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for better integration
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Stakeholder engagement in
the practice-research-policy
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education policy

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Loes van der Graaf**

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DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Multi-stakeholder approach for better integration of refugee students: Stakeholder engagement in the practice-research-policy transfer in refugee education policy

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Abstract

Ample research has shown the importance of collaboration between practitioners, researchers, and policy makers to ensure holistic, inclusive, and effective policy making, particularly in the field of refugee education. Many countries, however, still face challenges in engaging with stakeholders during all the stages of the practice – research – policy transfer in the context of refugee education in a meaningful and effective way. The unique and distinct needs of refugee students in education systems require extensive collaboration among schools, service providers, and (refugee) communities to collect evidence whether and how refugee students' needs are met. Hence, a multi-stakeholder approach or “whole-of-a-society” approach is one of the prerequisites for designing inclusive refugee education policies. This paper highlights the importance of stakeholder engagement at all stages of the practice – research – policy transfer, and maps key stakeholders in refugee education in Europe.

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Introduction

Various studies have aimed to understand the detachment between research, practice and policy making in the context of public policies, including education. In a field with a highly practical application such as refugee education, this detachment is detrimental and calls for a closer connection to ensure that educational theory is combined with, and strengthened by empirical evidence on what works, why, when and for whom. The main challenges preventing a closer connection are often associated with the lack of mutual understanding of what comprises useful evidence, as well as misinterpretation of policies and research.

The aim of the paper is to clarify the process of stakeholder engagement in the transmission of evidence from research into practice and policy making in the context of refugee education. Stakeholder engagement in the practice-research-policy transfer¹ is a particular area of interest as the paper argues that a range of stakeholders at different geographic and social levels can facilitate this transfer by working together to design and conduct research, redesign practices and policies based on evidence, interpret research results and policy, considering the context sensitivity.

Section 1. highlights current gaps in data and research on refugee education and the challenges for policy makers to use the limited data available for holistic and inclusive refugee education. It also offers background information on areas to consider for the integration of refugee students in schools as well as on the key role that education stakeholders play to support this process. Section 2. draws on a conceptual framework of the practice-research-policy transfer to describe how and when stakeholders could be engaged in this transfer. It also outlines the current refugee education stakeholder environment in Europe. A conclusive section draws on the findings of the previous sections and provides suggestions for greater stakeholder engagement in the practice – research – policy transfer to promote the inclusion² of refugee students through education.

¹ In this paper, the authors use the term “transfer” to refer to a complex phenomenon of relationships and interactions between research, practice, and policy, going beyond linear one-dimensional relationship. The term is further conceptualised in the Annex A.

² In this paper, the authors use the terms “integration” and “inclusion” interchangeably. The nuanced differences between the two concepts are nevertheless acknowledged – integration emphasises the difference/otherness of the group, and their acceptance in the host society upon the condition of the group making efforts to “fit in”; while inclusion celebrates the differences of every member of the society, which can positively contribute to it, including refugees and immigrants (Dijkshoorn, 2016^[4]).

1. An overview of refugee education research and practice for policy making

Understanding current trends and gaps in research and evidence on education for refugee students is key to analyse stakeholder engagement in the practice – research – policy transfer (see Section 2.) in refugee education. This section provides this background knowledge and claims that collaboration between education practitioners, researchers and policy makers is of great importance to ensure that the complex needs of refugee students are addressed. This section also presents the main research questions and methodology to investigate how practice, research and policy can better inform each other.

1.1. Background and context

The recent rise in refugee flows and asylum applications has increased pressure on European countries to develop strategies to effectively integrate new arrivals into European societies. Regardless of the efforts in the last decade, refugee and immigrant students continue to be placed at a disadvantage in different areas of life (Koehler, 2018^[1]). Research has shown that education is one of the most important paths to the structural integration of young refugees (Fazel et al., 2012^[2]). Education to refugee students can be provided in various formats and settings, such as reception centres and camps through non-formal education methods, introductory and preparatory classes or after-school integration programmes, and mainstream formal education (Koehler, 2017^[3]).

1.1.1. *Holistic and inclusive education for refugee students*

The learning needs of refugee students often exceed the needs of native students, for example due to specific linguistic and psychosocial challenges they face (Dijkshoorn, 2016^[4]). The design of refugee education policies requires a holistic approach to be able to respond to the complex set of needs of refugee students, in terms of their learning, social and emotional well-being as well as their linguistic and cultural integration into host countries (Arnot and Pinson, 2005^[5]). Besides the general need for communication and a sense of belonging, refugee students also need safety and support in overcoming possible traumatic experiences (Herzog-Punzenberger, Le Pichon-Vorstman and Siarova, 2017^[6]). All these factors need to be considered in developing individual, interpersonal and institutional approaches in refugee education (Cerna, 2019^[7]).

Therefore, additional efforts are needed to ensure education is inclusive for refugee students. Inclusive education can be defined as “an on-going process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 126^[8]). Carter and Abawi (2018, p. 2^[9]) state that “inclusion is defined as successfully meeting student learning needs regardless of culture, language, cognition, gender, gifts and talents, ability, or background”. Besides catering for individual educational needs, schools play a critical role in helping refugee students find some sense of safety (Thomas, 2016^[10]), the stability of daily structure and a sense of normalcy in their lives, as well as opportunities to develop the language and technical skills necessary for future employment

(O'Rourke, 2015^[11]). As SIRIUS puts it “educational policies (as well as practice) for educational inclusion of refugee students should support the development of a feeling of *arrival*, i.e., a feeling that the country and local area in which children access education are places in which they and their families can situate their new home” (Kakos and Teklemariam, 2021, p. 21^[12]). For this to happen a holistic approach to educational inclusion is necessary, encouraging multidisciplinary, multiagency collaborations for the development of multidimensional interventions.

1.1.2. Challenges to overcome

Currently, research on refugees and immigrants in Europe is expanding rapidly in response to the 2014 refugee and immigrant wave and the need for effective approaches to their integration. However, there is insufficient research and data on refugees that can be comparable across European countries. Evidence needed to inform policy making on refugee education is limited, fragmented and case specific (Cerna, 2019^[7]). There is lack of consistency of terminology and concepts in research as well as variation in data collection methodologies (European Union, United Nations, 2018^[13]). In particular, Pastoor (2016^[14]) and Bonin (2017^[15]) note the lack of comprehensive, systematic data on the situation of refugee students in European schools. Wiseman and Bell (2021^[16]) also point out to the lack of standardised and disaggregateable data, as well as extremely localised nature of the data that is available. There are some promising examples to address the issue of data availability, such as the IAB-BAMF-SOEP-Refugee Study in Germany; the planned monitoring system for the implementation of the Swiss Integration Agenda at the national level; and Refugee Education Management Information System (REMIS), which would feed into the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)'s Education Management Information System (EMIS)³ at the global level. However, along with the data availability issue researchers further highlight the capacity issue – referring to the ability of policy and practice to effectively use data for understanding the needs of refugee students in education and gaps in provision (Cerna, 2019^[7]).

According to Bonin (2017, p. 44^[15]), “as the current situation is basically without precedent, the existing empirical research provides a rather weak basis for inferring what could work best to support educational development of this target group [refugees]”. In this line, several international organisations recognise that there is a clear need for a more robust evidence base for refugee education. This can only be achieved through a collaborative approach, focusing on “what works, how, for whom, where, and under what condition” (Save the Children, UNHCR, Pearson, 2017, p. 10^[17]).

Ample research has shown the importance of collaboration between practitioners, researchers, and policy makers to ensure holistic, inclusive, and effective policy making, particularly in the field of education (Koehler, 2018^[1]; Huddleston and Wolffhardt, 2016^[18]; Wolffhardt, Conte and Huddleston, 2019^[19]). However, various challenges can influence interaction between research, practice, and policy. For example, Ion et al. (2019, p. 2^[20]) report that educational research is perceived as “too small, not well-organised, and the results are not effectively communicated or shared”. Furthermore, research and evidence may be comprehensive, but not meet policy makers' needs or may not be presented in a language that is understandable to policy makers (Levin, 2013^[21]). Additionally, evidence-based education programmes limit the opportunities for practitioners to adjust programmes to their own context, based on their own judgment and needs (Ion et al., 2019^[20]).

Currently, the three domains of practice, research and policy are not sufficiently linked and integrated. For example, local or ad hoc initiatives are not always evaluated and the question arises of what constitutes an acceptable evidence base for policy making (Oliver and Boaz, 2019^[22]). Wiseman and Bell (2021^[16]), for example, emphasise the need for a more nuanced knowledge on teacher preparation to work with the

³ An EMIS can be defined as “a system for the collection, integration, processing, maintenance and dissemination of data and information to support decision-making, policy analysis and formulation, planning, monitoring and management at all levels of an education system” (UNESCO, 2008^[111]).

unique refugee communities, and the identifiers and impact of trauma and identity on learning and performance.

The challenges and gaps in practice, research and policy development require practitioners, researchers, and policy makers to develop new ways of working by understanding the needs and priorities of the others, building on common ideas, and developing a common language for communication (Treadway, 2015^[23]). Oliver and Boaz (2019^[22]) present three clear areas where significant work is needed to better link practice, research, and policy making:

- *Transforming knowledge production.* Firstly, it is crucial to “understand who is involved in shaping and producing the evidence base” (Oliver and Boaz, 2019, p. 5^[22]). For instance, funders’ priorities influence the direction of research. Involving stakeholders in the process and incorporating their perspectives is also important but often overlooked.
- *Transforming, translation and mobilisation.* Sufficient, high-quality data, both localised and standardised, is needed for research to be useful. Additionally, if it cannot make its way to policy makers for review, it has little chance for practical implementation. Effective design and implementation of policies, with in-built evaluation and monitoring, requires that researchers, practitioners, and policy makers create opportunities to collaborate and reach consensus.
- *Transforming decision making.* This area involves the role of research and researchers in supporting decisions of practice and policy making. Further, appropriate methods must be used to determine the impact of decision making on society.

Wiseman and Bell (2021^[16]) highlight extremely localised nature of data on refugee education interventions worldwide, which is difficult to aggregate and used for nation-wide policy interventions. They further emphasise the important role of governments in ensuring the collection of large-scale data on refugee students needs, learning obstacles and outcomes. This can be done by mandating or providing incentives to subnational education units to provide refugee-specific data to be then made available to researchers and educators alike for analysis and interpretation of refugee student and teacher needs within their educational system. To do this the need for this kind of data must be recognised and valued at each level of education, policy, and decision-making. In the absence of systematic disaggregated data on refugee students at the national level, teachers and schools become important actors in data collection themselves. Schools and communities (given students’ learning territories expand beyond formal settings) can collect and make available data that ensures the privacy of refugee students and their families that can be used in conjunction with other data that their educational system provides for evaluation and accountability purposes (Wiseman and Bell, 2021^[16]).

The current paper aims to explore how successful practices in refugee education can function as sources of evidence for researchers, and subsequently be translated into policy recommendations (in a bottom-up approach). It also discusses how such evidence can reach policy makers in a language that appeals to them, addresses the needs of the system, and suits the context and culture of decision making. Finally, the paper highlights the importance of collaboration and consultation with stakeholders at all stages of the practice – research – policy transfer, and maps some of the key stakeholders in refugee education in Europe.

1.2. Areas to consider for the integration of refugee students in schools

Local practices and interventions can provide evidence on approaches that work well in addressing the complex and diverse needs of refugee students and ensuring their inclusion in school and society. Refugee students often face a more complex set of challenges to their academic performance. Besides possible interruptions in learning, many refugees experienced trauma and separation from family, cultural dissonance, lack of host country language proficiency, and limited financial resources (Bal and Arzubiga,

2014_[24]). Refugee students often need to take on roles and responsibilities within their family beyond their age, for example due to their enhanced knowledge of the local language acquired through schooling. These as well as many other challenges and circumstances affect the learning progress, academic achievement, and subsequent success in life of refugee students (Reynolds and Bacon, 2018_[25]).

For this reason, Reynolds and Bacon (2018_[25]) recommend five areas that must be considered in the design of school-based interventions for refugee education. They include: i) school leadership and culture; ii) teachers and teaching; iii) mental and behavioural health; iv) after-school programmes; v) school-family and school-community partnerships. It is also important to consider ways in which practices can be expanded, namely scaling-out, scaling-up and institutionalising promising practices.

1.2.1. School leadership and culture

At this level, the cultural and linguistic learning environment of the school is designed in a way that either promotes or hinders the inclusion of refugee students. According to Scanlan and López (2014_[26]), school leaders should promote socio-cultural integration, cultivate language proficiency, and ensure academic achievement. They need to ensure that processes and products are in place that facilitate these elements.

1.2.2. Teachers and teaching

Within schools, teachers play the most prominent role in ensuring inclusive education for refugee students. A literature review by Reynolds and Bacon (2018_[25]) finds that many teachers lack the knowledge and competences to account for the psychological traumas of refugee students (e.g., research by Pastoor (2015_[27]) in Norway) or lack sufficient teaching resources and tools to tailor mainstream pedagogies to individual needs.

1.2.3. Mental and behavioural health

Refugee students are more likely to suffer from poor mental health (e.g., Sullivan and Simonson (2016_[28])), but are simultaneously less likely to seek mental health support (e.g., Ellis et al. (2011_[29])). A Dutch study finds that 57.8% of refugee students were identified to be in need of mental health services, while only 12.7% actually accessed mental health services. As refugee students spend a significant time in school, the school can identify and provide mental health services, or raise awareness of the importance of such support (Reynolds and Bacon, 2018_[25]).

1.2.4. After-school programmes

Various studies, such as the 2018 SIRIUS Watch Report (Lipnickienė, Siarova and Van der Graaf, 2018_[30]), demonstrate the value of after-school programmes for at-risk students for their academic, social, and personal skills. Bolden and Tymms (2020_[31]) also argue that outside school factors account for a large share of students' success at school and cannot be disregarded. However, concrete evidence of the impact of such programmes on refugee students remains limited (Lipnickienė, Siarova and Van der Graaf, 2018_[30]).

1.2.5. School-family and school-community partnerships

McLeskey, Rosenberg and Westling (2013_[32]) define inclusion more broadly, where the school involved does not focus merely on the student but goes further to help the family engage in the community and help them access services that enable refugee students to engage fully in all aspects of school life. This is a key factor for inclusion of refugee students. Additionally, refugee and immigrant communities in the host country possess extensive knowledge on the context, experiences and needs of refugee students that schools can draw upon in designing their inclusive education approach (Wagner, 2017_[33]).

While research has demonstrated the value of parental involvement for educational achievement, refugee families are often less involved or connected with the school of their students (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011^[34]). This is caused by differing expectations, perceptions, beliefs, and roles about parent involvement, language barriers, deference to authority in schools, and challenges associated with the process of resettlement (e.g., Georgis et al. (2014^[35])). “Cultural brokers” as described by Georgis et al. (2014^[35]), can play a key role in fostering relations and understanding between refugee parents and school staff. These are people who act as mediators between the host school and the refugee family, usually with a refugee or immigrant background themselves, who understand the cultural differences that can exist between the refugee family and the school.

1.2.6. Expanding good practices

The replication or expansion of a good practice can take place on three levels (see Table 1.1):

- *Scaling-out*: The expansion of an intervention of practice to a wider geographic area or population. This comprises the replication or diffusion of the practice (Fisher, 1993^[36]). This idea is, however, questioned by some researchers as it does not always bring the expected effect due to the “loose coupling” of education systems and resistance to changing day-to-day practice (Elliott et al., 2019^[37]; Schweisfurth and Elliott, 2019^[38]).
- *Scaling-up*: Expanding the effects of a practice not only to a larger group of beneficiaries, but also to achieve longer-term changes in practice and belief (depth), continuation of intervention effects after initial implementation (sustainability), and strong ownership of the reform process (Coburn, 2003^[39]).
- *Institutionalisation*: Institutionalisation is defined as a process through which innovations or novel practices are embedded into the context and become prevailing practices within an organisation, system, or society overall (Nworie, 2015^[40]).

Table 1.1. Three ways of practice expansion

Scaling-out	Scaling-up	Institutionalisation
The expansion of an intervention of practice to a wider geographic area or population. This comprises the replication of the practice (Fisher, 1993 ^[36]).	Expanding the effects of a practice not only to a larger group of beneficiaries, but also to achieve longer-term changes in practice and belief (depth), continuation of intervention effects after initial implementation (sustainability), and strong ownership of the reform (Coburn, 2003 ^[39]).	Institutionalisation is defined as a process through which innovations or novel practices are made to be normal or prevailing practices within an organisation, system, or society overall (Nworie, 2015 ^[40]).

Sources: Fisher (1993^[36]), *The Road from Rio: Sustainable Development and the Non-governmental Movement in the Third World*. London: Praeger; Coburn (2003^[39]), *Rethinking Scale: Moving Beyond Numbers to Deep and Lasting Change*. Educational Researcher. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X032006003>; Nworie (2015^[40]), *Institutionalization of Teaching and Learning Gains in Higher Education*. Educational Technology, Vol. 55/5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44430404> (accessed on 05 June 2021).

1.3. Stakeholder engagement: partnerships between schools and other stakeholders

The diverse education, health, social and emotional needs of refugee students pose large and diverse responsibilities for schools to ensure their needs are met. However, schools are often not sufficiently equipped to deal with the complex, unique, and multifaceted needs of refugee students outside the scope of education (Thomas, 2016^[10]). For this reason, small-scale practices can be developed within a municipality or district, rather than at the school-level alone. Schools are an important element in the wider

local support infrastructure for refugee students, including social service agencies, public libraries and neighbourhoods, as well as parents and teachers' associations. Effective inclusion of refugee students in education, with extensive consideration for their multifaceted needs, requires close cooperation and exchange between schools and other service providers (Thomas, 2016^[10]).

Similarly, the 2018 SIRIUS Watch Report highlighted the numerous benefits of partnerships between schools and non-formal educators for the inclusion of refugee students. Non-formal educators can account for limited expertise of schools on refugee education and address social problems such as bullying and xenophobia. They can also provide additional dimensions of education such as behavioural and social skills and connect with hard-to-reach target groups such as students in refugee centres (Lipnickienė, Siarova and Van der Graaf, 2018^[30]).

For all aspects of inclusive and comprehensive refugee education, partnerships with private sectors also provide opportunities. Private organisations can provide innovative tools and approaches leading to more comprehensive and effective interventions. The introduction of education technology solutions for challenges faced by refugee students is a current area of great potential and development. This requires educators, school leadership and local public authorities to understand how to cooperate with and gain the benefits of collaboration with private partners (Global Business Coalition for Education, 2016^[41]).

The multifaceted needs of refugee students and the inclusion of various external actors demonstrate that the design of local practice for inclusive education for refugee students requires time and resources to study the local setting, determine the individual needs of refugee students, and set up the infrastructure for their targeted support. Comprehensive needs assessments to be done by practice designers and implementers ensure that interventions are relevant and meaningful (Save the Children, UNHCR, Pearson, 2017^[17]).

As local refugee communities provide a wealth of knowledge on their needs and circumstances, they should be engaged as active agents of change together with schools and other stakeholders in designing support programmes. Local authorities, communities, schools and stakeholders should be involved, not only in the design and implementation of a new practice, but also in the adaptation and implementation of a scaled-up or scaled-out practice, or implementation of a policy.

1.4. Aims and methodology of the paper

1.4.1. Research questions

In the light of the above, the paper reviews literature on stakeholder engagement in the practice – research – policy transfers and the role of stakeholders at different stages. It identifies key stakeholder groups in refugee education in Europe and how different stakeholders can be engaged in developing evidence-based refugee education policies and practices in Europe. In particular, the paper seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the strategies to promote effective research production in refugee education and make it impactful for policy making?
- Which factors support or hinder effective stakeholder engagement in the practice – research – policy transfer in the context of refugee education?

1.4.2. Methods and scope

The paper focuses on policy-research-practice links in relation to education for refugee students. Refugees are defined as people “who are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social

group, or political opinion" (UNHCR, 1951^[42]). A person is legally recognised as a refugee when they are declared as fulfilling these criteria by the host country. While in the process of obtaining the legal refugee status, the person is considered an asylum-seeker.⁴

In this paper, the scope of refugee education focuses predominantly on formal compulsory education systems, unless indicated otherwise. The paper mainly discusses refugee students in European countries, with examples from other OECD countries where relevant.

To answer the research questions, the paper includes an overview of existing evidence on different elements and stages of the practice – research – policy transfer (see Annex A). Given the lack of information on this transfer in the field of refugee education, the paper draws on a developed conceptual framework for the practice – research – policy transfer and applies it to the area of refugee education. It situates the role of stakeholder engagement within this transfer.

To support the review of existing evidence, the paper also benefits from interviews with several umbrella organisations active in refugee integration through education across Europe. The following organisations were interviewed:

- European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), in July 2021
- European Network of Education Councils (EUNEC), in August 2021
- SIRIUS: Policy Network on Migrant Education, in August 2021. Note: several interviews were conducted with representatives of academia in Germany and the United Kingdom and grassroots organisations in Germany and Bulgaria.

⁴ See, for example, UNHCR glossary via <https://www.unhcr.org/449267670.pdf> (accessed on 05 June 2021).

2. Engaging stakeholders in the practice – research – policy transfer in refugee education

The practice – research – policy transfer is driven by the involvement of stakeholders at all levels and stages of the process. The unique and distinct needs of refugees in European education systems require extensive collaboration among schools, service providers, and (refugee) communities to ensure there is data to understand whether and how refugee students' needs are met. To facilitate holistic policy making for refugee education, research must be impactful, which requires engagement of researchers with refugee and education stakeholders, practitioners, and policy makers themselves.

A multi-stakeholder approach or “whole-of-a-society” approach is one of the prerequisites for designing inclusive refugee education policies. Many countries, however, still face challenges in engaging with stakeholders during all the stages of the practice – research – policy transfer in the context of refugee education in a meaningful and effective way. This section aims to understand the reasons for these challenges, discuss the levels and mechanisms of stakeholder engagement and identify key stakeholder groups.

2.1. The role of stakeholder engagement in the practice – research – policy transfer in refugee education

A holistic policy approach towards refugee education requires synergies between practice, research and policy making, with continuous involvement of relevant stakeholders. Policies that support inclusive and effective education for refugees should build on evidence (Arnot and Pinson, 2005^[5]). This evidence comprises a multitude of aspects such as statistical data on refugee students and their educational backgrounds, information on the specific needs of refugee students compared to native peers, and information on the impact of existing interventions for refugee education (Arnot and Pinson, 2005^[5]). Indeed, the theoretical base on education for refugee students is insufficient for researchers to claim that a certain approach to refugee education is bound to succeed. For these reasons, it is important to undertake evaluation and assessment of local interventions and practices to determine the enablers and barriers that play a role in enhancing inclusive refugee education on the municipal or school level. This serves as a link between incidental, local examples of practice and the policy level that can institutionalise it.

The practice – research – policy transfer is not a unidirectional process. Continuous back-and-forth interactions between practitioners, researchers, and policy makers take place at different stages of the implementation of refugee education programmes. Practice must be designed based on research, namely educational theory, specific needs of refugee students and local context assessments. Research also serves to study and evaluate the effectiveness of policies in general or to assess how a policy must be implemented to better fit the local context.

The interaction between practice and research in refugee education involves the analysis and evaluation of practices, their juxtaposition with educational and refugee integration theory and the subsequent conclusions on whether practice achieved its intended results.

The dissemination of knowledge and the impact of knowledge are not a linear process but are affected by various factors and interactions. Examples of the factors and interactions within the system include the existing structure and capacity of the education system to interpret and adopt knowledge, the readiness of the education system to adopt the knowledge (including available resources), the actual implementation of the knowledge (decision-making processes, resources, feedback loops) and the outer socio-political context and perceptions towards refugees and refugee education.

Figure 2.1 provides a visual conceptualisation of the practice – research – policy transfer and the role that stakeholder engagement plays in it. It builds on various existing knowledge on the interactions between practice and research, research and policy, and policy and practice, such as Levin (2013^[21]), Langer, Tripney and Gough (2016^[43]), and Revai and Guerriero (2017^[44]). The Annex A provides background knowledge on the components of the practice-research-policy transfer in education – connecting it to the area of refugee education when possible. The Annex also explains how each component of the nexus plays a role in the development of practice, research and policy. Overall, as the figure highlights, several factors can influence the way practice, research and policy are developed and the process through which one component informs the other. In this process, stakeholder engagement (i.e. stakeholder collaboration in the figure) is a key component that allows to transfer knowledge between practice, research and policy. Mapping key stakeholders in the practice-research-policy transfer in refugee education in Europe and understanding how they can be effectively engaged and the roles they play is key for developing more inclusive education programmes for refugee students. The paper aims to do so in the following sub-sections.

Figure 2.1. A visual conceptualisation of the role of stakeholder engagement in the practice – research – policy transfer

Note: In the picture, stakeholder collaboration is used as a synonym for stakeholder engagement. The acronym PBE stands for Practice-Based Evidence and EBP for Evidence-Based Practice (See Annex A for further explanation on these concepts).

2.2. Key stakeholder groups in refugee education

There is a wide recognition of the need to move away from hierarchical top-down models of policy making towards inclusive decision making and participatory policy design, implementation, and monitoring processes (OECD, 2013^[45]). This implies engaging with stakeholders to foster sustainable reforms that respond to public policy challenges, including in education. The OECD (2010^[46]) highlights three strategies in this paradigm shift:

- i. mobilising citizens and specific target groups (e.g., refugee students, families and communities in the context of refugee education)
- ii. involving the private sector, civil society, researchers and experts in the provision of services
- iii. sharing experiences and knowledge and designing innovative solutions, as well as engaging with public authorities at different levels, especially through partnerships with regional and local policy actors.

Regardless of this conceptual shift, many European countries still lack a multi-stakeholder strategy to facilitate integration of refugee students in education and ensure effective practice – research – policy transfer. Similarly, only a few countries ensure comprehensive multi-level coordination with regional and local education authorities (e.g., Wolffhardt, Conte and Huddleston (2019^[19])).

While different stakeholders interact, especially at the local level, coherent coordination of their activities for effective support and integration of newcomers is largely lacking (Koehler, 2017^[3]). The local administration often plays a key role in coordinating the cooperation of key stakeholders, such as training institutions, governmental agencies and schools.

Even before 2014, when particularly high numbers of newly arrived refugees were recorded in Europe, it was crucial to cooperate with volunteers and NGOs, though such partnerships mostly served to fill gaps that could not be serviced by national and municipal authorities immediately (Koehler, 2017^[3]). This has been the case particularly for: i) language learning; ii) the provision of general orientation and information in reception centres; and iii) the provision of social and emotional support as well as basic education for refugees and asylum seekers who, due to their status, may not have access to the mainstream education system (Koehler, 2017^[3]).

However, despite the crucial role of NGOs and civil society actors in refugee education in most European Union (EU) countries, there is no systematic state support for expert non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the education field (e.g., Lipnickienė, Siarova and Van der Graaf (2018^[30]) and Wolffhardt, Conte and Huddleston (2019^[19])). As stated by an interviewed SIRIUS network representative, “*the NGO and civil society organisations (CSO) sector is still often seen as a tool to fill-in the gaps in formal policies, rather than a holistic equal part of an education provision*” (SIRIUS, 2021^[47]).

In the Global Framework for Refugee Education, four broad stakeholder groups are identified as key actors for ensuring accessible, quality, and inclusive education for refugee students in development contexts (Global Refugee Forum Education Co-Sponsorship Alliance, 2019^[48]):

- i. host governments
- ii. technical and financial partners
- iii. international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), multilateral organisations, private sector partners, academic networks, civil society organisations and other actors
- iv. regional and inter-governmental organisations.

While there does not seem to be a comprehensive mapping of stakeholders in refugee education in Europe conducted to date, there are a few sources identifying key actors at different levels of inclusive education policy making involved in the education of refugee students. Resorting to these, the following key groups can be singled out: i) European level stakeholders (umbrella inter-governmental organisations and networks); ii) national governments; iii) regional and local governments; iv) teacher training providers; v) teacher unions; vi) educational institutions and practitioners; vii) refugee students and families; viii) NGOs and CSOs; ix) experts and academia; x) local communities; xi) private sector; xii) media, and xiii) sending country governments/stakeholders (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Key stakeholder groups in refugee education

Group	Examples	Roles and tensions
European level stakeholders/ umbrella inter-governmental organisations and networks	European Network of Education Councils (EUNEC), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), Education International (EI), European Youth Forum (EYF), Policy Network on Migrant Education (SIRIUS), European Parents Association (EPA), SOLIDAR, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), Caritas	The key roles of this stakeholder group include policy advocacy, providing platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue and exchange, ensuring policy monitoring. Key tensions: no coherent and well-articulated positions on effective measures for refugee education based on research that are well translated into policy advocacy (research-policy nexus) (Huddleston and Wolffhardt, 2016 ^[18]).
National governments	Ministries/National departments of Education, Ministries of Social Affairs, Ministries of Internal Affairs (Integration/Migration departments)	The key roles include strategy and guidelines development, policy implementation and quality assurance, engagement in dialogue with other stakeholders (OECD, 2019 ^[49]); creating meaningful opportunities and exchanges for bottom-up policy development; collecting data to inform assessments about the provision of schooling and educational opportunities for refugees (through EMIS); establishing feedback mechanisms about policy implementation (Mendenhall, Garnett Russel and Buckner, 2017 ^[50]). Key tensions: conflicting political climate and the need to assure continuity of long-term policy; insufficient expertise and capacity (Kakos and Teklemariam (Kakos and Teklemariam, 2021 ^[12] ; SIRIUS, 2021 ^[51]).
Regional and local governments	Cities, municipalities	The key roles include policy development and implementation at the local level, school governance, monitoring and reporting, mobilising local multi-stakeholder networks: NGOs, migrants associations, charities, universities, and especially private businesses. Key tensions: varying capacity across municipalities, education is only one of many responsibilities, the need to avoid sectoral fragmentation, insufficient expertise and capacity (UN-Habitat, 2020 ^[52]).
Teacher training providers	Universities, teacher training institutes, in-service training providers	The key roles include designing and delivering initial teacher education and in-service training, in cooperation with schools and municipalities. Key tensions: high decentralisation and variation in quality, conflicting priorities, (not always) delivery on the specific needs and demands of education community, limited capacity for cooperation and networking, competition tensions (OECD, 2019 ^[49]).
Teacher unions	National and local teacher unions and associations	The key roles include representation at the national level in policy making, supporting teachers and school leaders. Key tensions: lack of involvement in policy dialogue on specific issues related to refugee education, varying priorities of practice and policy, weak voice and representation at the national level (OECD, 2019 ^[49]).
(Educational) institutions	Schools, reception/integration centres	The key roles include setting up and implementing institutional plans for learning, providing learning support to refugee and migrant students, ensuring competence development of teaching staff, ensuring inclusive institutional climate, etc. Key tensions: policy making capacity unevenly distributed across schools, need for continuous professional development of teachers and leaders and high workload and lack of resources, conflicting priorities of school and policy and funding distribution (OECD, 2019 ^[49] ; SIRIUS, 2021 ^[51]).
Refugee students and families	Refugee students and families	The key roles include participating in learning process and decision making at the school level mainly through councils. Key tensions: variation in municipal and school possibilities for student voice, nominal representation, sustaining the capacity of school councils (OECD, 2019 ^[49]).
National-level NGO stakeholders and immigrant-led education initiatives	BEMIS (Scotland), NCP (IE), NPOINT (NL), Multi-Kulti (BG)	The key role is advocating for/addressing specific issues encountered by migrant/refugee learners (e.g., linguistic support, mentoring programmes, NFE, etc.), providing additional support,

		cooperating with schools and other actors in designing and implementing inclusive programmes. Key tensions: lack of collaboration with schools, project-based nature which can hinder sustainability, limited capacity, and challenges with professionalisation (European Economic and Social Committee, 2016 ^[53] ; Golubeva, 2012 ^[54]).
Academics, researchers, education, and migration experts	Universities, networks of academics (such as IMISCOE), national centres/agencies for education policy monitoring, evaluation, and analysis	The key roles include participating in stakeholder fora, policy dialogues and consultations, policy monitoring and evaluation, linking research evidence and practice. Key tensions: detachment of academic research and policy and practice, isolation and lack of communication, lack of system vision and knowledge on policy processes (Oliver and Boaz, 2019 ^[22] ; Oliver and Cairney, 2019 ^[55]).
Local communities	Non-formal self-organised communities (e.g., religious, ethnic cultural groups, residential communities)	The key roles include taking active citizenship positions and participating in stakeholder dialogues and fora. Key tensions: lack of knowledge and professionalisation in system and policy processes preventing meaningful contribution (SIRIUS, 2021 ^[51]).
Private sector	Business, EdTech	The key roles include participating in stakeholder dialogues and fora, designing educational innovation, public-private partnerships. Key tensions: business models oriented towards making profit, which might disregard the need for inclusion and catering for the needs of smaller groups of students, such as refugees (interviews; (Kakos and Teklemariam, 2021 ^[12])).
Media (traditional and social)	TV, Radio, Social Networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	The key roles include providing educational and informational services. Key tensions: engaging in fake news broadcasting, dehumanisation of refugees and migrants, polarisation and hate speech (KAICIID, 2021 ^[56]).
Host country stakeholders	National governments and umbrella organisations	The key roles include liaising with host country policy makers and education providers and supporting the design of responsive and culturally sensitive education processes. Key tensions: conflicting policies and priorities, funding issues (SIRIUS, 2021 ^[57]).

Sources: Huddleston, T., & Wolffhardt, A. (2016^[18]). Back to School: Responding to the needs of newcomer refugee youth. Brussels: Migration Policy Group, <https://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2017-3-MPG-Back-to-School-Responding-to-the-needs-of-newcomer-refugee-youth.pdf> (accessed on 14 June 2021); OECD (2019^[49]). Stakeholder engagement with the model. In OECD, Improving school quality in Norway: the new competence development model. Paris: OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/publications/improving-school-quality-in-norway-179d4ded-en.htm> (accessed on 14 June 2021); Mendenhall, M., Garnett Russel, S., and Buckner, E. (2017^[50]). Urban refugee education: Guidelines and Practical Strategies for strengthening support to improve educational quality for all. Columbia University Teachers College, https://inee.org/system/files/resources/Urban_Refugees-Programmatic-Guidance-Report.pdf (accessed on 15 June 2021); UN-Habitat (2020^[52]). Local inclusion of migrants and refugees. A gateway to existing ideas, resources and capacities for cities across the world, <https://unhabitat.org/local-inclusion-of-migrants-and-refugees-a-gateway-to-existing-ideas-resources-and-capacities-for> (accessed on 15 June 2021); Golubeva, M. (2012^[54]). Mapping European Stakeholders on Migrant Education. Brussels: Migration Policy Group / NEPC / SIRIUS, <https://www.migpolgroup.com/old/portfolio/mapping-european-stakeholders-on-migrant-education/> (accessed on 17 June 2021); European Economic and Social Committee (2016^[53]). How civil society organisations assist refugees and migrants in the EU. Brussels: European Economic and Social Committee, <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/publications-other-work/publications/how-civil-society-organisations-assist-refugees-and-migrants-eu> (accessed on 17 June 2021); Oliver, K., and Boaz, A. (2019^[22]). Transforming evidence for policy and practice: Creating space for new conversations. Palgrave communications, 5 (60). <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Transforming-evidence-for-policy-and-practice%3A-for-Oliver-Boaz/b583866328de8e6ffd8ecc234122e782cee161ab> (accessed on 17 June 2021); Oliver, K., & Cairney, P. (2019^[55]). The do's and don't of influencing policy: a systematic review of advice to academia. Palgrave Communications, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-019-0232-y> (accessed on 17 June 2021); KAICIID (2021^[56]). Network for Dialogue Policy Brief #3: Reshaping Narratives On Migration Through Intercultural And Interreligious Dialogue. Vienna: KAICIID, <https://network4dialogue.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/N4D-PolicyBriefs-03-NarrativeChange-Final.pdf> (accessed on 17 June 2021).

2.3. Levels and examples of stakeholder engagement

A multi-stakeholder approach is key to ensure an effective and smooth practice – research – policy transfer. Given the variety of stakeholder groups that are crucial for inclusive refugee education outlined above (Section 2.2), there is a need to understand possible mechanisms and channels allowing relevant groups to meaningfully participate in different stages of practice – research – policy transfer in refugee education.

The literature discusses various typologies of engagement and participation: e.g., Pretty’s “typologies of participation” (Pretty, 1995^[58]), Karl’s “levels of participation” (Karl, 2002^[59]), Fung’s “democracy cube” (Fung, 2006^[60]), and the OECD’s “levels of engagement” (OECD, 2015^[61]). The typology adopted in this paper is inspired from the OECD approach for stakeholder engagement for inclusive water governance (OECD, 2015^[61]), which distinguishes six levels of stakeholder engagement depending on the processes and intentions pursued: i) communication; ii) consultation; iii) participation; iv) representation; v) partnership; and vi) co-decision and co-production (see Figure 2.2). We look at these levels specifically in the context of practice – research – policy transfer.

Figure 2.2. Levels of stakeholder engagement in practice-research-policy transfer

Source: Adapted from OECD (2015^[61]). Stakeholder engagement for inclusive water governance. Paris: OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/gov/stakeholder-engagement-for-inclusive-water-governance-9789264231122-en.htm>. (accessed on 20 June 2021).

2.3.1. Communication

Communication represents the first level of stakeholder engagement and intends to make information and data on refugee integration and education policies available to all. Information sharing can be done through a variety of channels, such as traditional and social media and get-together workshops. Communication can also aim to raise awareness to make the targeted audience more knowledgeable and sensitive to a specific issue, such as the rights and needs of refugee students, pedagogical needs of teachers and current gaps in education provision (see examples in Box 2.1).

Information sharing and making data available alone does not necessarily contribute to an effective knowledge transfer and upscaling of practices in the context of refugee education as it implies basic transfer of information without the necessary buy-in of relevant actors, as well as does not guarantee the availability of necessary evidence. However, regular communication and awareness raising campaigns contribute to transparency. Other challenges that may prevent the effectiveness of the communication-level of stakeholder engagement may include a lack of academic literacy of practitioners and policy makers, lack of understanding of teaching and policy processes by researchers, high workload of practitioners (and their lack of participation in information events), or conflicting priorities on the policy level, which are not consistent with research recommendations.

Box 2.1. Communication in the practice – research – policy transfer

Examples of how the communication-level of stakeholder engagement can manifest itself in the context of refugee education are provided below:

- *Provision of information.* In Flanders (Belgium), newly arrived families can receive information about the education system from the local Integration Centre, reception centres and NGOs working with refugees. Some schools organise “network days” within reception education centres to enable connections among students, parents, principals, teachers and follow-up coaches. In Leipzig, Germany, an educational advisory service offers monthly group and individual study sessions for asylum seekers where they learn about the German education system and opportunities with a particular focus on further education (Koehler, 2017^[3]). Such transparency is important in making refugee families aware and understand the specificities of reception systems, and subsequently contribute to their improvement (through sharing their perspectives and feedback on existing processes).
- *Awareness raising and forum for dialogue.* *Les Grands Voisins* – The “Big Neighbours” in Paris, France, started as an NGO-run refugee reception centre established in the premises of an old hospital that the city lent for this purpose. Between 2016 and 2020, the centre became the local neighbourhood meeting point for Parisians and immigrants alike, well known for its innovative use of space. It included an emergency shelter, start-up offices, artists’ studios, and shops as well as a bar and an event location. Concerts, workshops, cinemas, and other activities regularly brought different communities together, promoted dialogue and raised awareness about positive contributions to the city by every member of the community, as well as provided the platform for understanding the needs of each community member better (UN-Habitat, 2020^[52]).
- *Evidence-based communication.* In Vienna, Austria, the Vienna integration and Diversity Monitor (*Wiener Integrations and Diversitätsmonitor*) (2020^[62]) provides an overview of key areas and topics linked to integration and diversity in the city. The Vienna Integration and Diversity Monitor illustrates socio-economic aspects of local migration that highlight gaps between immigrant and non-immigrant groups. Data of other municipal departments are synthesised into the report offering a holistic compass that encourages constant reviewing of the current policies (UN-Habitat, 2020^[52]).

- *Research conferences and exchange workshops* on the latest research and migration data. For example, The International Migration Research Network (IMISCOE) is one of the largest networks of scholars on migration and integration in Europe. Among other activities, IMISCOE organises regular knowledge sharing events bringing to light the findings of the latest research in the field (IMISCOE, 2021^[63]).
- *Online platforms and repositories of good practices*. For example, in Europe, the IMMERSE hub is an online platform building a virtual community of various professionals, including institutions and other actors, active in the field of socio-educational inclusion of refugee and immigrant children. The community aims to promote an active exchange of knowledge, resources and best practices among its members (IMMERSE Hub, 2021^[64]).

Sources: City of Vienna (2020^[62]), Integrations- und Diversitätsmonitor der Stadt Wien (Vienna's Integration and Diversity Monitor), <https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/pdf/monitor-2020.pdf> (accessed on 02 September 2021); Koehler, C. (2017^[3]). Continuity of learning for newly arrived refugee children in Europe. NESET Ad Hoc Report., from <https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Continuity-of-learning-for-newly-arrived-refugee-children-in-Europe.pdf>; IMISCOE (2021^[63]), <https://www.imiscoe.org/> (accessed on 02 September 2021); IMMERSE Hub (2021^[64]), <https://www.immerse-h2020.eu/> (accessed on 2 September 2021); UN-Habitat (2020^[52]). Local inclusion of migrants and refugees. A gateway to existing ideas, resources and capacities for cities across the world. UN-Habitat et.al. <https://unhabitat.org/local-inclusion-of-migrants-and-refugees-a-gateway-to-existing-ideas-resources-and-capacities-for> (accessed on 15 June 2021).

2.3.2. Consultation

Consultation aims at gathering stakeholders' comments, perceptions, advice, experiences and ideas. The process is often initiated by decision makers looking for insights and views from the stakeholders involved or who will likely be affected by the outcomes (OECD, 2015^[61]). Consultation may involve a wide range of tools starting with discussion fora such as round tables, town meetings, focus groups and surveys (in-person or electronic) followed by other feedback mechanisms such as public opinion polls or comment periods on a draft policy. The process can also include tools for more continuous consultation such as citizen's panels and advisory committees of interest group representatives, e.g., institutionalised advisory bodies (Rietbergen-McCracken, 2010^[65]).

In the context of the practice – research – policy link it is key to explore how various stakeholders can participate in conceiving research (based on identified research gaps), supporting research design and implementation (through participatory research – as many practitioners and grass-roots organisations work with refugee students directly and have better understanding of their experiences), interpreting research results and thinking about its applications in practice and policy, evaluating practices and policies and so on.

However, as interview data suggests, for stakeholder consultations to offer meaningful results it is key that “*stakeholders have necessary knowledge of the system and understanding of the policy-making processes*” (SIRIUS, 2021^[57]), and vice-versa decision makers develop an inclusive mindset and openness towards the needs of refugee students and voices of practitioners, as well as have the capacity to translate research results and practice-based evidence into policy. These stakeholder engagement processes could be accompanied by capacity-building and training activities for different actors expected to be involved in the consultation process (such as in the example in Box 2.2).

Box 2.2. Consultation in practice-research-policy transfer

In **Lithuania**, the new 2018-2020 Action Plan on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society sought to organise regular meetings on the implementation of policies bringing together NGOs, municipal education departments, ministries and other organisations working in the integration sphere. The Action Plan requires education authorities and bodies at regional and local levels to organise trainings for education policy stakeholders to improve their intercultural skills, overcome stereotypes and promote the values of respect for diversity and equality. The training component is key to enable different actors to understand nuances of each dimension of practice – research – policy transfer and establish concrete evidence needs at each level of education, policy, and decision making.

In the **European Union**, in order to address the bottlenecks of refugee integration, the Urban Agenda Partnership has agreed on a dedicated activity as part of its Action Plan, aimed at the expansion of the Europe-wide knowledge base on immigrant integration at the urban and/or regional level. From November 2017 to October 2018, a structured reflection and development process took place through regular meetings of a stakeholder Working Group. The platform brought together key actors interested in integration data on urban and regional levels, including data experts from Amsterdam, Athens, Ghent, Helsinki, and Vienna (some of the cities represented in the Urban Agenda Partnership), the European Commission (i.e. the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, the Directorate-General For Regional and Urban Policy, Eurostat, and the Joint Research Centre) and the OECD as well as stakeholders such as Eurocities, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), URBACT, ESPON, Portugal's High Commission for Migration (ACM) and the Immigrant Survey Data Network. This allowed for the inclusion of cities' experiences and perspectives in the on-going EU debate on infra-national integration data. It also enabled the group to gather good local practices for evidence-based integration policies and explore an improved know-how transfer and mutual learning.

Sources: Wolffhardt, A., Conte, C., and Huddleston, T. (2019^[19]). The European benchmark for refugee integration – A comparative analysis in 14 EU countries. Brussels: Migration Policy Group. <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library/doc/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-a-comparative-analysis-in-14-eu-countries> (accessed on 05 June 2021); Wolffhardt, Joki and Solano (2019^[66]), Facilitating evidence-based integration policies in cities. Opinions of the Stakeholder Working Group. Brussels: Migration Policy Group. https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/evidence-based20integration20policies20in20cities_options20report.pdf. (accessed on 05 June 2021).

2.3.3. Participation

Participation implies that stakeholders are associated with the decision-making process and take active part in discussions and activities. In these stakeholder activities, the aim is often to improve transparency in decision making and strengthen the foundation based on which decisions are taken. In the context of practice – research – policy transfer, this would mean actual involvement of a range of education actors into evidence production (e.g., through mandating and providing incentives to schools, non-formal education providers and community-based organisation to collect data on specific needs of refugee families and their integration experiences, as well as participating in evaluation of practices and policies as co-researchers/co-evaluators) and then interpreting the produce evidence for practice and policy (re)design. Examples of stakeholder participation in the interaction between research, policy and practice in the context of refugee education are provided in Box 2.3.

Box 2.3. Participation in practice-research-policy transfer

In **France**, the inter-ministerial delegation for the reception and integration of refugees (DiAir) created in January 2018 is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the National Strategy for Refugee Reception and Integration (*Stratégie nationale pour l'accueil et l'intégration des personnes réfugiées*) in close collaboration with all relevant ministries (i.e., Ministries of Interior, Employment, Housing, Education and Health), the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) and the French Office for Immigration and Integration. The Strategy is implemented in each territory with the support of regional and local authorities, as well as civil society organisations.

Several studies were launched in 2018 to assess and monitor integration outcomes of newcomers. These were conducted by different ministries with the support of universities and research institutions. In order to review the implementation of the integration strategy, all relevant ministries meet every six months, and an annual conference is organised by the DiAir, involving all relevant stakeholders in refugee education for producing and interpreting monitoring evidence to inform the implementation of the strategy (Wolffhardt, Conte and Huddleston, 2019^[19]).

SIRIUS Policy Network on Migrant Integration facilitates the organisation of peer-learning activities and national round tables, which gather a wide range of stakeholders with the aim to support the inclusive education policy reform process across different countries in Europe. During the national round tables representatives of various organisations directly related to refugee and immigrant students' integration process help policy makers identify data gaps, review a selected policy and come up with an action plan for its improvement (SIRIUS, 2021^[47]).

In Manitoba, **Canada**, an Advisory Committee for Newcomer Education (more active prior the COVID-19 pandemic) has been established to ensure the active voice of various stakeholders in the policy process. It includes the usual educational stakeholders, but also representatives chosen by front-line refugee-serving organisations. Perceptions of what is going well and what is needed are often very different depending on which group is speaking, that's why representation of various groups of refugee and migrant communities is crucial. There is also a Newcomer Education Coalition - comprised of newcomer serving organisations, educators, parents, and government staff that help interpret localised evidence on children's and schools needs and challenges and inform future policy directions for newcomer and refugee students and families at the Ministerial level⁵.

Sources: Interviews with representatives of SIRIUS network from academic and NGO, August 2021; Wolffhardt, A., Conte, C., & Huddleston, T. (2019^[19]). The European benchmark for refugee integration – A comparative analysis in 14 EU countries. Brussels: Migration Policy Group. <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library/doc/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-a-comparative-analysis-in-14-eu-countries> (accessed on 05 June 2021).

2.3.4. Representation

Representation is a more structural and institutionalised level of stakeholder engagement. It often consists in having stakeholders' perspectives and interests officially represented in the existing structures and policy processes (OECD, 2015^[61]). In the case of refugee education, representation can take the form of advisory bodies composed of different types of stakeholders or refugee and integration councils composed of representatives of refugee communities (Koehler, 2017^[3]). Typically, stakeholders are involved in the various aspects of design, development, implementation and evaluation, and have a say in the strategic and operational decision-making processes (see examples in Box 2.4). In such contexts, it is key that

⁵ See, for example, <https://www.newcomernavigation.ca/en/about-us/advisory-committee.aspx>.

involved stakeholders, and refugee communities in particular, are addressed as active agents of change, rather than victims whose needs can be addressed solely by the majority. Systematic representation (in leadership and decision making) is essential to creating self-honing/correcting eco systems using approaches such as the Human Centred Design (SIRIUS, 2021^[57]).

Box 2.4. Representation in practice-research-policy transfer

In Berlin, **Germany**, the State Advisory Board on Migration in Berlin and Integration includes elected representatives of seven immigrant organisations and makes recommendations and approves the appointment of the Integration Commissioner of the city (UN-Habitat, 2020^[52]). Immigrant and Integration Councils in Germany exist in most cities. Their role is to represent immigrants who live in the cities. They have a consultative function to any decision. In some cities they are completely integrated in municipal structures. In some cities they are independent bodies and play just a nominal function (SIRIUS, 2021^[67]).

Trade unions play an important role in representing voices and interests of practitioners across **Europe**. Trade union umbrella organisations at the EU or international levels, such as the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and Education International (EI), are active in providing input to EU policies in the area of migration and education, as well as in horizontal topics of equality, human rights, non-discrimination, etc. At the national level, the impact and weight of trade unions vary and depend on the strength of social dialogue in the given country, perspectives on the role of trade unions in policy processes, as well as priorities the trade unions give to the issue of refugee integration. Therefore, active communication with the range of stakeholders in the field of refugee education bringing attention to the gaps in evidence and practice is important. In some countries the unions are mainly seen as representing teachers' views and expectations on working conditions, not necessarily as voices of professionals (ETUCE, 2021^[68]).

Sources: UN-Habitat (2020^[52]). Local inclusion of migrants and refugees. A gateway to existing ideas, resources and capacities for cities across the world. UN-Habitat et.al. <https://unhabitat.org/local-inclusion-of-migrants-and-refugees-a-gateway-to-existing-ideas-resources-and-capacities-for> (accessed on 15 June 2021); EUNEC (2021^[69]), Education Councils in Europe. Going beyond the tensions, <https://www.eunec.eu/publication/education-councils-europe-going-beyond-tensions> (accessed on 30 July 2021) ETUCE (2021^[68]), Interview with a representative of ETUCE, 27 July 2021; SIRIUS (2021^[67]), Interview with a representative of SIRIUS network from a youth NGO in Germany, 03 August 2021.

2.3.5. Partnerships

Partnerships are the next formalised level of engagement. They consist of agreed-upon collaboration between institutions, organisations, or civil society to combine resources and competences in relation to a common challenge to solve (OECD, 2015^[61]). Partnerships can take place at various scales, from local partnerships between municipalities to regional and international partnerships aiming to bring innovation and solutions to segregation, such as the Urban Agenda Partnership at the EU level (see Box 2.5). Such partnerships can be possible if there is sustainable state funding for data collection and research and policies that encourage practitioners, researchers and other education stakeholders to participate in the design and development of interventions.

So far, research and development of such interventions and programmes in many countries seems to depend too heavily on private and grant funding, including funding from foundations and charities. As Kakos and Teklemariam (2021^[12]) point out, an increase in state grants to educational institutions is vital for increasing quality and equity in refugee education. Public-private partnerships may also play a role if certain conditions are met: (1) transparency regarding financing and roles, and clear partnership frameworks that guarantee public accountability of partners; (2) collaborative monitoring for quality

assurance of interventions to ensure horizontal accountability, (3) sustainable funding, flexibility, and channels for different actors to actively participate, (4) all-rounded evidence collection (both localised and standardised) on specific needs of schools and community actors, in the context of refugee education.

Box 2.5. Practice in practice-research-policy transfer

In Athens, **Greece**, the Athens Partnership (AP) was launched in 2015 with lead support from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation to facilitate innovative public programmes in the capital, in partnership with the municipality, the private sector and global philanthropic leaders. Among other initiatives, the AP manages the implementation of the Migrant and Refugee Coordination Centre & Observatory (MRCC&O), which aims to connect NGOs working in the field to facilitate communication and cooperation (UN-Habitat, 2020^[52]).

In **Germany**, which is divided in 16 Federal States (Länder), the institutionalised dialogue conference of ministers from the Länder dealing with integration of refugees and immigrants (Integrationsministerkonferenz, IntMK) is an interface between the federal level and the Länder. This conference develops indicators that are compared every year across the Länder (UN-Habitat, 2020^[52]).

In **Belgium**, the Flemish community introduced Local Consultation Platforms (*locale overlegplatformen*, LOPs) as a tool to create school learning communities and promote collaboration and links between schools and local stakeholders. LOPs bring together social partners, teachers, parents and different institutions with the aim to ensure equal access to educational opportunities, improve social cohesion, provide optimal learning chances and tackle segregation in schools. There are currently 49 LOPs for primary schools, and 29 for secondary schools. These platforms provide an analysis of the school environment, encourage socio-economic diversity and bring insight on how to avoid segregation. Also, LOPs collaborate with municipalities and keep track of newcomers, trying to provide support for skills assessment and their allocation to particular schools. Additionally, LOPs can provide support in teacher education programmes as well as advice to schools on the ways to engage parents and local communities (European Commission, 2018^[70]).

Sources: European Commission (2018^[70]). Peer-Learning activity on linguistic and cultural diversity - Integration of migrants through inclusive education in schools; UN-Habitat (2020^[52]). Local inclusion of migrants and refugees. A gateway to existing ideas, resources and capacities for cities across the world. UN-Habitat et.al. <https://unhabitat.org/local-inclusion-of-migrants-and-refugees-a-gateway-to-existing-ideas-resources-and-capacities-for> (accessed on 15 June 2021).

2.3.6 Co-production and co-decision

Co-production of policies and co-decision are the ultimate levels of stakeholder engagement as they are characterised by a balanced share of power over the policy-making process. In OECD countries, it has been proven that co-decision and co-production in public services have led to cost reductions, better service quality and improved user satisfaction (OECD, 2015^[61]).

In the context of refugee education, such co-production is essential in all three dimensions: practice, research and policy and depends on having the right mix of leadership, capacity, and empowerment of all the stakeholders involved to ensure that all stakeholders feel responsible for and own the change process as well as contribute in a meaningful way (SIRIUS, 2021^[51]).

One form of such co-production could be participatory policy research. Policy research has been used by NGOs and other stakeholder groups to promote and inform participatory policy making. In the most effective cases, policy research has been undertaken in a participatory manner to bring the voice of ordinary citizens and communities to the attention of policy makers. To have a real impact on the policy design or reform, the research needs to involve key policy makers and practitioners from the start and be integrated into a formal policy review process (e.g., Rietbergen-McCracken (2010^[65])).

2.4 Enablers and barriers for effective stakeholder engagement

The OECD (2019^[49]) highlights several important conditions that need to be in place for effective stakeholder engagement: i) clear communication and transparency; ii) careful selection of the relevant stakeholders for the policy process; iii) building capacity of and empowering everyone involved; and iv) facilitative capacity and leadership to bring all the voices together and ensure meaningful contributions in each of the dimensions: research, policy and practice.

The aforementioned conditions are key to move along the ladder of different levels of stakeholder engagement and ensure participatory inclusive policy-making processes. However, current reviews demonstrate that these are still rather exceptions (see e.g. OECD (2018^[71]). According to the OECD (2018^[71]) and interview data, communication to and consultation with stakeholders in ensuring practice – research – policy transfer are the most common tools used to engage with stakeholders.

The challenges associated with moving up the ladder can be classified in three categories: i) policy capacity and willingness (at both the state and city level); ii) (lack of) empowerment of grassroots actors; and iii) policy and academic literacy and capacity of schools and practitioners (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2. Barriers to stakeholder engagement

Policy level	Grassroots level	School and practitioners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of political will and the shift of power, no institutionalised stakeholder engagement process (driven not by decision makers, but by grassroots) • Institutional fragmentation and lack of adequate coordination between levels • Weak legal frameworks • Information asymmetry • Lack of research and data literacy • Too many or too few voices (OECD, 2018^[71]) • Varying regulatory and financial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee and migrant organisations are required to obtain the technical policy skills and gain the necessary tools to enable them to provide active and effective policy and research contributions • Unequal allocation of funds • Lack of incentives for political integration of refugees/refugee-led organisations (RLOs) • Underestimation of RLOs as stakeholders at policy level based on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of research literacy among both formal and non-formal education providers and lack of comprehensive and relevant training opportunities • Limited policy engagement and interest • Huge workload and limited resources (Lipnickienė, Siarova and Van der Graaf, 2018^[30]).

autonomy and capacity of cities (Rauhut and Humer, 2020 ^[72]).	<p>prior assumptions that RLOs are less capable (Torfa, 2019^[73])</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of intercultural and inclusive dialogue (Palaiologou and Lontou, 2019^[74]). 	
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Sources: OECD (2018^[71]). Working together for local integration of migrants and refugees, <https://www.oecd.org/publications/working-together-for-local-integration-of-migrants-and-refugees-9789264085350-en.htm> (accessed on 30 June 2021); Rauhut, D., and Humer, A. (2020^[72]). EU Cohesion Policy and spatial economic growth: trajectories in economic thought. European Planning Studies, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2019.1709416>; Torfa, M. (2019^[73]). Refugee-led organisations (RLOS) in Europe: Policy contributions, opportunities and challenges. Brussels: European Council on Refugees and Exiles. <https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Working-Paper-01.pdf> (accessed on 05 June 2021); Palaiologou, N., and Lontou, M. (2019^[74]). Refugee education in Greece: Challenges, needs and priorities in non-formal settings - An intercultural approach. In S. Peleg, Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogues for Global Peacebuilding and Stability. IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-7585-6.ch008>; Lipnickienė, K., Siarova, H., and Van der Graaf, L. (2018^[30]). Role of non-formal education in migrant children inclusion: links with schools. Brussels: SIRIUS Network. https://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/SIRIUS-Watch_Full-report-1.pdf (accessed on 05 June 2021).

A way forward for holistic policy making in inclusive refugee education

Refugee students are a unique group of students in European education systems. While they benefit from interaction with native students and integration into mainstream education programmes, significant additional individual support is required to ensure they benefit equally from the same education offer. The support for refugee students should be arranged by school and municipality staff tailored to the needs of the individual student. However, at the central level, governments should ensure that stakeholders possess sufficient knowledge, resources, and support systems to deliver this provision at the local level. Therefore, effective inclusive education for refugee students relies on extensive interaction and continuous engagement between the practice, research and policy levels. The complex needs and circumstances of refugee students require a more comprehensive collaboration among schools, communities, service providers and non-formal educators to ensure refugee students can reach their full potential in formal education.

In the European context, key stakeholders in refugee education include: umbrella inter-governmental organisations and networks; national governments; regional and local authorities; teacher training providers; teacher unions; educational institutions and practitioners; refugee students and families; NGOs and CSOs; experts and academia; local communities; the private sector; media; and sending country governments/stakeholders. Engagement with these different groups of stakeholders takes place in the design of policies and practices, their evaluation for the identification of uniform success factors and the dissemination of research findings to policy makers and society. Depending on the processes and intentions pursued, there are different levels of stakeholder engagement, including: communication; consultation; participation; representation; partnership; and co-decision and co-production.

However, many countries still face challenges in engaging with stakeholders during all the stages of the practice – research – policy transfer in the context of refugee education in a meaningful and effective way. Current gaps in the research to policy nexus are found predominantly in the disconnect between researchers and policy makers. Stakeholders and knowledge brokers can build bridges between the research and policy domain and support the translation of research theories into concrete action points for policy. Similarly, stakeholders can raise awareness on the importance of inclusive education for refugee students among policy makers and open the door for researchers to provide evidence on scalable good practices.

Moving forward, there is a wide recognition of the need to move away from hierarchical top-down models of policy making towards inclusive decision making and participatory policy design, implementation, and monitoring processes. This implies engaging with stakeholders to foster sustainable reforms that respond to public policy challenges, including in the area of refugee education.

For effective stakeholder engagement, key conditions include clear communication and transparency; careful selection of the relevant stakeholders for the policy process; building capacity of and empowering everyone involved; and facilitative capacity and leadership to bring all the voices together and ensure meaningful contributions in each of the dimensions: research, policy and practice. These hold true for refugee education.

In the area of refugee education, there is a particular need to ensure that systems are put in place to promote policy capacity and willingness at the national, regional and local levels. It is also crucial to empower grassroots actors, including NGOs and CSOs, which are often key stakeholders in the field. Furthermore, developing policy and academic literacy and capacity of schools and practitioners is another important step to ensure that stakeholders are effectively engaged and supported. There is a particular need to ensure that refugee students, their families and refugee organisations are actively engaged as key stakeholders in the decision- and policy-making processes across European countries. Their knowledge and direct experiences can inform the development of policies and practices to effectively meet refugee students' needs while also promote their inclusion in education and society.

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Annex A. Background knowledge on the research-policy-transfer in education

This Annex discusses the rationale and need for interaction and collaboration between practitioners, researchers and policy makers to facilitate inclusive and effective refugee education. This notion is understood as “practice – research – policy transfer” and includes a complex combination of processes, structures and environments. The section presents the conceptual framework for the practice – research – policy transfer and the processes that facilitate such transfer in refugee education. It further describes what it means to implement such transfers effectively and the challenges that currently hinder the connections between practice and research as well as research and policy.

The involvement of both researchers and practitioners, and other education stakeholders, is crucial for more informed policy making. In this regard, ETUCE explains that: *“In many countries, policy makers provide funding and grants for research because they require evidence and data to inform policy. However, the result is that researchers drift off into the work of what they believe education looks like. Feedback from the ground, from teachers and practitioners, is crucial to inform research and evidence for policy making. One cannot implement a policy that does not fit the needs of a teacher”* (ETUCE, 2021^[68]). The following sections describe in detail the factors that need to be in place to support and enable the practice – research – policy transfer and the key barriers hindering this transfer in Europe.

Practice – research nexus

The first dimension of the practice – research – policy transfer includes the coordination and cooperation between refugee education practitioners and researchers. The interaction between practice and research is two-directional. On the one hand, practice can provide empirical evidence for researchers if it is studied and synthesised in relation to other data. This is defined in research as practice-based evidence (PBE). On the other hand, research and evidence inform the design of holistic practice. This is defined as evidence-based practice (EBP) (e.g., Chorzempa, Smith and Sileo (2019^[75])).

This section aims to understand how the interactions between practice and research take place in the field of refugee education. The figure below presents how practice and research inform each other continuously.

Figure A A.1. The interaction between practice and research

Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)

A practice needs to be based on evidence. In health science, an evidence-based intervention is considered “an intervention that has been tested in research [...] and that has been demonstrated in this research to achieve statistically and practically meaningful improvements in health and wellness” (Gottfredson and et.al., 2015, p. 894^[76]). Similarly, it is generally understood that an education programme should be based on scientifically validated theoretical frameworks and methodologies that clearly articulate how the services achieve the desired outcomes (Bond and Carmola, 2004^[77]). Educational theory, refugee needs and local context influence the design of a successful practice (The Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Childrens' Hospital Melbourne, 2011^[78]).

In medicine, evidence-based practice (EBP) is considered “integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research” (Sackett et al., 1996, pp. 71-72^[79]). In the field of education, EBP constitutes the use of systematic education research by teachers in their teaching, adapted to their individual expertise and experience (Diery et al., 2020^[80]). Empirical evidence of teaching practices collected by researchers with the help of practitioners and analysed in the context of broader educational theory and research on education effectiveness provides insights into the most suitable approaches to refugee education. These findings are subsequently fed back to teachers and complemented by their own experiences of success. This latter aspect of “complementarity” is of great importance. Cook et al. (2008^[81]) note that evidence-based practices should not be blindly adopted by teachers as one practice may not lead to success in all cases. Even when an evidence-based practice is implemented correctly, not every refugee student may respond to it as expected. For this reason, adaptability of practice, combined with continuous assessment of needs and local context, remains key (Sutoris, 2018^[82]).

In the field of refugee education, teachers across Europe express a clear need for more and better-quality training opportunities on inclusive education practices (ETUCE, 2021^[68]). However, there are various challenges for teachers to enhance their teaching practice by using research (such as EBP). Information provided by research can be overwhelming for teachers who are not well versed in understanding academic literature (Chorzempa, Smith and Sileo, 2019^[75]). For this reason, ETUCE argues for the engagement of other actors to translate research evidence for practitioners:

“It is not the task of the teacher to study research on a regular basis. An individual teacher will look at research only if they have a particular interest. There is a need for teacher training institutions to incorporate research into their programmes and subsequently train teachers according to the

evidence. Other stakeholders can support the accessibility of research evidence for teachers through events for teachers where the evidence is presented in a teacher-friendly manner” (ETUCE, 2021^[68]).

An interviewed education researcher further reiterated that *“teachers need help with academic reading and are out of touch with research. To address this, teacher training programmes should focus on developing research skills in teachers, and habits of thinking of the whole school community. At the same time researchers need to get closer to teaching, such as teacher trainers”* (SIRIUS, 2021^[51]).

Therefore, to encourage the design of evidence-based practice, researchers, and stakeholders such as teacher training institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) need to collaborate to make evidence accessible.

To ensure that the effectiveness of a practice is replicated in a different school, teachers’ capacities and skills need to be considered in the design of the practice. For example, a teacher training programme can be scaled-out consistently across all implementation sites, while the curriculum of the training can be adjusted to the needs and circumstances of the individual schools (Sutoris, 2018^[82]). Furthermore, scaling-up for sustainability of the practice should start from the strengths of teachers and school staff, and their ownership of the practice (Krainer and Zehetmeier, 2019^[83]).

In essence, when done well, the practice of scaling-up or scaling-out is an example of practice – research – policy transfer, where an initial pilot practice is evaluated (researched) for its effectiveness and transferability, and subsequently re-introduced in other localities and/or with the purpose of enhanced durability in the original locality.

Translating practice into research and evidence

An important step in the practice – evidence – policy transfer is the translation of practice into research and evidence outputs. Evidence can be defined as “the product of any systematic investigative process employed to increase or revise current knowledge” (Langer, Tripney and Gough, 2016, p. 6^[43]).

A practice can be suitable to inform research and evidence, as well as subsequent improvement of practice, when it builds on success factors, challenges and elements that transcend a single locality (Sutoris, 2018^[82]). For example, if the practice has been repeated, or similar practices have been implemented, common factors that apply to different contexts can become apparent if studied together in research. If the analysis of a scaled-up or replicated practice demonstrates that similar positive results have been achieved in different localities, this can serve as evidence for the effectiveness of the practice and its potential upscaling.

The efforts to replicate or scale-up a practice can support the identification of factors and elements contributing to effective and inclusive refugee education in various localities. Therefore, translating practice to evidence (research production) comprises several elements: i) evaluating success; ii) measuring the factors of success; and iii) identifying success factors.

I. Evaluating success

Firstly, through data collection, it must be determined that the practice was effective, impactful, and meaningful. This can be measured through well-designed project evaluations and collaboration among educators, education stakeholders and researchers. To get a holistic understanding of the impact of a refugee education intervention, data collected should not be limited to student outcomes, but also to their well-being, their (qualitative) experience with the intervention, and the experiences and observations of teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. This is where a range of education stakeholders need to be active actors of data production/collection (see e.g., Wiseman and Bell (2021^[16])).

II. Measuring the factors of success

Secondly, research must determine the factors that promote the effectiveness of the practice and whether these factors could be replicated. This will inform whether the success of the practice could be repeated or whether its success is linked to a unique, local phenomenon. If the success of a practice depends solely on a unique circumstance or stakeholder, the practice might not be the only source to inform future interventions (Sutoris, 2018^[82]). The results of scaling-up or scaling-out of a practice can provide important insights into the potential of the practice to translate (if at all) to other contexts.

III. Identifying universal, flexible success factors

Thirdly, the evaluations and results of various similar practices are put together and analysed to compare the success factors. The evidence should be based on the synthesis of results gathered from replicated practices or from other local practices of refugee education with similar objectives and outcomes. For example, in relation to early childhood education, the Centre for Community Child Health in Melbourne notes that “rather than identifying effective programmes, practice-based syntheses identify universal features of effective practice and do so in a rigorous fashion” (The Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, 2011, p. 2^[78]). However, the existence of such universal features may not mean that these features are static. In fact, the success of various scaled-up projects depends on the flexible design of an intervention to ensure its adaptability to different contexts (Sutoris, 2018^[82]). Therefore, research should also analyse the extent to which the adaptability of a practice contributes to its effectiveness in different localities.

Similarly, in terms of monitoring, there are many elements that cannot be controlled, and researchers should not aim to control all aspects of a local practice during its implementation (Swisher, 2010, p. 2^[84]). Rather, the process of documenting the results should preside over controlling the delivery of the practice, while simultaneously reporting on contextual factors of influence and details on the actual implementation processes. This approach to research better respects the complexity of the refugee education context and refugee students' diverse individual needs as they will inevitably differ by locality and community (Swisher, 2010^[84]).

Practice-based evidence (PBE)

An important element of the practice – research link is the principle of practice-based evidence (PBE), an approach originating from medicine and psychology studies, such as the aforementioned EBP. Various studies demonstrate a disconnect between educators and research (e.g., Santangelo et al. (2015^[85])), as educators generally rely on their own experiences rather than on research-based practices, while many theoretical research papers on potential education interventions lack the empirical evidence to support their proposition (Chorzempa, Smith and Sileo, 2019^[75]). The PBE approach, however, involves educators as co-researchers and the classroom as their site of inquiry. Educators are tasked to determine the degree to which approaches suggested in literature produce the intended outcomes in their classroom context. As a result, educators produce empirical evidence on a theoretical proposition (Chorzempa, Smith and Sileo, 2019^[75]).

The role of bottom-up assessments of practices has been recognised in other studies as well (e.g. Kratochwill et al. (2012^[86]) and Shannon (2015^[87])). Therefore, there is significant rationale for a close collaboration between researchers and educators in the design, implementation, and evaluation of local practices. However, there is a need for both researchers and educators to recognise the importance of their collaboration and the added value of such close collaboration for impactful research and effective practice.

Co-production

The creation of practice-based evidence can benefit significantly from what Campbell and Vanderhoven (2016^[88]) call “co-production”. This approach to research considers the production of evidence as a process that relies on the interaction between academic and non-academic partners and results in knowledge that is both practical and academic (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016^[88]).

Recognition for co-production in research has grown, because it ensures that research outcomes are more relevant and can create more impact (Durose et al., 2012^[89]). However, to create impact, non-academic research partners should be involved in the design of the research as well as in determining the concept of “impact” (Pain, 2016^[90]). The development and importance of impactful research will be introduced in the next Section.

The Belgian Education Council uses an interesting method of co-production, directly for the purpose of policy making. A EUNEC representative explained that:

“Besides short-term policy advice we also conduct strategic exploration on a longer term. We create a working group with government representatives (e.g., from education, but also representing migration stakeholders), our stakeholders, and university representatives. In principle, every working group should comprise a researcher from a university. The expert is often not continuously present but provides ad hoc advice or they support our policy advice with scientific evidence and foundations. We see a clear value for having this researcher involved as well” (EUNEC, 2021^[91]).

However, from the researcher's perspective, co-production only works if all involved stakeholders are trained and empowered to meaningfully contribute to the process and understand how the whole system of research and policy making works⁶. As an interviewed representative of SIRIUS network from academics puts it, “involving stakeholders with a narrow vision of inclusion may reinforce the prejudice and exclusion, preventing the design of an inclusive and effective solution” (SIRIUS, 2021^[51]).

Research – policy nexus

The second dimension of the practice – research – policy transfer comprises the interaction between the research domain and the policy domain. Similar to the practice-research nexus, the research-policy nexus is a continuous interaction and exchange in both directions. In short, research serves to inform policy making of proven approaches to enhance refugee education. Policy makers are tasked to translate the evidence into concrete action based on needs analysis taking into account specific national and regional contexts. Subsequently, researchers and education stakeholders review and evaluate the implementation of the policy and provide evidence of the successes and challenges in this regard. These should function as in-built mechanisms of reflection on current systemic gaps. The monitoring results are fed back to the policy makers for policy improvement. Such systems promote effective policy planning, based on careful gap analysis and informed by evidence, encourage open dialogue, networking and collaboration, both vertically and horizontally. However, the involvement of a broader range of stakeholders only works when there is a strategic vision and set of processes to harness their ideas and input (Burns and Köster, 2016^[92]).

⁶ Accessible via UKRI Economic and Social Research Council: <https://esrc.ukri.org/research/impact-toolkit/what-is-impact/> (accessed on 2 September 2021).

Figure A A.2. Interaction between research and policy

Elements of impactful research

Impactful research is defined differently by different actors but is generally understood as research that generates benefits for society, such as health, social improvement, and economic well-being, besides contributing to the academic knowledge base (Greenhalgh et al., 2016^[93]). The UK Economic and Social Research Council⁷ makes the following distinction between academic and economic and societal impact:

- *Academic impact* is the demonstrable contribution that excellent social and economic research makes in shifting understanding and advancing scientific method, theory, and application across and within disciplines.
- *Economic and societal impact* is the demonstrable contribution that excellent social and economic research makes to society and the economy, and its benefits to individuals, organisations and/or nations.

Amo (2007^[94]) considers five interdependent stages that lead to research impact: (i) conducting the research; ii) sharing the findings; iii) disseminating the knowledge; iv) short-term impact; v) long-term impact. Researchers typically exert control over the first three stages, but the actual impact of research is determined by various other influences. For example, in education, research impact on policy making, curriculum design and teacher training would also depend on its uptake by policy makers, education design specialists and practitioners (Amo, 2007^[94]). Therefore, close cooperation with other stakeholders, practitioners, media, and end users is crucial for researchers to achieve the expected impact.

Figure A A.3. Five stages of research impact

Source: Readapted from Amo, C. (2007^[94]). Conceptualizing Research Impact: The Case of Education Research. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 22.

However, other scholars have argued against this “linear” model of research impact. Best and Holmes (2010^[95]) consider that dissemination processes are affected by structures that facilitate interaction between stakeholders (or “agents”) with diverse perspectives, priorities, and expectations. Stakeholders are brought together by a “system” that is dynamic and constantly adjusting itself through interactions between its components.

Providing empirical evidence on “what works” is not sufficient by itself. Evidence of individual practices may provide information only on success factors in specific contexts and with unique communities. As explained in the previous Sections of the paper, there is a need for a variety of practices to be studied, but the evidence of practices should be supplemented with contrasting it against theoretical base. Therefore, impactful research needs to combine empirical evidence with other data sources, such as large-scale assessment data and education theory (Wiseman, 2010^[96]).

Studies on the linkages between research and policy making point to significant gaps and challenges that need to be addressed before education research can be impactful. Davies and Nutley (2008, p. 2^[97]) state that “research findings do not speak for themselves – they must be collated, summarised, and synthesised, and then presented in ways that make them acceptable and informative”. Examples of challenges to impactful research for policy making include:

- Research is not designed according to questions on “what types of knowledge are most valuable to help address societal problems, or how to produce useful evidence, or how to use this knowledge in policy and practice setting” (Oliver and Boaz, 2019, p. 2^[22]).
- Education research is perceived as too anecdotal, not well organised and not well communicated or shared. As a result, it fails to reach policy makers and have an impact on society (Levin, 2013^[21]).
- Researchers lack knowledge on policy decision-making processes and their research therefore lacks clear insights into how individuals and institutions can achieve or measure impact on the challenges that research identified (Oliver and Cairney, 2019^[55]).
- Education researchers are unable to produce recommendations that address the needs of policy makers or produce such recommendations in academic language that is incomprehensible (and therefore unattractive) for policy makers (Vanderlinde and Van Braak, 2010^[98]).
- There is a lack of robust evidence, as noted above, on inclusive education for refugee students that provide a sufficient basis for policy making (Cerna, 2019^[7]).
- Education research for refugee education is perceived as more controversial for policy making. Both left- and right-wing politicians, as well as academics themselves, have their own agendas for refugee education, often based on perceptions on accepting refugees in general. Research findings can therefore be undermined or exaggerated according to political positions (Cummings, 2011^[99]; Hansen, 2018^[100]).

Bolden and Tymms (2020^[31]) highlight further reasons why educational policy changes have had little impact in the last decade, which could be linked to insufficient knowledge-policy transfer.

Box A A.1. Explaining the limited impact of educational reforms

Bolden and Tymms (2020^[31]) summarise the reasons for the limited effectiveness of education reforms into two main categories: i) related to their implementation process; and ii) what has been missed during the design.

- i. Implementation: what could have been done/considered better:
 - *Timing of the reforms.* Most national governments are typically in office for only four to five years at a time before having to seek re-election. This often results in speedy reforms with the goal to show immediate results and actions rushing through the change process without the necessary research base. For instance, Higgins (2012^[101]) describes how the decision of the introduction of whiteboards in UK schools was made before the actual results of the pilot were released – i.e., the decision on the expansion of the pilot was based on the perception of the data rather than its actual analysis. Another related explanation comes from the frequency with which policy initiatives are introduced and replace one another without understanding the mid-term and long-term effects of such policy changes. It is natural to expect that in such a climate some teachers and schools may not fully embrace the change because they know another change will be introduced soon.
 - *Carrots and sticks.* This expression refers to a system in which a person is rewarded for some actions and threatened with punishment for others (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.^[102]). Reforms are often accompanied by measures designed to ensure compliance, such as tests, high-stakes inspections and financial penalties/rewards, promoting the culture of punishment, rather than the culture of experimentation and learning. These measures/incentives can result in unintended consequences which would be opposite to the expected effects of the reforms (Jones et al., 2017^[103]).
- ii. Omission: what issues have not been taken into account when designing or understanding impact of the reforms:
 - *Factors outside school.* It has long been recognised that student success (and refugee and immigrant students' in particular) is not just a result of schooling but is related to factors outside the formal educational system. However, this evidence is often disregarded when designing particular policy solutions (Bolden and Tymms, 2020^[31]).
 - *Changing pedagogy is difficult.* Efforts in changing teacher practice might not yield expected results if there is no buy-in and involvement of teachers and schools themselves in experimenting and mutual learning. Resistance to changes and novelties as a natural human response should also be taken into account (Ibid).
 - *"Transplantation" of policy.* As Elliott et al. (2019^[37]) suggests, a perceived "best practice is unlikely to be smoothly introduced into a new context with no resistance, unless it is grown/embedded into this context".
 - *Compartmentalised knowledge.* The knowledge on students' development is compartmentalised within a whole range of disciplines including psychology, sociology, genetics, medicine, economics, statistics and education. However, there is no communication between and often within disciplines and as a consequence no holistic transmission of existing knowledge into policy and practice (Bolden and Tymms, 2020^[31]).

Source: Sources: Bolden and Tymms (2020^[31]). Standards in education: reforms, stagnation and the need to rethink, Oxford Review of Education, 46:6, 717-733, DOI:10.1080/03054985.2020.1781608; Elliott, J., Stankov, L., Lee, J., & Beckmann, J. F. (2019^[37]). What did PISA and TIMSS ever do for us?: the potential of large scale datasets for understanding and improving educational practice. Comparative

Education. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2018.1545386>; Higgins, S. (2012_[101]). Evaluation of impact: A case study of the introduction of interactive whiteboards in schools in the UK. In L. Ashley, M. Waring, R. Coe, & L. Hedges, *Research methods and methodologies in education* (pp. 145-152). SAGE Publications; Jones et al. (2017_[103]). The unintended consequences of school inspection: the prevalence of inspection side-effects in Austria, the Czech Republic, England, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland. *Oxford Review of Education*, 43 (6). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2017.1352499>.

Translating evidence into policy

The final step of the practice – research – policy transfer is the adoption of education policies and strategies that institutionalise the uniform success factors identified in research and practice. However, there is no one dimensional route from evidence to policy. For example, policy making takes place based not on evidence alone, but happens within the wider political context, public opinion and in connection to other sectors and budgetary considerations. Furthermore, one element of evidence can lead to multiple policy pathways and diverse possible policy solutions (Koster, Shewbridge and Kramer, 2020_[104]). This demonstrates the need to evaluate the effectiveness and suitability of the policy intervention implemented.

The value of evidence for policy making

Policy making requires close cooperation between education researchers and policy makers to avoid the disconnect between research outputs and policy makers' needs. Various challenges exist towards the production of impactful research by researchers as well as towards the effective use of evidence by policy makers. For example, a study on research in the United States finds that research evidence is more often used conceptually (for general background knowledge) or symbolically (to justify a chosen course of action) rather than instrumentally (feeding directly into a particular policy decision) (Greenhalgh et al., 2016_[93]).

Interest in the contribution of research to the European Union (EU) policy processes has been increasing since 2000, when the Open Method of Coordination was introduced as one of the instruments of the Lisbon Strategy⁸. This has resulted in studies that highlight the gap between research and policy-making communities, but also in practical and theoretical approaches to how this gap can be bridged – usually with the help of intermediaries, i.e., knowledge brokers⁹ (Schut et al., 2014_[105]). The concept of knowledge brokerage (OECD, 2007_[106]) was identified as a promising strategy in terms of promoting interactions among researchers, policy makers and civil society. The goal of cultural brokers is to develop a mutual understanding of goals and cultures of participating actors, and to identify issues and problems for which decisions or solutions shall be developed (Van Kammen, de Savigny and Sewankambo, 2006_[107]). Both the European Union and the OECD flag currently limited knowledge brokerage as the weakest link in research-policy transfer for refugee education (Ion and Lucu, 2015_[108]).

While it was formerly assumed that knowledge is produced through research and subsequently needs to be transferred to the recipients for evidence-based decisionmaking and practice (Davies and Nutley, 2008_[97]), knowledge brokerage is a two-way process; informing research about the relevance of research

⁸ The aim of the EU's 2000 Lisbon Strategy, launched in March 2000 by the EU heads of state and government, was to make Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". The Open Method of Coordination includes specific benchmarks and indicators to measure best practice of EU Member States towards the implementation of EU policies (European Council, 2000_[112]).

⁹ *Knowledge brokering* refers to initiatives and activities that enhance the accessibility and meaning of research for different stakeholders, such as policy makers (Turnhout et al., 2013_[113]). These activities can include the dissemination of research findings among different stakeholders, as well as facilitating joint knowledge production and workshops on findings among different stakeholders.

outputs for policy and practice through knowledge brokerage are equally important. Oliver and Boaz (2019^[22]) recommend that research agendas should be set collaboratively to share emerging ideas among researchers, stakeholders, and policy makers.

Therefore, the research to policy transfer requires inputs from the supply side (research) and demand side (policy makers). Researchers are responsible to collect varied, adequate, and relevant information and knowledge, as well as present it in an understandable manner. Simultaneously, policy makers must have the motivation, capability, and opportunity to make use of the evidence and transform it into action and policy (Burns and Köster, 2016^[92]).

The use of evidence in policy making

According to Köster, Shewbridge and Kramer (2020^[104]), there are five key areas for policy makers to develop the motivation, capability, and opportunity to use evidence:

- i. *The skills to access and make sense of evidence.* Such skills include policy makers' ability to locate and assess information, analysing it in relation to other information and judging its trustworthiness and value.
- ii. *Making evidence conveniently available.* Various paths can be used to disseminate evidence, such as newsletters, publications, research summaries, handouts, and publications. However, dissemination should be targeted and adjusted to the needs of policy makers so they can identify the elements most relevant to them. Collaboration between researchers and policy makers significantly helps in this regard.
- iii. *Organisational processes encouraging the use of evidence.* Existing policy-making structures and processes should include the use of evidence, ensure transparency, and invite diverse perspectives in the decision making.
- iv. *Collaboration with evidence producers and collegial exchange.* The interaction between policy makers and researchers supports the systematic use of evidence, but also helps researchers understand how evidence should be presented to policy makers.
- v. *Building a common understanding of fit-for-purpose evidence and its use.* Policy makers should recognise the use of evidence as a good practice. Events and awareness-raising campaigns can support their understanding of the importance of evidence in policy making. Simultaneously, researchers and policy makers should reach consensus on what constitutes fit-for-purpose evidence and how evidence should be used.

Koster, Shewbridge and Kramer (2020^[104]) further suggest three approaches for the interaction between researchers and policy makers for the purpose of enhancing the use of evidence in policy making:

- i. Interactions should have a clear purpose, for example as part of structured events (e.g., workshops, conferences) including discussions and interactive sessions.
- ii. Interactions should be more frequent and rather low threshold, to ensure timeliness of engagement of researchers in decisionmaking. Opportunities include work meetings, mentoring or coaching relationships.
- iii. Interactions should be clearly facilitated by ensuring that policy makers are given the time and resources to participate in events and meetings with researchers.

Examples of close cooperation between education stakeholders and education ministry officials can be found in Belgium, as explained by the EUNEC representative:

"The Flemish minister of education is obliged in some cases to ask the education council (VLOR) for advice. We develop advice by bringing together the education stakeholder representatives and reaching consensus among them on the advice to provide. The minister is subsequently obliged to provide a response to the advice. We can also provide advice on our own initiative"

Additionally, we have yearly stakeholder assemblies where we meet with the minister, ask questions, and interact about issues posed by the stakeholders. For longer-term strategic exploration, we generally establish a working group that involves one representative of the Education Ministry. This works well because the ministry representative is directly involved in policy making and gets his information directly from the stakeholders” (EUNEC, 2021^[91]).

Both EUNEC and an interviewed researcher on refugee and immigrant integration provided warnings about the role of research and advisory bodies attached to the ministries directly. While they can produce research that is understandable for, and targeted at, policy makers, they may be politically motivated and less in touch with practitioners (EUNEC, 2021^[91]; SIRIUS, 2021^[51]).

Policy – practice nexus

The prior sections demonstrated that there is no one-practice-fits-all approach. A recurring concern is that evidence-based education does not provide sufficient flexibility for practitioners to adjust education policy to their local and classroom settings (Cain, 2015^[109]). The adoption of evidence and design of policies need to constantly consider how the final policy approaches can be implemented by local authorities and education stakeholders. Therefore, engagement and discussion with education researchers does not end with policy making. In fact, at the final stage of the practice – research – policy transfer, the circle starts over at the local level.

Figure A A.4. Policy to research transfer

A policy intervention needs to meet school and community needs, through the engagement and dialogue between local partners and the assessment of the local needs in the context of national policy. This happens through monitoring of policy impact on the ground, which further feeds into improvement of policy. However, there is not always a strong connection between policy and practice. One interviewee indicated that:

“Policies are not implemented but ‘interpreted’, and one of the most misinterpreted policies is the one on inclusive education. There is a lack of sufficient resources and supporting institutional culture in schools to properly implement (‘interpret’) policies of inclusion, which contributes to misinterpretation of policies” (SIRIUS, 2021^[51]).

Bell and Stevenson (2015^[110]) further argue that “education policy implementation should be understood as the web of processes through which policies are interpreted, translated and reconstructed, rather than a simple process of execution”. The implementation of a policy on the school level is more than the mere execution of a top-level instruction. Elements such as school leadership, school vision and goals and success criteria, and monitoring mechanisms are what actually shape the policy and its outcomes (Bell and Stevenson, 2015^[110]).