

**Centre for Urban Research on Austerity (CURA)  
Interdisciplinary Research Partnerships Fund  
Proposal**

**The ‘migrant children schooling crisis’: examining the intersection between media framing, neoliberalism and schooling (Leicestershire)**

The pilot project aims to address tensions identified with the ‘migrant children schooling crisis’ as it is portrayed in the media and the challenges this brings to local authorities and schools who have to place and educate ‘migrant children’. This is an intersectional study between the media framing of neoliberalism, framing of tensions within the education sector and the reality of how local authorities and schools deal with those tensions.

The project investigates this by undertaking a frame analysis of newspapers (2015-2018), interviewing local authority advisors, Executive Head of MATS, Chair of Governors, school Teachers and Head Teachers and is based in Leicestershire.

The project aligns with CURA’s strategic focus on developing interdisciplinary, cross-faculty research partnerships involving education, media and politics. The project has the potential to expand the reach by engaging with psychology looking at building resilience within schools, depending on the findings from this pilot study.

The study is aimed at reducing inequalities in society (UNSDG 10) by devising strategies and tools to survive in the age of austerity.

The project further benefits from the interdisciplinary collaboration with health and mental health research here at DMU.

**Rationale**

The project examines neoliberal policies and practices embraced in the process of economic and social changes in the UK over the last three years (2010-2018) and the impact on the country’s education system, particularly on the compulsory education of transnational migrant children who relocate from Europe and rest of the world to the UK with their parents. The challenges within the school system are significant given how the education system is entrenched within a neoliberalism political agenda and framing of ‘migrant children’ within a broader discourse of immigrant and Brexit. The ‘common-sense’ (Freire, 1970a; Harvey, 2005) narrative fed by the conceptual apparatus (state and its agencies) although is constructed and shaped by the neoliberal policies, in reality, that does not necessarily always help overcome the cognitive barriers both in relation to practice and reception within the classroom. Evidence (Spencer, 2011) suggests media plays an active role in shaping and reshaping this debate in the public sphere, with hostile articles on ‘migrant children swamping UK schools’ but not accepting diversity as a pillar for development. On the other hand, schools are expected to play a vital role in developing community cohesion. The polarised and politicised media framing, therefore, inhibits certain stereotypes that in the long-run may have a detrimental impact on, not only, teaching and learning within schools, but on enforcing community cohesion.

Mental health and wellbeing is also a key issue for migrant children. Effective schools and learning communities are characterised by learners who are healthy, well-nourished, resilient, ready to learn and supported by their family and community. Adolescence and early adulthood are peak risk times for the onset of mental health problems. At any one time, one in six young adults aged 16-24 will have a common

mental disorder, such as anxiety and depression, that meets the threshold for a clinical diagnosis.

Therefore, it is critical to understand how the schools are addressing the question of inclusion and diversity through innovative pedagogical interventions within the current curriculum framework. This is the first-ever study to develop a strategy for fostering social integration and not assimilation, as is sometimes conceptualised in the UK (Brubaker, 2001) of migrant schooling.

Previous research (Turunen and Rafferty, 2012:43) suggests “dominant discourses based on neo-liberal rationale presented themselves as “unquestionable truths” that influenced how educators interact with others and went about their profession”. It is therefore paramount, firstly, to understand neoliberal rationale as a discourse in UK educational context; secondly, the media framing; and thirdly, the impact on migrant children schooling from the perspective of Head Teachers and local authority. Neoliberalism has evolved into a market-controlled notion and we have witnessed the gradual withdrawal of the state in the name of freedom. This notion of freedom is carefully crafted by the conceptual apparatus designed by governmentality and executed by technologies of power (media). The research aims to understand the nexus between the state and its agencies (media) that has contributed to a complex narrative of representation and intervention in the mediated public sphere.

#### Methodology

This is qualitative research that aims to construct a historical narrative through an interpretive case study to develop a strategy for overcoming the barriers brought in to the classroom as a result of neoliberal policies. This approach is popular among education and media researchers to examine the experiences from within its natural habitat and from multiple perspectives to gain a holistic understanding of the subject matter under investigation. Although the interpretivism influenced methodology that this project employs is small scale but given the sampling technique, discussed below, guarantees it to be intense. The research also provides scope for participant and researcher co-creation to produce knowledge in this specific area of examination. Since the research examines strategies used by the schools in the wake of the migrant schooling crisis, the case study approach is imperative to understand how schools are contributing to increases in the critical consciousness of the students (Patton, 2002). The project undertakes a snowball sampling method (non-probability sampling technique) purposeful sampling technique (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Noy, 2008) to enable a deep insight into pedagogical approaches and differences between schools. The project will be based in Leicestershire and investigate three secondary schools (one each: Academies, Independent, Faith schools) for this pilot study.

A total of **ten interviews** will be conducted with **classroom teachers, Head Teachers, Executive Head of MATS, Local Authority (Leicester city and Leicestershire council), and Chair of governors** of selected schools on admission policy and migrant schooling, supported by a qualitative news frame analysis, employing both rhetorical and technical framing devices of the five national newspapers focusing on the headlines and content (The Sun, Daily Mail, The Guardian, The Times and The Independent) and two local newspapers (Leicester Mercury and Melton Times) to understand how the issue of migrant schooling has been framed between August 2015- December 2018 through media texts and how people in position view the migrant crisis. The newspapers were selected to make

sure, the project captures both diverse and covers the different intellectual orientations.

The project, therefore, takes an innovative and novel approach to data collection and data analysis by combining qualitative media framing (critical to understanding mediated social situations, media psychology, media-influenced decisions) and interview analysis that can help address the barriers, without assuming that the barriers experienced by all the stakeholders are similar. Taking a pluralist approach to design the methodology is critical to understand the different circumstances, the magnitude of the problem and how the problem has thereby been received by the different sections (to be interviewed as mentioned above). In the long-term, the project aims to develop operational strategies for institutions and resilience tools for secondary school students and parents as a survival technique in the age of neoliberalism and austerity.

The project will employ a Research Fellow (RF) to undertake data collection and analysis. We will examine 140 newspaper articles (5 articles approximately per year from each of the above-mentioned newspapers between 2015-2018 using Lexis Nexis) paying close attention to media framing around migrant school education. The time period is relevant to the crisis of problematising migrant school education that has developed and occupied space in the public sphere during these years. The national newspapers have been chosen carefully for the purpose of this research. The Sun and the Daily Mail topped ABC's print circulation list in January 2017, The Guardian, The Times, and The Independent (i) have circulation above one hundred thousand.

According to Entman (1993:52) "To frame is to select aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular ... causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described". Thus, the analysis here involves understanding the agency, identifying the people in those stories, examining how migrant schooling is categorised and finally the media generalisations that contributed to the debate. The main research question driving the empirical data collection and analysis, therefore, is 'how the media continues to frame and set the agenda on migrant school education and if there are evidences of systematic othering? The data should, therefore, provide us with content (what the media is conveying) and form (how the media structures the content) of framing given by the aspects of the context gathered through interviews. The aim here is to understand the discursive practices (the way arguments and discussions are framed) emerging out of the construction of news articles that can influence audience interpretation of events (Tuchman, 1978). The main search phrases for this research initiative will be 'migrant schooling', 'immigrant integration', 'migrant children outperform', 'immigrant children swamping schools'. Depending on results we will refine, change, replace and add terms as required. To generate meaningful samples involving purposeful sampling, the search operation will be restricted to specific months and the online recommender system will be used as a tool to filter useful information and guide through the search operation.

### **Plan of Action**

RF (post-doctoral researcher, experienced in media framing and discourse analysis) will work under the supervision of PI and therefore this is a great developmental

opportunity for the RF to engage with external stakeholders and develop research network. We will organise meetings regularly every month to touch base, create an online working space (Google Doc to create documents/reports and GDrive or ask ITMS for storage) to keep a track of monthly progress to minimise risk and stay up to date with any issues or crisis that requires immediate attention.

We will host the symposium at DMU and this should provide an additional developmental opportunity for RF to develop networking and organisational skills along with the research skills. The calculated costs cover the developmental activities for RF.

February end-early March 2019– Advertising and recruiting RF, followed by Secondary research. I have already been in touch with our potential RF and had a discussion and planning meeting prior to the submission of this revised proposal. A detailed discussion has been undertaken with the RIO team and our HR Advisor to understand the correct procedure for costing and recruitment. The guidance on the costing (budget) has been provided by the research office and the UniTemp recruitment process document with the form was sent by our HR adviser. This period, additionally, involves examining literature and building on the network involving snowball sampling. The theoretical framework for the study needs developing during this period in order to successfully proceed to the next level.

March 2019- April 2019 Data collection and analysis (RF, One day a week for RF, 0.2fte)

May 2019- Meeting on research progress and output planning (digital content development prior to the symposium, symposium planning) (One day a week RF)

June 2019 (early) –Symposium (collaborating with RSA and council). This could be managed by the faculty research office.

June-July 2019- Final Report and future plans (articles and external bids for both research and network development) (RF one day a week)

#### **Indicative semi-structured interview questions:**

What support do schools need most to promote effective teaching and learning for migrant students?

How do schools make migrant students feel welcome in their classrooms?

What is the school/council level policy for Migrant Education?

Do you read newspaper articles on migrant schooling?

Do you view migrant schooling a crisis or is it a mediated reality?

#### **Relevance and novelty**

This project is relevant to the general public and connected to the well-being of our city and its communities and therefore will contribute towards the public good. The research produces a counter-narrative to neoliberalism and attempts to fracture the discourse that exists in the public domain.

#### **Outcomes**

1. Short term outcomes by 31/7/2019

During this phase the outcomes are a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures, describing the number of people benefitting from the project and the nature of those benefits.

Qualitative measure: perceptions and experiences of the intended beneficiaries (pre and post project)

- A. Perceptions of migrant schooling and neoliberal framing of social capital (questionnaire during symposium)
  - B. Report on the complex phenomenon based on the interviews and media framing of the problem
  - C. Developing a webpage (using WordPress) and if possible (depending on the visual data availability and accessibility) the project may ask for a space to exhibit the findings in collaboration with Leicester council.
  - D. Symposium, June 2019 (date to be decided depending on the availability of stakeholders). Possible attendees: Leicester council, teaching representative from the three school and others who are willing to participate in future research, governing body, parents, media (journalists), local teacher's union (and national). It will be hosted at DMU (The Venue, booked through estates)
2. Longer term objective (August 2019- August 2020)
- A. Publication (articles/literature reviews/reports/Edited collection with Routledge, Sage or Palgrave)
  - B. External funding application (as below). The project has the potential to expand the area of interdisciplinary research, by engaging with co-investigators and partners from but not restricted to education, psychology, politics, mental health disciplines

The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (deadline below)

Peace, security and Rights and Justice are their priority area. This project can be expanded to include UNSDG 3, 4 and 16.

<https://www.jrct.org.uk/when-to-apply>

<https://www.jrct.org.uk/budgets.aspx>

2 September 2019	Power and Accountability Rights and Justice Sustainable Future	2 December 2019
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Welcome trust

Small grants in humanities and social science (<https://wellcome.ac.uk/funding/small-grants-humanities-and-social-science>) No deadline

This fund is particularly useful to undertake interdisciplinary research and build network around building resilience within schools and beyond.

AHRC

Research networking (no deadline)

<https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/apply-for-funding/current-opportunities/researchnetworking/>

Research grants

<https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/apply-for-funding/current-opportunities/researchgrantsearlycareers/>

AHRC International fund

On successful completion of this pilot study, further research (ESRC /AHRC grant application) will be undertaken UK wide, to compare the different operational frameworks in Scotland and Ireland with the National Curriculum framework. I have got links in both countries and have also worked with

schools in Scotland (Stirling and Glasgow). Finally, a comparative study (ESRC/AHRC grant application) between UK and USA (contacts through LinkedIn) will be done, as the issue of migration has been central to the government working policies in both the countries. Anticipating that the approach may be different in both the countries, the interesting finding would then contribute to the contemporary history of school education and justice and rights. The above certainly contribute towards the socio-cultural understanding of education in the UK and expand our international reach.

<https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/internationalfunding/>

ISRF

Early career fellowship (around February 2020)

Budget (£1979.01)

RF time [1-day (7.5hrs) x 12 days of data collection and analysis, 12x7.5 x £14.69] = £1322.10

Hiring Manager's Charge £17.91

Travel and subsistence cost (£15 per day x 10 days) = £150.00 (additional 5days to meet any gaps) (Data collection)

Refreshments:

The bronze bundle is £11.31 pp = 339.3

Water £1.90 x 4 = £7.60

Tea and coffee at lunchtime if you want it = 0.93 tea/ £1.18 coffee (£42.20)

Total - £389.10

Miscellaneous (contingency fund): £100

Activity	Date Completed by	Notes
Lexis nexus preliminary search for appropriate key words	18 <sup>th</sup> March	
Data Collection for 5 newspapers. Approximately 10 articles per newspaper from 2015-2018	8 <sup>th</sup> April	Will provide update to Indrani at this point with overview of preliminary findings pre analysis.

Data analysis	30 <sup>th</sup> April	Will provide secondary update to Indrani with more detailed information regarding findings.
Symposium organisation	By 30 <sup>th</sup> June	
Report writing and exploration of future bid writing opportunities	By 31 <sup>st</sup> July	

**Time:**

March – 1 day per week / 2 days total

April- 1 day per week/ 4 days total

May- 1 day per week / 4 days total

June- 1 day total

July- 1 day total

Total number of days: 12 days