

Besides their need for intensive ESL support, refugee young people who have experienced significant disruptions to their schooling also require instruction in literacy and numeracy using innovative pedagogies:

At our school, we have a large number of refugee students who have significant gaps in prior education. Some students are coming to us with virtually no prior education. Some have a few years. Some talk about having been to school but when you ask them about it, school was often in a camp, irregular, perhaps with a trained teacher perhaps not. There were huge numbers, no facilities and no books, no curriculum. So it wasn't school, as we know it. (ESL teacher at a large high school)

A deputy principal of a high school with significant populations of refugee young people made this assessment of the resources her school required to meet their educational needs:

I need people who are trained in what primary school teachers are trained in – how to teach reading and writing. The basics. [Students] are coming to us without the basic skills and basic language. In my school I would like more [trained] people on the ground working with these children in small groups. (Deputy principal, high school)

Secondary teachers need to adopt a bit more of the strategies and techniques of primary teachers to develop concepts in our refugee students. English language across the curriculum, literacy across the curriculum. This is an ongoing professional development need. (ESL head teacher, high school)

The ESL teachers in our study observed that much of their training and expertise centred on providing language instruction for young people who already had literacy skills in their home language. They were now being confronted with a student population without mother tongue literacy:

When I started [as an ESL teacher] we were getting refugees from the Former Yugoslavia. They had had education in a Westernised country, living what we would regard a reasonably normal life. And then there was a period of [war and total upheaval]. [Even] refugees that came from Vietnam in the 70s, had education and a normal life [before leaving]. [Now the refugee students from Africa] have a whole different set of circumstances – socially, economically and educationally from refugees that we had before. [They] have not had what anyone would consider a normal life prior to coming. (ESL senior teacher, high school)

Principals in schools with high refugee populations criticised the short-termism of education bureaucracies and pointed to complex manoeuvrings to reduce class sizes so that refugee students had more attention from teachers:

The funding mechanism doesn't allow for long-term strategic planning to address the issue. It is reactive. (Principal, high school)

In our school, because most classes will have 3-4 traumatised refugees who are [unused] to schooling and have very little capacity to read and write academic language, we would like classes of around 20-22. The school has focused on managing staffing. No one has been sacked but when someone retired or when there was a new position available, rather than having someone in the Head of Department role, we have taken the decision [to use the funds] to decrease class sizes across the board. (Deputy Principal, high school)

One teacher observed that political tensions around 'race' worked against the provision of resources to this vulnerable population:

Because they are such a small group, there is no political mileage at the State or Federal level in [relation to] refugees. There is a lot of negative press and there is a lot of latent racism, if I am being totally frank, that makes this a major problem to get any funding shift. (ESL teacher, high school)

Without targeted policies and system support, teachers faced formidable professional challenges (see also Cassity & Gow, 2005; Miller et al, 2005; Matthews, 2008).

At the same time many teachers were unequivocal about the commitment shown by refugee students. The following extract from an interview with a senior ESL teacher highlights the critical importance of recognising the strengths of individual children:

[Refugee students] are resilient and strong, survivors. They have a lot of strategies, and strengths. They come to school every day, sometimes they have a long journey. They don't give up – they never give up. They will be here till year 12. We have very few students who give up and leave school. They work really hard. They value education very much. All of these things should set them up for success if there weren't other difficulties – like the lack of schooling. (Senior ESL teacher)

In the context of complex educational needs and poor resourcing, it is important not to slip into deficit thinking about the aspirations and capabilities of refugee children.

A final point regarding the broader educational policy context concerns the impact of a host of policies aimed at increasing the transparency and accountability of schools. State schools in Australia increasingly operate in the context where school performance is framed by league table rankings. The recent development of a government sponsored ranking system, My School, is one such example. My School profiles the 10,000 or so Australian schools that make up the state and non-state education sector, presenting statistical information as well as results from a national assessment of literacy and numeracy scheme (NAPLAN). Although criticised by teacher unions and education researchers, governments at both Federal and State levels have promoted My School as an important instrument for increasing students' test scores, ensuring school effectiveness, allowing parents to exercise choice in school selection, and contributing towards improved productivity and international competitiveness.

Our study predated the arrival of the My School ranking system. However, it was clear from our interview data that audit and benchmarking techniques concerned with ensuring school effectiveness were starting to have potentially problematic effects for equity and social cohesion, a finding replicated in overseas research (Ball et al, 1996; Rutter, 2006). While some state school

principals in our study were welcoming of refugee students, others expressed concern that their presence would steer academically inclined students away from local state schools and towards private, non-government schools.

The vignettes below suggest that marketisation policies and practices have the potential to reduce socioeconomic and cultural mixing, and in doing so threaten social cohesion and diminish the overall levels of human and social capital in society:

[Our history is that numbers had declined] from 1700 to 400 and we were facing closure. [Our school is surrounded by] private schools. We niched this school to make it fit the mould of being an alternative to a private school. We are now up to 950 students. We run as a traditional school: top academic standards, top uniform, discipline. We have probably one of the top academic records of any state school in Queensland. [Some parents] would say that [their children's] results will go down with the refugees coming into the system. [They're] not wrong. (Principal, inner city high school)

I think maybe some people are concerned that the numbers [of refugees] are getting so great and that it will deter other students from coming here. [Their view] is 'That's the school that all the black kids go to.' (Principal, inner city high school)

### **Moving Forward: good practice**

So far our discussion has been focused on the challenges facing national education systems in meeting the complex educational needs of a transnational population. In this section we outline key components of good practice in the education of refugee youth, drawing on Arnot and Pinson's (2005) holistic model which is premised on engagements with the *learning*, *emotional* and *social* needs to refugee students.

#### *Commitment to Social Justice and Leadership*

In a national context where political parties have mobilised community insecurities and anxieties, schools play an important role in alleviating these alienations. The principal of one state school which we identified with good practice in refugee education observed that schools must play an advocacy role given the disempowerment created by government policies and practices. She sent teachers to accompany refugee parents to meetings with the Department of Immigration, and to the Refugee Review Tribunal. Several school principals in the Catholic Education sector, who were also interviewed for this study, spoke of writing to politicians to counteract negative comments they made to the media in relation to refugees and asylum seekers. They also expressed their opposition to government policies in school newsletters, and in doing so they made visible their support for refugees to the broader community of parents. Advocacy, a strong social justice ethos, and leadership are vital elements if schools are to help create a culture of inclusion both within the school and within society more generally.

#### *A Holistic Approach to Welfare and Education*

As we have demonstrated in the article, the task of approaching education from a holistic perspective involves attention, not only to students' language needs, but also to literacy support in particular for those students who have experienced significant disruptions to their schooling. Settlement support is also vitally important to ensure that refugees have the opportunities for broader social engagement.

In the main, the settlement experiences of refugee populations are shaped by their pre-migratory circumstances which feature multiple dislocations, and a potential range of traumatic experiences including physical injuries, famine, sexual violence, child soldier activity and loss of family members through violence. Their post-migration world also holds challenges – refugee families often struggle to find stable employment, affordable housing and social acceptance in an environment in which racialised assumptions about belonging and citizenship are prevalent (Jones & Rutter, 1998; Rutter, 2006). Refugees embark on resettlement in Australia with the knowledge



that their family unit has been totally reconfigured – sometimes because family members are dead, missing or still awaiting resettlement in a refugee camp. It is common for resettled families to provide financial help to family members still in camps, thus creating additional financial stresses. In our study, the schools which were most effective in their work with refugee students and their families, maintained close links with multiple welfare and community agencies to provide the intensive support needed by this group.

#### *Targeted Policy and System Support*

The institutional arrangements for the education of students from a refugee background in Queensland are manifestly inadequate. A systemic ambivalence towards refugee students was clearly evident – the Australian state sees the acceptance of refugees for resettlement as an important part of being a good global citizen, however it has not put into place the necessary education structures and programmes to facilitate their transition to citizenship. By refusing to recognise their unique educational needs, the state shifts the burden of responsibility for providing socially just and inclusive education to individual schools and teachers. The teachers in our study were struggling to meet the needs of those refugee students who had experienced interruptions to their schooling prior to coming to Australia. Education policies and programmes seemed to be premised on the literate migrant student, with the cultural and economic capital to make the necessary transitions to being an educated, productive citizen. By default then, the state is creating the conditions for ‘a hostile educational model in place of a holistic model’ (see Pinson & Arnot, 2010). A key finding of our research is that long-term marginalisation of refugee populations is a real risk without targeted policies and systemic support for schools.

#### **Concluding Comments**

The focus of this article has been on a key aspect of resettlement for children on the move – schooling. Following Rutter’s (2006) caution to reduce research attention and policy interventions on the ‘traumatised’ refugee child, we have focused instead on how nation-states enable or constrain the settlement of refugee children and young people.

Education authorities in Australia have been quick to acknowledge the importance of globalisation and the need for changes in curriculum and pedagogy to prepare students for a more interconnected world. Typically, education bureaucracies produce issues papers, statements and strategies referring to the need to prepare citizens for active participation in a globalised workforce to secure economic advantage for the nation. Schooling is also expected to contribute to social cohesion in ‘an age characterised by international migration and mobility’ (Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009, p. 5). Schools, it is proposed, must contribute towards global and multicultural citizenship:

Global citizenship denotes an awareness of our interconnectedness, with people and environments around the globe, and contribution to a global society and economy. Multicultural citizenship denotes active participation in our multicultural society and respect for our similarities and differences. (Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009, p. 4)

At one level these are reassuring statements suggesting that education systems are engaging with the implications of human mobility and increasing cultural diversity. However, at another level and based on our research findings, it is clear that the current policy environment does not allow schools to engage substantively with the complex trajectories that make up globalisation, including forced migration, unsustainable economic development and unprincipled realism in foreign policies.

Governments of all political persuasions have relied on the commitment and professionalism of individual teachers and community workers to deliver a reform agenda while providing minimum assistance (Sidhu & Taylor, 2009). The state effectively exploits the principle of devolution in delivering educational equity, reconstructing teachers as newly responsabilised actors in this task. Within a broader context that emphasises school effectiveness and school selection, we see a neoliberal institutional culture installed in state schools. While some teachers and school

principals actively resist these forces, others are swept up by the need to rebuild the legitimacy of public education as an institution that focuses on achievement and provides access to social and cultural capital and economic mobility, albeit for a select group. Yet without systemic support, the marginalisation of sections of the refugee student population is very likely. We conclude with this astute observation by Pinson and Arnot (2007, p. 405):

[Refugee] and asylum-seeking children and their integration represent a litmus test in terms of social inclusion. As the absolute [strangers, they] could tell us something about how we define education and its role in society. (Pinson & Arnot, 2007, p. 405)

## Notes

- [1] Financialisation describes an economic system or process which translates all aspects of exchange value into a financial instrument or derivative of a financial instrument (see French & Kneale, 2009).

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