Why Support Blended Bridging Programmes For Refugees? A Literature Review

In this section we present some of the key findings from relevant literature that informed the rationale for FFA and PADILEIA, and that provided the team with context, theories and models for thinking about refugees' access to tertiary education. It is by no means exhaustive, however, and woven throughout the Scoping Tool and Design Framework are references to scholars and scholarship that informed particular approaches and design choices.

After briefly explaining how the literature review was conducted and embedded in the design process of FFA, this section draws on the relevant literature to discuss refugees' strengths and aspirations for higher education, before highlighting some of the main barriers that exist to them achieving these goals, noting facilitators to achievement when identified. The final section explores why blended bridging programmes are viewed as an important and effective response to some of these challenges.

Literature Review as Pedagogical Process

Although a brief literature review was conducted during the proposal phase of this project, the FFA team soon realised they wanted to complete a more in-depth literature review to inform the design of the FFA blended bridging program and later, the project's research outputs. A literature review team was established in May 2019 composed of MCF Scholars, PADILEIA graduates, and staff and faculty from the partner institutions. Literature review team members were engaged in reviewing key literature on higher education for refugees and presenting relevant insights from this literature during online discussion sessions open to all members of the project team.

This process was designed to contribute to FFA in four main ways:

1. By providing relevant, research-led evidence on curriculum and programme design for the FFA course and programme organisers;
2. Through informing the creation of an overarching Programme Philosophy and Principles document to guide the development of the FFA programme;
3. By summarising key findings and evidence to contribute towards the elaboration of the Scoping Tool and Design Framework;
4. To support MCF Scholars and PADILEIA graduates to learn how to conduct literature reviews and to develop their research skills around analysing secondary data.

The literature review process therefore provided a capacity building opportunity for participating MCF Scholars as they were guided through how to identify, analyse, summarise, and present on academic texts. They were also supported - and encouraged - to act as 'critical friends' to provide feedback on various aspects of the FFA program design, including the Programme Philosophy and Principles and the FFA course outlines. The literature review team thus engaged Scholars as both learners and valued project researchers, integrating teaching on how to analyse academic texts alongside encouraging students to learn this through practice. This was done initially through bi-weekly meetings throughout the summer of 2020 to discuss how to conduct literature reviews and through the sharing of accessible online material, and then on an ongoing basis through group conference calls, peer support and one-on-one feedback from project staff. More experienced team members, including academics from the UoE, were also paired with students to support them in synthesising and critically evaluating the selected literature. The literature review calls provided a time for reflection on the overarching ethos, principles, and practices of FFA, and a conduit through which to feed this and students' own experiential knowledge back into programme design. The literature review was designed to be an ongoing process whereby those involved in programme design could ask the literature review team to synthesise evidence on a particular topic to feed directly into decision-making.

Midway through this process, we conducted an online survey with the literature review team to seek feedback on learning, task and meeting structures, and participation. Scholars provided the following reflections on the experience: "the team dynamic is very effective and encouraging"; "enough time is given for learning"; "there is room for participation and airing out views"; and that they enjoyed "working together with professionals". Participating scholars described skills they wanted to build throughout the process, including critical analysis; identifying the most relevant information in an article; identifying relevant literature; note-taking; delivering presentations; and how to publish an academic paper in a suitable journal.

Our literature review revealed evidentiary gaps too, many of which we hope to address through this project, including:

- Limited research focussing on refugee young adult learners accessing higher education (versus school age children);
- The lack of research focussing on refugee education for adult learners based in countries in the Global South (rather than focussing on refugees who have travelled to contexts such as the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, or Europe);
- An overall lack of conversation between debates in digital education and refugee education, and lack of literature critically addressing curriculum design;
- The role of psychosocial support in refugee education, and how such support specifically relates to educational achievement and learning outcomes;
- Overall, there were few detailed examples of projects like ours in the literature, so there was a general lack of comparable research models, although we believe we engaged with evidence from a variety of related projects and approaches.

Despite the overall small number of research outputs focussing on adult refugee learners in the Global South, we learned from the refugee education literature more generally, and our literature review sub-team, which included scholar researchers, highlighted initial themes and findings which supported and enhanced our approach. A few of these initial themes that fed directly into programme design included:

- The importance of developing teaching material that specifically suited the students' needs (rather than repurposing existing material, as has been the case with previous partnerships);
- Using concrete approaches to enhance refugees' access to higher education, including measures relating to gender such as providing stipends to enable women to study; the importance of establishing a stable and safe physical classroom space that provides opportunities for structured learning without distractions; the need to schedule in self-directed study time and peer-to-peer study opportunities as part of

the curriculum; and the need to centre psychosocial support within programme design;

- The importance of participatory learning design and monitoring (which we made efforts to implement at all stages of our project);
- Developing a socially and politically relevant pedagogy for refugees, such as curating curriculum to include political themes like teaching conflict history and engaging with scholarship on refugees in Uganda;
- The need to situate our project in relation to wider debates concerning the role and purpose of refugee education, with scholarship highlighting a variety of positions driving interest in refugee education including humanitarianism and rights-based approaches, national & regional security and counter-radicalisation, and economic development.

The team also recognised that much of the literature on refugee education has elevated quantitative and experimental methods above qualitative approaches, shaping the collective understanding of what 'works' in terms of educational interventions. Burde et al. (2017; 2015), for example, who have led several major systematic reviews on refugee education, argue that educational programmes can only be evaluated through 'rigorous testing', which requires an experimental design. They have referred to qualitative data as sketchy and anecdotal, and devalued sources of knowledge that cannot be empirically tested, including research that draws on students' perspectives on educational interventions. As such, their definition of a 'quality education' remains relatively narrow, focused on either quantifiable outcomes and grades, or a counter-radicalisation and peace-building agenda. Our approach, in contrast, seeks to foreground situated knowledge and refugees' perspectives, and thus to focus on outcomes informed more by experiential perspectives than international policy objectives.

The team also quickly realised once beginning the literature review that there was no consensus on key terms even though how these words are defined has a large bearing on how projects are conceptualised and operationalised. The team thus decided that it was important to agree on the meaning of the language they would be using in the context of blended bridging programmes for refugee learners. Without having a shared understanding of what success means in the context of refugee HE, for example, they recognised that it would be impossible to co-design a programme to achieve it. With this in mind, the MCF scholars and project team members collaboratively created a glossary of terms, provided in the next section.

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Key Concepts

Term	Operational/working definitions (to be refined later)
Structural/ Systemic barriers	Structural and systemic barriers are the economic/financial, legal, and social policies and practices that unfairly discriminate against refugees, hindering their ability to access and/or succeed in HE. These barriers are shaped by how resources are distributed, national contexts, who holds power, how institutions are organised, and how people relate to each other.
Psychosocial	'Psycho' refers to the inner world of a person – their thoughts, feelings, and emotions – while 'social' relates to ones' relationship with the external world and environment. Psychosocial support work therefore focuses on the aspects of an environment or situation which has an impact on both the social and psychological well-being of affected populations.
Aspirations	An aspiration is a strong hope, dream, or goal. The idea of aspiration has a positive, upward connotation. Strong aspirations are motivators and require an investment of time, effort, and money.
Access	Access entails equitable opportunities to participate fully in tertiary/higher education. This is made possible by the policies of governments and educational institutions, and individuals within them, that work to remove social, economic, and legal barriers to HE, as well as by providing additional services that enable students to participate fully.
Success in HE	Success can be defined on at least two levels: 1. The completion of studies; and 2. The capabilities gained for after the completion of studies, including the ability to use academic, practical, and interpersonal knowledge and skills for employment, social engagement, and further education.
Quality	Some scholars focus on quality of education as a deliberately constructed value. Nikel and Lowe (2010), for example, have identified seven dimensions of what is required for quality education: • Effectiveness • Efficiency

	• Equity • Responsiveness • Relevance • Reflexivity • Sustainability
Global South	"The answer to the question 'what is the global South' is not straightforward. No quick easy definition can be provided, and no list of countries that are part of the global South can be discerned. The world is far more dynamic and complex, and scholars' use of the term differs. {...} the term has evolved from an interesting process and set of debates and has been influenced by a range of different clusters of scholarship, from geography, political science, and sociology to post-colonial and subaltern studies. The term is not static and does not refer to a specific list of countries, groups, or communities: it evokes different meanings and is used both descriptively and analytically. The north-south divide is present and increasing. But this inequality it is not just between countries (if it ever was); inequalities are increasingly marked on a smaller scale, between and within communities" (Clarke, 2018)
Blended	Blended learning designates the range of possibilities presented by combining the internet, digital media, and digital technologies with established classroom forms and practices that can require the physical co-presence of teacher and students. Blended learning as presented in Foundations for All assumes the availability of both dedicated teachers and technology.
Bridging Program in HE	Bridging programs are short, focused learning courses designed to help students enter and succeed in higher education institutions.

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Refugee Strengths and Aspirations for Higher Education

Most literature on refugees' experience accessing and participating in HE focuses on research drawn from qualitative interviews and case studies within the 'global North', notably Australia, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. While there is a large body of

literature that looks at the many barriers faced by refugees trying to access HE, many of which will be highlighted in this literature review, there are relatively few studies that take a strengths-based approach, considering the skills and capital brought by refugee students. There are notable exceptions; Harvey and Mallman's (2019) study, for example, considers the strengths of refugee students in Australian HEIs, and found that refugee students often performed well academically, despite their difficult life experiences, and strove to be a role model for their family and friends (p. 666). Other strengths identified in the study are refugee students' multilingualism, though this was rarely appreciated or utilised by the university (Ibid., p. 667), as well as the different knowledge and life experiences they bring to the classroom (Ibid., p. 664). Other studies echo these findings, demonstrating that refugees learn to be resilient and develop navigational resources to deal with systemic challenges (Naidoo et al., 2018; Mkwananzi, 2018).

Considering aspirations as student capital is a key part of a strengths-based approach to HE interventions (Yosso, 2005). 'Aspiration' is defined by Sellar and Gale (2011) as "the capacity to imagine futures". Educational literature has long focused on student aspirations as a key precondition for accessing and succeeding in HE (Gale & Parker, 2015; Schneider, 2018, p. 461; Zipin et al., 2013). The downside of this, as pointed out by Bok (2010), is that it may lead to the overlooking of structural inequalities and challenges to accessing HE. The sections that follow in this literature review are our effort to not ignore these significant barriers. Nonetheless, considering refugee aspirations within tertiary education is an important part of seeking out the unique perspectives and experiences of refugee students (Schneider 2018, p. 461).

According to Ramsay and Baker (2019), most of the research on refugee educational aspirations is drawn from those in contexts of settlement, meaning they have been accepted by another country to reside and study there with the option of staying long-term or permanently. Among non-settled refugees, while there is an abundance of literature that considers the educational aspirations of refugees in refugee camps (Bellino, 2021; Dahya & Drydon-Peterson, 2017; Dridi et al., 2020), there is need for more perspectives of refugees in urban and peri-urban centres in the global South, as physical location largely determines access to services, supports, and access to HE. Furthermore, more research is needed that connects the pre- and post- resettlement experiences of refugees, specifically in terms of their aspirations and experiences around HE (Ramsay and Baker 2019, pp. 69-70).

Literature suggests that aspirations are socially constructed; anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2004), for example, states that "Aspirations are never simply individual (as the language of wants and choices inclines us to think). They are always formed in interaction and in the thick of social life" (p. 67). This is captured by a recent study of secondary schools in Kakuma refugee camp, where Bellino (2021) finds that student aspirations are shaped by teachers enforcing a narrative of meritocracy, whereby one can pull themselves out of the present challenges by working hard. Here, academic performance is mixed with sentiments of moral achievements; students are reminded that good grades result in scholarships and poor grades bring 'shame' (p. 825). This has serious implications when only 2% of the estimated 31% of Kakuma-based students enrolled in secondary schools qualified on national exams to

compete in tertiary scholarships (Ibid., p. 820). To succeed in getting a scholarship and leaving the refugee camp to study at a HEI amounts to what Nygreen (2013) describes as a zero sum game within education, whereby one succeeds by getting ahead of others. The psycho-social implications of this competitiveness will be explored further later in the literature review.

There may be a disconnect between the aspirations of refugee learners and HEI agendas, which do not always adapt their requirements but rather cause refugee students to adjust their preferences based on what they feel they are capable of pursuing (Parker et al., 2013, p.6). The sections that follow take a student-centred approach to understanding the multifaceted barriers to higher education, as well as the systems and processes that help in overcoming such barriers. An appreciation of refugee strengths and aspirations are an important part of understanding the refugee experience in HEIs and forming programmatic interventions, but it is important to remember not just the aspirations of refugee students, but also of the many players and discourses within the global education ecosystem, which presupposes access to high quality and affordable education will ensure economic success and social connectivity (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019).

Furthermore, within the context of bridging programmes, it is also critical to acknowledge both what they do and what they do not do, noting the risks therein. Bridging programmes often focus on preparing individuals to fit the system, rather than on structural changes to the institutions, and their staff and programmes might enable only certain learners to be able to access and thrive within them (Strydom, 1997, as seen in Hay & Morals 2004, p. 62). This too constrains how creative bridging programmes can be in their approach to course design and delivery; if their goal is to prepare students for a particular model of educational provision, they might do best to replicate that model in their own system. Even if bridging programmes thus aim to shift student demographics, and ultimately diversify knowledge production, in HEIs, they can end up being extremely conservative, creating applicants who fit within the acceptable boundaries of the traditional institutions they hope to enter. Instead, as Morrice (2009) notes in his review of student trajectories following a bridging programme for those with refugee backgrounds in the UK context, the question we ask needs to shift from how students' social capital can be enhanced to access HEIs to how HEIs can better recognise the valuable forms of capital that students can bring to them.

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Refugee Access to Higher Education: Economic Barriers and Facilitators

Poverty is a major barrier to education, and financial costs often present an insurmountable challenge to refugees wanting to pursue higher education. In addition to the cost of living and tuition, international students often have to pay international fees, and may be excluded from being able to apply for full or partial public or private loans (Sengupta and Bessinger

2018, p. 224). Undertaking bridging programmes and studying at university can be costly endeavours for all students, but particularly for refugees in the Global South.

Many refugees leave their country of origin with little to no savings and arrive in refugee camps where there are limited opportunities to earn sustainable income (Callanan & Reynolds, 2020). For many of these individuals, food scarcity and lack of water remain as key barriers to accessing primary, secondary and tertiary education (World Bank Group, 2019; Yankam Lemdjo, 2018), with resource scarcity resulting in poor concentration when in educational environments and preventing students from regularly attending classes (Masuku & Rama, 2020; Callanan & Reynolds, 2020).

Evidence suggests that countries operating under settlement policies rather than camp policies can, but not always, mitigate against such barriers. Kikano & Lazarralde's (2019) study compares encampment, non-encampment and settlement policies in both Lebanon and Jordan and concludes that non-encampment and settlement policies can aid refugees to find work to supplement basic resource provision. But it can also result in exploitation where refugees face a range of challenges including finding appropriate, and affordable, accommodation, heath and education provision, and protection/personal safety.

Host countries offering refugees cash assistance and agricultural programmes can also mitigate against financial barriers. Betts, Omata & Sterck (2020) studied the Kalobeyei refugee settlement in northwestern Kenya, which was created by the Government of Kenya in 2015 to 'support self-reliance for refugees and greater interaction with the host community' (p. 189). This was the first settlement of its kind to support both refugees and host communities, fostering a cash-assistance programme called Bamba Chakula ('get your food') and dry land agriculture in the form of 'kitchen gardens'. Bamba Chakula is a cash transfer where refugees receive mobile money on their phones every month which can be used at registered traders for both food and cash. The kitchen gardens are small plots cultivated in open space adjacent to shelters designed to grow vegetables. Increased reliance on community grown food provides refugees with fewer basic amenities overheads and more scope to use cash for alternative purposes. The study does not, however, explore the impact of these initiatives on refugees' abilities to access higher education.

Scholarships, in the form of full or partial financial stipends, are one of the most common interventions to overcome financial challenges for refugee students seeking higher education. There has been a growing number of scholarships designed specifically for students in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) around the world. This is in alignment with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4.B, which states, "By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries…for enrolment in higher education" (United Nations, 2017). There has also been an increasing number of HE scholarships reserved exclusively for refugee students. Two examples of these are the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD, or the German Academic Exchange Service), and the World University Service of Canada (WUSC). Some of these scholarships are designed to have a holistic and long-term approach that goes beyond the immediate financial challenges. WUSC's Student Refugee Program (SRP), for example, aims to both provide

financial scholarships and help students resettle in Canada as permanent residents (WUSC 2017, as seen in Streitwieser et al., 2019, p. 482). Funding for these scholarships is arranged through various channels, including national governments, as in the case of DAAD, through private philanthropists or the charitable arms of major corporations (such as the Mastercard Foundation), and sometimes through the student body of participating universities. The Oxford Students Refugee Campaign (OxSRC), for example, noticing that refugees were not applying to the university because of financial limitations, began fundraising through the student body by asking for £1 from each student every month (Sengupta and Blessinger 2019, 223). Wilfrid Laurier University in the United States has a similar initiative through their International Students Overcoming War programme, whereby students contribute $8 per semester to support refugee student scholarships.

The availability of scholarships alone does not negate barriers to accessing them, or succeeding in HE once they are received. A study by Hohberger (2018), for example, demonstrates how Syrian students in Turkey reported that the lack of clarity around scholarship application processes, which can differ dramatically between providers, and the lack of transparency around selection criteria were two of the biggest hurdles to applying (p. 28). Ramsay and Baker (2019) suggest that, in addition to scholarships, HEIs should provide "increased scrutiny on the complexity of financially supporting higher education for refugees and the various funding mechanisms" (p. 73). One potential solution was suggested by the Syrian students polled in Hoberger's study (2018), who recommended that countries have a centralised and up-to-date virtual information portal that provides information on the eligibility criteria and application procedures for all available scholarships (p. 28).

Other studies point to the necessity of providing psychological support along with scholarships; one report (Betancourt et al., 2014, seen in Burde et al., 2017), for example, shows that the combination of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and an education subsidy for youth affected by war had greater educational outcomes and psychosocial indicators than compared to the provision of an educational subsidy alone. Psycho-social factors will be explored in greater detail later in this literature review, but we reference it here to emphasise how these barriers do not exist separate from one another, but are rather interrelated, overlapping, and exacerbating. The impact of the accumulation of multiple barriers for refugee students in higher education is what Lambrechts (2020) refers to as 'super-disadvantage'. This cannot be adequately overcome, according to Lambrechts, without intentional institutional measures within universities, developed and administered in collaboration with third sector organisations and refugee students themselves (p. 803). Even if financial assistance is accessed, refugee students still feel the need to earn income to send money to family and friends back home, creating high levels of stress and making it difficult to prioritise studies (Sheikh, Koc, and Anderson 2019, p. 350). This is explored in more detail in the next section on psycho-social challenges facing refugee students in HEIs.

Aside from accessing HE, literature suggests that financial assistance alone may not be enough to ensure long-term success for refugee students within HE, and much more needs to be known about the outcomes and impact of scholarships, particularly in relation to long-term sustainability and quality of education that they afford (Streitwieser et al. 2019, p. 18;

Martel, 2018; Consentino et al., 2019). A later section in this literature review which examines objectives for refugee HE within the wider political economy ('Bridging to where? Engaging with the political economies of refugee education') will consider rights-based approaches, which suggest that refugees should be able to access HE as a human right. Yet, as Campbell and Mawer (2019) explore, a downside of this approach is that it frequently prioritises access over quality of education (176). Not all HEIs that provide scholarships to refugee applicants will provide the same level of quality of education, a concern raised by students in PADILIEA who expressed hesitancy to accept scholarships due to a lack of institutional credibility and/or global recognition, and implications for career prospects in the long run. Aware that promoting access to poorer-quality education for refugees may perpetuate pre-existing social and economic inequalities (Darvas et al., 2017), some refugee scholarship programmes address such concerns by simultaneously focusing on access and quality of HE for refugees. A study by Consentino et al. (2019), for example, examines educational outcomes among cohorts of The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, which provides comprehensive scholarships to young African scholars to study at high-quality HEIs. The study suggests that though outcomes include graduation, enrollment in further studies, and securing employment (p. 7), more research is needed on the correlation between educational access and long-term impact for refugee students (Ibid.).

Even in countries where higher education is free, financial barriers remain. In Germany, for example, where tuition is free of charge, with the exception of a small administrative fee, students are required to pay for living expenses and learning materials (i.e., textbooks, laptop). Inadequate stipends, out of which refugees may also be trying to send small amounts of money to family members and friends elsewhere, can contribute to social anxiety and exclusion, as refugees are unable to participate in some of the extra-curricular activities through which social capital is built on campuses. Furthermore, stipends are generally designed for young, single students, making it hard for those with dependents (which may well be the case with older, refugee applicants) to consider this a viable option. Paying for these expenses is further frustrated by legal barriers (which will be explored in greater detail in the next section); asylum-seekers in Germany, for example, cannot work for the first 15 months after submitting their application or until they are granted refugee status (Morris-Lange and Brands 2016, p. 1). In another example of how legal and financial precarity are tightly bound, a study by Atesok, Komsuoglu, and Yesim Ozer (2019) shows how Syrian refugee students enrolled at Istanbul University find opening bank accounts difficult if they lack proper identification papers (p. 131).

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Refugee access to higher education: social and cultural barriers and facilitators

Across many contexts of forced displacement, access to education is held in high regard among students for socio-cultural reasons as well as the economic reasons highlighted elsewhere in this review. It is seen as a pathway to a 'better future' to enable students to make plans and develop or maintain socio-cultural status (Clark-Kazak, 2012; Crea, 2016). Education provides a way of restoring negative cultural implications of protracted displacement by helping young people to be seen as role models in their communities, and by providing opportunities for social participation, cultural connection, and a way to maintain their national identity (Grace et al., 2018, Felix, 2021). Baker et al. (2019, p. 7) argue that "[f]or people who have experienced forced migration, the sense of agency, control, and forward momentum that can accompany engagement in higher education can become a vital driving force".

Important social and cultural barriers to achieving this, however, are discussed in greater detail below, along with systems and processes that facilitate overcoming such challenges. Though the discussion that follows is divided into the socio-cultural categories of gender, language, and class for organisational purposes, we are cognizant that these are not isolated dynamics, but rather often overlap and intersect.

Gender

Gender[1] is one of the key issues faced by students in relation to enrolment and participation in education around the world. Female enrolment in school education varies across contexts, but is approximately half of that of males (UNHCR, 2019). This schooling history has implications for higher education, with the UNHCR describing a "self-perpetuating system that works against girls". Barriers to enrolling and participating in education for refugees are consequently heavily gendered because of this systematic gender gap (Burde et al., 2017; Ramsay and Baker, 2019).

There are often stark gender inequalities present in refugee camps where young girls and women have a comparative lack of decision-making power in both the home and the public sphere, often underpinned by powerful cultural norms that attribute more potential value to a man's education and future than a woman's (Hattar-Pollara 2019, 245). This often results in boys and men being prioritised by their families to attend primary, secondary and tertiary education, while women are expected to perform more domestic duties at home (Donnelly & Muthiah, 2019).

Lack of security in refugee camps and host communities can make travel to and from educational institutions and/or training opportunities especially dangerous for women and young girls. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a brutal manifestation of gender inequality and is even more pronounced in refugee populations where women and girls are at increased risk of violence (Tappis, Freeman & Doocy, 2016). SGBV habitually arises in refugee camps and settlements as domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation (FGM). All are widely reported and acknowledged barriers to refugee girls and women seeking to access education (cf. Reynolds & Callanan, 2020; Donnelly & Muthiah, 2019; Lugova, Samad & Haque, 2020).

Gender inequality also affects the experience of female refugees once they are in universities. While attaining a HEI can bring socio-cultural prestige and provide a sense of forward momentum, it can also present challenges for maintaining cultural identity for female refugees when their studies take place away from home, with some studies showing that "educational and other success often came at a cost to their cultural identity, distancing them from some aspects of traditional community and cultural roles" (Galagher, 2021; Naylor et al., 2019, p. 2154). This concern is also discussed by Zeus (2011) who notes that female participation drops off markedly at the later stages of education due to cultural expectations that women should focus on family and domestic labour rather than pursuing higher education. In Mangan and Winter's (2017) study of refugees in North American HEIs, female students also reported a tension that came with challenging cultural norms from their home country by being a woman in higher education (p. 500).

There are many suggestions in the literature for how schools can counter these socio-cultural norms that prevent women from succeeding in HE. These include developing culturally and contextually relevant curriculums (Tuliao et al., 2017); providing access to female peer mentors (Gower et al., 2022); and locating schools closer to where students live to reduce the time and danger of long commutes (Das and Das, 2021). However, there is little emphasis in the literature on how universities and other higher education institutions can make themselves more receptive to the unique needs of female refugees, specifically.

There is also relatively little data describing enrolment across academic specialisms. Exceptions include a study that observes that female refugee students are overrepresented in nursing (Naylor et al., 2019), though nursing in general is a heavily gendered occupation, and reports that track global targeted efforts for increasing the enrollment of women and girls in particular disciplines, notably STEM+ (science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics and design) (Benevant et al., 2020). In 2019, for example, UN chief António Guterres marked the International Day of Women and Girls in Science by declaring that increasing the number of women and girls in STEM+ was "vital" to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2019). Global initiatives, like the partnership between the Canadian-based MasterCard Foundation's Scholarship Program (MCFSP)and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Ghana, give enrollment priority to females and displaced peoples (including refugees) (Appiah-Castel et al., 2020). While the partnership has resulted in increased enrollment of female refugees, there is little data that speaks to the retention or success of such enrollment. In the case of female refugees studying in Ghana and beyond, it

is not clear if these women are enrolling because of their own interest in pursuing a career in STEM, or because of the growing number of scholarships earmarked for STEM-specific disciplines. For this reason, there is a need for further research into the gendered decision-making processes of refugee students when it comes to selecting disciplines to study (Naylor et al., 2021, 2154), and the most appropriate ways to respect students' autonomy while recognising the pervasive effects of gendered socialisation and structural barriers to womens' inclusion in particular disciplines.

These findings illustrate that there can be deep-rooted cultural and social barriers that intersect in the lives of female refugees to detrimentally affect the up-take of educational opportunities in refugee camps and/or host communities. Setting up bridging programmes to HE will require careful attention to alleviating the impact of these burdens to ensure that there is equal participation across the sexes. Having substantive NGO provision and refugee support organisations, including dedicated programmes and projects for female refugees, has been proven to help ameliorate the impact of these barriers, particularly around SGBV and FGM (de Jong & Ataç, 2017; Özgür Keysan & Şentürk, 2021). Hosts of bridging programmes need to work in partnership with existing refugee support organisations to ensure that students have the necessary support outside the classroom to attend and fully participate in these programmes, including through the adequate provision of childcare if needed. In addition, bridging programmes need to undertake awareness raising work with the wider refugee community about the benefits - particularly for women - of attending HE and how this can work with, not against, cultural and social norms in refugee communities. Academic research shows that riding roughshod over existing social and cultural barriers in favour of more rights-based approaches to help girls and women can, in fact, contribute more to their marginalisation (Elias, 2010; cf. Burman, 1996). This work must be done sensitively and target power-holders in refugee communities to facilitate refugees to equitably and fully engage with bridging programmes for HE.

Language

A second key socio-cultural barrier identified in the literature is language, which affects engagement and classroom dynamics at all educational levels (Trudell & Cheffy, 2019). Several studies cite the need for some refugees to quickly learn a new language as a substantial impediment to accessing and succeeding in any educational environment (Naylor et al., 2019; Watkins et al., 2012). This can be more pronounced in higher education, where refugees must acquire a high level of proficiency in the local language of the hosting community to engage with the material, including specialised academic vocabulary and understanding of the rules and regulations of universities (Felix, 2016; Ferede, 2010; Shakya et al., 2012). This is compounded by a lack of explicitness in universities' conventions, bureaucratic processes, and norms, which can disadvantage students from non-privileged backgrounds and with less developed language skills (Sidhu, 2017). This issue intersects with gender; as Galegher (2021) highlights, female students with high domestic labour burdens (i.e., caregiving responsibilities) find it difficult to spend extra time developing the requisite academic language skills necessary for critical thinking and writing alongside their regular studies.

One example of a way in which HEIs can help overcome the language barrier is drawn from a study of Spanish universities that offer concurrent language training for refugee students, provided in both class-based settings and by Spanish student volunteers (Marcu, 2018). In the case of Syrian refugee students studying at Istanbul University, the University removes the language barrier by providing the entrance exam in Turkish, English, and Arabic, and offers free preparation courses to help grow students' competency in Turkish before commencing their university courses (Atesok, Komsuoglu, Yesim Ozer 2019, pp. 127, 131). Aras and Mohammed (2019) examine how Turkey's foreign policy has increasingly utilised scholarships for international students, including Syrian refugees, as a 'soft power' means of diplomacy and state-building (pp. 427, 428).

Class

A third key socio-cultural issue is class. In an ethnographic study of over 400 Congolese refugees, Clark-Cazak (2012) noted that social class is an overlooked dynamic in understanding barriers to higher education. Clark-Cazak's study unpacked the complex relationship between class, social power, and education, showing how gaining access to secondary and higher education can exacerbate existing class divides in situations of protracted displacement. The study highlighted how formal education was viewed by many as a way of maintaining social rank and cultural capital for refugees from upper- and middle-class backgrounds, entrenching pre-existing class divides. Despite the prominent role that cultural power and socio-economic dynamics have in mediating educational access, class is very seldom explicitly addressed as an issue in the relevant literature on refugee populations. In addition, higher education is almost always framed in academic literature and policy reports as universally transformative for all refugees, without accounting for differences of experience due to class. It is therefore important for practitioners to consider how specific aspects of class, including socio-economic inequality and cultural capital, intersect with other inequalities (such as gender and race) in helping or preventing refugees from accessing and succeeding in higher education. It is not necessarily enough therefore to help students get 'their foot in the door' if, as discussed above, there are vocabularies, languages, and norms at University that first generation students and students from lower socio-economic classes do not know how to engage with and benefit from.

As a final note, we note that literature often not only overlooks the adverse impacts of social and cultural barriers between refugee students and hosting HEIs, but also those that exist within host countries, which can act as barriers to refugees accessing higher education. Phillimore (2021, p. 1946) suggests that "[t]he role of receiving societies in supporting and providing the context for integration has not been systematically interrogated". As such, challenges within host societies, particularly prejudice against refugees and asylum seekers, and the broader politics of racialised and gender inequality, are important aspects for any educational programme to understand and respond to. We discuss these further in the following section on psychosocial barriers below.

[1] Literature often analyses the experiences of women and men as if they are two separate and homogeneous groups (Ramsay and Baker, 2019). There is very little attention to other intersectional dynamics such as social class, sexual orientation, family responsibilities and age, and how these factors interact with gender (Ibid., pp. 71, 80).

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Refugee access to higher education: psycho-social barriers and facilitators

There are numerous psycho-social barriers (relating to the intersection of social and psychological factors) facing refugees applying for, entering, and aiming to excel in tertiary education. Many of these challenges are left unacknowledged, as literature often focuses on the seemingly more 'practical' and visible barriers, such as the exclusionary legal frameworks or lack of affordability. These institutional barriers are not separate from psycho-social challenges but rather, are often interconnected and compounding. As Bajwa et al. (2017, p. 57) reports, displacement-related stressors affect how refugee students relate to the opportunities available to them. Anxiety, depression, flashbacks, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) related to previous trauma or violence can, as Bajwa et al. documents, "degrade survivors' self-esteem and sense of agency and control, which could affect the ability to overcome educational barriers." Refugee students are often unique from their counterparts in that they may have more severe histories of trauma, including but not limited to the deaths of family members and friends, the loss of home and personal property, physical violence, and sexual assault. Psychological trauma resulting from such experiences can be long-lasting and hinder concentration, social integration, and academic performance within a class setting (Grant and Francis, 2011), affecting students' likelihood of being accepted into HEIs and then succeeding if they are.

In addition to residual psychological effects of pre-arrival stress and trauma for refugee students, there are numerous exile-related stresses encountered post-arrival at HEIs. Some of these will be explored now, with a focus on the psycho-social impacts of financial responsibility, feelings of isolation, and discrimination.

Financial Responsibility

Earlier in this literature review we discussed financial barriers to higher education for refugees. As financial demands and limitations underpin psycho-social barriers for many refugees studying at university, it is worth revisiting here. Returning to a point made earlier, university

education often entails 'complex social roles and responsibilities', which 'may be negotiated not only at the scale of their local lives, but across transnational networks of sociality' (Ramsay and Baker 2019, p. 73). Being far from kinship networks and friends can be an isolating experience, as will be explored further shortly. Sending remittances can counter these feelings of isolation (or guilt) brought on by studying far from loved ones by enabling refugee university students to maintain a sense of familial belonging and inclusion (Peter, p. 230). At the same time, the pressure to send remittances and the financial strain this creates can compound psychological stress (King & Owens 2018, p. 74). While there is a growing body of literature on the detrimental effects of remittances on the mental health of refugees that send them, more studies are needed on the effects on refugee university students, specifically, and what can be done to minimise this stress.

There are often added financial challenges faced by female refugee students in HE; Hatoss and Huijser (2010) note that women, on top of the challenges to succeed in class, feel pressure to reduce financial burdens on their families by either contributing to childcare or working while enrolled in school, the latter a pressure also faced by male 'breadwinners'. This undermines the potential, noted by authors working on higher education for refugees such as Zeus (2011) and Mangan & Winter (2017), for education to bring about "positive transformation of life and identity (Ibid., p. 498)."

Isolation

Admission to HEIs can also disrupt refugee learners' personal lives in ways that compound their experiences of isolation. A physical move to HEIs can separate individuals from family and friends, who may remain in first countries of asylum in precarious or even dangerous circumstances. The mental load and anxiety of being separated and worried about those back 'home', as well as the possible pressures of having to financially support them, are significant burdens that refugees have to manage that peers and faculty members may be unaware of.

The transformations that learners may undergo in sites of higher education may be considered culturally inappropriate within the environments they came from. As Mangan (2017, p. 14) states, '[Higher education] can serve to alienate a student from their culture of origin, every step in higher education bringing them further away; whilst at the same time they may not feel accepted in the culture of their [Higher Education] institute either". It can be difficult forming new social connections on campus, particularly if there are significant cultural and/or class differences at hand; Mangan and Winters' (2017) study, for example, found that some refugee students in North American HEIs felt isolated from their peers when social gatherings entailed drinking alcohol, which they felt uncomfortable or unwilling to do because of religious/cultural reasons or because they could not afford to do so (p. 497).

Marginalisation

Closely connected with feelings of isolation, experiences of marginalisation and 'misrecognition' within universities serve to severely disrupt students' abilities to thrive in their studies even once they have overcome the significant barriers to accessing these highly

exclusive spaces (Mangan, 2017). As Mangan (2017) documents, refugee learner's intellectual contributions, life stories and ongoing experiences are rarely recognised and listened to within these settings, which have been historically structured to hear only the voices of their predominantly white, Western peers. Students with refugee backgrounds can end up being made to feel that they are 'token candidates' who are not really accepted within the social and educational mainstream of these institutions (Caxaj, Chau, & Parkins, 2021). O'Rourke (2011, p. 31) states that refugees often downplay the educational, linguistic and cultural challenges resulting from their displacement histories, and how these negatively affect their abilities to engage in HEIs. Instead, they may feel guilt and shame from social stigmas, which directly and in turn hinder their studies (Ibid.). Their identities are shrunk and 'invalidated' in a process that Mangan and Winter (2017, p. 494) notes involves 'dismissal, not understanding or recognising, or negative judgement' and a form of recognitive injustice.

The result of such discrimination with its racist underpinnings, as captured in Mangan's (2017) research, is that learners with refugee backgrounds are left "feeling distracted, stressed and unmotivated to attend, compounding already-existing challenges with learning" (p. 11). Kanno and Varghese (2010) refer to this as 'self-elimination', whereby refugee students withdraw from educational settings that they do not feel a right to participate in. Female refugee students are sometimes doubly marginalised; Mangan and Winters' (2017) study of refugee background students (RBS) in North American HEIs found that female RBSs encountered higher levels of feeling marginalised and invalidated than their male counterparts (p. 496).

Strategies to prevent experiences of invalidation and marginalisation must be adopted at every stage of people's educational journeys, and by every part of the system with which they interact. Bridging programmes, at the beginning of the enrollment journey, can help with some of the socialisation into university communities and systems that refugees may lack (O'Rourke, 2011). Within HEIs, research demonstrates the importance of educators being aware of the psycho-social challenges experienced by refugee learners; Burde et al. (2015) and Mangan's (2017) work highlights the psychological damage done to refugee learners when educators are 'oblivious' to the ways in which students' performances are impacted by their past traumas and ongoing experiences of structural discrimination (11). Mangan (2017) recommends that "on a micro-level of individual social interactions, enhanced training should be provided for staff working with students from refugee backgrounds to ensure that they are aware of the potential issues which might be impacting on their learning" (p. 15). Here, employing educators who themselves have displacement histories has been shown to increase empathy and contribute to educational spaces being seen as safe and supportive by students (see Greaves et al., 2019), but this requires shifts in hiring practices and a commitment to in-service training, amongst other structural changes.

Underpinning these recommendations, however, we are reminded by the advice offered by Burde et al. (2017), who highlight the need for approaching psycho-social barriers in a way that is compatible with refugees' own understandings of mental health and psycho-social support, as opposed to being based on Western models of pathology and intervention. The authors synthesise relevant evidence to show how the imposition of externally generated

models can cause more harm than good. Torre's (2021) work in Uganda expertly illustrates this as he documents outcomes of intervention in a refugee camp in Northern Uganda based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). The author demonstrates that efforts were experienced negatively by their intended 'beneficiaries', who said its approaches left them feeling more 'helpless' than before, while contributing to the 'medicalisation of poverty' through the effacement of the real structural barriers that were undermining communities' well-being (45).

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Refugee access to higher education: legal and institutional barriers and facilitators

According to many global human rights frameworks, refugees are entitled to higher education. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Articles 13 and 14), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child all recognize the right to tertiary education for all people, regardless of status (Kavuro 2013). The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (189 UNTS 137) also recognizes the fundamental rights of refugees specifically to access education. Despite these entitlements, only an estimated 5% of refugees are enrolled in tertiary education around the world (UNHCR, 2022).

There are significant legal hurdles that hinder this number from increasing. Many states do not subscribe to the above-listed frameworks, and do not permit non-nationals to apply to study at state universities (Platzer 2018, p. 194). Legal status is perhaps the most significant determinant to accessing HE, with most hosting countries requiring forcibly displaced students to have registered refugee status as a precondition for enrollment and access to education-related rights, such as acquiring residency permits and financial aid (Berg, 2018). Even if HEIs are supportive of receiving refugee students, national immigration systems may hinder processes. Refugees who may want to study in a third country, for example, can struggle to receive their Convention Travel Document (CTD,) preventing them from travelling and studying outside of their host country (White et al., 2022, p. 1). There are also examples of instances when refugees have been barred from scholarship programmes because of an assumption that they would soon be losing their refugee status, either because of an impending 'ceased circumstances' Cessation Clause or because of assumed repatriation

operations (Cole, 2016). There are also cases of governments failing to recognise online-based qualifications. Lebanon, for example, requires no more than 40 percent of a degree can be delivered virtually, and Jordan allows for up to 25 per cent (Reinprecht et al., 2021, p. 3214). Regulations may be loosening, however, with many HEIs around the world responding to mobility restrictions introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic by introducing new legislation that permits greater percentages of blended programmes to be delivered online (Ibid.).

The absence of explicit legal obstacles to enrollment in HE does not, however, guarantee the removal of institutional impediments to accessing tertiary education. Many universities, for example, have quotas that give priority to nationals over asylum-seekers and refugees (Atesok, Komsuoglu, Yesim Ozer 2019, pp. 122, 127), making it harder for the latter to gain admission. Even in contexts where there are institutional equity statements for 'vulnerable' applicants, refugees and asylum-seekers are not always included in this category. In the case of Australia, forcibly-displaced applicants are often ineligible to apply for financial aid earmarked for vulnerable individuals, demonstrating a tension between market-driven recruitment and organisational equity mandates (Baker et al., 2021, as seen in Lee 2021, p. 790). On the other hand, however, refugees can feel 'singled out' if they are allocated to a separate category, even if the intention of this is to recognise their different situation. Some studies show, for example, negative psycho-social implications at the university level when refugee students are seen as a distinctive category from their fellow students because of their refugee status. A study by Mangan and Winter (2017) similarly shares that refugee background students (RBSs) felt they were placed into a sort of social hierarchy where they were made to feel inferior compared to others (p. 494). As Dryden-Peterson et al. (2019) point out, refugees are embedded in multiple and overlapping contexts, each with unique exclusions and implications that can make it hard to predict the specific outcomes of certain interventions or categories (p. 346).

In addition to the need to prove refugee status, applicants are typically required to provide qualifications from their country of origin to demonstrate eligibility to study in the programme of their choice within HEIs in the host country. This can present a significant challenge in the event paperwork was lost or damaged during war or flight from instability (Felix, 2016; Loo, 2016; Tobenkin, 2006). Even if such documentation can be provided, applicant qualifications or non-degree bridging programmes may not be recognised by the HEI (Mangan & Winter 2017, p. 495). Admissions requirements often differ between institutions; in the UK, for example, language requirements are set by individual HEIs, and academic qualifications, which are processed via the UKNARIC (National Academic Recognition Centre), are processed differently from one HEI to the next (Détourbe and Goastellec 2018, p. 10). These processes, which occur separate from national visa requirements, make for a highly fragmented and often confusing experience for refugee applicants attempting to prove eligibility to study in the UK. In contrast, Détourbe and Goastellec (2018), who present a comprehensive comparison of access to HE for refugee students in Germany and England, share how Germany's adoption of multiple institutional mechanisms at national and regional levels enable the recognition of foreign students' qualifications, including both those of formal institutions and non-degree bridging programmes. One such mechanism takes the form of Uni-assist, an association created in 2003 by the German government and an

association of public and privately-funded HEIs that provides centralised evaluation of secondary-school qualifications as part of the process of applying to HEIs for international students (European Students Union, 2017, p. 28). Though this service is accepted by many Germany HEIs and is either free or affordable (applicants can use the service for free for up to three applications to HEIs, or for a nominal fee afterwards), it does not review post-secondary qualifications, for which applicants need to contact the HEI directly (Ibid.). If documents are incomplete or missing, Germany also offers an Aptitude Test for Academic Studies ('TestAs'), which tests cognitive skills and subject-specific knowledge and provides applicants with an equivalent qualification that can be used for admission to tertiary education (Ibid., 29).

Oftentimes institutional policies that govern the enrollment process become more restrictive as public sentiment towards incoming migrant populations becomes more critical (Watenpaugh et al., 2014). Even if this does not bar the application or intake of refugee students, it can result in more confusing and complicated bureaucratic requirements, which hinder refugees from applying in the first place (Berg, 2018). Compounding this challenge, there is often a lack of advice and guidance for refugee applicants and students on legal regulations and frameworks, such as required documentation and legal rights (Atesok, Komsuoglu, Yesim Ozer 2019, p. 124). Increasing access to clear and up-to-date advice on navigating legal and institutional regulations is perhaps one of the greatest leverage points for overcoming the confusion that prevents refugees from applying for HE. As stated by Détourbe and Goastellec's (2018) study of HE access in England, the likelihood of refugees accessing higher education "is tightly conditioned by access to (and the ability to make informed choices from) customised and well-informed advice, information and guidance about each HEI's requirements and targeted support" (p. 10).

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Refugee access to Higher Education: the Role of Technology

With the COVID-19 pandemic having displaced millions of students worldwide from their physical classrooms and forcing teachers and students, many for the first time, to adapt to virtual or hybrid forms of study, an abundance of new literature looking at the challenges and opportunities of Education Technology (EdTech) emerged. Yet digital technology and Internet-based learning is nothing new for many refugee students around the world, nor are their advantages and pitfalls. There has long been increasing emphasis in research that recognises the role that digital technology can play in the lives of refugees, from aiding in migration journeys (Latonero and Kift 2018; Dekker et al., 2019; Alencar et al., 2018) to

accessing services and opportunities in settlements (Worrell 2021; Clarke and Tukundane, 2021). EdTech is also heralded within literature as a crucial resource in the context of increasing access to education and improving learning outcomes among marginalised populations, including refugees (Dahya 2016; Stannard and Tauson 2018; World Bank 2016). While access to digital technologies amongst refugee populations is uneven, there has been a steady increase in digital offerings directed at improving access to HE for refugee populations. The rapid uptake of mobile phones, laptops, and tablets, along with the increasing affordability and connectivity of the Internet, has paved the way for new ways of learning for refugees (Dahya and Dryden-Peterson, 2017).

There are numerous innovative examples highlighted in literature of how technology helps to overcome some of the barriers to HE that we have presented so far in this document. The challenge of language limitations, for example is addressed by American NGO 'Paper Airplanes', which matches college-age refugees with volunteers from around the world for virtual one-on-one tutoring to prepare for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam (Streitwieser et al.,2019, p. 486). The issue of isolation, as well, can be overcome through virtual social networks that connect refugee students with peers from around the world (Dahya & Dryden-Peterson 2017; Tobin and Hieker 2021, p. 4). Other examples highlight how challenges around isolation and marginalisation are addressed by Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which have widely been promoted by some HEI and non-governmental initiatives as 'a solution for the integration of disadvantaged groups into higher education such as refugees' (Halkic & Arnold, 2019). These open online courses can be designed to provide instruction for refugee students on remedial and pastoral subjects to prepare students for higher education, which can be supplemented with in-person instruction in refugee settlements or elsewhere. Not only can connected digital learning prepare students for HE, but it can also support instructors themselves; an increasing number of HEIs around the world are using online education platforms as a means of scaling up Teacher Professional Development (TPD) activities to accommodate refugee students in often under-resourced educational contexts (Kennedy & Laurillard, 2019).

Unangst and Crea (2020) highlight Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) in the United States as an example of a HEI that provides an intersectional approach to online educational opportunities for refugee students around the world through their Global Education Movement (GEM) program. The program, which offers online degrees to refugee students based in Lebanon, Kakuma (Kenya), Dzaleka (Malawi), Rwanda, and South Africa, offers bachelor's degrees in communications, management, and health-care management. The program is unique in that the curriculum is tailored to the academic levels of each individual student, with advancement based on skill development rather than dedicated hours, as well as providing remote internships as a core component of the curriculum (SNHU 2019, seen in Unangst & Crea 2020, p. 240).

Yet despite the potential of technology to increase access to HE for refugees, there are also concerns of it perpetuating or compounding pre-existing structural inequalities. While there is still relatively little research that looks at the immediate and long-term benefits and challenges of MOOCs among refugees, there are applicable lessons that can be learned from

MOOC user experiences in fragile contexts (see Murugesan, Nobes, & Wild, 2017). EdTech requires reliable and affordable access to technology (i.e. laptops, headphones), technology infrastructure (i.e. stable Internet connection, electricity), and computer skills. Even if one has access to the necessary tools and skills, critiques of online education for refugees mirror general critiques of MOOCs, including the lack of teacher presence, the difficulty in enacting social support networks in navigating the courses (Witthaus 2018), and their lack of cultural adaptation to specific contexts (Crea & Sparnon 2017). As Risam (2018) states, there is need for an "ongoing interrogation and remediation of the influences of colonialism and neocolonialism on digital cultural heritage and knowledge production" (p. 59). Literature suggests that digital forms of learning alone do not ultimately improve learning outcomes for refugee students or end 'learning poverty' (UNESCO, 2018; World Bank, 2019). Furthermore, it is important to consider the preferences and aspirations of refugee students themselves; Fincham's (2020) study among Syrian refugee students found that they preferred more formal, class-based formats of higher education than virtual settings, as they felt they would perform better academically if in the presence of classmates and away from the precarity of camp life. With these limitations in mind, there is a growing body of literature that suggests that EdTech should not be viewed as the sole solution to barriers in refugee HE, but rather as part of a wider solution mindful of structural and material inequalities (Bergin 2017; Tobin & Heiker 2021; World Bank, 2016). One of these solutions that has gained growing attention in literature, and the focus of the FFA, is the 'blended' learning model that provides both online and in-class elements. This model will be explored further in the next section.

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The Blended in Blended Learning

In the previous section on EdTech, we explored some of the pitfalls of technologically-based forms of HE for refugees, including barriers presented when students lack the skills or infrastructure needed. Yet technology, if used alongside other approaches instead of as a stand-alone solution, can be a powerful tool for increasing access and improving outcomes in education for refugees (Al-Husban & Shorman, 2020; Bhagat, 2020). One of these tools is 'blended learning', which refers to the range of educational possibilities that come with combining the internet, digital media, and technology with established classroom forms and practices that can require the physical co-presence of teacher and students.

There are numerous studies that explore the benefits of blended learning, including blended learning in HE contexts that address the unique challenges faced by refugee students. A study by Al-Husban and Shorman (2020), for example, looks at how the Arab Open University in Jordan provides Syrian students with access to the Learning Management System (LMS), which mitigates the challenges of students' time restraints due to needing to work to cover tuition costs. The LMS limits in-person lectures to just once per week and provides students with the opportunity to participate in online discussion forums throughout the remainder of the week (Ibid., p. 48). Similarly, a survey of refugee students in Lebanon and Jordan by Reinprecht et al. (2021) demonstrates a preference for self-guided blended programmes that allow students to study around their work schedules (p. 3212). Another barrier that blended programmes can overcome are linguistic limitations; Ruipérez-Valiente et al. (2020) explore that while global providers of MOOCs frequently include a significant element of English in their delivery, which excludes large numbers of refugees, the platform 'Edraak' has been embraced by Jordanian universities to deliver blended learning to students entirely in Arabic. Within the African context, a study by Burkardt, Krause and Rivas Velarde (2019) looked at an 8-month blended learning course for professional development provided by the University of Geneva (UNIGE) , with a focus on healthcare. The authors addressed the challenge of precarity in the refugee camps, restrictive government legislation concerning allowing refugees to access HE, and mobility patterns of refugees (in this case, travelling back and forth between Somalia and Dadaab camp) by the UNIGE partnering with Somalian HEIs to permit students to complete the course in Mogadishu if they preferred (p. 5).

Yet there are also challenges associated with blending learning, as experienced by the FFA team first-hand and supported by literature. With a programme team developing the curriculum and a separate tutor team teaching in the two learning centres (Kampala and Kiryandogo), we found considerable variances in student skills, culture, language, and material capital, compounded by the difficulty in communicating across locations. These challenges are mirrored in a study by Crea and Sparnon (2017), who noted a lack of cohesion between faculty members delivering blended HE programs in Malawi, Kenya, and Jordan due to geographical distance between them and unstable Internet connections that made regular

digital communication difficult (pp. 10,11). The lack of readiness or familiarity among educators is also a significant potential barrier to the adoption of blended learning, as explored by Buluma and Walimbwa (2021) within the Uganda context. They recommend that teacher trainers should deliberately adopt the use of blended pedagogy to enable trainees the ability to incorporate blended learning more readily into their teaching.

Dridi et al. (2020) detail the technological barriers that minimise the impact of blended learning, particularly in refugee settlements, and note the cascading effect of poor connectivity and infrastructure on the sense of isolation that refugees experience in pursuing their education through blended models. Murugesan, Nobes, and Wild (2017) present a MOOC designed for students in the global South with poor Internet connectivity that overcame infrastructural limitations by intentionally designing modules that require low bandwidth. Regarding the issue of isolation, a report by Stannard and Tauson (2018), which looked at popular components of contextualised blended programs, suggests a flexible curriculum that enables students to be self-paced, and the provision of plenty of online communities, such as group discussion forums and tutorials.

Literature also emphasises the need for blended learning programmes to be culturally specific (Crea & Sparnon, 2017; Tobin & Hieker, 2021). As Onguko (2014) states, "in a context where there is lack of access to electricity, Internet is not guaranteed, and schools lack basic amenities including clean and safe learning spaces, learning materials such as textbooks and facilities such as desks, blended learning must be redefined with consideration of the contextual realities'' (p. 78). In fact, one of the main reasons the FFA team found it so difficult to repurpose existing Open Educational Resources (OERs) was because of their frequent lack of cultural relevance to refugee and Ugandan contexts. We further note, echoing Ferreira & Lemgruber (2019), Wolfenden & Andolfini (2019) and Amiel (2013), that how Open Educational Resources (OER) is conceptually framed can obscure local contexts and pedagogic and cultural marginalisation may occur with their use. We urge caution in the use of OER in refugee contexts due to these potentially erosive qualities.

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Bridging to where? Engaging with the political economies of refugee education

As has already been explored throughout this literature review, there are many complex and overlapping factors shaping access to and success in HE for refugee students. This chapter opened with a consideration of refugees' aspirations for pursuing HE. Here, we will consider some of the motivations that exist within the wider 'political economy' - or the relationships between governments, society, and markets - as they relate to refugees and higher education, and discuss some of the implications of this for how refugees access and experience HE.

To date, the most common objective of bridging programmes has been to assist students in gaining access to HEIs (Burde et al., 2017, p. 625). Yet literature increasingly questions whether it is enough to focus on access as the ultimate objective of bridging programmes. Brockhoff,

Krieger and Meierrieks (2014), for example, question the quality of access, pointing out that "region and economic structures may matter in order for access to have a positive effect, as might the quality of education and its relevance to job prospects" (seen in Burde et al., 2017, p. 627). A study by Marginson (2011, seen in Cin and Doğan 2021, p. 302) also questions access to HE as the ultimate objective. "Equally important as the factors impeding access," the study suggests, "are the questions of what happens after enrolment or access is achieved. Therefore, equity, in the context of higher education, should investigate educational processes, relations, and opportunities which expand well beyond access" (Marginson 2011, as seen in Cin & Dogan 2021, p. 302).

This reminds us of the need to consider the dominant discourses and motivations underpinning HE interventions among states, policy makers, and practitioners, as well as the way they inform curriculum and educational outcomes. This section will draw upon literature that provides answers to these questions, looking specifically at three primary discourses around HE for refugees: first, as a form of humanitarianism and development; second, to 'deradicalise' refugees as part of an agenda of conflict prevention; and third, to promote self-reliance and economic competitiveness within a neoliberal paradigm.

Humanitarianism and Development

Education has long been a core element of humanitarian responses to forced migration around the world, promoted by global humanitarian and human rights paradigms including the Education in Emergency (EiE) framework, the Humanitarian Charter, Education for All (Brun & Shuayb 2020, pp. 21-22) and the UNHCR's 'Refugee Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion' (UNHCR, 2019). Numerous studies look at examples of HEIs, governments, and private donors enabling access to and success in HE for refugees under the banner of humanitarianism and human rights (Ergin, de Wit & Leask, 2019; Menashy & Zakharia 2020; Streitwieser et al., 2019).

Despite the prevalence of the humanitarian and rights-based discourse behind refugee HE, several conceptual challenges arise. The line between humanitarianism and development is often blurry, for example, and complex challenges around education for refugees compounds this ambiguity. Whereas humanitarianism is focused on short-term responses, the protracted nature of humanitarian crises, including forced migration, challenges the boundaries between temporary humanitarianism and longer-term development goals (Brun & Shuayb 2020, p. 21). Implications for this are discussed by Shakya et al. (2010), who in their study of refugee resettlement efforts in Canada point out the often problematic overlap and tensions between politics and ethics that drive humanitarianism (p. 74). Interventions rooted in 'depoliticised' humanitarian policies, they argue, which hold ethical aims but lack capacity for promoting long-term justice or equity, are at risk of perpetuating the 'compassionate repression' of the agency and interests of refugees (p. 75), a stance supported by other refugee scholars (Nyers 1999; Malkki 2007; Fassin 2005).

The growth of EdTech, discussed previously in this literature review, has recently come to the forefront of humanitarianism; a study by Menashy and Zakharia (2020) looks at 'digital

humanitarianism' funded by the private sector for Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, which distributes online digital learning platforms and courses grounded in the discourse of humanitarianism and aid. While many private donors, which include big name multinationals like Ikea, Google, and Microsoft (Menashy and Zaharia 2020, p. 323), claim that refugee empowerment is their primary incentive, the authors suggest that privately-funded digital humanitarianism in education is often closely aligned with businesses' profit motivations, with their involvement in the refugee sector fulfilling a corporate social responsibility (CSR) mandate and elevating the brand's image among consumers (p. 323). It is very hard to establish channels of accountability in the provision of EdTech too; Twigt's (2022) study on Iraqi refugees in Jordan shows that as more technologies have been provided to refugees, there has been an abdication of responsibility from UNHCR to provide particular support and services, while technological innovations have been seen as 'panaceas' for issues that are often much more structural and deeply political in nature.

Beyond Menashy and Zakharia's study of digital humanitarianism for Syrian refugees, it is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate the motivation of humanitarianism from other drivers of refugee HEI. Streitwieser et al.'s 2020 study of US-based HEIs reminds us that there are often overlapping and conflicting interests at play, notably between humanitarian/rights-based interventions and economic interests (p. 420). The interests of HEIs and of state institutions are often tightly bound, they suggest, all influenced by dominant discourses around neoliberalism and globalization (Ibid.). Yet these values are not necessarily incompatible; Streitwiser et al. (2019) discuss how the need for HEIs in the U.S. to appeal to students and donors mean that they are more inclined to support refugee HE as a humanitarian endeavour while also boosting their public image as a caring institution (p. 489).

'Desecuritisation' and Conflict Prevention

One of the dominant assumptions in policy-based literature on HE is that the absence of educational opportunities results in youth disengaging from broader societal and political structures, making them prone to radicalisation. Higher education has increasingly become seen by governments as an ideological tool for the 'desecuritisation' of students that may be perceived as a potential security threat (Sahar & Kaunert 2022, p. 189), defined as "the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining process of the political sphere" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 4). Within this agenda, HE promotes the deradicalisation of refugee students' ideo-politics through curriculum, norms, and institutional practices (Sahar and Kaunrt 2022, p. 190). These can take various forms; Streitwieser et al. (2020) give the example of how HEIs in the United States facilitated desecuritisation of undocumented and migrant students through advocacy measures and taking part in initiatives such as the University Alliance for Refugees and At-Risk Migrants (UARRM) (p. 409).

Literature points to the limitations of the desecuritisation objective. A study by Burde et al. (2017), for example, which examines the relationship between peace education programs and conflict, shares that while there are positive results in reshaping attitudes and behaviours among children (pp. 619-620), there remains little evidence about the long-term efficacy of

education in reducing conflict and violence (p. 634). Another problem with this way of thinking is that it suggests a 'ticking time bomb' thesis, i.e. that it is only a matter of time before youth become radicalised unless they receive an educational intervention. This perspective has been heavily criticised (Burde et al., 2017), and Jungblut et al. (2020, p. 336) shows how the increasing urgency among governments and HEIs for the social integration of refugees in order to counter this 'threat' has driven a much more top-down - and in many ways counter-productive - approach to refugee education and inclusion.

Neoliberal Ideology and Economic Competitiveness

In addition to desecuritisation, governments around the world have increasingly turned to HEIs to cultivate the skill sets needed for ensuring economic growth and competitiveness in their countries (Hall 2015, p. 29; OECD, 2012). Literature suggests that the inclusion of refugees in HE promotes greater integration into the host country's economy (Kondakci and Onen, 2019; Streitwieser et al., 2018), namely by increasing their employability there (Streitwieser & Bruck, 2018).

Easton-Calabria and Omata (2018) challenge the promotion of self-reliance within development discourse, however, pointing out how it is largely rooted in implicit efforts of donors and policy makers to mitigate long-term displacement costs through migrant economic self-sufficiency. The theme of refugee self-reliance has indeed become increasingly prominent within neoliberal development discourses, which emphasise less intervention by governments or the humanitarian regime. Self-reliance has recently been heralded by the UNHCR, for example, as "an integral and underpinning part of any durable solution" (UNHCR Handbook for Self-Reliance, 2015, Book 2, 1). Easton-Calabria and Omata remind us that even though development efforts have long been aligned with the market-oriented philosophies of neoliberalism, over the last decade, refugee self-reliance has been given renewed attention among governments and the refugee regime, mostly due to the unprecedented levels of protracted displacement and dwindling funding (2018, pp. 3-4). Efforts to facilitate refugees' access to HEIs may thus be a pragmatic compromise within this budget-conscious humanitarian agenda, with implications for how seriously questions around equity, quality and structural change are taken.

Furthermore, the objective of HE as a pathway towards economic self-reliance places emphasis on the benefit for the host country that HE affords, rather than the student themselves (Arar et al., 2020, p. 196). Earlier in this literature review, within the discussion on student aspirations, we referenced the disconnect between refugee educational goals and wider politico-economic paradigms and the neoliberal premise of self-reliance that is heralded by policy-makers, as education is increasingly conceptualised as a key component for national economic performance (Durazzi, 2019, p. 1800). Within this strategy, HEIs are incentivised by governments to prioritise certain disciplines over others, depending on what better serves the states' economic interests (Ibid., p. 1801; see also George, 2006; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Pritchard, 2011). On the other hand, and as discussed in the Scoping Tool, educators may themselves feel conflicted over the advice they provide students, based on

labour market knowledge, around what degrees they should pursue. More prestigious degrees, such as engineering, may not have the best employment prospects for graduates in particular contexts (as is seen among Syrians in Lebanon), and programme organisers - acutely aware of the significant costs invested in students' educations - may wish to direct possible applicants to more employable degrees. While this can end up working for both students and the labour market, it can also efface student autonomy and reduce educational initiatives to their most instrumental form.

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