IMISCOE

Standing Committee
Education and Social Inequality

Call for Papers

IMISCOE EduSocial SC Workshop

Re-thinking research on education policy in migration:

Policy actors and impact

27th-28th January 2027, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

Critical policy research, including research on education policy, has increasingly moved beyond top-down, linear understandings of policy to examine its complexity, processual nature, and the multiplicity of actors involved in shaping it. In the context of migration, actors shaping education policies operate across different institutional levels, geographical scales, and social contexts. Supranational organizations and international agreements may establish broader frameworks for education policies concerning refugees and migrants more generally, while national political institutions, local governments, schools, migrant communities, and associations all contribute to shaping these policies.

Although politicians and bureaucrats are still conventionally labeled as policy*makers*, education policy is, in fact, *done* by teachers, principals, students, parents, and communities. Everyday interactions with street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980) in educational institutions govern migrants' access to resources as they interpret, negotiate, and enact migration-related categories and discourses. Therefore, conceptualizing policy as *done* through the interrelations of multiple actors (Gorur 2011, Newman 2013, Codó 2023), rather than as something made by bureaucrats and implemented by practitioners, allows for a more holistic analysis of the policy process that takes its various actors into account.

Concepts such as policy "appropriation" (Levinson et al., 2009) have long been preferred in critical research over the more technical term "implementation" in order to draw attention to the agentive role of practitioners, including teachers and administrators. Policy has also been analyzed as "practice" to underline the fact that school and classroom practices themselves often constitute education policy. Yet, such concepts still fail to account for the roles of some of the actors mentioned above, such as parents and communities. The new materialist reconceptualization of agency as a relational phenomenon has also brought into focus the role of space, objects, and the material conditions of education in shaping policy (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). Therefore, another relevant area of inquiry concerns who (and what) is able to effect change in education policy, how agency is exercised and what its limitations are.

Finally, education researchers can also be considered policy actors and their role calls for a critical reflection. Recent migration scholarship questions the concept of policy-relevant research (Bakewell, 2008; Stierl, 2022) and reveals how policy often has an impact on research, rather than research necessarily influencing policy in return. Taking policy categories and needs as starting points for research runs the risk of primarily serving states and political agendas rather than migrants themselves. It is crucial, therefore, to reflect on how to effect change in policy through research without compromising research integrity and overlooking migrants' perspectives and needs.

In this workshop, we would like to explore the notion of "education policy actors" without limiting ourselves to a single definition of the concept. Thus, we invite contributions that examine education policy in the context of the current global migration regime and scrutinize the role of different actors involved in it. These could include, but are not limited to, global actors defining the framework for refugee education, politicians shaping the limits of education for migrants, teachers and students negotiating the logics and discourse of education policies, migrant and parent associations resisting or shaping policy decisions, and researchers producing knowledge on migrant education. Novel conceptual and methodological approaches as well as research from understudied contexts are particularly welcome.

Potential questions to address include:

- What and who shapes education policy in migration? How does education policy intersect with migration regimes and governance practices?
- How could we re-conceptualize education policy to account for the diverse actors, spaces, discourses, and events constructing it?
- How do different actors of education policy exercise agency? How is policy "done" in the context of migration?
- How are policy logics, discourses, and categories reproduced, negotiated, or contested by actors at different levels? How are these
- What is "impact" in education policy? How do different actors shape the education policy and effect change?
- What counts as policy-relevant in education research? How such relevance is defined, and by whom?

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Submission and contribution guidelines:

Please send an abstract (max. 500 words) to gulsah.turk@uab.cat outlining your proposed contribution to the workshop themes, including the title, author name(s), affiliation(s), and contact information.

Important dates and key information	
Abstract submissions *Refer to the information above.*	13th November 2026
Notification of acceptance *12-14 papers will be accepted for a rich and in-depth discussion.*	27th November 2026
Confirmation of attendance by participants	4th December 2026
Circulation of the final program *Each session will consist of a 10-minute overview of each contribution, followed by a 5-minute response from a discussant and an open discussion with all participants.*	18th December 2026
Circulation of draft papers *The draft (max. 5000 words) does not need to be fully developed but should provide sufficient detail on the research questions, theoretical approach, methodology and preliminary findings or arguments to allow for meaningful discussion.*	8th January 2027
Workshop dates	27th-28th January 2027

This two-day workshop aims to provide a venue for exchange and constructive engagement with each other's work. Participants will be invited to read each other's papers in advance. During the sessions, authors will briefly introduce their contributions, followed by comments from a discussant and an open discussion, creating space to exchange and further develop ideas.

Funding

The SC EduSocial will be able to cover (part of) travel and accommodation costs for those participants without institutional funding. The final amount will be decided based on needs and availability.

References

Bakewell, O. (2008). Research Beyond the Categories: The Importance of Policy Irrelevant Research into Forced Migration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *21*(4), 432–453. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen042

Codó, E. (2023). *Global CLIL: Critical, ethnographic and language policy perspectives*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Fenwick, T., & Edwards, R. (2010). Actor-network theory in education. Routledge.

Gorur, R. (2011). Policy as assemblage. *European Educational Research Journal*, *10*(4), 611–622. https://doi.org/10.2304/eerj.2011.10.4.611

Levinson, B. A. U., Sutton, M., & Winstead, T. (2009). Education Policy as a Practice of Power: Theoretical Tools, Ethnographic Methods, Democratic Options. *Educational Policy*, *23*(6), 767–795. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904808320676

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Stierl, M. (2022). Do no harm? The impact of policy on migration scholarship. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, *40*(5), 1083–1102. https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654420965567