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Instating settings of emergency education in Vienna: temporary schooling of pupils with forced migration backgrounds

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ABSTRACT

In the year 2015, Austria was one of the main European destinations of displaced persons. According to education authorities around 15,000 children with a forced migration background of school age who arrived in Austria over the course of a few months from late 2015 to the beginning of 2016 called for immediate and partly temporary solutions. Due to Austrian legislation and unlike other countries, every child living in Austria between the ages of six to fifteen (or for nine years of schooling) is entitled to receive compulsory education. Though the school administration of Vienna generally promotes an inclusive approach to education in regular schools, schools in neighbourhoods with a large refugee population were reportedly unable to provide appropriate and adequate education for all children. In response, the local school authority in Vienna decided to establish temporary classrooms in refugee accommodations. This article describes and analyses the emergence of new educational structures from the point of view of university students and lecturers who took part in the one and a half years of its implementation. The article thereby aims to document specific perspectives on educational emergency measures at a certain point of time. In both the primary and secondary sectors, the emergence of a new temporary field of specialised and exceptional education were observed and recorded in a thick description of dynamic processes of trans-institutional, trans-organisational, trans-professional, communal, and individual development. Thus, the article presents a multifaceted picture of problems in refugee education under exceptional circumstances. The findings illustrate how insufficient educational opportunities for those falling outside the age of compulsory schooling – in particular, preschool children as well as youth older than fifteen – diminish possibilities for the inclusion of these children within and beyond education.

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Introduction

Forced migration results from dwindling livelihoods in the displaced person's country of origin, particularly caused by war and other life-threatening situations (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

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et al. 2014). Under the conditions of global developments, there is a demand for appropriate concepts for the education of children with a forced migration background at the nexus of refugee education and inclusive education (Taylor and Sidhu 2012; Block et al. 2014; UNESCO 2016). In this article, we underline the need for the discussion of such issues, not only in the context of countries of the Global South, where they would, under certain circumstances, be referred to as measures of emergency education (Kagawa 2005), but also in the context of European countries, drawing on the example of Austria. Additionally, we advocate for an understanding of inclusive education that extends beyond a mere focus on the inclusion of children with disabilities in education, to incorporate a broad range of societal efforts to include all children, youth, and adults (Taylor and Sidhu 2012; Block et al. 2014).

The empirical basis of this article emerged from two consecutive courses in a *BA Studies in Educational Sciences* programme, supervised by Gottfried Biewer and Michelle Proyer, at the University of Vienna. This article draws upon a teaching, practice, and research project that emerged out of a close collaboration between the University and the Vienna School Board. The project was carried out with students at the final stage of their BA in the area of Education Studies, two of them acting as co-authors of this article. The project lasted one and a half years and took place in two large accommodation facilities for refugees where so-called 'on-site educational facilities', 'on-site provision (of education)' or 'on-site schooling' (Vor-Ort-Beschulung, VOB) were installed during peaks in arrivals of forced migrants. This article introduces the (educational) situation of refugees in Austria, then focuses on the research and the university course, the students' research activities and the nexus of inclusive and refugee education, including restraints due to discriminatory policies, the importance of training, engagement, and readiness of educational actors to enable equal education for all.

Refugees in Austria: arrivals in 2015 and beyond

A particular challenge for some European countries, including Sweden, Austria, and Germany, emerged in 2015, when within a few months more than one million people sought protection within their borders as a result of wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, in particular. In the second half of the year, more than 80,000 people, with a forced migration background, sought refuge in Austria. Thus, the population of Austria increased by almost 1% within a few months (Expertenrat für Integration 2016). This may seem small, given refugee quotas as high as 25%, for example, in Lebanon (UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF 2015); however, it led to a public debate in Austria that had a polarising effect on society. The debate raised questions regarding the development of the Austrian educational and social system. This also had an impact on political developments, especially the outcome of polls in late 2017. An initially welcoming attitude seemed to trade places with widespread mistrust, fear, and a certain attitude of self-fulfilling prophecy when it comes to failures in integration. To a large extent, this seemed due to political parties spreading news of misinterpreted statistics and tales of migrants aiming to 'play tricks'. For example, singular cases of the misuse of social security or violent attacks were arguably generalised and facts that would contrast such a view such as high levels of education among certain groups were overlooked or shaped by uninformed prejudice (Reisigl and Wodak 2005; Buber-Ennser et al. 2016). This, despite the fact that Austria had previously received significantly higher numbers of refugees, such as in the

1950s from Hungary as well as in the 1990s as a result of the wars in the former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, Austria cannot be described as a particularly multicultural country and it continues to prioritise monocultural, especially monolingual approaches (Dirim and Mecheril 2017). Indeed, the opposite is true, young people with a so-called migration background are still overrepresented in specific educational tracks, such as special and vocational training (Unterwurzacher 2007). Under the motto ‘German first’, Austrian regulations make it nearly impossible to get a job before attaining German at an intermediate level. So-called values and orientation courses (Wertekurse) were introduced for recently arrived refugees (Republik Österreich 2017). A significant proportion of the people seeking shelter have mental trauma and their needs have still only been marginally met. While mental health support is subjected to public debate, as waiting lists for therapeutic support are full and waiting times often span months. Moreover, recommendations backed by empirical studies are still scarce (Plutzer 2016).

The provision of education in refugee accommodations

One of the main areas of concern in the context of the arrival of refugees in 2015 was the education sector. Since the provision of basic education for children between the ages of six and fifteen is mandatory, Austria had to take immediate and sometimes transitional or polarising measures. According to Austrian education legislation, all children and young people living in the country have the right to receive instruction in school for nine years (so-called compulsory education). The limits of the educational services become apparent as regards the group of youth beyond the ages of compulsory education (Atanasoska and Proyer 2017, 2018), especially regarding those who have received little or no education in their countries of origin or on their way to Austria. In Austria, primary schools run from grade one to four (ages five, mostly six to ten) and secondary schools from grade five to eight (ages ten to fourteen) (Biewer and Proyer 2017). The ninth (and last compulsory) school year (ages fourteen to fifteen) can be completed at a polytechnic school that emphasises vocational orientation or at other types of school. There are no exceptions to compulsory schooling by nationality or ethnic background (Statistik Austria et al. 2016). Thus, schools have no right to deny any foreign children or youth access. Beyond compulsory school age, most young people with a forced migration background do not have any access to apprenticeships or advanced schooling (Atanasoska and Proyer 2017, 2018). This is especially challenging for unaccompanied minors, along with children and young people who had never attended formal schooling.

From the late summer of 2015 until the first months of 2016, the number of children and adolescents among the refugees in Austria rose steadily, in particular in the city of Vienna. In accordance with the educational policy of the Viennese school authorities, children are placed in schools within the vicinity of their families’ place of residence. Places are assigned according to children’s age, former education levels, language proficiency, and schools’ availability. The children would then either be integrated into regular classrooms, where they were entitled to two years of external student status without receiving marks and receive additional language tutoring, or be placed in specific classrooms for refugees referred to as ‘New to Vienna Courses’ (Neu in Wien Kurse), established in the winter term of 2015 and ‘New to Vienna Classrooms’ (Neu in Wien Klassen) thereafter. In 2018, specific German classrooms ‘Deutschförderklassen’ have been installed

(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung 2018), which underlines the fact that a focus on (mono-)language-competence frames educational efforts for refugees and migrants in Austria (Füllekruss and Dirim 2019).

As large quantities of refugee accommodations were established in former office buildings rented by the government, it was especially difficult to place the number of newly arrived children in neighbouring schools or within a reasonable distance, since asylum-seeking families are not entitled to free public transportation. Thus, 'on-site schooling' was newly established for primary school children and lower secondary school in two large accommodations for refugees in Vienna. In terms of school law, these classrooms (the numbers were subject to constant fluctuation of pupils) were part of the catchment area of primary and secondary schools. De facto, however, the classes were located on the premises of the refugee accommodations on Vienna's outskirts. This measure was intended as a transitional measure of a limited, but unknown, duration, since increases in numbers of refugees, as well as the political response, were open at the time.

The classes set up in the first months of 2016 met the following preconditions (adapted from an unpublished concept note on the installation of 'on-site schooling' by the Vienna School Board):

- (1) placements in the catchment and surrounding areas were exhausted,
- (2) alternatives proved unreasonable,
- (3) pupils had external status, and
- (4) the refugee accommodation could provide a 'school-like' infrastructure.

An instruction schedule was provided analogous to other Austrian compulsory schools with lessons in the morning and the usual holiday periods during the year. Moreover, furniture and the usual educational equipment for compulsory education, including materials for German as a second language and some basic school equipment, was provided. Preparing children and youth for mainstream schooling, German tutoring, and creating an environment of trust and relationship-building were central. Primary and lower secondary school teachers volunteered to be transferred to these schools.

The research context

Children and youth with a forced migration background in Austria were taught by primary and by secondary school teachers. Additionally, language teachers speaking Arabic and Farsi also worked with these teachers. Teachers used existing curricula from primary and secondary schools in combination with teaching materials for children with another first language than German. The main idea at the instated sites was to shape the teaching settings in accordance with the needs of the children. Due to time limits, the 'on-site schooling' programme was initiated in collaboration with state-governed child-welfare institutions. The pedagogical and didactical approach was needs-based and related to well-established structures of mother-tongue supported teaching and opportunities to establish pedagogical intervention in collaboration with stakeholders on-site running the habitation, such as social work.

The two selected sites for the education of children with a forced migration background were located in two different parts of Vienna. One school (A) was in the north of the city,

the other in the south (B). The two schools were established in February and April 2016. The number of pupils attending these schools constantly fluctuated, with the number of pupils was constantly rising until the summer of 2016, while from the spring of 2017 onwards it decreased until schooling concluded at the end of June 2017 with the start of the school holidays. After these holidays, all children remaining in these schools had been placed in district schools.

The majority of pupils attending these schools came from Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan, while some came from Somalia or Chechnya. As the numbers of pupils constantly changed during the period of the authorities' record due to high sometimes daily fluctuation, it is difficult to provide exact numbers. The highest number was around 60–70 pupils at once in each of the sites. Also, the numbers of classrooms varied accordingly. In site A up to 3 classrooms (1 primary and 2 secondary) were running at the same time. In site B a maximum of 5 classrooms (2 primary and 3 secondary) were set up. Age-heterogeneous groups of children between 6 and 10 years were taught in primary settings and those between 10 and up to 16 years of age visited secondary settings.

Numbers varied as some families moved to private accommodations with their children changing to other schools, families moving to other countries or forcefully had to leave Austria. Thus, there were approximately fifteen students per classroom as compared to around twenty-five in a mainstream setting. Towards the end of instating-measures classrooms were merged and only few children attended the classrooms. Due to the precarious conditions in the children's countries of origin, some had never previously attended school. Others had experienced an interruption of their educational process, having fled home with their families.

It is very rare that emergence of totally new educational structures that did not previously exist can be observed. More often than not, these setups serve the purpose of measures of so-called emergency education. The installation of a new educational model offers a rare occasion to observe the emergence of new structures. The institution was newly founded, with a concept that had to be developed and an education and teaching staff with high motivation, but little experience in this new field (Biewer 2018). Thus, the set-up of these schools contains important implications for thinking anew about inclusive education and its possibilities for children with a forced migration background. In the course of a collaboration between University and Vienna's school authority, the process was accompanied by a seminar series involving students doing their practicum at the two locations. This was to support practical activities and thereby enhance the quality of teaching for the children. Moreover, it enabled students to experience these unique educational settings and enabled the lecturers to research the setting.

Two consecutive Bachelor of the Arts (BA) seminars lasting two semesters each, were conducted. Students, enrolled on the course, had to engage in 160 hours of practical work during one semester and generate their bachelor thesis on the empirical data they had gathered throughout. The operational area of the students within the field was agreed on with the teachers on-site and the university lecturers. Most of the students supported the pedagogical work in primary and secondary school classrooms. Some were engaged in establishing early childhood education, and some supported those youth at the ages of fifteen to eighteen beyond the compulsory school age. Background in research ethics and supervision was provided to the university students through regular meetings at University where activities were reflected among the whole group. Lecturers visited the

research sites on a regular basis and were approachable by students and staff throughout the process.

Methodological approaches

This article presents a project of educational action research (Noffke and Somekh 2009), which is strongly connected with the collaborative work of university lecturers, university students, teachers, social workers, and other actors in the field. It represents a reflection of the common vision of practitioners and researchers to investigate, change and improve pedagogical practice. The investigation also can be regarded as an ethnographic study, focusing on a large number of different aspects, with data collected using different methods (Breidenstein et al. 2015).

The study aims to represent different perspectives on the emergence of ‘on-site schooling’: It reflects the inclusion of university students of a course in the bachelor programme educational science in topical educational developments and the impact such a course including a practicum has on them and their future career choices. Thus, two lecturers organising two cycles of these one-year courses (BA course and practicum) invited two highly-engaged students to reflect on the research activities and to join the write-up of this article to guarantee first hand-accounts of students next to the lecturers’ perspectives. Two meetings were organised among the four authors of this article to jointly reflect on the set-up of the courses’ activities in the field of ‘on-site schooling’, different voices and the overall impact of the course. In doing so, we present which activities all the involved university students engaged with and how they shaped the field. Over time more than 50 university students were involved in different activities and reflected their involvement in BA theses. By reflecting upon their overall choices of involvement and topics they engaged with, the analyses of the impact of this seminar on the field and the learnings from such a course setting for the context of teaching pupils with refugee background gains depth.

The two temporary educational institutions received much-needed support from students from the University of Vienna who provided for the diverse needs of the children, their parents and even kindergarteners and youth beyond schooling. Students chose in which area (primary or lower secondary) they preferred to work in after thorough observation and completed 160 h of practical work. During the first year of the course – that started during the second term of the ‘on-site schooling’ – the university students’ practical work mainly focused on supporting the establishment of services and installation of additional in and out of school educational provision. During the second term of the first one-year course, the second one started. While the first group of students started the reflection of their activities and write-up of their theses, the second group got involved in the practical activities. They took over some of the other students’ activities but also introduced or adapted some of the activities as the field was in constant flux. Two of the authors of this article were involved in the first course as university students and will mainly elaborate on their experiences and observations in the field, adding first-hand experiences from the students’ perspective.

The teachers’ perspectives are presented through findings of a content-based analysis of narrative open-ended interviews including three group interviews with teachers (two at site A with 3 participants from primary and secondary schools each and 1 at site B) and one interview with the coordinator at the Vienna School Board.

In the following, activities and the involvement of the university students in the field will be elaborated, insights from primary and secondary school stem from a reflection of the discussions that evolved throughout the research seminar, parts on activities beyond compulsory education stem from study activities in the field. Thereafter, different perspectives on these activities and the overall impact of 'on-site schooling' will be presented and discussed.

Observations and activities: 'On-site schooling' in action

Primary school

Most of the young refugees at the accommodations were children at primary school age, starting with three classes and going up to five primary school classes in total. Taught by many students and several teachers, including also assisting Arabic and Farsi language teachers, the pupils were grouped in small classes. These structural conditions facilitated the attempt to meet each pupil's individual needs in the heterogeneous, multi-age classrooms. Considering the children's experiences and diverse starting positions, one function of the 'on-site setting' was to provide an acclimatisation period for the children and a gentle introduction to the new environment as well as approaches to Austrian ideas of schooling.

The structures of the primary school classes at one of the accommodations (B) were mostly established by the time the students arrived. Therefore, the students had a rather supportive function as 'co-teachers'. By comparison, in the other accommodation (A), the students could participate in setting up the educational structures. The lessons themselves varied depending on the respective class teacher. While some of the teachers focused on preparation for the regular education system with a very structured regular-school-like daily routine, others considered the unusual setting as an opportunity to create special education units adjusted to the pupils' current needs, their psycho-social conditions, their capacities of learning as well as their wide-ranging language skills.

Despite the fact that the class was part of a segregating setting, within the classroom staff endeavoured to implement some ideas of inclusive practice (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). Against this background, responding to individual needs of the pupils and supporting a holistic concept of education beyond the pure acquisition of knowledge, the well-being of the children was considered essential. Many of the primary school children showed perceptible symptoms of traumatisation, like excessive anxiety, sadness, apathetic and aggressive behaviour, enuresis, dissociation, sleep deprivation, and insomnia. Particularly in the beginning, an internal restlessness was notable. Not being trained for handling trauma, this was an overwhelming challenge for both teachers and students. Building up supportive relationships of trust with the children, the teachers and the students' aim was to empower the pupils to strengthen their abilities and confidence through various methods of teaching (Allan and Persson 2018). As an attempt to initiate inclusion as a process of increasing participation and empowerment (Booth et al. 2000; Florian 2014), the children participated in the organisation of the educational content, were encouraged to bring in their language knowledge, and were put in charge of assigned responsibilities within the classroom.

The special staffing conditions allowed much one-on-one practice of the German language, which led to the children's fast progress. The children also helped each other

and benefited from the heterogeneous classes, teaching each other not only German but also their wide-ranging language knowledge. The educational programme also included non-verbal communication and cooperation through dancing and body language leaving aside language barriers. As another preparation step, the children attended classes in public schools now and then. After the regular lessons, supplemental learning support and leisure activities were offered by the students in cooperation with some voluntary helpers and aid organisations.

In the course of the second cycle, 15 out of 25 students decided to support primary education activities. Especially during the second half of the semester, this school type was subject to massive fluctuation.

Secondary school

The sector of secondary school is shown to differ in key aspects from primary school. Regrettably, there were no assisting language teachers in secondary school at accommodation B since the teachers did not consider it a necessity. The pupils who had already acquired basic proficiency in German were urged to 'voluntarily' translate for other pupils at the beginner level. At the other accommodation (A), the assisting Arabic-speaking teacher travelled between the primary and secondary classrooms.

Most of the secondary school lessons focused on German, mathematics, and informatics. Additionally, the lessons were stricter, traditionally teacher-centred, and performance-based. Secondary school in its essence showed a lack of structure and was impeded by the non-existence of educational material for children between eleven and fifteen, studying German as a foreign language. A regular class schedule was further hampered by the fluctuation of pupils due to the constantly changing circumstances. Similar to the younger ones, the general health status of the secondary school children, being traumatised by war and their escape to Austria, represented a major challenge. The absence of privacy and the uncertainty involved in waiting for a decision from the asylum authorities complicated the situation even more. In order to make up for these common symptoms, the last hours of class were intended for sports activities. In addition, it was essential to work with an open, flexible, and spontaneous lesson schedule. Moreover, school life gave the children a structure in terms of a variation to the limited everyday life in a refugee accommodation, a distraction from the current situation and a lack of stability. Additionally, after some time students started offering learning support in the afternoon. In terms of the students' involvement, the project proved inclusive tendencies in introducing differing life-worlds and offering hands-on opportunities to engage in improving educational realities.

Nevertheless, the extent to which this was an entirely inclusive project was limited by the fact that the classes installed were homogenous environments, with only refugee children attending. Thus, the project illuminates how inclusion into educational settings does not necessarily entail social inclusion. Indeed, despite offering opportunities for meaningful participation in education, this kind of schooling could not guarantee or even duly facilitate inclusion into Austria's society as such. The limitations of inclusive education are equally highlighted in current approaches to schooling, which result in language-specific segregation in selected European countries, and reflect wider exclusionary tendencies in these societies (Dirim and Mecheril 2017). A trip to near-by regular schools

gave an impression of this discrepancy. While some of the students tried to find a school place for those young pupils coming up to fifteen years of age in order to give them a chance to continue their educational process, this effort was ultimately abandoned due to the lack of capacities and many rejections. Furthermore, the students saw the immense importance of better education and training for teachers, particularly in teaching German as a 'foreign language' as well as a specific training for working with traumatised children. Nevertheless, significant differences in their approaches to teamwork were stated comparing the two 'on-site schooling' projects. At one accommodation (B), teamwork, structure, and a better balance among teachers and students were established, whereas, at the other accommodation (A), teamwork was not a considerable tool for handling difficult situations, which resulted in unclear structures and excessive demands being more likely.

During the second cycle, seven students supported the work of secondary classroom teachers. This school type was subject to a fast reduction with classrooms being collapsed from two or even three to one classroom per site. In the end, only few students remained within this school-type.

Youth beyond compulsory education

Since Austrian legislation only mandates compulsory education for children and youth between the ages of six to fifteen, there were no or few educational opportunities at the accommodations for refugees above the age of fifteen. German beginner classes were only offered by voluntary helpers, having little or no experience in teaching German as a 'foreign language'. Additionally, the participants did not receive any confirmation of their participation. Since the Austrian asylum authorities see it as a positive sign if people demonstrate their 'willingness to integrate' by acquiring some certification for learning German (Expertenrat für Integration 2016), the refugees above the age of fifteen had hoped to take certified German classes.

Furthermore, there were no real structures or daily routines for the youth and a severe lack of communication between management, social workers, and residents. The poor transmission of information constituted a fundamental barrier for the refugees to a new start in Austria. Since there was also an absence of interpreters for this age group, the social workers did not even receive necessary information about the refugees' educational background or their already acquired German levels. Two students tried to gather some information with the help of a young man living in the accommodation and speaking several languages. Besides, there were very few relatively small and unknown projects for this age group. Again, poor cooperation led to a lack of knowledge about crucial information concerning educational and vocational opportunities beyond the confines of the refugee accommodation. There were, in fact, some possibilities like 'Projekt Schule für Alle' (PROSA, 'Project School for All'), a non-formal education facility where refugees can obtain high school diploma, but participation remained low. Some of the students also tried to initiate cooperation with other projects, for example 'Deutsch ohne Grenzen', but most of these did not work out. On the one hand, this was due to poor staffing conditions with a ratio of social workers and refugees of one to hundred, which led to excessive demands from social workers and made individual support almost impossible. On the other hand, the above-mentioned traumatisation and associated

concentration difficulties, depression, and absentmindedness made it very hard for the young refugees to gather all the crucial information on their own. Most students engaged with this age group reported experiencing more resistance due to a lack of educational opportunities and political impasses, as a result of restrictive educational policies making it hard for young people beyond the age of compulsory education to get access to facilities. These restrictive circumstances led to increasing feelings of frustration and powerlessness of both, the refugees and the students, since the government did not provide more educational or vocational opportunities for this vulnerable age group. This points to the perseverance of discriminatory tendencies in educational policies geared towards inclusion that still more often than not draw on ideas of special education practice (Slee and Allan 2001). This implies that labels and generalisations remain at the centre of attention. Additionally, there is still little understanding of inclusive education including all groups and not only people with disabilities. Thus, knowledge on what is needed to provide appropriate educational environments and minimise barriers for refugee pupils often remains unclear (Block et al. 2014).

First-hand accounts: 'On-site schooling' in perspective

The following ethnographic description highlights the perspectives of three groups: the teachers who worked in the classrooms of primary and secondary schools, the university students who participated in and investigated the field during one and a half years, and the university lecturers who developed and implemented this project.

The teachers and school authorities

In the course of on-site provision, many students decided to interview the teachers and other education professionals they were collaborating with. Michelle Proyer conducted three formal interviews with groups of teachers (twelve teachers: two primary educators and a mother-tongue assistant teacher as well as three secondary school teachers and a mix of two primary and two secondary school teachers and one mother-tongue assistant teacher as well as an on-site coordinator) during the second cycle.

All teachers had volunteered to work in the temporary provision. Their prior education ranged from just having left tertiary education to those with many years of experience. None of them had received specialised training in providing education to children and youth with a forced migration background, nor had they received training in trauma pedagogy. Nevertheless, some had been involved in teaching during the arrivals of refugees from the war in former Yugoslavia and almost all had been teaching children and youth with a migration background, which is not surprising, considering the large numbers of this group in the Austrian school system. A pressing question for most of the teachers involved in facilitating 'on-site schooling' was whether the system they were working in was increasing the exclusion of the children and youth taught.

In addition to everyday challenges of a teacher such as choosing the right teaching approaches for each individual, this group of teachers needed to cope with the stress of traumatisation and (culture-related) differences among the pupils and among the educational approaches and backgrounds the pupils brought with them and had experienced. Moreover, the teachers had to be responsive to changes in numbers of individuals in the

classroom, with pupils vanishing or appearing sometimes on a day-to-day basis. This implied the need for high levels of flexibility and improvisation.

Teachers were well aware of their responsibilities and appreciated the flexibility and possibilities of the transitional setting. Most of them questioned the sustainability of the implementation with the insecurity of pupils' passage out of their hands. 'On-site schooling' was considered a good solution and necessary measure for the time being, but not considered the ideal setting according to the teachers interviewed. Towards the end of the provision, some of the teachers were wondering how they would manage their own passage back to mainstream education.

An interview with a member of the Vienna School Board in charge of coordinating instating 'on-site schooling' brought interesting insights. The need to set up such an emergency setting was described as last resort which she would have 'preferred to not to have to instate' (translation from German). The reasons for the arising urgent need have already been elaborated, but the interview brought additional insights:

- (1) Schools in the vicinities were de facto too full to accept any more children.
- (2) Especially for primary school children, long distances to reach school are legally prohibited.
- (3) Parents often needed a structure close by as their psychological and financial situation would have otherwise made it impossible to provide regular schooling to their children. (Asylum seekers are not entitled to receive money for tickets for public transportation.)
- (4) The only realistic alternative would have been so-called 'afternoon schooling' that was implemented during the early 1990s when many pupils with a forced migration background arrived from former Yugoslavia. This alternative proved unfeasible in this case as the number of affected pupils would have again implied long-distance travel to specific schools where such a provision could have been implemented.
- (5) It was clear to the school authority and officials in Vienna that such a measure could only be temporary.

One of the main challenges according to the school authority was the constant and high fluctuation of children that still affects schooling. Many of the families with a forced migration background who have since obtained legal asylum status and whose children attend mainstream schools have faced difficulties in finding accommodations and had to relocate several times. Reflecting on the emergency set-up, the interviewee referred to how vulnerable the process of instating the setting was at the time and how important it was to identify the right set of people and readiness of Vienna's local government to enable certain processes at the right time. She underlined the high engagement of teachers volunteering to get involved, although it was not too easy to find these in the first place: 'It was not easy, but we managed' (translation from German). She continued to elaborate that the involvement of so-called mother tongue teachers was absolutely necessary: 'Without them, we would have never managed' (translation from German). The passage above underlines the importance of the involvement and readiness of all levels of actors, especially political, institutional and managerial decision-makers to realise inclusive tendencies in education (Ainscow and Sandill 2010). The authority's awareness that the educational emergency provision in segregated settings could only be a temporary one can be

considered as very forward-looking. Nevertheless, and despite protests and empirical evidence (Plutzer 2016), support for first-language teaching was dramatically cut with recent political developments in Austria.

The perspective of university students

Retrospectively, there was a significant understaffing in all educational areas. The work was experienced as particularly burdensome if people had to overcome all difficulties on their own. Like the teachers and social workers, the students also perceived an excessive demand for work combined with a constantly changing workload due to the transitional nature of the accommodation and the provision of education. Experiencing the children's and youth's suffering made it hard to accept the limits of the help they could provide the refugees. To support the students in facing these difficulties, Gottfried Biewer provided supervision through the University of Vienna.

It was also challenging to face partly inhospitable structures as well as a lack of teamwork and communication at all levels due to a lack of staff, high fluctuation, etc. On the one hand, the available resources like the volunteers were not fully exploited on account of insufficient resource coordination. On the other hand, several times the students realised that their ideas of people's needs were not congruent with the actual needs. For example, offering German courses especially for women to empower them turned out not to be crucial at that point in time taking into consideration all the other essential living conditions that they had to cope with, like omnipresent insecurity and uncertainty about the future. These circumstances also hindered building relationships and led to a lack of communication and ignorance about people's demands.

After being disappointed about the seeming disinterest, the students realised they were forcing their visions and efforts onto the refugees. This made the students aware of the necessity of a critical approach to their beliefs and wishes for the refugees as well as to those of the accommodations' management. In addition to the institutional structures, there were clear societal ideas and political guidelines concerning integration, which the refugees as well as the students had to deal with. The highest priority seemed to be the acquisition of the German language plus an assimilation to the Austrian society. Paradoxically, these normative bases of integration for living in Austria were expected to be voluntary, but were structurally inhibited at the same time. For example, while acquiring German language knowledge was seen as crucial, simultaneously the access to German courses was heavily restricted.

The perspective of university lecturers

The activity was established by university lecturers. From their perspective, it was a project which integrated three main tasks: teaching, research, and third mission activities. Third mission has become a main agenda of the University of Vienna during the last years. It involves universities in finding solutions for societal challenges. There is no doubt that in 2015/16 the arrival of thousands of children and youth with a forced migration background in the Austrian educational system was such a challenge.

The activities in the refugee settlements and the emergence of new structures was a situation the public was hardly aware of at the time. The same holds true for the group of

students of educational science. It came to much of their surprise that something like ‘on-site schooling’ had been established to accommodate the needs of high numbers of pupils. It made the full-blown extent of the humanitarian crisis happening on their doorstep visible. Thus, it can be considered a laboratory in the real world, where the setting up of a new institution came into view. The processes could be observed and investigated, and the students had the chance to write their BA theses in this highly interesting field of educational activity. The students collected new data on a new field of practice with a very diverse repertoire of scientific methods.

From earlier experience, this type of twofold seminar with practical work during the first term and main course work during the second term challenges students as they have to swap from focusing on practice to reflecting these empirical experiences in a more structured way. This seminar proved that the relevance and currency of the topic added to these challenges. Students had a hard time in accepting the radical cuts in educational provision for refugees and instant changes; political developments were followed with growing interest among the group of students. Parts of the accompanying sessions at University to theoretically frame and discuss practical experiences were used to make way to communal outrage against political developments in the forefront of upcoming polls in late 2017. This is reflected in the choice of topics of the second cycle’s BA theses. Twenty-three BA theses were submitted on time. The topic choices for this final thesis was up to the students as long as they referred to the empirical data collected. The submissions were sorted thematically and can be found listed below.

Topic	Number of theses
Self-care, trauma, coaching	6
Didactics, classroom management, children/youth	5
German	1
Pros and Cons of ‘on-site teaching’ and critical assessment of integration aspects	5
Teachers and collaboration	6
	23

It is important to mention that during the first term, topics related to didactics especially focusing on German language acquisition as well as coping with pupils’ behaviour played an important role, but became less of a topic for the majority of the group with only six theses overall. The most pressing questions can be derived from the other topics dealt with in the remaining theses. Students had an increasingly hard time dealing with the fluctuation of the number of pupils, which was often due to sometimes forceful deportations at night and children simply not showing up at school the next morning. Many other pupils left the camp in order to live in private flats with their families as soon as they had received their positive asylum decisions; this left some of the students unable to say goodbye to children they had grown fond of as their practical work was restricted to certain days of the week. Towards the end of the on-site provision, the daily fluctuation and the initiation of closing the facilities were imminent. Some students continued to volunteer long after they had collected their necessary number of hours for the practical work and witnessed the government filling up empty places in the classrooms with children of homeless migrants from eastern Europe, packing boxes of donated goods that were transferred to other schools, etc. Many of the topics chosen did not have anything to do with the immediate practical work of the students with pupils but focused on its reflection. At the centre of interest was the impact of traumatising on the pupils and the students

themselves or volunteers in general. Some of the students continued to make use of the external coaching offers, two of which made it the topic of their thesis. Another topic of growing interest was the impact teaching under these conditions had on teachers and the general question of to what extent the installation of the emergency setting occurred in accordance with inclusive principles. The students questioned the approach of teaching specific pupils in segregated settings as it implied exclusion. They criticised the steps taken despite the fact that it was made clear by the school authority that no alternative was available. Additionally, a heated discussion whether under certain circumstances, non-inclusive settings could be in favour of this specific group was ignited and thereby lead to a deeper understanding of the dilemmatic characteristic of inclusion. Conversely, the on-site setting was perceived as a sort of protective space enabled the teachers and students to operate within a more flexible school setting in order to adapt the environment and curriculum to the students' needs and in dialogue with them.

Conclusion

This seminar proved to be one of the most hands-on examples of action-related research and paved the way for some of the students to get engaged with research and/or working with refugees. Thereby, striking up the discourse on the intersection of service-learning and action research at university (Reardon 1998). Some of the involved students decided to follow a career in social work or wanted to stay in touch with the researchers' follow-up projects, which is not always the case in other courses. It serves as a good example of how collaboration between academic and non-academic actors can function in the context of 'third mission' efforts.

'On-site schooling' can be considered as a suitable transitional solution for large numbers of children and youth arriving in Austria. The provision serves as a secure space with a number of advantages, but its exclusive character was assessed critically by most of the actors involved. Students and researchers were able to reflect on the implementation of a far from inclusive educational provision that can be interpreted as preparing steps towards more inclusive facilities. This has been discussed in the context of provision associated with special educational needs in discourses surrounding the implementation of inclusive education. As one teacher mentioned in an informal conversation about the pros and cons of 'on-site schooling' 'Is the Austrian school system so bad that we have to prepare these fragile children to be able to bear it?' (rephrased from informal conversation). A good question, which gained attention during those parts of the seminars when students could gather first-hand accounts of what it meant for people with a forced migration background to receive, be in need of, and fight for educational provision.

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