THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE IDEAL TEACHER

Two approaches to working with teachers to strengthen their identity and agency in refugee contexts

Glasgow, 2025

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PREFACE

In 2019, I started working with a group of teachers in Gaza on my masters dissertation on teacher identity, who quickly became friends. Last week I received a message from one of them, saying that she had, despite everything, somehow managed to publish her first paper in a journal. Interactions like this maintain the thread of relationships with people I care about, remind me of what's important, and provide insights which shape the way I see life and approach my job.

As a team, we see developing these relationships not as an incidental by-product of working together, but as both a prerequisite and a key goal in what we do. Our relationships have strengthened the values and sense of purpose which form our identities, and supported us in developing the agency to align our identities with the way we live our lives and work. Focusing on identity and agency in turn leads to stronger relationships, creating a virtuous circle.

The activities in this booklet are ones we've used with teachers to explicitly focus on these themes, which can be overlooked or undervalued, especially when more "concrete" classroom skills are seen as a priority. They have been part of projects which are themselves the result of relationships and threads developed over time, leading to this small team with shared values and common aims. Dr. Maria Grazia Imperiale (Lecturer in Adult Education) and Dr. Giovanna Fassetta is (Senior Lecturer in Social Inclusion) are colleagues in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. They have worked together for many years developing participatory approaches in their work with colleagues in Gaza and in supporting refugee education in Scotland. I found inspiration and an ally in Grazia while reading about her work in Gaza when researching my dissertation working with teachers there to initially develop the 'Ideal Teacher' approach below.

This led to us working together on two projects at the British Council, where Grazia wrote a piece advocating for the importance of relationships in teacher development, and first adapted the Tree of Life approach for use with teachers. Grazia, Giovanna and I have since then been working on various stages of the LINES project, including using these approaches with participants in Lebanon and Jordan. We were very lucky to be joined by Nikos Psochios, a Ph.D. researcher with a background in community education for displaced individuals and arts-based research methodologies, and colleague of Giovanna and Grazia. Nikos led on the design of this booklet.

We would also like to acknowledge all the teachers who worked with us as participants, co-creators, and friends.

Damian Ross
Lecturer in English Language, University of Porto.
11 January 2025

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I used to teach Italian as a foreign language at the University for Foreigners of Siena (Italy), where I completed my bachelor's and Master's. It was about 15 years ago, and I wasn't a very experienced teacher back then – but I had lots of ideas, I loved my job, and I kept improving through additional training. I often taught with a dear friend, Diego Lombardi, now an excellent teacher of Italian. We worked with Erasmus or international students – I loved those times. Diego and I had different teaching styles, but our lessons were... good, students were happy, and they were learning. Diego and I shared a similar ethos and purpose, and we were trying to act in ways that mattered to us and – we hoped – to our students too. This is probably what made those days so special.

When I started my PhD with pre-service English teachers in the Gaza Strip (Palestine), I became even more aware that what matters in class is more than teaching skills. When a teacher tells you, 'success means to plant a seed of hope in your students,' well, how do you support *this* in teacher development? Although teachers are usually encouraged to reflect on their values, why are these discussions often considered of secondary importance – or why is that considered 'soft' training? What about a space for nurturing relationships?
Damian used a nice word above, 'ally' (and I am flattered to read about the 'inspiration' too). With him, Giovanna, and Nikos, perhaps we found a group of allies (friends?) who share a similar purpose, ethos, and values, and we try to do what we can for what we value. Of course, we don't always agree on how to run a workshop or conduct an interview, and we have very different working styles – but we do share a very similar ethos and purpose. And this is what matters and brings us close. My hope with this booklet is that other teachers can find their allies (friends?) – (wonderful) colleagues who often might have a very different (teaching) style – but share similar worries, joys, and hopes for their students.

Teacher development often provides the opportunity for teachers to make new connections, but this is often down to luck when it fosters - only - teaching skills. Let's make the most of these opportunities and find space for discussions around hopes and dreams, future aspirations, roots, capabilities, and agency. Probably through those discussions, other teachers will be able to identify their Diego, their Damian, their Giovanna, their Nikos.

I am so very grateful to all our teachers-allies-friends in Lebanon and Jordan, and to you, Damian, Giovanna, and Nikos, for our work together on the LINEs project and on all the other projects that followed and will follow.

Maria Grazia Imperiale
Lecturer in Adult Education, University of Glasgow
24 January 2025

INTRODUCTION
WHO AND WHAT IS THIS BOOKLET FOR?

The activities and principles in this booklet are intended for anyone involved in teacher development, including through participatory research alongside teachers, or for groups of teachers themselves. They are designed to support teachers in developing, articulating and acting on their purpose and values.

We understand teacher development as holistic. Teachers, especially refugee teachers and teachers of refugees, usually do much more than 'teaching'.
They are often points of reference for children, parents and carers and their communities more broadly. Teachers' values, hopes and dreams can be closely linked to their communities' and are key to their work both inside and outside the classroom. Consequently, we see teacher identity and teacher agency as core aspects of being a teacher and teacher development. We explain these concepts in more detail below.

The booklet was developed as part of the LINEs project (Learning for Informal and Non-formal Educators in Refugee Settings in Lebanon and Jordan), led by Maria-Grazia Imperiale, Lecturer in Adult Education, University of Glasgow, Damian Ross, Lecturer in English Language, University of Porto, and Giovanna Fassetta, Senior Lecturer in Social Inclusion, University of Glasgow. The booklet design was led by Nikos Psochios, Doctoral Researcher, University of Glasgow.

LINEs worked with teachers involved in non-formal and informal refugee education in Lebanon and Jordan to explore their values, hopes and aspirations through participatory workshops. It also worked with refugee communities to understand their own perspectives on education.[1]

This short guide presents two approaches we used in our workshops: The Tree of Life[2] and the Ideal Teacher.[3] We have illustrated the activities with quotes from teachers involved in the LINEs project and also in two other projects where we have used the Tree of Life and the Ideal Teacher. To conclude, we also offer tips and links to further materials for people working with teachers in refugee settings.

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1. You can read about the project and the research findings in more detail at https://lines-learning.com/

2. See Imperiale, M.G., Mander, S., Ross D. (2021) Early career English teacher identity project report: Exploring teacher identity and agency through the Tree of Life approach. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Early_career_English_teacher_identity_report.pdf

3. British Council (2021). Being English Teacher in Gaza https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/being-english-teachers-gaza This webinar involves teachers talking about English Teacher Identity in Gaza, and is based on the findings from Ross, D. (2020). *Being English Teachers in Gaza.* [Master's Thesis, University of Porto]. https://repositorio-aberto.up.pt/bitstream/10216/130941/6/433724.2.pdf

KEY CONCEPTS[4]

We define **teacher identity** as the hopes, beliefs, values, and sense of purpose a teacher holds. It is informed and influenced by inter-related factors which include their personal and professional experiences, the contexts in which they live and work, and the perceptions and behaviour of those around them. Strengthening identity can lead to a stronger purpose and a stronger teacher community, reducing feelings of isolation and providing hope for sustainability.

Teacher agency refers to a teacher's ability to act in accordance with their values and beliefs. Teachers can enact change at multiple levels of the system, including the classroom, school, and community. Focusing on agency can empower teachers and lead to social change within and beyond refugee communities. To promote agency, we must also address the obstacles and constraints that refugee teachers encounter that prevent them from acting as they would like. These concepts offer insight into refugee teacher development beyond improving classroom teaching skills, and they help us understand the roles of teachers as leaders of change.

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4. The following two sections are edited versions of a policy brief we wrote for NORRAG Global Education Centre of the Geneva Graduate Institute. See Imperiale, M.G., Ross, D. and Fassetta, G., (2023). Improving refugee teacher development in Lebanon and Jordan: nurturing teacher identity, relationships, and agency. https://inee.org/resources/policy-insights-refugee-teachers-heart-global-refugee-response

Relationships are at the heart of agency and identity, and nurturing these relationships within teacher development helps teachers find enjoyment and friendship, which contributes to well-being and resilience. A focus on identity and agency can therefore create a shared ethos that helps refugee teachers navigate structural and local barriers and challenges.

In this project, we used **participatory approaches** to prioritise and amplify participants' voices. These consider participants (teachers, in our case) the real experts who should co-design research priorities and agendas starting from their own needs. Participatory research is an effective tool in closing the common gap between education research and practice.
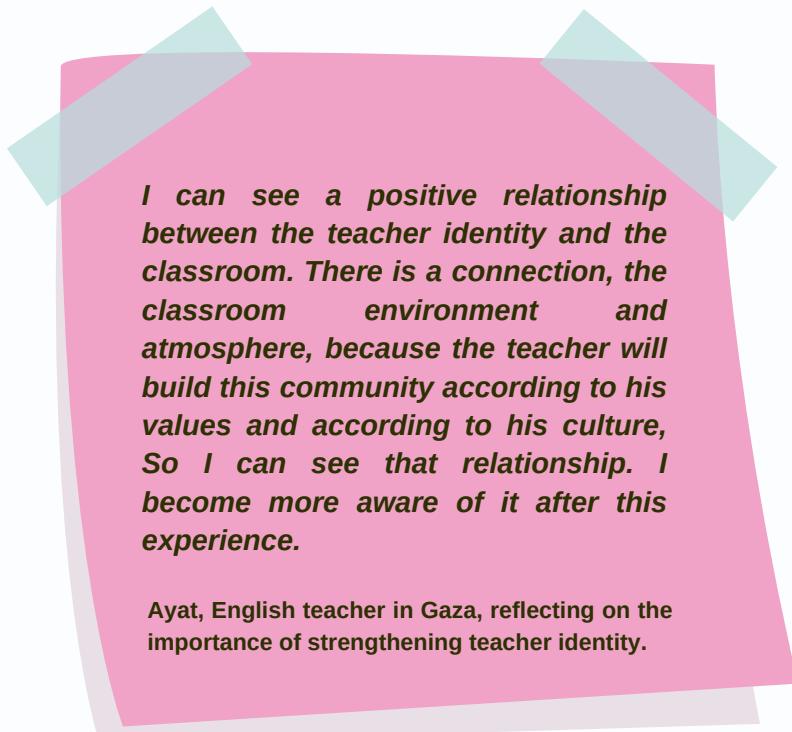
I can see a positive relationship between the teacher identity and the classroom. There is a connection, the classroom environment and atmosphere, because the teacher will build this community according to his values and according to his culture, So I can see that relationship. I become more aware of it after this experience.

Ayat, English teacher in Gaza, reflecting on the importance of strengthening teacher identity.

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HOW TO USE THE ACTIVITIES

The activities are flexible and can be adapted to respond to the local context and community needs. Each activity can be done as a standalone workshop in as little as three hours, but can also be developed into a series of activities spread over a number of weeks. It can also be integrated with other professional development activities and resources, and with other research methods. We have included reference to this, including possible supplementary activities, in the detailed guide to each approach below.

THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU START:

- **Your specific aims**

  For example, your specific aims could be about whether you want to train new teachers or provide professional development for teachers who are already working in educational contexts.

- **Practical considerations**

  1. Convenience and accessibility for participants
  2. The time and spaces available and whether you will be working online or in person, whether the participants will be paid or receive compensation for their time and travel

- **How well you and the participants know each other and in what capacity.**

- **The experience and background of participants.**

- **How to deal with potentially sensitive and/or traumatic topics and experiences.**

  For example, do you know any organisations that might support you and participants with mental health, and psychosocial support? It would be useful to give a list to participants.

TREE OF LIFE
WHAT IS THE 'TREE OF LIFE'[5]?

The 'Tree of Life' approach is a strength-based approach which explores the foundational values of the participants, the aspects of their identities and hopes and dreams for the future. Developed by Ncazelo Ncube (2006), the Tree of Life (ToL) was first used in narrative therapy. To meet the needs of their communities in a culturally-sensitive way, Ncube (2006) used narrative therapy instead traditional 'therapy.' This approach understands that our identity is shaped by the stories we tell about ourselves.

The ToL helps people explore different, more positive stories about themselves. Often, in traditional 'therapy' people focus only on negative stories about their lives, due to difficult and traumatic experiences they have lived. Ncube wanted to change this and helped people reflect on their strengths, hopes and dreams to foster their wellbeing. Using a metaphor of a tree, participants are guided to reflect on:

- **Roots:** Past experiences / belonging / people's 'roots' (this may include challenges and difficult lived experiences)
- **Trunk**: Strengths and abilities
- **Leaves and Blossoms:** Aspirations and hopes for thefuture, and what may be needed to achieve these.

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5. You can find more about the adaptation of the ToL in:

- Imperiale, M.G., Mander, S., Ross D. (2021) Early career English teacher identity project report: Exploring teacher identity and agency through the Tree of Life approach
  https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Early_career_English_teacher_identity_report.pdf
- British Council, (2021) How to strengthen teacher identity and agency: Overview.
  https://www.youtube.com/watchv=QKEDgHbjsb8&ab_channel=BritishCouncil%7CTeachingEnglish
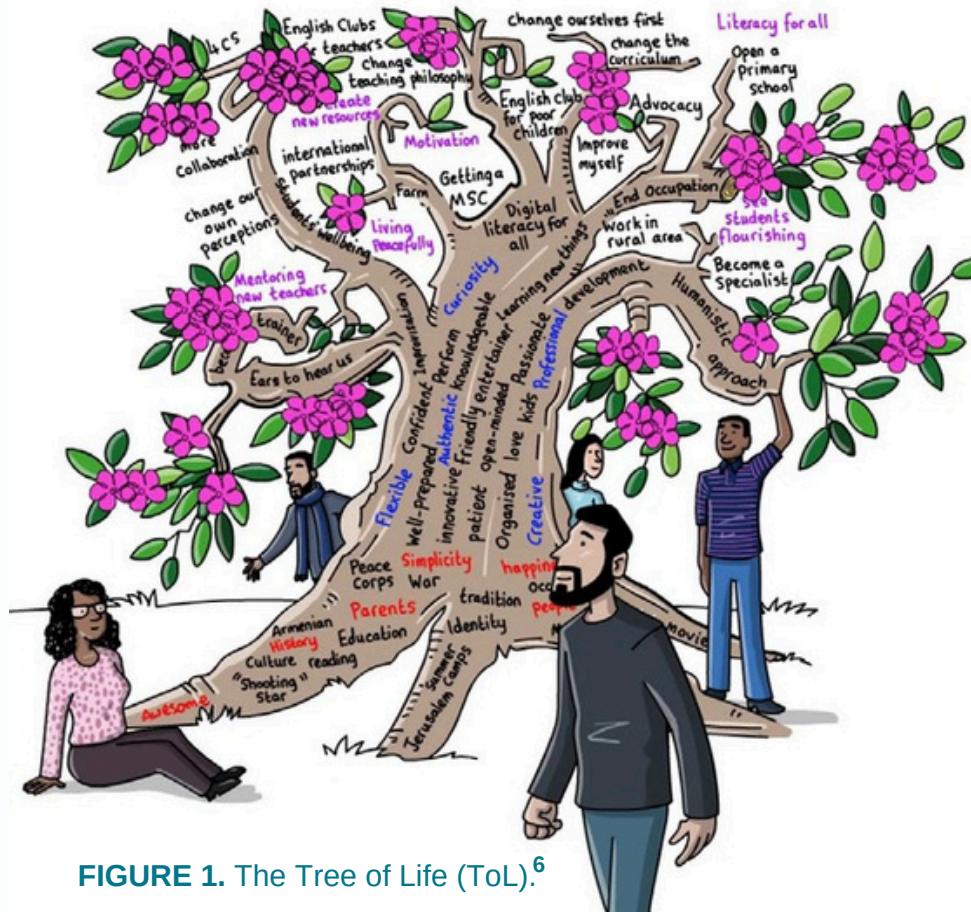
FIGURE 1. The Tree of Life (ToL).[6]

6. Picture taken from: Imperiale, M.G., Mander, S., Ross D. (2021) Early career English teacher identity project report: Exploring teacher identity and agency through the Tree of Life approach.
https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Early_career_English_teacher_identity_report.pdf

The ToL approach can only work if participants feel that they are in a 'safe space'. Creating a safe space is not always easy, but possible. The following considerations can help.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- **Confidentiality**

What people say during the workshop is confidential; ensure that participants know and understand this before the workshop starts.

- **Easier to do if the group of teachers already know each other and already know the facilitator**

- **Trust in the facilitator**

This is not always possible, or at least, it takes time to build this. If you are the facilitator ensure that you build some rapport either with the teachers directly, or with someone they trust, for example, a school or NGO representative)

- **Active listening**

Active listening is a communication technique that involves paying close attention to what someone is saying, both verbally and nonverbally, and then reflecting back what you've heard to ensure you've understood correctly. It's about truly understanding the speaker's perspective and showing that you care about what they have to say.

- **Trauma-informed practice**

Be mindful of potential emotional triggers during discussions. Ensure a safe space and offer support if needed.

- **Multilingual Settings**

Involve interpreters or multilingual facilitators when necessary. Encourage participants to share in their preferred language. You can also use teachers' language skills to interpret for others.

HOW TO USE TREE OF LIFE

You can choose or combine between two ways of facilitation, depending on your aims and needs:

• **Individual Trees -** Participants create personal trees reflecting their unique journeys and then they create a 'Forest'. This is the approach that Ncube developed, and you can find more information <u>here</u>.

• **Collective Tree -** Participants contribute to a single tree, fostering a sense of community/purpose. This is the approach we developed, as for us it was important to build shared sense of purpose, and to strengthen the participants' sense of belonging to the teacher community.

STRUCTURE

• OPENING OF THE WORKSHOP

- As everyone arrives, **greet them warmly** and **create an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable participating**.
- To ensure a **safe and productive space for everyone**, you could open the floor for a discussion on respectful communication and confidentiality.
- **Draw or ask participants to draw a Tree** on a flipchart or on a whiteboard, or if online, on a shared interactive whiteboard.
- **Hand out post-it notes to each participant**

(or, if online, show how participants can add text/post-it notes).

Give a prompt to stimulate reflection and responses.

The prompts are very important. In our work, we choose to leave them open enough to ensure that participants can tell their preferred stories.[7]

Explain the *THINK and SHARE* [8] **principle:**

Participants can be given a few minutes to think and write their responses to the prompt on a post-it note. Wait until everyone is done and then participants can take turns to share what they have written in their post-it notes and stick their post-its on the Tree.

This method ensures everyone gets a chance to speak. We know not everyone will participate equally, and that's okay. The goal is to prevent only the loudest voices from dominating the discussion. Participants can write a word, a sentence, draw, or use any language they are comfortable with. This helps everyone express their thoughts in a way that suits them best, especially in multilingual groups. As participants get more comfortable, they often start talking more naturally, asking questions to each other, and sharing their thoughts freely.

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7. See Frimberger, K., White, R., Ma, L. (2018) "If I didn't know you what would you want me to see": Poetic Mappings in Neo-Materialist Research with Young Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Applied Linguistics Review, pp. 391-419. https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/en/publications/if-i-didnt-know- you-what-would-you-want-me-to-see-poetic-mappings

8. Using the 'think then share' method from Ketso (Tippet, 2009).

ROOTS

The prompt could be something as simple as "What are your roots?" Participants may ask for clarification, and but it is important that they can interpret the question however they like. "Roots" are a common metaphor for the past, background, and sense of belonging in many languages, including English, so most likely participants will discuss these. Remember, it does not need to be related to the professional domain (we understand 'teacher identity' more broadly, and in fact we encourage teachers to think about who they are and what they do beyond the classroom settings).

When I was thinking about my roots.. I was thinking ya'ani, I was thinking of my home. That's the place where I connected like so much with that place, my life was there so the place is like my... identity, where I feel safe […] all my identity and father and mother are from there and as Sudanese community we are very much connected and we have that connection and I feel comfortable, I feel safe, talking about root so all my grand- grand- grandfathers come from this home, if you ask I know all my oldest relatives and they told us these are your roots, and they used to draw us like the … family.. yes the family tree […] and it is a big family tree.. they used to taught me that so I know all of them.

English teacher from Sudan, teaching refugees in Jordan

TRUNK

Participants are invited to discuss their personal strengths. Instead of explaining directly to the trunk, you can use a metaphor: "Moving up the Tree of Life, the trunk symbolizes our core strengths and capabilities." After this, you may also include scenarios from the participants' teaching contexts, to see what they would do in certain situations, or how they overcome certain 'challenging' moments. You can highlight the strengths and capabilities displayed in these situations (sometimes people need a reminder about what they are good at).
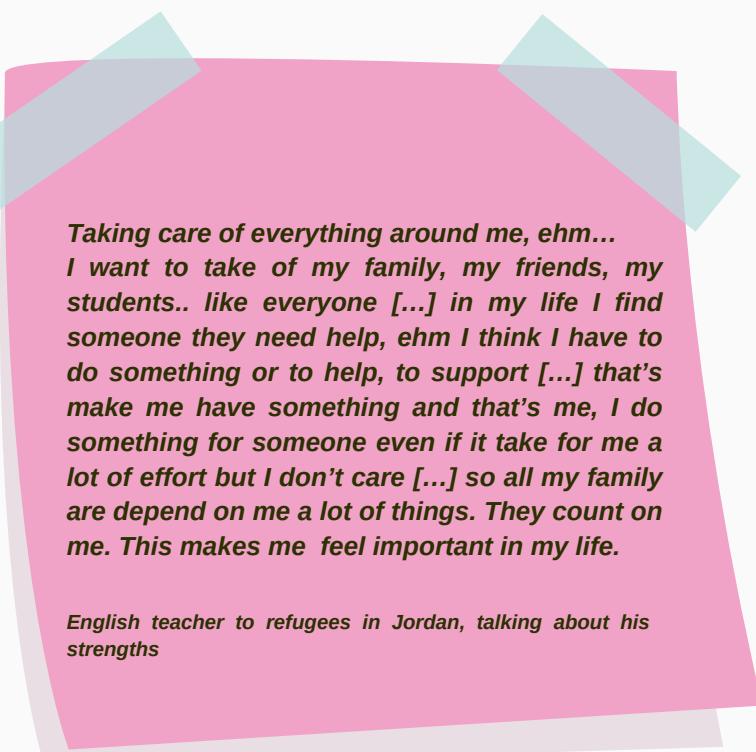
Taking care of everything around me, ehm…
I want to take of my family, my friends, my students.. like everyone […] in my life I find someone they need help, ehm I think I have to do something or to help, to support […] that's make me have something and that's me, I do something for someone even if it take for me a lot of effort but I don't care […] so all my family are depend on me a lot of things. They count on me. This makes me feel important in my life.

English teacher to refugees in Jordan, talking about his strengths

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LEAVES AND BLOSSOMS

Participants are invited to explore hopes and dreams for the future.

I think my dream was minimal …, ehm compared to the others. I just think about myself, but it is true, the only thing I want to do is to be a good citizen and to raise good citizens responsible for their communities … and that's it. It is not as important as others, like working with poor children etc.

English teacher, ECETI project
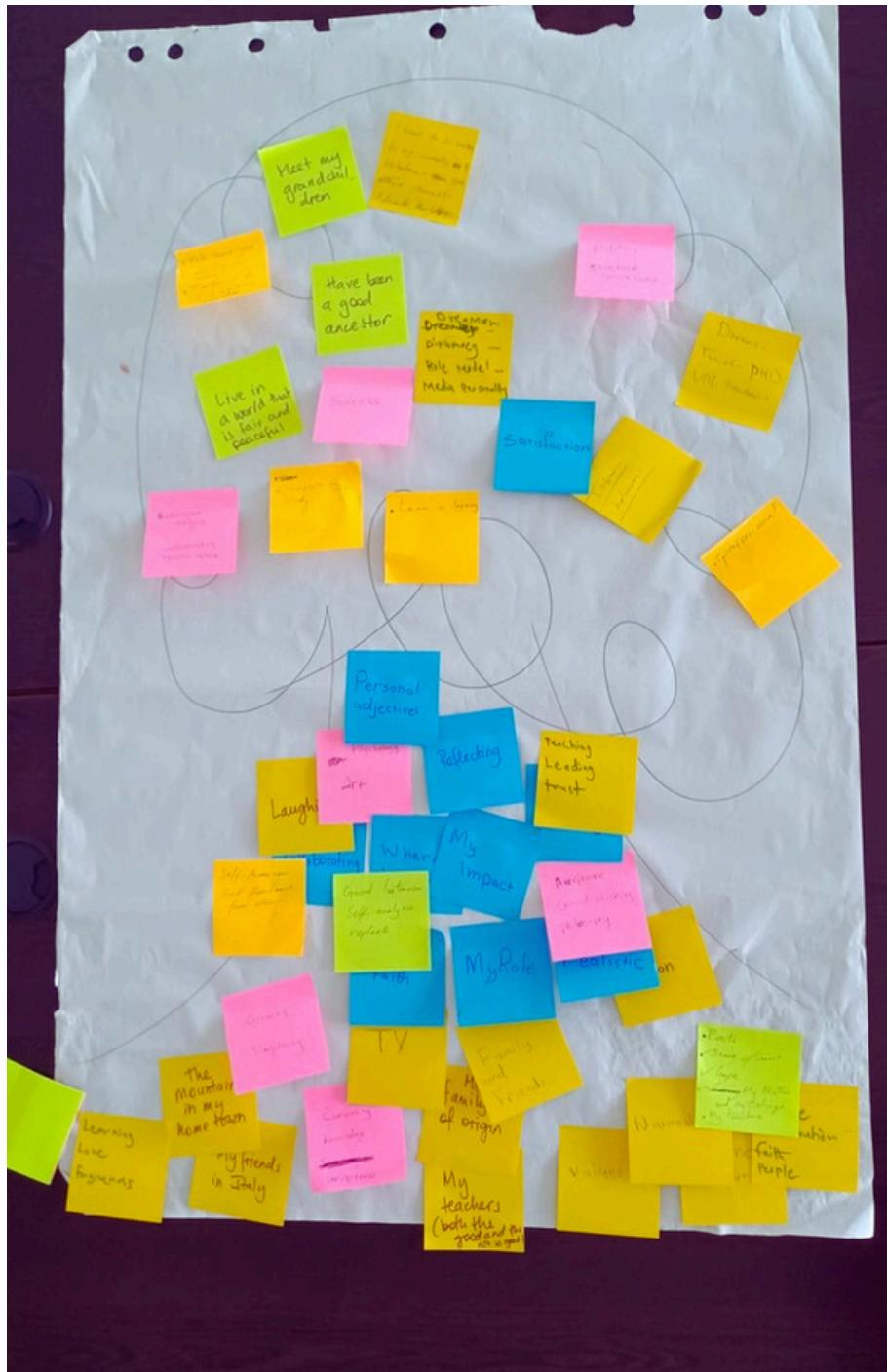
FIGURE 2. The Tree of Life (ToL) created during the LINEs project in Jordan.

THE IDEAL TEACHER
WHAT IS THIS APPROACH?

The concept of the ideal teacher is common in research into teacher identity. Here we have created an approach based on this concept, aimed at supporting teachers in articulating their values and purpose, and then considering what is needed to strengthen their agency in putting their values into action. Thinking about an ideal teacher in a particular context supports reflection on the needs of the community as well as principles of education and the role of the teacher. It can then lead into a discussion of the barriers and enabling factors in relation to that ideal. Each of these areas can benefit from detailed and ongoing discussion and action planning over a series of workshops, or you can use the ideal teacher activity as the basis for future work.

HOW TO PREPARE TEACHERS FOR THE IDEAL TEACHER ACTIVITIES (OPTIONAL)

Many teachers will benefit from some preparation before considering the ideal teacher. Firstly, we have used individual interviews to help teachers reflect on their own experiences of education and to consider the priorities of their communities. Secondly, we have included a simple whole group activity to think about the ideal school. This creates a context in which to consider the ideal teacher. These two activities are described below, followed by the ideal teacher activity itself.

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INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS: EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATION

If practical, individual discussions with teachers are a valuable tool in developing identity and agency. Perhaps surprisingly, many teachers spend very little time thinking or talking about their beliefs, values and priorities in relation to being a teacher, and how these came about. Interviews provide a chance for thinking about and articulating these without the pressure of being in a group. Themes that come up can then provide the basis for groupwork.

In many refugee contexts, there will be teachers with minimal experience of teaching, and they might not be confident discussing these topics directly. Teachers' own experience of education and their favourite/least favourite teachers is likely to have had a big impact on the way they see education and the values they hold as teachers. Helping them reflect on these experiences can be a good starting point towards articulating their beliefs about teaching and education in general. More experienced teachers also find this topic enjoyable and useful because it can demonstrate their agency in implementing things they liked from their own schooling and rejecting those they didn't. The conversation is often nostalgic, but can also prompt unhappy memories, and should be handled with sensitivity.
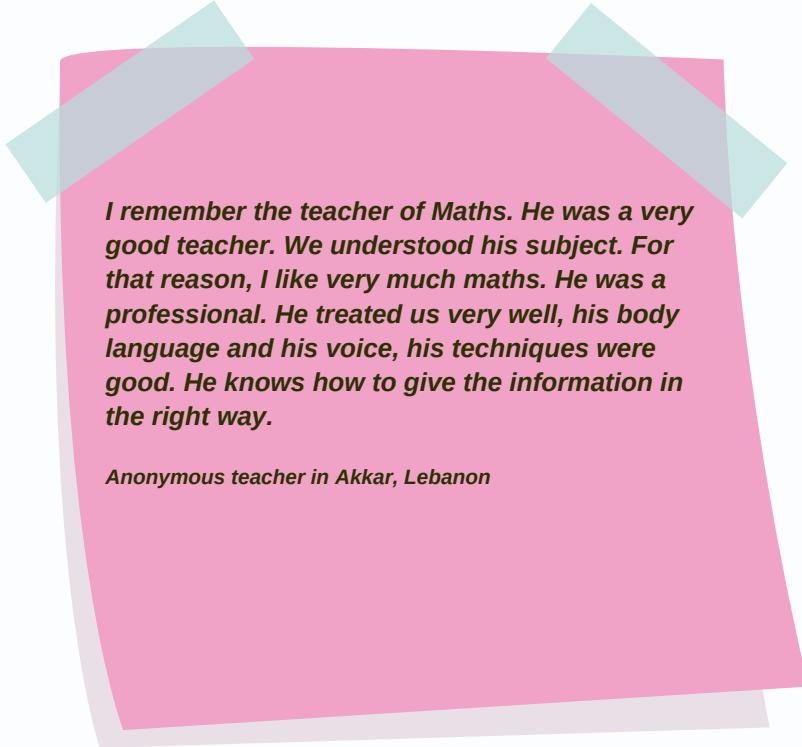
I remember the teacher of Maths. He was a very good teacher. We understood his subject. For that reason, I like very much maths. He was a professional. He treated us very well, his body language and his voice, his techniques were good. He knows how to give the information in the right way.

Anonymous teacher in Akkar, Lebanon

TIPS FOR SETTING UP THE INTERVIEWS

Interviews are also an excellent opportunity for building understanding and trust at a one-to-one level. Below you can find some key points to consider when interviewing participants.

MAKE TIME FOR INFORMAL CHAT

Build rapport by sharing personal details that you're comfortable sharing such as where you're from, your day etc., and encourage the participants to do the same. If you need to collect personal data from participants, this is a good opportunity, but make sure the participants know why you're doing that and that they give their consent (see below).

INTERVIEW PURPOSE AND FORMAT

Ensure participants understand who you are, why you are there (the purpose of the project and your connection to it), and the purpose of the interview(s). Explain the format and timing of the interview. We have occasionally been surprised by suspicion and misunderstandings through not doing this thoroughly.

PARTICIPANT CHOICE AND CONSENT

Ensure participants are aware that they can choose whether or not to participate and what information they would like to share.
Explain the points of confidentiality and, where necessary, get permission to record the interview.

EXAMPLES OF THEMES AND POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. School: Can you describe your school life?
- *How was the teaching?*
- *Are there any teachers that you remember in particular?*
- *Which subjects did you enjoy/were you good at?*

2. Further study and work: What did you do after school and why?

3. The present: Can you tell me about your work now? Are you currently teaching? If so:

- *What do you teach?*
- *What is the most rewarding part of your job?*
- *What are the biggest challenges?*

4. The future: what are your hopes and aspirations?
- *What are your hopes for education in your context?*
- *How do you see the role of the school?*
- *How do you see your own role and the role of a teacher more generally?*
- *What are your personal hopes for the future in the longer term?*

THE IDEAL SCHOOL

Aim: to help teachers reflect on and articulate priorities for education in their context, and to provide context for the ideal teacher activity below.

The procedure follows the three steps below, but it is inevitable that teachers will discuss steps two and three throughout.

REFLECTION ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IDEAL SCHOOL

Teachers brainstorm the characteristics of an ideal school in their context. This can be done by the group as a whole or teachers can be divided into smaller groups. Note that teachers should be encouraged to remember that this is an ideal – it doesn't need to be realistic. The facilitator should capture their thoughts and divide them into categories or themes as much as possible.

After initial brainstorming, you may need to provide prompts to develop the discussion. These can be based on your knowledge of the context. We were working with teachers to set up new informal non-formal schools in informal camps and these are some examples of questions we asked:

- Who is the school for?
- What do students learn?
- How do students learn?
- How does the provision of non-formal/informal education relate to formal education?
- How is the community involved in education?
- How does the school look physically?

For example, amongst other things, our participants in Lebanon emphasised that an ideal school is one that provides safety, is open to children of all ages, has sufficient resources, and has established well-grounded communication between the schools and the community.[9]
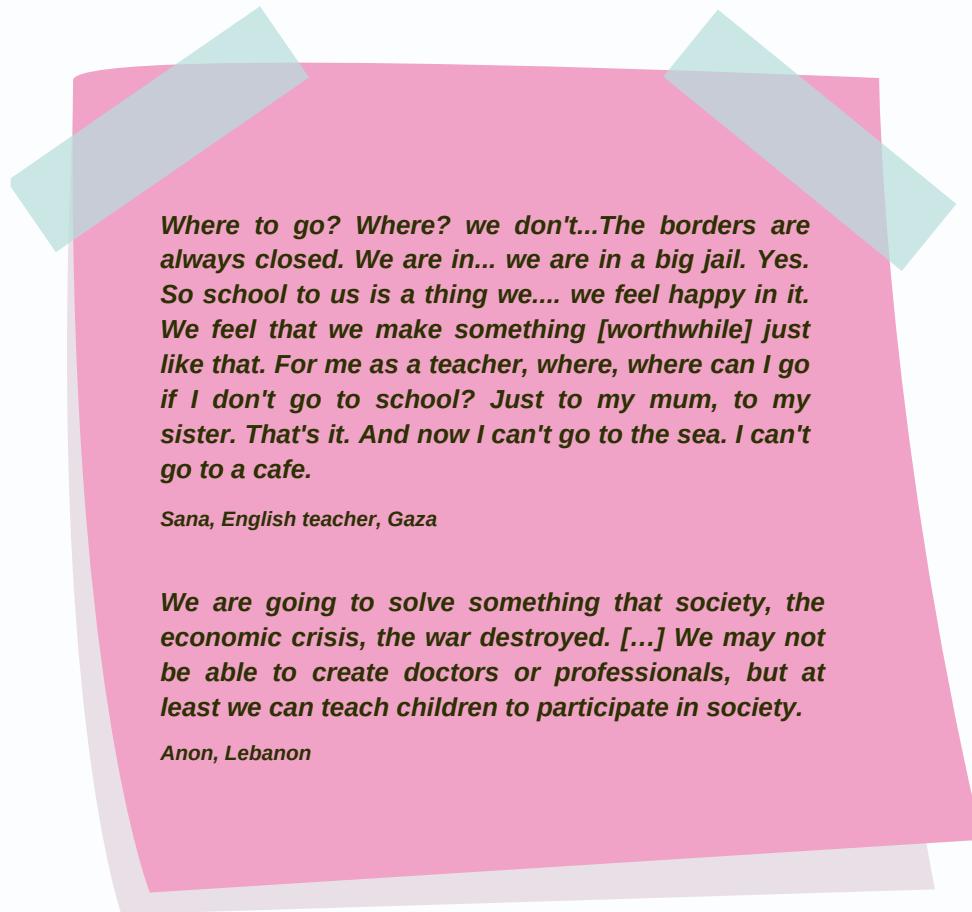
Where to go? Where? we don't...The borders are always closed. We are in... we are in a big jail. Yes. So school to us is a thing we.... we feel happy in it. We feel that we make something [worthwhile] just like that. For me as a teacher, where, where can I go if I don't go to school? Just to my mum, to my sister. That's it. And now I can't go to the sea. I can't go to a cafe.

Sana, English teacher, Gaza

We are going to solve something that society, the economic crisis, the war destroyed. [...] We may not be able to create doctors or professionals, but at least we can teach children to participate in society.

Anon, Lebanon

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9. See Ross, D., Imperiale, M.G., Fassetta, G. (2023) LINES REPORT Learning for Informal and Non-formal Educators in Refugee Settings in Lebanon and Jordan. https://lines-learning.com/reports/

REFLECTION ON THE EXISTING SITUATION

The facilitator summarises the themes that came out of reflections on the ideal school, and the teachers discuss the existing situation in their context in relation to each theme.

Some prompts we used:

- Who are the groups that currently benefit most in your contexts?
- Who faces challenges accessing quality education? Why?
- What kind of existing funding, resources and infrastructure are available?

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CONSIDERATION OF POTENTIAL PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE AND PRACTICAL STEPS

From these themes, they then identify priorities for change and divide into groups (optional) to consider the barriers and enabling factors for development in each area and how to address them, before reporting back to the group as a whole. This can lead to the establishment of longer-term working groups looking at each area in more detail and planning action.

USING THE IDEAL TEACHER ACTIVITIES

Aim: For participants to articulate their values and purpose through imagining an ideal teacher, and then to consider how to align their work as teachers with these values.

The previous activities (are likely to have provided plenty of points of reference for teachers to build on when considering the ideal teacher. Where needed, the facilitators can use these as prompts to stimulate discussion, or where clear themes have emerged, these can be used as a structure for the workshop. For example, in our interviews before the workshops in Gaza, the teachers came up with the following themes, and we used them as prompts to structure the discussion:

- Student health, trauma and wellbeing
- Teacher health, trauma and wellbeing
- Teaching citizenship and values
- Working with parents and the community
- Engaging in professional development
- Relationships with other teachers within and beyond the camp
- National education policy and the curriculum

The steps of the Ideal Teacher activities are very similar to the ideal school activity above.

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WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN IDEAL TEACHER IN YOUR CONTEXT?

Participants discuss this question by building on the following prompts.

Ideally, a teacher in our context...

- ...knows how to...
- ...is able to...
- ...is allowed to...
- ...believes...
- ...cares about...
- ...is aware of...

At this stage you may want to remind participants of themes that came up in interviews or in the ideal school activity above. This will help with structuring the conversation.

Capture the teachers' ideas in a list that they can reflect on and add to over time. With one group, we were able to use a live online document which allowed comments and adjustments as discussions progressed. With another we used flipchart paper for teachers to work in groups and then produced a final version which the teachers had agreed on and could refer back to as a statement of their shared purpose.

Depending on the time you have available, the description of an ideal teacher can kept as a simple list, or the teachers can develop and refine their ideas. For example, the following is an excerpt from what teachers produced in Lebanon in one afternoon:

AN IDEAL TEACHER

- …knows how to [make] the students think.
- ...believes that every student has the same rights of learning.
- ...is able to make the students understand the lesson equally.
- ...is able to make the students one team.
- ...cares about following the students' news and their situation, especially in relation to education.
- ...is aware of their context and how the situation outside the school is hard.
- ...is able to be there as a friend for students when they are having a bad time.
- ...knows how to connect and communicate always with parents.
- ...is allowed to explain their lesson [in a way] that they are good at.
- ...is allowed to be funny and assertive at the same time.
- ...believes in their abilities
- ...believes that they need to learn.
- ...believes in their message.
- ...believes they are able to create a good generation, and are ambitious for their students.

In contrast, teachers in Gaza, who spent weeks refining their idea of an ideal teacher, came up with this definition in relation to student wellbeing (one of seven themes):

An ideal teacher prioritises their students' wellbeing above all else. They make a continual effort to know and understand their students and to adapt as necessary, which includes having the basic counselling skills that allow them to recognise and address trauma. This involves understanding the socio-emotional impact of conflict on learning and wellbeing, as well as on character development and behaviour.

The ideal teacher seeks and takes advantage of professional development opportunities in this area, but recognises that the ideal response taught in trauma training sessions is difficult to implement in the hard reality. This teacher is able to overcome their own trauma to be strong for the children in their classes.

They make the school and the classroom a safe space, and know how to make lessons fun to take children's minds away from traumatic events. The English classroom is recognised as a particular opportunity for dealing with issues of wellbeing and trauma.

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HOW WOULD OTHER PEOPLE IN YOUR CONTEXT DESCRIBE AN IDEAL TEACHER?

This activity helps teachers identify conflicts and support from other stakeholders in education. Teachers' discuss how other stakeholders view the ideal teacher. Possible stakeholders include:

- Children
- Parents
- NGO workers
- Teacher trainers
- Donors
- The government

Ask teachers how this affects their work, and if there are any characteristics of an ideal teacher related to managing these views. If so, they should add them to the list.

IDENTIFYING OTHER BARRIERS AND ENABLING FACTORS

a) Ask teachers:

- Which of the ideal characteristics you identified are the easiest to achieve? Why?
- Which are the hardest to achieve? Why?

Capture the barriers and enabling factors related to each characteristic in a document or on a flipchart.

Structure discussion by helping teachers think about enabling factors and barriers and the related people involved, including the teachers themselves, at different levels of the ecosystem, such as in the classroom, in the school, in the community and in wider society. Encourage teachers to consider what allows them to feel good about their job in their immediate environment, but also help them consider cultural attitudes and norms as well as areas such as national government policy and international interest, perceptions and support.

b) Discuss and record answers to the following

- What can be done to overcome barriers and develop enabling factors in relation to each characteristic of the ideal teacher?
- Which are priorities?
- What action can teachers take?
- What action can other stakeholders be encouraged or influenced to take? How?
- How can teachers' voices' be made louder?

c) End of workshops

At the end of the workshops, produce a document summarising the teachers' thoughts and ask them to reflect and comment on it. This can then serve as the basis for more detailed action planning.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BUILDING A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN REFUGEE SETTINGS

This section aims to help teachers who work with refugees. Teachers in these situations face many challenges, both for their students and for themselves. Here, we give you tips and information to create a better learning environment. We have picked resources to help teachers with their everyday work. They were selected by the following key areas which emerged from activities with teachers in refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan during the LINEs project. The resources were selected from the respective database of the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) as well as other platforms, such as databases from non-governmental and governmental organisations. You can see an overview of the key areas below.

A. Teaching in Challenging Contexts

B. Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

C. Creating Strong Teacher-Parent Relationships

D. Addressing Gender Inequalities in Education

FIGURE 4. Key areas for building a safe and supportive environment in refugee settings.

A. TEACHING IN CHALLENGING CONTEXTS

Young learners in refugee settings may have gone through challenging time which affects the ways they learn and their emotional well-being. A supportive teaching environment not only does encourage students to reach their fullest potential, but also equips educators with strategies to understand and address students' emotions. Additionally, it recognises the challenges teachers face and offers resources for their well-being.

In what follows, we suggest some freely available resources to support you in teaching in refugee settings. They focus on:

↳ *Impact of challenging experiences on students' learning and well-being*

↳ *Challenges for teachers in emergencies and teacher well-being*

IMPACT OF CHALLENGING EXPERIENCES TO STUDENTS' LEARNING AND WELL-BEING

RESOURCE TYPE	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
Practical Manual	Essence of Learning – Learning support in crisis contexts A practical approach to education in emergencies	Beatrice Rutishauser Ramm Nicole Stolz Caritas Switzerland	Caritas Verlag

CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS IN EMERGENCIES AND TEACHER WELL-BEING (1)

RESOURCE TYPE	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
Guidance Note	Guidance Note on Teacher Wellbeing in Emergency Settings	Sophia D'Angelo (PhD) Raksha Sule Samaya Mansour Jwalin Patel (PhD)	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
Case studies	Promising practices in teacher well-being, leadership and school management	Collective Work	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
Paper	Teaching amidst conflict and displacement: persistent challenges and promising practices for refugee, internally displaced and national teachers	Mendenhall, Mary Gomez, Sonia Varni, Emily	UNESCO

CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS IN EMERGENCIES AND TEACHER WELL-BEING (2)

RESOURCE TYPE	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
Resource Collection	**Creating Healing Classrooms: Tools for Teachers and Teacher Educators**	International Rescue Committee Child and Youth Protection and Development Unit	International Rescue Committee
Report	**Digital Teacher Professional Development in Education in Displacement (EiD) Settings: Access, equity, and quality**	Dr. Oula Abu-Amsha	Childhood Education International
Report	**Teachers of refugees: a review of the literature**	Emily Richardson, Leonora MacEwen, and Ruth Naylor	Education Development Trust (formerly CFBT)
Training Manual	**Teacher Well-being: Training on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Teachers in Emergencies**	Saskia van Valkenhoef	EduKans
Training Manual	**ENABLING TEACHERS FOUNDATIONS COURSE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** **Teacher Well-being**	Save the Children International	Save the Children International

B. CREATING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A positive learning environment is essential for students to thrive. It's not simply about the classroom itself, but about creating a place where students feel secure, valued, and comfortable taking chances. This means recognising that students learn in different ways, fostering strong teacher-student connections, and using teaching methods that encourage participation, teamwork, and a belief in their ability to improve. Ultimately, a supportive environment helps students learn to their fullest potential and become lifelong learners. Below we suggest some resources related to:

↳ *Emotions and appropriate responses in teaching*
↳ *Developing creativity, resourcefulness and autonomy*

EMOTIONS AND APPROPRIATE RESPONSES IN TEACHING

RESOURCE TYPE	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
Practical Manual	**Working with children and their environment. Manual of psychosocial skills**	Heiniger, Jean-Pierre Bray, Maria Bollier, Audrey	Terre des Hommes
Training Manual	**Now,I'm Stronger: Focused Activities for Children's emotions**	International Rescue Committee	International Rescue Committee

DEVELOPING CREATIVITY, RESOURCEFULNESS AND AUTONOMY

RESOURCE TYPE	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
A. FOSTERING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CLASSROOM			
Handbook	Practical approaches to behaviour management in the classroom A handbook for classroom teachers in primary schools	Pupil Wellbeing Team Department for Education and Skills Welsh Government	Welsh Government
Toolkit	Working with children and their environment. Manual of psychosocial skills	Michèle Meuwly	Terre des Hommes (TdH)
B. CREATIVITY AND RESOURCEFULNESS			
Paper	Teacher Professional Development & Play-based Learning in East Africa Strengthening Research, Policy, and Practice in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda	Mary Mendenhall, Ed.D. Vidur Chopra, Ed.D. Danielle Falk Chris Henderson Jihae Cha, Ed.D.	Teachers College Columbia University
Paper	Learning through play at school A study of playful integrated pedagogies that foster children's holistic skills development in the primary school classroom	Rachel Parker Bo Stjerne Thomsen	The LEGO Foundation
C. PROMOTION OF AYTONOMY			
Resource Collection	Creating Healing Classrooms: Tools for Teachers and Teacher Educators	International Rescue Committee Child and Youth Protection and Development Unit	International Rescue Committee
Manual Toolkit	INEE Minimum standards for education in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)

📌 C. CREATING STRONG TEACHER - PARENTS RELATIONSHIPS

Collaboration between educators and parents is essential. To build this partnership, educators should acknowledge parents' crucial role and offer clear communication that goes beyond tasks. It is essential to:

↳ *Recognise family challenges and offer support for navigating difficulties when needed.*

↳ *Engage parents by creating welcoming conferences, providing practical learning sessions, and facilitating social connections for support*

↳ *Empowering parents through clear instructions and demonstrations empowers them to become active partners in their children's education despite the crisis.*

CREATING STRONG TEACHER- PARENTS RELATIONSHIPS

RESOURCE TYPE	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
Practical Guide	**Essence of Learning – Learning support in crisis contexts A practical approach to education in emergencies**	Beatrice Rutishauser Ramm Nicole Stolz Caritas Switzerland	Caritas Verlag

D. ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION

Gender issues in education is an ongoing challenge. Statistics show girls are left behind in education. Addressing gender issues includes strategies such as:

↳ *Revising curriculum materials to eliminate gender bias and stereotypes while reflecting girls' experiences,*

↳ *Promotion of equal participation, assigning non-traditional chores, addressing girls' absenteeism, and encouraging inclusive sports participation.*

↳ *Raising community awareness about the importance of girls' education.*

ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION

RESOURCE TYPE	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
Paper	TEACHING AMIDST CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT: PERSISTENT CHALLENGES AND PROMISING PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE, INTERNALLY DISPLACED AND NATIONAL TEACHERS	Mary Mendenhall Sonia Gomez Emily Varni	UNESCO
Report	Breaking down barriers: increasing girls' access to and completion of secondary education in Kakuma	Giacomo Concina Jill Drzewiecki JRS Kenya & East African Regional teams	Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)
Webinar	Gender Equality in and through Education	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI)	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI)
Training Material	Gender Responsive Pedagogy Teacher Training Pack (GRPTT)	Plan International Canada	Plan International
Training Material	INEE Gender Training Manual	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)

ADDITIONAL TRAINING RESOURCES FOR TEACHER TRAINERS AND PEOPLE WHO WORK WITH TEACHERS IN REFUGEE SETTINGS

RESOURCE TYPE	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
Training Manual	Training for Primary School Teachers in Crisis Contexts	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)
Training Manual	Teacher Well-being: Training on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Teach	Saskia van Valkenhoef	Edukans
Training Manual	Teacher Training: Psychosocial Support	Grete Ravn Omdal Juliet Munden	Norwegian Refugee Council
Training Material	Teacher Focused Social and Emotional Learning	International Rescue Committee (IRC)	International Rescue Committee (IRC)
Training Material	Teacher Digital Toolkit	Thaki	Thaki
Webinar	Teacher Professional Development in Crisis Contexts	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)
Guide	Stopping violence in schools: a guide for teachers	UNESCO	UNESCO
Training Manual	DOORWAYS TRAINING MANUAL	Safe Schools Program, DevTech Systems, Inc	USAID's Office of Women in Development
Guidance Manual	Helping Children Cope With the Stresses of War: A manual for parents and teachers	Mona Macksoud	UNICEF

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https://lines- learning.com/reports/

THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE IDEAL TEACHER

Two approaches to working with teachers to strengthen their identity and agency in refugee contexts

lines

University of Glasgow

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