

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Education is a basic human right, affirmed by various declarations and conventions. International consensus on this issue was confirmed by the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All and the 2000 Dakar World Education Forum. The right to education persists even in situations of armed conflict. By extension it is regarded as being in force in all but the very earliest phases of emergencies.

Having sufficient numbers of trained and competent teachers is essential in guaranteeing the right to education. This study, commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat to explore issues affecting refugee teachers in selected Commonwealth countries, presents the results of documentary and field research that the authors conducted in the first half of 2012 in Kenya, South Africa and Uganda.

This research initiative follows in the wake of the Sixth Commonwealth Research Symposium on Teacher Mobility, Recruitment and Migration in Addis Ababa in June 2011. The symposium examined the implementation of the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol and the relevance of its principles to education in emergencies. In particular, it aimed to determine how refugee teachers could best be managed so that their rights were protected; their impact on the destination country was beneficial; they were enabled to improve educational quality and access for refugee children (and, at times, host country children); and finally to better themselves. The impact of returnees on their home country also arose as an issue to be explored. The symposium looked into systemic and structural issues, as well as good practice, and identified future research directions.

This research pursues some of the issues from the symposium by looking at three receiving countries – Kenya, South Africa and Uganda.

However, the findings are relevant to any country hosting refugee teachers. The overall aim of the present investigation was to answer two research questions:

1. What are the issues affecting refugee teachers?
2. What policies are necessary to ensure the welfare of refugee teachers and to create an enabling environment for them to teach?

The specific objectives were:

1. To identify the issues affecting refugee teachers and the existing policies influencing their role and status, and to determine the connections between these issues and policies and refugees' ability to contribute towards education in and after emergencies.

2. To formulate recommendations for policy-makers that will protect the professional role and status of teachers forced to migrate and enhance their ability to operate constructively in emergency conditions.

This study responds to the increasing urgency of providing policy guidance on education in emergencies, as armed conflict and natural disasters represent serious obstacles to achieving the education Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015 through the loss of teaching talent. This loss is poorly documented in the literature.

Among the concerns of the Commonwealth Secretariat is to identify obstacles and opportunities to using the talents of refugee teachers in host countries. The Commonwealth Secretariat, which inter alia seeks to encourage co-operation on education issues among its member states, requested the authors to conduct a study on refugee teachers in order to provide guidance on strengthening policies on educational co-operation, particularly those policies encouraged in the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol. Consequently, the authors have identified the international legal protections afforded refugees in general (none of these address teachers specifically), as well as national policies on refugees in the three Commonwealth host countries: Kenya, South Africa and Uganda. The research findings also include data on South Sudan and the status of teachers returning there from exile in countries, including Kenya and Uganda.

The issues surrounding refugee teachers are little documented, as they are mostly incidental in the literature on education in emergencies, which focuses largely on students. The teachers themselves, of course, have generally a clear view of their situation and much of this report is based on that.

The major findings of the literature review and interviews in Kenya, South Africa, South Sudan and Uganda show that the international migration of teachers is a complex phenomenon. Not least among the factors is whether a teacher is part of a mass exodus or moved individually (with some control over timing for example).

A teacher's decision to leave home is typically motivated by a combination of 'push' factors – such as political threats and armed conflict, or simply poor pay and a lack of professional opportunities – and 'pull' factors, such as better pay and living conditions in a host country.

Internal migration in the home country has also to be taken into account. There are often few qualified teachers in refugee camps. This is because teachers, just as other salaried people, may, in a crisis, migrate *within their home countries* to preserve their salary, employment and benefits.

In this study, three types of refugee teachers are described: a) qualified teachers who succeed in finding teaching jobs in the host country; b) qualified teachers who are forced to find non-teaching employment in the host country; and c) individuals who have taken up teaching or training to work in the host country, but are not qualified.

Despite international protections that guarantee the right to work of refugees in host countries, a number of obstacles intervene to make it difficult for refugee teachers to find teaching jobs in host countries. These obstacles include factors such as the following:

- The absence of co-ordination between ministries of education and ministries in charge of registering and managing asylum-seekers and refugees.
- The inability of many teachers to obtain recognition of their credentials in the host country, which forces many to seek work outside of teaching. Some go into business for themselves, often trading or opening small shops, cybercafés and information and communications technology (ICT) services.
- Refugee teachers rarely have support in obtaining teaching credentials in the host countries.
- The temporary or uncertain nature of refugee status, which works against economic security, tenure, contractual protections, promotion prospects and professional development, and obtaining long-term teaching jobs.
- The over-supply of trained teachers without jobs in many host countries despite there being unfilled teaching jobs, a constraint caused by a lack of money for education budgets. Parents sometimes employ teachers, and refugees occasionally get temporary employment in this way.
- Xenophobia towards foreigners in general and the wariness of national teachers' unions towards refugee teachers.
- Language differences: refugee teachers from non-English-speaking countries have great difficulty in finding teaching (or other work) in Anglophone Commonwealth countries.

Interestingly, gender was not found to be a major issue. It was frequently noted that the lack of female teachers in camps was because qualified women found it easy to get less stressful jobs in other NGOs.

The study identified other issues, as well:

- Some practices of the UNHCR and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that supervise schools in refugee camps were reported to be unattractive to qualified refugee teachers. These practices included there being no legally binding contract, and that much is demanded in terms of a full day's work or adherence to a code of conduct, yet remuneration may consist only of a small allowance or in-kind support, such as housing in tents. Career development is virtually non-existent. The various forms of informal training that may be given do not add up to a usable qualification.
- Indeed, relatively few qualified teachers are to be found in camps. Those who leave their home countries often find work in non-teaching positions with NGOs that supervise camps. This applies particularly to female teachers. Teachers serving in camps are mostly refugees with some education who become para-professionals after varying types of training provided by NGOs. There is no common framework for training these teachers, and their training may not be recognised by either home- or host-country governments. This means that their skills may be lost after they leave the camps simply because they cannot get a job in teaching.
- The literature further suggested that encampment itself can be an issue, as refugee teachers' teaching qualifications can be undermined in refugee camps by the employment of less qualified or unqualified teachers in alternative basic education

centres or child-friendly spaces by NGOs, who tend to prefer these modalities (Penson and Tomlinson 2009).

The research revealed that refugee teachers are surprisingly resilient. When unable to find suitable teaching jobs, many use their skills to become independent entrepreneurs, opening services such as cybercafés in their host countries after taking, initially, low-paying jobs – for example, as maids or car park attendants.

The research found few women refugee teachers in the three host countries studied. The age of the refugee did not seem to be significant, though most refugee teachers are young, reflecting the recurring idea that teaching is not thought of as a career.

When qualified women do flee, they often have more chances to leave teaching for other jobs, sometimes helping to fulfil other organisations' gender quotas. Gender balance among teachers is generally believed to be beneficial, though thorough studies are few, especially in developing countries (Kelleher 2011). However, women as role models for young girls and examples to young boys are valuable. In some countries of Southern Africa, notably Botswana, women do have senior and strong roles in society. In Zimbabwe, a woman was the Minister of Education for some time. In Northern Uganda the Acholi headmistresses are well-known for the good schools they run and the training they give.

Some educated refugees end up *becoming* teachers in host countries, either in refugee settlements or in secondary or higher education. In some cases their language (for example, French) enables them to teach that language in a host Commonwealth country. In Uganda, long-term refugees from Sudan have obtained teaching credentials and returned to newly independent South Sudan, but there, as noted later in the document, they often take more remunerative jobs.

The authors have drafted a number of recommendations to remedy the problems revealed in the research. Among the recommendations is a suggestion that mechanisms should be created to validate teacher training and credentials. The study emphasises the importance of better co-ordination between ministries of education and ministries in charge of refugee affairs in Commonwealth countries. The need for providing refugee teachers with better information on regulations and opportunities in Commonwealth host countries is also cited.

1.2 Summary of recommendations

The stakeholders concerned in implementing these recommendations are governments, especially of Commonwealth countries, UNHCR and its NGO partners, other organisations working with refugees, 'think-tanks' such as particular university departments and 'communities' such as the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), and the Commonwealth Secretariat itself.

1.3 The role of the Commonwealth

While it is recognised that the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol (CTRP) is not a legally binding framework, it is evident that the protocol constitutes a useful tool for guiding inter-country co-operation in the area of teacher management.

Table 1.1 Summary of recommendations

No	Issue	Recommendation
1	<p>The review of the literature revealed that there are few studies on refugee teachers. Overall, published studies and reports on education in emergencies deal with children. This lack is important for all stakeholders involved in education in emergencies and in refugee education (see chapter 2).</p>	<p>Efforts must be made to put relevant unpublished United Nations, government, NGO or personal documents (sometimes called 'grey literature') online; if funds can be found, an educational NGO, or university should be supported to gather the common experiences in education for refugees (with teachers as a focus) over the last 20 years. The academic community could prioritise research on refugee teachers, in order to better understand the issues that affect such teachers in different contexts and how their efficacy can be maximised. Among others, Echo Bravo, the Refugee Studies Centre of Oxford University and the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University (Canada) are suggested partners in guiding and evaluating relevant research, possibly with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA).</p>
2	<p>Although international conventions stipulate that refugees may work and study in host countries, there are often barriers to refugee teachers who seek employment in host countries. Both officials and refugees may lack relevant information about refugee rights (section 4.3).</p>	<p>Governments should ensure by internal communications that refugee rights, in particular the rights to work and study, are respected by all institutions in the country. While governments are the primary actors concerned by this recommendation, it is also relevant to UNHCR, IOM, teacher unions and INEE members. Education International, which represents organisations of teachers and other education employees across the globe, could play an advocacy role in supporting the rights of refugee teachers.</p>
3	<p>Reception centres for refugees frequently do not collect information on the skills and qualifications of arriving asylum-seekers (section 4.3).</p>	<p>The authority which first deals with refugees should maintain a database that captures the skills and qualifications of people who enter the country, and should share such information with other departments and relevant educational authorities. UNESCO and UNESCO-IICBA could give guidance on comparing teacher qualifications from different countries, as could the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth of Learning.</p>

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Table 1.1 (Continued)

No	Issue	Recommendation
4	Interviewees often stated that they were bewildered by bureaucratic procedures in the host country. They were poorly informed about their rights in general. Interviewees in South Africa cited xenophobia as one of their most serious problems in finding employment and housing (section 5.1).	Governments should ensure that official policy is clearly explained (to their own people, as well as to refugees). This includes the law, and the rights and obligations of refugees. Where necessary, such explanations should be targeted at specific issues causing xenophobia or misunderstandings. This information is best provided in a simple brochure, in radio spots and professionally produced publicity, similar to the professionalism of HIV/AIDS campaigns, emphasising the humanity of refugees and promoting a 'welcome' from the host community. Incorporation of refugees into popular soap operas could be a way to start. Organisations with credible histories of combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination are present in most countries hosting refugees. They can be selectively invited to contribute to creating a climate of respect for refugee rights.
5	The research revealed that there is no systematic process of identifying refugee teachers or refugees in the host country, whether in camps or not. As a result, important skills often go untapped (section 5.2).	Educational management information systems (EMIS) are needed to register teachers who are refugees, as well as refugees who <i>become</i> teachers. While development partners such as UNESCO-International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and IICBA may support the development of such an EMIS, local ownership, ongoing management and support from UNHCR, NGOs and bodies that register refugees will be needed.
6	Refugees from non-Commonwealth countries have major challenges in obtaining recognition of their qualifications in the host country (section 5.2).	The emerging teacher recruitment protocol for Africa, which at the time of writing is being developed by the African Union, should specifically address the issue of refugee teachers. Governments should liaise with neighbouring countries and, if it does not exist already, establish a system for mutual recognition of qualifications. Institutions should be encouraged to place results (and the meaning of grades) on public access websites. This should be developed alongside other similar mechanisms such as, for example, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth's Transnational Qualification Framework, to ensure wider international comparability. The South-South co-operation aspects of liaising among developed countries to support mutual recognition of qualifications could be supported by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Special Unit for South-South Co-operation.

Table 1.1 (Continued)

No	Issue	Recommendation
7	The researchers found that there is no co-ordination between ministries that register and manage refugees and ministries and related bodies that manage teachers (section 5.3).	The lead ministry for refugees and the ministry of education should each designate a person or a unit to work with the other on the matter of refugee teachers. Action relating to this recommendation is of primary concern to governments. However, INEE members and the Commonwealth Secretariat can provide technical assistance. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNESCO-IIEP could assist ministries of education whose capacities these agencies have developed in managing education in emergencies to co-ordinate with ministries that handle refugee affairs.
8	The authors found that ministries of education in Africa have generally done little to prepare for emergencies. They also noted that qualified teachers often migrate to safe areas in their home country. They are rarely found in refugee camps (section 5.3).	In emergency and early reconstruction, teachers who have not completed official certification processes but who possess 'alternative qualifications' could be temporarily recognised. To enable this, tools such as rapid assessment tests of teaching skills and instruction in emergency situations are needed.
9	There is no comprehensive system of certifying teacher qualifications outside of their home countries. Training of para-professional teachers in camps is not generally certified by any national authority (section 5.4).	Refugee teacher training should for the most part be provided by a certificate- or diploma-issuing body recognised in both host and home countries. Home countries should ensure that their administration is aware of any such agreements and the validity of qualifications. UNHCR and the NGOs that provide teacher training would benefit from technical guidance from UNESCO-IICBA and IIEP in developing teacher certification programmes. UNESCO and, among other partners, the UK Open University and the Commonwealth of Learning, can offer technical guidance on distance and open learning for refugee teachers. USAID also has a great deal of experience in distance learning for teachers in developing countries.
10	The lack of competitive salaries and benefits, including career development, discourages teachers in camps from remaining in the profession. Qualified teachers seeking employment in host countries often find themselves forced to work for less pay than nationals. As a result, many will seek better-paid work outside of the teaching profession (section 5.6).	It should be recognised that refugee teachers increasingly find their own place in the employment market. Agencies and NGOs can help, however, by paying competitive salaries and providing promotion opportunities in the camps or wherever they employ teachers. They should not rely on the principle of volunteerism for more than the first few months of a refugee crisis, nor work to keep salaries artificially low in relation to the wider employment market. UNHCR and NGOs in charge of training and supervising camp teachers could help facilitate the eventual integration of trained teachers into the education systems of their host or home countries.

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No	Issue	Recommendation
11	Qualified refugee teachers face considerable, informal and bureaucratic hurdles in finding employment in South Africa in particular. Opportunities may exist, but they are hard to find. Teachers' unions or NGOs could play a role in promoting networks and information hubs that would facilitate access to employment for refugee teachers (section 5.7).	Because of informal or bureaucratic barriers to work, refugee teachers in South Africa should co-operate among themselves to create organisations to play a leadership role in opening closed doors. They must not rely only on their rights as refugees, but also come up with different skills and competences in order to create opportunities for themselves. Teacher unions or NGOs could serve as advocates as well as intermediary between refugee teachers, the South African Council for Educators (SACE), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), UNHCR and the government at different levels. Education International, of which the South African teacher unions are members, could also play an advocacy role.
12	In host countries, refugee teachers are often seen as competition for national teachers and a danger in terms of pressure to reduce salaries (section 5.7).	Encourage a view of refugee teachers as an asset towards improvement of quality or towards achievement of EFA goals, particularly in refugee-affected areas of a country such as camps. In some cases, this may be a temporary measure. UNHCR, UNICEF and UNESCO-IIEP are well suited to promoting refugee teachers as a resource for achieving EFA goals.
13	It is difficult for qualified teachers from non-English-speaking countries to find employment in Anglophone Commonwealth host countries (section 5.8).	UNHCR or service providers should provide intensive English (or other) language improvement where necessary to enable refugee teachers to compete in the host country. The UK Open University, Oxford University Press and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) are just a few UK and Commonwealth sources for distance learning of English. There are many others.
14	Tripartite agreements are designed to smooth the transition of refugees back to their home countries. In cases where refugees have gained qualifications and skills in other countries, measures are needed to ensure the recognition of these qualifications by the home country (section 5.9).	Any tripartite agreement between the host country, the home country and UNHCR for the return of refugees should specify the validity and equivalence of qualifications. Work should be carried out to make sure that such an agreement's contents be sent to the correct receiving institutions in the home country. Returnees should receive transcripts or certificates before they return home, with comprehensive records placed on the worldwide web. The technical aspects of providing transcripts or certificates and creating the EMIS to record and update records could be supported by UNESCO.
15	The authors found an exceptionally useful handbook designed by a refugee support unit in a university to help refugees find information about their rights and obligations (section 6.2).	Information brochures in hard copy and online (and in various languages, such as Swahili, Somali, French and Portuguese) could be prepared to disseminate information on refugee rights and responsibilities. This is a role for advocacy bodies with the relevant government departments.

To this end, work to develop the CTRP further will need to contain explicit language about the rights of refugees, as well as guidelines for hiring and deploying refugee teachers in host countries in camp settings and in resettlement contexts.

In addition to the recommendations above, it is clear that the Commonwealth Secretariat could have, especially in the context of the CTRP, a substantive role in:

- working with governments to build their capacity at the national level to manage refugee teachers more effectively;
- working with governments, regional organisations (including the African Union) and specialised agencies (including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNESCO-IICBA, to help build regional mechanisms for managing international teacher migration;
- publicising the rights that teachers have, especially to work in host countries;
- providing guidelines for teacher service commissions and ministries of education in order to inform them about the rights of refugee teachers;
- providing training for ministries of education and authorities handling refugees to assist them in co-ordinating their responses;
- encouraging the creation of an initiative involving partnerships with teachers' unions, the press and broadcast media in order to overcome negative perceptions of refugee teachers;
- lobbying for organisations such as the Global Partnership for Education or the Gates Foundation to fund initiatives to use refugee teacher talent in accelerating progress toward the MDGs and EFA goals in host and home countries;
- developing tools and providing technical assistance to help governments collect data on teacher migration, including forced migration;
- developing tools and providing technical assistance for the development of teacher qualification comparability frameworks, with partners such as the Commonwealth of Learning, the African Union and UNESCO-IICBA; and
- using its position as a member of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies Working Group on Education in Fragility to provide access for Commonwealth government officials to global policy forums, in order to ensure refugee management policy reflects their needs and experience.

References

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