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### **Introduction**

According to national and international legislation, every child in the UK of compulsory school age has the right to education. However, for some children this right is complicated in practice by immigration, security, and anti-terrorism policies. This article, which examines the impact of these often contradictory policy areas on teachers and students in an English as an Additional Language (EAL) classroom, is a contribution to the literature on migration and education (Pinson, Arnot & Candappa, 2010). In the UK, 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL) refers to learning English in addition to the learner's first language or languages, and learning English in an English-speaking environment such as a school. EAL can be used interchangeably with 'English as a second language' (ESL), although EAL is often preferred as it acknowledges that students might speak several other languages. In the UK, 'English to speakers of other languages' (ESOL) is usually used to describe adult learning of English as an additional language. There is no central policy or guidance in the UK for how EAL needs should be addressed in UK schools and as a result there is significant variation between schools' practices (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; D'Angelo, Sales, Rodriguez & Ryan, 2008; Pinson et al., 2010). Options include withdrawal programmes for such students, supporting them in mainstream classes, additional language classes, or no extra provision at all.

EAL learners therefore find themselves between contradictory policy areas. Education and child-centred policies aim at an inclusive approach towards all students in a classroom regardless of where they come from, while immigration and anti-terrorism policies encourage exclusionary practices and suspicion towards students from certain backgrounds. Most noteworthy are policy agendas such as ‘fundamental British Values’ and ‘Prevent’, which expect teachers to police the boundaries of the ‘community of values’ or nation (Anderson, 2013; Lander, 2016; Pinson et al., 2010). The Prevent duty was introduced in the UK as part of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015; it specifies that certain authorities, including schools, have ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.’ Based on ethnographic research in an EAL classroom in a diverse school in London, I analyse how these policy agendas play out in the classroom. How are they interpreted and understood by teachers and students? How do they impact dynamics between teachers and students, and how do they affect the education delivered?

The field of sociological knowledge of the education of refugee and migrant children is no longer the wasteland described by Pinson and Arnot in 2007, thanks in part to their own contributions, such as *Education, Asylum, and the ‘Non-Citizen’ Child* (Pinson et al., 2010). However, significant gaps remain. One challenge, as they argue in their 2020 review paper, is ‘to rethink the role of schooling in increasingly unstable and increasingly hostile, often racialised political environments’ (Pinson & Arnot, 2020, p. 839). Part of this work is to investigate how educational institutions and classrooms are shaped and influenced by such broader, hostile and racialised policy agendas and societal discourses. This article contributes to the literature by examining how this societal ‘State Thought’ (Sayad, 2004) plays out in the microcosm of one school’s EAL classroom. Through in-depth exploration, the article argues that the responsibilities and expectations placed on students and teachers caused by a complex policy environment for migrant and refugee schoolchildren are at odds with their educational needs. These needs, as Jill Rutter argues, ‘[have] complex causes that are often related to their different pre-migration and post-migration experiences’ (2006, p. 4). While educational audits and league tables expect teachers and students to deliver measurable attainment results, refugee and migrant students are more concerned with learning English, knowing how to navigate the school and its rules, processing recent experiences, and feeling safe. Teachers in the EAL classroom become caught between providing a safe space for their students and complying with policies that focus on attainment and surveillance. There is then a significant mismatch between three factors: the expectations of a metric-driven education system; what teachers *feel* they want and should deliver for these young migrants; and what the young recently-arrived migrants need.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section examines the theoretical and policy context of the right to education and other competing policy areas, and is followed by a discussion of methods. The third section examines the needs of migrant and refugee children in the EAL classroom. The final section considers the impossible task teachers face in addressing their students’ needs while also maintaining their professional responsibilities and duties.

### **Immigration and the right to education in the UK**

All children in the UK have the right to access education regardless of their background or immigration status, as per the Education Act 1996 and the Education

and Inspections Act 2006 (Spencer & Hughes, 2015). Although this right can be interpreted as an implicit right for some migrant groups, such as migrants who do not have legal residence status, the National Subject Association for EAL, NALDIC, maintains it exists irrespective of immigration status. In their 2012 briefing they point out:

‘Local Authorities have a legal duty to ensure that education is available for all children of compulsory school age... This duty applies irrespective of a child’s immigration status, country of origin or rights of residence in a particular area’ (NALDIC 2012).

Beyond national legislation, the UK has international legal obligations through being a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the child (CRC) and the European Convention on Human Rights, enforceable in the UK through the 1996 Human Rights Act (1998) (Protocol 1, Article 2). The CRC specifies the right to education in article 28 and guarantees non-discrimination in education. However, as Osler has discussed, in order for children and young people to effectively access their right to education in practice, its implementation needs to be considered in its specific context and often requires broader changes (Osler, 2016, p.18). To think through how ‘abstract provision of international human rights’ can be interpreted for ‘real-life issues’, former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education Katarina Tomaševski developed the ‘4-A scheme’ of availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability (2001, p. 14). Under adaptability, Tomaševski specifies the needs of child migrants and refugee children; she states that schools and educational establishments should adapt to these special needs if these children’s right to education is to be fully met.

However, in the UK migrant children stand at the intersection of often contradictory policy areas, namely education and children’s rights on the one hand, and immigration policies on the other (Sigona & Hughes, 2012). While education and children’s rights policies adopt an approach to include *all* children in the right to education, immigration policies restrict migrants’ access to the welfare state, including education (Oliver & Hughes, 2018; Sainsbury, 2012).

Although restricting children’s education on the grounds of their immigration status would contradict the UK’s international and national commitments to the right to education for all children, recent governments have tried to introduce such policies. In the summer of 2015, the Home Office proposed introducing immigration checks in schools (Watts, 2016), with the intention to ‘deprioritise children of illegal immigrants’ (Kuenssberg, 2016). This initiative was dropped after media reports and a public outcry. In September 2016, the UK Government tried a different tactic by introducing a requirement that primary, middle, secondary schools and colleges collect country-of-birth and nationality information for children aged between 5 and 19 as part of the school census. Although this was not a requirement to collect immigration status data, the initiative was linked to the ‘hostile environment’ immigration policy introduced by then Home Secretary Theresa May in 2012 (Goodfellow, 2019), and resulted in information being passed from the Department for Education to the Home Office which could be used for immigration enforcement (Weale, 2019). This requirement is a further indication of the direction of travel, with increased surveillance information being collected on students. The policy was strongly resisted by schools, teachers’ unions, migrants’ rights organisations and

other actors, such as the *Schools ABC* campaign; they all argued that schools should be safe spaces for children, and teachers and school staff should not be implicated in immigration enforcement. After a persistent campaign and a complaint against the collection of such data in schools, this controversial requirement was removed in April 2018 (Whittaker, 2018).

Increasing expectations on teachers to carry out surveillance work, and the closer working relationships between schools, the police and the Home Office, also contribute to a hostile school environment for migrant children. The introduction of the Prevent duty in 2015 placed teachers, like many other public sector workers, under a legal duty to adopt 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' (Home Office, 2019:1). This demand, which also requires teachers to watch out for violent and non-violent extremism, implicates them in the state's counter-terrorism surveillance strategy. As Panjwani, Revell, Gholami, and Diboll argue, Prevent has 'effectively placed a duty of care on all practicing educationalists...to act as the eyes and ears of the Home Office and other governmental agencies' (2017, p. 6). This duty is part of the broader counter-terrorism policies of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. In schools the policy is usually implemented by appointing a Prevent officer and by compulsory staff training to detect students 'at risk of radicalisation'. The training focuses on spotting 'unusual behaviour' among students and emphasises that young people who have low confidence and self-esteem, are isolated, lack friends, do not feel like they belong or have difficult home lives are especially vulnerable to being radicalised. As Liberatore points out, such criteria are problematic, because 'many of the identified "behaviours" are normal for many young people and do not constitute unlawful activities' (2017, p. 248). Given the policy's focus on *prevention*, students are suspects before they have committed any unlawful actions or engaged in criminal behaviour. Prevent has also individualised behaviour and assumes certain people are more likely to engage in terrorism than others, ignoring broader societal problems or underlying structural inequalities. Concerns such as the alienation of Muslims or a lack of future employment prospects are dismissed (Liberatore, 2017).

In schools Prevent has led to increased discrimination against Muslims, who are being disproportionately reported under the strategy (Home Office, 2017, 2018; Versi, 2017). In 2016/17, 61% of individuals were 'referred for concerns related to Islamist extremism' (Home Office, 2018, p. 4). Figures for the same year show that 81% of reported cases referred via Prevent were dismissed (Home Office, 2018, p. 4). Given the absence of a typical single risk profile that leads individuals to become terrorists, teachers are told to follow their 'gut feeling'. However, such 'gut feelings' are often 'predicated upon racialised biases' and 'produced through racialised understandings of risk and vulnerability' (Fernandez, Walker & Younis, 2018). As Awan has argued, rather than 'prevent[ing] extremism [it] risks labelling the Muslim community as "suspect"' (2012, p. 1158) and contributes to a 'politics of unease' about British Muslims, who are ambiguously viewed as a threat to societal security in the post-9/11 securitisation agenda (Archer, 2009).

The Prevent duty is closely related to the 'British Values' agenda, as counter-terrorism policy defines extremism as being against *Fundamental British Values*. As Liberatore points out, 'under Prevent, British Values have become juxtaposed with "extremist ideology"' (2017, p. 252). This development came in the wake of a backlash against multiculturalism; to the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, the solution lay in a stronger national identity and the redefining of Britishness. In this

context, immigrants are welcome only if they comply with 'British Values'. This follows a longer history of racial exclusion of Black Britons from the British nation despite their British citizenship, as Gilroy argued in the 1980s, and where the British nation remains imagined largely as white (2002; see also Anderson, 2013; Sharma, 2015). Bhabha's research has further shown how migrant students are othered and marginalised in schools through nationalist and postcolonial hierarchies (2004). The power and processes of racist social and hierarchical ordering continues to be re-constituted (Hall, 2017) and, over time, these racial exclusions from Britishness have been extended to include Eastern Europeans and Muslims (De Noronha, 2017). In the recent iteration of such hierarchies, in the context of Islamophobia and the 'War on Terror', religion has become a key identity marker, and this presents specific challenges for young Muslims in schools (Arnot, Schneider & Welply, 2013, p. 573). As Pinson et al., have argued, schools play a crucial role in '[demarcating] who is allowed to be included in the national constituency' (2010, p. 206). As part of the Prevent duty, teachers have been tasked to teach 'British Values' in UK schools and, as a result, to inadvertently define the boundaries of Britishness. However, 'British Values' have been criticised for being poorly defined (Rights Watch, 2016) and vague, mostly referring to universal human rights and democracy. In the Home Office's policy document, 'British Values' are defined as 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs' (Department for Education, 2015, p. 5). But, as Liberatore asks, 'how are these values specifically *British*?' (2017, p. 251). Furthermore, the principles chosen ignore Britain's colonial and racist histories, that directly contradict many of these values. Jarvis and Lister argue 'the discussion of "mainstream British values" that runs throughout the new Prevent [policy] is both conceptually flawed and potentially dangerous' (cited in Awan, 2012, p. 1169). Defining 'British Values' in opposition to Muslim values is problematic in a diverse classroom which includes students from different religious, national, and ethnic backgrounds.

In addition to finding themselves in this complex intersection between education, children's rights, immigration and securitisation, UK schools have to navigate an educational environment that has seen increased marketisation and academisation driven by neoliberal political agendas since the 1980s (Kulz, 2017). Teachers and schools have been expected to prove their success and progress, and this has led to the introduction of an audit culture of standards, league tables and increased testing; this has often led to a more authoritarian and disciplinarian ethos and style of teaching. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regularly inspects schools and assesses their quality. Further pressure is added to schools by comparative league tables, requiring them to demonstrate their students have attained minimum standards of literacy and numeracy and satisfactory progress in other subjects. This 'failure-success binary' means other measures of good quality teaching become almost irrelevant: the only legitimated metrics are exam results (Kulz, 2017, p. 8). Schools are also pressured to reduce truancy and school absences, which must be reported to Ofsted. Sanctions for parents have been increased. They can now be fined, or in extreme cases even prosecuted, if their child does not go to school.

### **Methodology**

Researching the lives of children who are globally mobile, subject to state surveillance and have experienced trauma poses methodological and ethical

challenges. In a policy environment designed to be hostile towards migrants in the UK we have to take extra care when researching those exposed to it. The participants in this research might be considered vulnerable—as children and as refugees. The methods were therefore chosen so as not to exacerbate these vulnerabilities, and to work collaboratively with children across language barriers, cultural and religious differences. Although the EAL pupils were not a homogenous group, the majority spoke Arabic, were Muslim, came from Syria and had held humanitarian status for five years. This contrasted with my privileged position as a white, middle-class woman and British citizen. A qualitative multi-methods approach was therefore adopted to respond to these differences in power and privilege, to offer flexibility in methods (Gidley, 2019; Jackson, 2010) and to enable an enlarged field of vision (Das, 2010).

This article draws on data from a doctoral research project that included a one-year ethnographic study of an EAL classroom in a secondary school in a highly diverse North-West London borough during the academic year 2016-2017. The school's students were diverse with respect to ethnic, religious, and immigration background. (Ofsted, 2015). According to senior management, approximately 50% of the school's students are Muslim, over 50% are deemed disadvantaged, and more than 80 languages are spoken, with 75% of students in years 7 to 10 speaking languages other than English at home (survey from this research). In the EAL classroom, recently-arrived migrant students with no or little English are prepared for mainstream school. In this school, 'recently-arrived' students were those who had only been in the school for a few months. This was many children's first school after arriving in the UK, whereas some had come from other London schools which often did not have EAL provision. Three teachers worked full-time in the EAL department teaching maths, English, religion, 'British Values', and carrying out autobiographical and identity projects. One teacher provided mainstream class support for students and classes for parents. The teachers, all of whom were female, were a diverse group: from Kosovo, Romania and Britain; Muslim and Christian; ethnic minority and white. The number of students in the classroom fluctuated between five and twenty with a high turn-over as students arrived throughout the school year and were graduated to mainstream classes as soon as possible. Students stayed in the EAL classroom for between a month and a year, were in years 7 to 11 (ages 11 to 16) and came from a variety of countries of origin, including Afghanistan, Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Italy, Lebanon, Nigeria, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, and Syria. As a result, they had a variety of pre-migration experiences and reasons for migrating.

For one academic year, I spent two days a week at the school. At the start of my fieldwork, teachers introduced me, and I explained the purpose of my role as a researcher. Over time, the boundaries of my role could blur, and students would refer to me as a teacher. I therefore used the opportunity of new students arriving to re-explain my role as a researcher. I also openly carried my notebook around with me and made notes in front of students, as a visual reminder. In addition to my mostly observational role in the EAL classroom, I volunteered one hour a week as a mentor with a charity based at the school. I was matched with one student to provide homework help; she had formerly been in the EAL classroom and was a Syrian refugee. All fieldwork was carried out in English, but in some instances students would help to translate for each other, especially if there were very recently-arrived students. Sometimes a teacher who spoke Arabic would translate. This shows the importance of young people's post-migration social networks in accessing services

(Sime & Fox, 2015). Communication was also often aided by drawing pictures, google searches, or sharing photos. Consent was obtained from parents of participants under 18, and orally from the students themselves. I was DBS checked and the study received ethical approval from Goldsmiths, University of London. It was made clear to the young people that participation in the research was voluntary, they could leave at any time and anything they told me could be withdrawn in the future. All information was treated confidentially, and names and locations have been anonymised to protect individuals' identities.

Observations included lessons and break-times in the EAL classroom and regular sessions run by the school psychologist. Sometimes teachers asked me to give one-to-one support to students. For two terms I accompanied two students in mainstream maths classes. I also took part in an EAL trip to the Houses of Parliament, Christmas, and Eid celebrations. After one term at the school I carried out, in addition to the ethnographic observations, more structured and child-friendly activities with EAL students in the EAL classroom (Punch, 2002). These involved making photo diaries, which seventeen students volunteered to take part in (Milligan & Bartlett, 2015). Students were provided with single-use cameras by the researcher to take the photos, which were collected and developed once the task was completed. One daily photo was taken at school and one outside the school for ten days to gain insights into children's social worlds outside of school and to overcome language barriers. Photos taken outside school were often of parks or close-ups of objects in their homes. There were varying degrees of enthusiasm for the photo diaries; only twelve students returned their cameras and fewer engaged in discussion about the photos. The discussions revealed new insights and there was a heavy focus on the EAL classroom. The purpose of the photo diaries was to stimulate discussion and the photos themselves were not used in publications, in order to protect participants' anonymity. There were also two poetry workshops on home and belonging. Ten students took part and wrote poems either in English or in their first language, which were then translated. At the end of the academic year eighteen students took part in a one-day theatre workshop facilitated by an experienced drama practitioner. The intention of the workshop was to access more 'embodied, dialogical and illustrative' data (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008, p. 4.3) and overcome language barriers. I helped with the Refugee Week school assembly and with carrying out an EAL survey of 631 students in years 7 to 10. Conversations with teachers were mostly informal as part of the ethnography, except for one formal interview. Many of the most insightful conversations with students and staff were unanticipated, however, and took place during break-times, in staff offices and on walks through the school's corridors.

Having discussed the methods and approach of this research, the next section will discuss the needs of the students in the EAL classroom and how they relate to the outlined policy agendas.

### **The ever-present past: Refugee students' needs in the school**

Our research found that amongst this plethora of policies which impact on migrant and refugee children at schools, there was little focus on the students' needs. Instead of prioritising how education should deal with 'real-life issues', according to Tomaševski's '4-A scheme', and adapting their educational offer to the needs of child migrants and refugee children, the school's decisions were dominated by the pressure of league tables and Ofsted inspections. As a result, the specific needs of



refugee children were often invisible and hard to accommodate within the school's existing parameters.

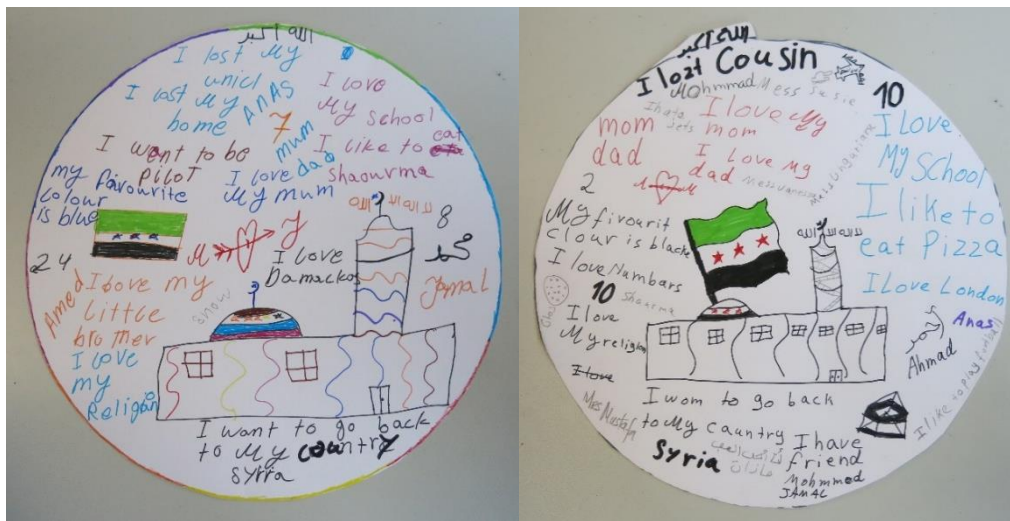
The pre-and post-migration experiences of the students in the EAL classroom were extremely diverse, as was their knowledge of English, former education, skills, abilities, and parents' level of education. As previous research has argued, we must therefore be careful not to homogenise this group but be attentive to their specific and complex needs (e.g. Rutter, 2006). In this particular context, the EAL classroom had students with a variety of backgrounds and previous experiences, including refugee children, and Eastern European students who had different levels of English and different experiences of education and life prior to joining the EAL classroom (for experiences of Polish pupils see D'Angelo et al., 2008; and for Syrian refugees see Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017). While some students had what might be considered a 'normal' childhood in their countries of origin, attending school and learning the Latin alphabet, others had experienced severe war traumas, missed years of schooling or were maybe illiterate. Research has shown the importance of learning English for recently-arrived migrant pupils to gain quality education, for friendships, and for their integration (D'Angelo et al., 2008; Evans & Liu, 2018; Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017; Pinson et al., 2010; Rutter, 2006), and the importance of developing social networks to access services (Sime & Fox, 2015). In addition, this research found that past experiences and the loss of home, family and friends was a constant presence in the lives of recently-arrived migrant students.

Refugee children were more likely to have had a range of traumatic experiences prior to arrival, compared to other recently-arrived migrant students in the EAL classroom. This could involve experiences of war and sudden removal from their homes. The journey to the UK often prolonged such experiences, and this could last many months or even years: stops in refugee camps or other places along the way, poverty, physical exhaustion, and the loss of family members. As a result, many refugee students have spent years outside of formal education (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017). These recent experiences often remained a constant accompaniment to students' everyday life at school, as they settled into their new environment. As they were learning a new language, often a new alphabet, and a new way of doing things, they were also processing often traumatic experiences. This was reflected in students' conversations, which moved between discussions of the most recent match of the school football team and who or what food they missed from 'home'.

This presence of the past in refugee children's daily life in school in the UK was brought home to me and their teachers during the theatre workshop. I explained the workshop was about understanding how students felt in their new school. However, these young people returned to their traumatic pre-migration experiences. Towards the end of the workshop, students were split into small groups to devise and act short scenes about their everyday life. This led to three girls acting out a war scene from their past. This involved two friends walking, chatting, and laughing, when one of them is suddenly gets shot, falls to the ground, and slowly dies. The girl who played the friend dropped to her knees and started wailing and shouting 'Wake up! Wake up!' The student was crying stage tears, but at some point it became unclear whether they had become real ones. This girl had only recently found out she had lost many members of her extended family to a bomb attack in Syria. We stopped the scene and took a break to check with the students, who insisted they were just play-

tears. Either way, this scene of their everyday life prior to migration shows the prevalence of such past experiences in some students' current lives in the UK.

Within this EAL classroom most children were from Syria. Although there was a range of experiences even among these students, traumatic experiences were common. One 12-year-old boy was at home with his sister when their house was bombed, and only he survived—an experience that turned his hair white. The family fled and spent months in Istanbul, where he worked in a shoe factory before they eventually made it to the UK. A 14-year-old girl had seen a neighbour in her village being decapitated by a soldier. Another 12-year-old girl was sent to get food by her parents as she was the least likely in the family to be killed; yet every time she went she was not sure whether she would make it home. A 15-year-old Afghani boy and the entire family's savings were sent away by his mother after his father and brother were killed by the Taliban. While in Calais his mobile phone was confiscated by the police and he has since been unable to contact his mother. These students had very recently experienced extreme violence and fear for their and their families' lives. Processing these experiences, rather than academic achievement, was an important need. This was clear on many occasions throughout the school day: in classes, break-time conversations and in the regular session with the school psychologist. In one session students were asked to draw their home country, and it was clear that the lives of many students, especially those from Syria, were marked by loss, insecurity, and war, as well as love, strong relationships with friends and family, and resilience:



Within the violent and traumatic experiences is a deep sense of loss of home, as commonly documented in research on refugees (e.g. Hughes, 2016). The students talked about their homes constantly; how much they loved them, how much they missed them and how they wanted to return to them. In a session I organised, we focused on 'home' and students wrote poems. This one by a 12-year-old Syrian student clearly demonstrates these themes:

***My Home***

My home is beautiful,  
Where the family meets and everyone eats.  
They walk to each other.  
I close my eyes and I see my road.  
And my uncle is there and he is waving,  
And calling us to eat.  
When I was in Lebanon,  
My mind was in Syria.  
But my body I don't know where it was.

As a result of the powerful presence of the past in students' everyday life, concentrating on schoolwork proved difficult. Many students repeatedly said they found this hard because they missed their grandparents, parents, siblings, or friends, or because they were thinking about their experiences during the war or continually worrying about it. Amira, a 12-year-old Syrian girl, was one of the students who took part in the photo diaries. One photo was of birds in large outdoor cages in a local park. I was surprised to see this and asked Amira why she had taken this photo. She explained she was sad for the birds because they were not free, and the cage is like a jail for them. She said, 'If I had them, I would let them out. They are like the children in Syria, they cannot get out.' She continued to explain her sad feelings about the situation, especially when she watched the news about the war in Syria. As well as being sad for everyone still in Syria, she was happy she and her family were able to leave and now be in the UK. It was not only their own memories that impacted their ability to concentrate, but also the constant news cycle and social media reports of the ongoing war in Syria.

These experiences left many of the refugee students feeling different to their peers and not understood. The EAL classroom provided a safe space for them to discuss these experiences and worries without being singled out or stigmatised, as most of their EAL classmates had similar experiences. This created a shared sense of solidarity between EAL students across year groups and backgrounds which supported their resilience to enter mainstream classes and school spaces. Over time, the recent pre-migration experiences would move further into the background, as students became increasingly involved in their present lives and studies at school.

The EAL classroom is an important space for its students. While it prepares them for mainstream classes by teaching them English, certain core content, and how to navigate the school, it also provides a safe space. Throughout my time at the school, students described the EAL classroom as safe, like home, and its teachers as caring and like family, or in the words of one student, 'the nicest place in the school'. Another student said 'the U40 [EAL classroom] is like my room, the teachers are kind, they tell me to learn, I learn everything there.' As the young people navigate their new life between past and present, the EAL classroom and its teachers play an important role in supporting them through their transition into mainstream education; this is discussed in the next section.

**Teachers' impossible task as brokers**

The teachers in this research were acutely aware of their students' complex needs, as outlined in the above section. They saw their task as teachers to create a safe space for their students within the school; this involved daily emotional labour and, as

Wallace puts it (2011), helping these new arrivals become pupils. However, teachers also need to navigate their role in relation to the education system and the school. Teachers are expected to graduate students from the EAL classroom into mainstream schooling as quickly as possible and focus on academic attainment and language acquisition. Previous research makes clear the importance of language acquisition for recently-arrived migrant students' academic attainment, as well as their inclusion and social integration (Evans & Liu, 2018; Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017). In line with Madziva and Thondhlana's findings (2017), this research found that addressing these complex needs often meant increased workloads for teachers; despite the school having dedicated EAL staff, resources were limited. In this process, EAL teachers become 'brokers' between the students, with whom they build trusting relationships, and the rest of the school, which often shows little time and understanding for their complex needs.

As discussed above, schools are under pressure to reduce truancy. This can lead to difficult relations between teachers and EAL students, often exacerbated due to language issues. EAL students would frequently complain to EAL teachers about getting into trouble for not following rules they were unaware of. Here the EAL and Arabic-speaking staff became crucial in explaining and translating the school rules to EAL students. A common misunderstanding was about students' timetables and not being in the right classroom for morning tutor time, which would mean they were marked absent in the school register: this could have serious consequences. Although usually easily remedied by EAL staff, these tasks were time-consuming. Other situations could be harder to resolve and cause unnecessary harm and upset. The following series of events is a harsh example of this.

One day Sadiq, a recently-arrived student from Syria, came in with dark rings under his eyes and handed the teacher papers from the London Ambulance Service. Through chaotic translations by other students and reading the papers, we established his mother had been in hospital all night with shock due to her entire family—about 10 relatives—having died in a bomb attack in Syria the day before. It then transpired that the school had called the family that morning because the three siblings were not in their respective tutor groups and had asked for 'evidence' if their absence were to be accepted. While the teachers spoke with Sadiq I went to see his sisters, who were in floods of tears and shock in the school corridor. We moved to a staff room and another Arabic-speaking teacher joined us to help make sense of the situation. Together the two teachers arranged permission for the students to go home. While I sat with the students, they kept looking at their phones and eventually showed me what they were looking at: pictures of their dead relatives sent via Facebook, a man and little children's bodies covered in blood and dust. They put their phones away but thought this was the evidence required by the school. Eventually, the Arabic-speaking teacher and I took the students home, where the teacher explained the situation to the aunt. She was visibly anxious about whether the students needed to go to school the next day but seemed reassured by the teacher. This experience sat heavily with all EAL students and teachers for the rest of the week.

This example demonstrates a potentially harmful consequence for students when difficulties in communication between the school and parents of EAL learners occur; examples of such situations are also to be found in Schneider and Arnot (2018) and in research on Polish pupils by D'Angelo et al (2008). There is a need for multilingual, sensitive and culturally appropriate mediation or intervention by

trained staff. In Sadiq's case, the school's fear of increased truancy numbers caused distress to vulnerable students. Their needs are invisible in the schools standard procedural apparatus, where it is only accountable to its financial benefactors and central government. If it had not been for the EAL teachers' intervention between the students, parents, and the school, there may have been sanctions for truancy.

The implications of the Prevent duty seemed especially prevalent, as most EAL students were Muslims. In other words, they fitted the stereotypical profile of young people seen to be at risk of radicalisation, as put forward by Prevent and its training sessions. Teachers then had a conflicted role: on the one hand, they were to make their EAL students from such a background feel safe, given their recent traumatic experiences; on the other, they had a legal duty to regard them with a certain level of suspicion and observe their behaviour for signs of radicalisation. Given the superficial and problematic training for Prevent, its interpretation posed many challenges for teachers—especially when deciding the seriousness of an incident. The following example illustrates this.

A 12-year-old Syrian male student started joking about wanting to bomb himself as he wrapped his scarf around his head. Everyone in the classroom, including his older brother, laughed. However, the atmosphere quickly changed as the teacher became angry, telling him off for making such jokes, mentioning that if he did this sort of thing, she had to report him, and the police might question him. The student, often the class clown, tried to explain he was joking, with other students agreeing. However, the teacher was not amused asking 'I don't need to report this, do I?'

What was concerning about this incident was how quickly it escalated and led to what could be understood as discriminatory behaviour from a teacher who knew these students well and specialised in supporting recently-arrived migrant students from a range of different backgrounds. She later related the incident to another EAL teacher who immediately dismissed it as a joke, and it was not taken further. This highlights the arbitrary and subjective implementation of this national policy and its dependence on individual interpretation that can lead to discrimination. Had the student been reported and identified as 'at risk', he could have been referred to Channel—the government's deradicalisation programme, which is a multi-agency panel involving the police. Furthermore, it demonstrates how such policies disrupt education and therefore undermine the UK's obligations under international law to ensure the right to education for all children in the UK. As Bolloten states, 'Prevent confuses the different professional roles of teachers and the police, and draws educational practitioners into becoming the eyes and ears of the counter-terrorism system' (2015), taking their attention away from teaching. In this incident an entire lesson was lost.

Concerns over the implications of Prevent have been raised by teachers, unions, academics, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association, and other educational experts (Adams 2016; Bolloten 2015). There are a number of concerns: these include worries about censorship, compromises to freedom of speech, the stigmatisation of segments of the population, and too much surveillance in schools. Despite these voices the Prevent duty remains—and often with detrimental consequences for students (Birt, 2015; Khaleeli, 2015; Rights Watch, 2016; Versi, 2017).

As part of Prevent, teachers are expected to teach so-called 'British Values', albeit with little guidance. In the EAL classroom, teaching 'British Values' has become

a core component. Lessons consisted of teaching the ‘five pillars’ of British Values—tolerance, democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect. Students were encouraged to think about what the fundamental values in their countries of birth were and what was important to them. However, while the policy context makes teaching ‘British Values’ fraught with difficulties, in the daily life of the EAL classroom it also seemed to be a gateway into many practical conversations with students. Teachers in the EAL classroom, who themselves were of migrant and mostly Muslim backgrounds, were able to explain certain expectations of behaviour within the school and in society more broadly. This was communicated from a point of experience as a migrant, having to learn certain ways of doing things, and from a point of concern.

In this specific context we can see how ‘British Values’ are implemented through a personalised perspective. As O’Toole, Meer, De Hanas, Jones and Modood (2016, p. 174) found, there are two types of governance, which can act in different directions: on the one hand the ‘disciplinary mode of regulation’ and, on the other, the ‘contested practice’ that can be seen in the examples outlined here. While the practice of teaching ‘British Values’ in this EAL classroom did not contest ‘British Values’, it did not teach they were opposed to Muslim values. The teacher, herself being Muslim, often pointed out the similarities. Contrary to the policy discourse which sees ‘British Values’ in opposition to Muslim values, here ‘British Values’ were used to establish a respectful relationship between students from different backgrounds.

From the discussion in this section, we can see that in this school the burden of adapting the right of education for refugee children falls overwhelmingly on individual teachers. EAL teachers’ roles are complex and multiple; they have to navigate a variety of professional and personal expectations, and often go to extra lengths to ensure all needs are met. For students, they create a safe space in the school, teaching English and ‘the rules of the game’. They support students through care, listening, and often fire-fighting crises. EAL teachers also fulfil an important role as brokers between EAL students and others in the school, engaging in a ‘politics of compassion’ (Pinson et al., 2010). Finally, EAL teachers remain accountable to school management and its demand to show good results in league tables and Ofsted reports, and comply with a plethora of national policies such as Prevent and ‘British Values’. To create a safe space for EAL students in the context of an audit and surveillance culture, EAL teachers are required to demonstrate adaptability and flexibility to navigate their obligations, duties and responsibilities on the one hand, and maintain care and empathy towards their students.

### **Conclusion**

Although every child in the UK has the right to education, its implementation and practice is not always straightforward. And at times this complexity, or competing policy demands, results in the UK failing to meet its international obligations to the right to education for all children. Furthermore, when examining the UK’s international obligations in relation to education, together with the ‘4-A Scheme’ developed by Tomaševski, we can pinpoint further shortcomings.

Firstly, given that the UK has no national policy for EAL learners, I would argue that the UK falls short in meeting its obligations to make the right to education *adaptable* and *accessible* to refugees. Instead, schools are left to find their own arrangements in adapting education to the special needs of refugee and migrant

children. This burden falls heavily on teachers, rather than on actors at the national, local or school level. As was shown in this study and previous research, the result is that there is significant variation in educational provision for refugee and migrant children. Whether a refugee or migrant student receives education adapted to their needs is often based on luck, due to the lack of a national policy providing guidance to schools. Students in an EAL classroom have complex needs that ought to be addressed by the UK government and schools under the principle of adaptability (Tomaševski, 2001). Refugee and migrant children often arrive in the classroom with traumatic pre-migration experiences, little or no English, and varying degrees of literacy and education. However, without a national policy on EAL education and education for young refugees and migrants, it could be argued that the UK falls short of its international obligations to ensure the right to education for all children.

Secondly, the right to education is complicated by other policy priorities affecting how education is delivered and how teachers act in the classroom. In the context of an EAL classroom, recently-arrived migrant children are not only constructed in relation to asylum and immigration policies and discourses, as Pinson et al., have argued (2010), but also by the Prevent and 'British Values' agendas, which create an environment of suspicion towards Muslim students. Such hostile and racialised policies impact on refugee and migrant children at school and can lead to discriminatory behaviour by teachers. Such discrimination, based on biases about students' backgrounds and their (Muslim) religion, compromises the UK's obligation under the CRC and ECHR for the right to education to be guaranteed without discrimination. As shown in this article, students of Muslim background are more likely to find themselves excluded from education as a result of the Prevent policy. Furthermore, this conflicts with ensuring that education remains accessible to all children, as Muslim students are more likely to miss out on education if they are removed from class or school.

Thirdly, adapting education to the complex needs of refugee children does not easily align with priorities of league tables, audits, and marketisation that schools have to comply with, under UK domestic legislation. These pressures from competing national education policies on schools means schools have fewer incentives to provide resources for students' wellbeing, spaces to process their recent pre-migration experiences, and their broader integration. Teachers' attention is therefore often drawn to meeting metrics for exam results and truancy—which if not met can have serious negative consequences for a school—and away from adapting their teaching to the specific needs of refugee and migrant children. While previous research has often criticised the over-emphasis on refugee children's' trauma at the expense of their resilience and agency, my study suggests this is not a helpful binary. Many refugee and migrant children display both tendencies, and therefore adapting education to their needs means creating space for students to process their often traumatic experiences as well as recognising their resilience.

The school's EAL teachers performed an important role in bridging the right to education in law and the right to education in practice for migrant and refugee children. The availability of specially trained teachers is an important component in meeting refugee children's educational needs. These teachers can ensure that education means a safe space in the school for these young people: a space where they can build resilience and create trusting relationships; a space where they learn English, the Latin Alphabet, how to read a timetable, how to wear a school uniform, how to get school lunch and pay for it, and what to do if they are sick; a space where

they learn how to communicate with teachers and other students. Education here, viewed in broad terms unrestrained by metrics, goes well beyond the curriculum. Such education is crucial in bridging students' previous worlds and their new environment, a moment of pause in the integration process. EAL provision is an important and essential part of student's integration in the school and their wider neighbourhood. Without a national approach to EAL learners, it is unclear how the UK can meet the obligation to interpret and implement the right to education 'in real-life', according to the 4-A scheme of accessibility, acceptability, availability, and adaptability—especially when it comes to availability (in terms of trained EAL teachers and resources) and adaptability (in terms of special educational provision for EAL learners). Schools have been left to their own devices in the interpretation of EAL education and therefore uneven provision exists. As a result, some students' educational needs are met under international human rights obligations of the CRC and ECHR, while others' fall significantly short.

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