

## The Potential of Children's Stories to Promote Equitable Classroom Integration: A Case Study of Diverse Refugee Students in an Algerian Secondary School

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**Abstract :** Refugee studies have lately emerged as a focused area of research, yet there is a vast knowledge gap vis-à-vis the integration experiences and socialization processes of diversified refugees in different educational settings. This research intends to study the diverse experiences of African refugee children in an Algerian mainstream secondary school. The study seeks to explore the nature and complexity of refugees' experiences and their relevance to the integration processes. Highlighting these diverse perspectives will be for the sake of understanding ways by which integration could be facilitated amongst refugees within mainstream school classrooms. Subsequently, this study shall investigate the possibility of story-telling activities in exploring and dealing with different issues of integration met by refugees in the predefined context. Accordingly, stories and narratives will be used to discuss values designed by the Living Values Educational Programme (LVEP) that could change the negative effect of war and conflict. These stories can potentially develop young refugees' understanding of the key social concepts that can facilitate acceptance and integration inside refugee communities and the host society. This study invokes the theoretical framework provided by Jerome Bruner's works on constructing the narrative through real-life experiences. In practice, the idea is to voice children's sense-making of their own world and integrate it with good values to help them construct a positive narrative. Qualitative methods will be integrated to investigate the readiness and acceptance of African refugee children to each other in an Algerian classroom. Two phases of data collection will be conducted. The first phase will attempt to answer the first research question about the challenges that refugee children encounter in their education in a host society. In this phase, classroom observation and semi-structured interviews will be held to explore the context regarding the research question. After issues and challenges have been identified in this phase, topics of discussion (values) that reflect these issues will be designed for the second phase. The use of participatory methods with children in the second stage of the data collection will help in discussing the core values by giving them the optionality of the arts-based tools through which they can express themselves. Story-telling was the idea behind the activities. It could help children express their thoughts and feelings about the discussed values freely. The methods used promoted a very integrating atmosphere in the classroom where both refugee and non-refugee students showed cohesion and integration. Children identified many issues in their integration processes that exceeded the classroom or the education setting. Political and economic opinions were openly shared in the class. Overall, the study is an attempt to reveal how refugee children in Algeria are experiencing integration in their education. The study will be unveiling the impact of the context on the integration of refugee children. The process of integration involved in this context helped to shape refugee experiences in a very unique way.

**Keywords :** children's agency, narrative construction, refugee children, refugee experiences, story-telling

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