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The diffusion of global discourses: the case of educating refugees

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ABSTRACT

We examine how organizational actors use global legal, humanitarian, and development discourses in their work supporting educational services for refugees to better understand how the transfer of ideas and norms emanating within global organizations affects educational programming for refugees. We ask: (1) To what extent do organizations reference global legal, humanitarian, and development documents in their work? And, (2) How do linkages with United Nations (UN) organizations (namely UNHCR, UNESCO, and UNICEF) influence organizations' usage of global documents? We find that different organizations draw on global discourses depending on their level of embeddedness in global society and that diverse types of relationships with UN agencies—financial and normative—mediate the extent to which they reference global policy documents.

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World society theory; refugees; education; international organizations; civil society; discourses; professionalization; diffusion

Introduction

The last decade has witnessed a rise in protracted and violent conflicts around the world from Syria to the Democratic Republic of Congo to Afghanistan. As a result, there are currently 70.8 million forcibly displaced worldwide—the highest number on record (UNHCR 2019). Of these, 25.9 million are classified as refugees, or people who have fled their country due to personal fear of persecution as a result of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. More than half of all refugees are children and only 63 percent have access to primary school (UNHCR 2019).

In response, the global community has advocated for refugee children's right to access quality education, and most countries in the world now permit at least some refugees to participate in public education. In 2016, the global community agreed to the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, which included a commitment to providing education to all refugee and migrant children. Following the *New York Declaration*, in December of 2018, United Nations member states signed onto the *Global Compact for Refugees*, which also underscores the importance of expanding access to quality education for refugee children. The new global agenda around providing education for refugees illustrates the

importance of this topic at the global level. Nonetheless, there is a lack of understanding of how these global documents influence the work of actors in the field of refugee education. In this article, we examine how these global discourses around refugees' right to education translate to the local level.

Sociological research has documented the global diffusion of particular cultural scripts and policy models (Meyer et al. 1997; Ramirez 2012) across different domains from mass education (Ramirez and Boli 1987) to environmentalism (Frank, Hironaka, and Schofer 2000) to human rights (Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004). These studies primarily rely on membership in inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) to measure linkages to a world culture. A key idea in these studies is that ideas and norms about best practices flow through membership in global networks, and as a result, diffuse around the world and filter down to the national and local levels. While a significant body of literature has shown that the number of INGO memberships in a country is a powerful explanatory factor in rates of diffusion of different global norms (for example, see Frank, Hironaka, and Schofer 2000; Longhofer and Schofer 2010), studies also show that not all memberships matter and not all matter equally (Lerch 2019).

We examine how ideas and norms emanating from the UN and other global networks, such as INEE (the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies), affect organizational actors supporting educational services for refugees. Organizations working on the provision of refugee education are uniquely positioned at the intersection of the broader humanitarian education in emergencies (EiE) field and a rights-based approach to education. Thus, they must bridge the humanitarian, development, and legal domains in their work and as a result, can be expected to draw on various types of global discourses. Legal documents are generally targeted at state entities, which sign onto international and regional treaties, while development documents set goals and support governments in long-term planning and implementation of specified targets. In contrast, the humanitarian sector generally works outside or in parallel with state actors and focuses on meeting refugees' immediate and short-term needs through civil society. In this article, we explore the extent to which organizations working on issues of refugee education engage with global documents and the relationships that facilitate these linkages.

In our analyses, we investigate the following questions: (1) To what extent do organizations reference global legal, humanitarian, and development documents in their work? And, (2) How do linkages with UN organizations (namely UNHCR, UNESCO, and UNICEF) via financial and normative relationships influence organizations' usage of global policy documents? We posit that organizations more embedded in a global society will be more likely to reference these global documents. In addition, we hypothesize that different types of relationships with UN agencies—financial or normative— may mediate the extent to which organizations reference different global policy documents. In particular, we hypothesize that vertical financial relationships may be more important for diffusing development discourses, which are often linked to funding particular packages of reforms. In contrast, we hypothesize that horizontal relationships, such as participating in networks of coordination and information sharing, may be more linked to the diffusion of humanitarian discourses, where the UN plays an important coordinating role.

To test these hypotheses, we draw on a unique dataset constructed from a global survey with 190 respondents working for organizations across 16 countries in the Global South. The organizations include UN agencies and international and national NGOs working on

issues and programs related to education for refugee populations in urban settings. We find that while UN agencies are most likely to mention the different global documents, followed by INGOs, and NGOs, different types of relationships mediate the extent to which organizations refer to global documents. Financial relationships are linked to the usage of development documents, while participation in networks of information exchange and coordination is associated with referencing on humanitarian documents.

Our findings support a growing body of work that suggests that local actors have varied linkages to disseminators of global discourses, and that different global actors may be emphasizing different versions of global scripts. Our findings also demonstrate that some mechanisms may be more effective at transmitting certain discourses than others, which may have implications for understanding variation in the uptake of certain global discourses at the local level. Our findings contribute to theorizing processes of diffusion in neo-institutional theory by demonstrating that the effectiveness of a given mechanism varies depending on the particular policy domain and the receptor. In the case of Education in Emergencies, we find differences in how legal, development, and humanitarian discourses are diffused, with financial mechanisms being more effective in development discourses and normative relationships more effective in diffusing professional discourses. These findings suggest diffusion processes may be more nuanced than prior scholarship assumes.

The rise of Education in Emergencies (EiE) and refugee education

In recent years, scholars have begun to chart the rapid rise and professionalization of the education in emergencies (EiE) field (Burde et al. 2017; Dryden-Peterson 2016; Kagawa 2005; Lerch 2017). EiE is the provision of education services to migrants and refugees affected by conflict, natural disaster, and other “complex emergencies” that cause large numbers of people to flee a particular region (Kagawa 2005). EiE emerged in the 1990s as a response to complex and ongoing global conflicts and natural disasters, and since then, EiE has been successful in positioning education as a key component of humanitarian aid (Burde et al. 2017; Kagawa 2005; Lerch 2017). Dryden-Peterson (2016) emphasizes that education in emergencies is fundamentally international in nature, arising from UN laws and policies such as the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* and *Education for All (EFA)*, yet it is implemented at a local level by a combination of international, national, and local organizations.

The field of EiE draws on the idea of individual and universal human rights, which took hold following the Second World War. Two treaties, in particular, have paved the rights-based path for EiE: the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and the *CRC* (1989).¹ The *1951 Refugee Convention* forms the basis for modern-day Refugee Law, and grants refugee children the right to a basic education. A number of global education policies have also formed part of the rights-based EiE framework, such as the *UNHCR Refugee Education Strategy* (see Table 1).

Advocacy for refugees’ right to education has been facilitated by the growing and professionalizing field of EiE. While education was previously a domain of the nation-state almost exclusively for citizens, it is now a widely recognized right for all children globally due, in part, to certain laws and policies that the UN has developed in order to support the right to education. These laws and policies include the *CRC*, the *EFA* framework, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000, and the Sustainable Development Goals

Table 1. Global documents.

Document	Source	Year
<i>Legal Documents</i>		
Convention on Refugees and its Protocol	United Nations	1951 & 1967
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	United Nations	1990
<i>Humanitarian Documents</i>		
INEE Minimum Standards	INEE	2010
<i>Development Documents</i>		
UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	United Nations	2000
UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	United Nations	2015
Education for All (EFA)	UNESCO	2000

(SDGs) of 2015. Nevertheless, the UN has limited capacity to oversee the implementation of these laws and policies at the ground level. The UN relies on host-country governments and global civil society organizations to actually provide education for refugees. International and national NGOs have played an important role in upholding the right to education promulgated by these laws and policies through the provision of educational services to displaced populations in conflict-affected settings (Rose 2007; Chelpi-den Hamer 2011). However, there is little research on how global discourses and organizations, such as the UN and its policies, influence the work of international and national NGOs working with these refugee communities.

Several factors have contributed to the rise of EiE as a professional field. First, the rights-based approach to the provision of education and global cultural emphasis on the rights of the empowered individual has in turn led to the emergence and professionalization of EiE as a global field and profession (Lerch 2017). Second, the establishment of INEE in 2000 as a venue through which knowledge and best practices are spread, primarily through education professionals working in international and national organizations, is a key indicator of the institutionalization and professionalization of the field of EiE. Third, as children affected by conflict are particularly vulnerable and tend to be out-of-school, global attention has turned to the issue of education for this group of children impacted by conflict. For example, more than half of out-of-school children at the primary level live in conflict-affected countries (UNICEF 2018). The rise of conflict is also viewed as a threat to the achievement of the MDGs/and SDGs (Lerch and Buckner 2018; Winthrop and Mendenhall 2006). Consequently, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which is the largest multi-stakeholder partnership and pooled funding mechanism supporting education globally, has shifted its focus to conflict-affected and fragile countries (Menashy and Dryden-Peterson 2015).

Theoretical framework: diffusion of global norms

In our analysis, we draw on neo-institutional theory, which conceives of a world society above and beyond nation-states, characterized by a global cultural framework that promotes the individual, human rights, and justice and that exerts influence on nation-states and a variety of other legitimated actors (Meyer et al. 1997; Ramirez 2012). In particular, INGOs and IGOs are viewed as important carriers of these global norms (Boli and Thomas 1997). As carriers of global norms, IGOs and INGOs develop and diffuse global development

discourses that support the right to education as a key to development, progress, and justice (Chabbot 2003). These international organizations disseminate key ideas, influencing various initiatives in the field of international education, such as Education for All, the MDGs, and the SDGs (Chabbot 2003; Mundy and Murphy 2001).

Previous studies have analyzed the role of INGOs and IGOs in transmitting global norms (Boli and Thomas 1997; Chabbot 2003; Mundy 2007; Reimann 2006; Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004). Scholars have found that the extent to which an organization draws on global discourses varies based on the extent to which it is “embedded” in the wider world culture (Ramirez 2012; Pope and Meyer 2016). Those organizations that are more embedded in global civil society are more likely to be part of broader transnational professional networks and therefore, more responsive to scripts emanating from the UN. As a result, we hypothesize that organizations more linked to a global society, including UN agencies and INGOs, will be more likely to draw on global scripts than national NGOs, which we hypothesize are more likely to be embedded in national civil society networks.

Recently, scholars have argued that neo-institutional theory must better differentiate between organizational types to better understand when and why some ideas diffuse (Cole 2017; Marshall and Suárez 2014). Cole (2017) advocates distinguishing between INGOs and IGOs, to differentiate between state authority and civil society, while Marshall and Suárez (2014) argue that within civil society, studies must better differentiate between international and national organizations, as the two have different relationships with global scripts. At the same time, other scholars have argued that an abstracted count of organizational membership fails to distinguish between the specific mechanisms that affect local NGOs’ practices, including professionalization, dependency on donors, and linkages to a variety of development organizations, all of which add complexity to our understanding of how global scripts diffuse (Beer 2016; Marshall and Suárez 2014).

Cole (2017) differentiates between organizational types, by distinguishing state authority from civil society. He argues that IGO memberships, serve as a proxy for a state’s participation in the world polity, while INGO memberships measure global civil society and embeddedness in a world society (95). Several studies have sought to examine how different organizations draw on global scripts. In a study of the diffusion of environmental scripts in Kenya, Beer (2016) finds that linkages to different types of actors or “globalizers,” including INGOs, UN agencies, and development agencies, as well as connections through funding or training, result in diverse global scripts among national NGOs. Marshall and Suárez (2014) demonstrate differences in monitoring and evaluation practices between local and international NGOs linked to resources and embeddedness in a global environment. In a qualitative study of organizations working on education in Rwanda, Russell (2015) finds differences in the extent to which INGOs and IGOs can influence policy, demonstrating that IGOs wield more financial and normative power.

In addition to distinguishing between organizations based on the extent and nature of their embeddedness in global society, neo-institutional scholars have also differentiated between the mechanisms that facilitate diffusion and isomorphism. In a classic article, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identify three core mechanisms through which isomorphism or similarities across organizational fields arise: coercive, normative, and mimetic. Coercive mechanisms involve power differentials and typically imply legal or financial consequences for failure to comply; normative mechanisms arise from the spread of global professional

standards and models; and mimetic mechanisms are copycat behaviors that institutions engage in as a typical response to risk (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Studies have investigated the specific mechanisms by which global norms diffuse through organizational fields. For instance, in their study on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices among NGOs in Cambodia, Marshall and Suárez (2014) find that NGOs that receive funds from INGOs are more likely to use M&E tools, pointing to the coercive nature of resource dependency.

Studies have also shown that normative mechanisms also matter in global development; individuals' professional memberships in global organizations are recognized as an important mechanism because these memberships serve as conduits for sharing ideas, norms, and best practices by creating shared understandings of problems and legitimate solutions. For instance, Suárez (2007) finds that global human rights norms are spread through human rights professionals and networks and the creation of an epistemic community of human rights educators that translate global models into local contexts. Similarly, in her work on educational development INGOs, Bromley (2010) demonstrates that a network of professionals carry out rationalized activities in order to influence a broader agenda and standards and professionalize the field. In his study on the use of global climate scripts among Kenyan environmental NGOs, Beer (2016) finds that international funding, as well as participation in trainings and conferences influences local organizations' use of global scripts, which seems to point to both coercive and normative mechanisms of diffusion.

Despite studies indicating that both normative and financial mechanisms matter, more nuanced understanding is needed of when and why different types of relationships matter. We hypothesize that the types of relationships that help transfer global discourses from the supra-national level, where they are primarily created and disseminated, to the local level, where they impact programming, vary based on the content of the particular global script. We examine two types of relationships: financial relationships and normative relationships. We characterize financial relationships as reflecting an unequal power dynamic, generally around financial resources or via an implementing partner relationship. For instance, the UN agencies have played an important role in elevating the EFA agenda and setting development agendas by establishing new funding mechanisms for bilateral and multilateral aid to education (Mundy 2016). In contrast, we conceptualize normative relationships as characterized by more equal, horizontal ties, which reflect professional relationships and networks fostered across organizations. These types of normative relationships are part of the broader professionalization of the field and contribute to the spread of global professional standards and models. By examining which relationships are associated with different discourses, we build on work in the world society tradition to investigate not only the influence of global documents on the work of international and national organizations but also the different modalities of diffusion.

In our analysis, we explore the extent to which organizations rely on three types of discourses in their work: legal, humanitarian, and development. We hypothesize that references to global discourses will vary based on organizational type (e.g. UN, INGO or NGO). We hypothesize that larger organizations and those more embedded in global society, such as the UN and INGOs, will be more likely to mention global documents of all types. In addition, we hypothesize that financial and normative relationships might facilitate the diffusion of each global discourse in different ways.

Methods and data

Data

Data for this study comes from a unique survey generated as part of the Urban Refugee Education Project.² Survey data comes from 190 respondents working for United Nations (UN) agencies and international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in 16 different countries across four different regions (Middle East and North Africa, Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia). We stratified countries by the four world regions, and then purposively selected four countries from each region with a high proportion of urban refugees out of the total refugee population. We focused on countries in the Global South, given that 86% of refugees reside in developing regions (UNHCR, 2016).³

We drew on a non-random convenience sample of organizations providing services to urban refugees. We targeted three different types of organizations: UN agencies, INGOs, and NGOs and attempted to recruit participants from each type of organization. We sent our survey to INEE, UNHCR headquarters, national and field office, as well as local implementing partners in the 16 countries.⁴ Surveys were sent to 1191 individuals at organizations online via Qualtrics (respondents also had the option to complete the survey offline and send it to us). Depending on who completed the survey, it is possible that their own personal opinion or position may have influenced their responses. However, to mitigate this concern, we examined the position held by the respondent in the organizations (as asked in the survey). Our results show that most respondents were organizational leaders and technical specialists. For example, their titles included country director, program officer, education specialist, and coordinator. Thus, we are confident that those responding on behalf of their organization were well-informed to answer these questions. In total, 190 respondents completed our survey on behalf of their organizations. The low response may be due to the sensitive nature of the topic, the difficulty of locating organizations working on these issues, and challenges with access to the Internet.

Respondents were from the four world regions targeted: 22% from Asia, 31% from MENA, 19% from LAC, and 28% from Africa. In addition, our respondents represented a range of organizations, including NGOs (40%), INGOs (40%), and UN agencies (20%). Since we had a different number of respondents from each country, ranging from 4 to 26, survey results were not disaggregated at the country level.

Our study has several limitations. Our sampling strategy was a non-random convenience sample, and is thus not necessarily representative of all countries or organizations working in the 16 countries. Given that we do not know the underlying population of organizations working in EiE, our sample provides a good overview of the major actors in this field and represents different types of organizations working in different countries. Nonetheless, our sample likely under-represents local and national NGOs working in informal or small-scale provision of educational programming. This would mean that the differences across organizational types are likely greater than what is shown in our results. In addition, our survey may suffer from response bias, as organizations who had stronger opinions about the topic or who were more connected to UNHCR, which provided us a direct conduit to connect with organizations, might have been more likely to respond or more likely to claim that they referenced global documents. As a result, it is likely that our results over-state the extent to which NGOs, particularly smaller NGOs, draw on global discourses. At the same

time, they may under-estimate differences between INGOs and NGOs and the impact of linkages on NGOs. Despite these limitations, our survey offers unique data from the perspective of organizations working in this space and provides important insight for understanding the influence of global documents. Our findings are robust to various specifications concerning filling in missing data, and are in line with a number of other studies on similar topics.

Dependent variables

Our dependent variable of interest is the extent to which organizations state that they draw on global discourses on refugee education in their programming. We operationalize the idea of global influence as the extent to which organizational respondents state they draw on a set of specific global documents, which represent the most prominent global discourses on refugee education. In order to determine the most influential discourses in the field, we conducted a literature review and mapping of the different global discourses in EiE and identified documents that represented different sources of these discourses. Drawing on the literature and our mapping, we distinguish between three different types of global discourses: legal, humanitarian, and development. We conceptualize global legal discourses as those associated with UN legal conventions, namely the 1951 Refugee Convention and the CRC. While these documents are produced by the general UN system, they are not necessarily linked to specialized organizations. Second, we conceptualize humanitarian discourses as those linked to transnational professional networks such as INEE, which is a global civil society organization that is widely recognized as the largest and oldest global network for professionals working in emergency settings. Third, we define educational development discourses as those associated with the UN Development Agenda, including the MDGs, SDGs, and EFA. [Table 1](#) outlines the specific legal and policy documents that we used to construct the variables.⁵

We find references to global documents within organizational documents, indicating that organizational strategic direction may be influenced by these global discourses. For example, UNICEF's "Core Commitment to Children in Emergencies" framework is guided by global norms and standards, including the CRC and the INEE Minimum Standards (UNICEF 2010). Similarly, in a 2018 report on refugee education titled "Time to Act", Save the Children, a large international humanitarian organization, mentions the CRC, the 1951 Refugee Convention, as well as the SDGs as guiding their work (Save the Children 2018).

We used the information gleaned from our literature review and mapping to create a survey question that asks about the extent to which organizations refer to these discourses when designing their educational programs. Specifically, we asked: "When designing education policies, programs and advocacy initiatives for urban refugees, to what extent does your organization refer to the principles and guidelines in the following documents?" The survey then provides a list of purposively selected documents, including 1951 Refugee Convention and the CRC, the MDGs, the SDGs, as well as other UN policy documents relating specifically to urban refugees. Although there are inherent limitations to survey data, and the wording of the question allows for various interpretations, the quantitative approach adopted here allows us to gain insight into how a wide variety of educational organizations, cross-nationally, purport to use global discourses in their programming.

We did not ask organizations about every document they consult, or about the extent a specific document shapes any given program, and our findings are therefore limited to a particular set of documents. However, our list of documents comes from extensive contextual knowledge and experience working in the field of EiE, as well as pre-testing the survey with experts in EiE, including those at the UN and other INGOs. We believe that referencing a document accurately captures the most relevant global discourses on refugees' rights to education that organizations rely on in their work.

For the dependent variable, the survey question asks to what extent organizations reference the documents: not at all, very little, somewhat, and a lot. We create an ordinal variable that classifies organizations in terms of three groups: high, medium, and low, influence, based on how many documents they reference and their response to how much they drew on each document.⁶ For example, for the development discourse, references 3 to 5 documents was classified as medium, while 7 to 9 was classified as high (see Table 2). This is the most appropriate way to model our dependent variable of interest because influence is an abstract concept that is difficult to measure quantitatively. The variable seeks to proxy how engaged a given organization is with broader global discourses on refugee education. Moreover, we do not think that there is necessarily a one-to-one correspondence between influence and referencing documents; therefore, we do not model the dependent variable as a numerical count of the number of documents referenced. Nonetheless, for robustness checks, we also run the models with count data (number of documents referenced) and find similar results.

Predictors of interest

To understand what factors affect the extent to which organizations are drawing on global discourses, we examined the organization type and the nature of its linkages to the United Nations, which serves as a proxy for the mechanism of diffusion.

Organization Type: First, we classified respondents based on the type of organization they work for into three categories: 1) a UN agency; 2) an INGO or 3) a national or local NGO or community-based organization (CBO). UN agencies are comprised of

Table 2. Type of relationships.

Survey Item		Type of relationship
They provide financial resources to our organization	Yes/No	Financial
We collaborate with them as implementing partners in the provision of urban refugee education		Financial
They provide us with important information about urban refugees	Yes/No	Normative
We work with them to advocate to the government for education policy changes for urban refugees		Normative
They provide technical expertise to our organization		Normative
They coordinate actors working on urban refugee education		Normative
They serve as an intermediary between our organization and the national government		Normative

member-states and thus function as part of the system of global governance; INGOs tend to be highly professionalized and integrated into global networks and often serve as intermediaries between the UN and NGOs, which work at the national or local level and are often more insulated from global discourses.

Mechanisms of Diffusion: In addition to organization type, we are interested in *how* global discourses diffuse, and what types of mechanisms are most powerful in facilitating diffusion. We conceptualize mechanisms of diffusion in terms of the nature of the relationship between organizations. The data come from a specific survey item, which asks: “What is the nature of your organization’s current relationship with the following UN agencies in regard to urban refugee education?” Responses were pre-populated and included the following options: they fund us, we are an implementing partner for them; we receive technical support from them; we provide them information; we engage in advocacy with them, among others.

We classified linkages into two primary types, in line with the literature on mechanisms of diffusion, namely: 1) financial relationships, which refers to financial dependency or implementing partner status; and 2) normative relationships, which includes professional networking, technical support, and information sharing. Similar to our outcome variable, we constructed ordinal variables to measure financial and normative relationships, since these are both abstract concepts rather than numerical counts. Financial linkages range from 0 to 3 with a mean of 1.26; normative linkages range from 0 to 3 with a mean of 1.60 (see Table 3). Thus, we modeled these variables by creating four ordinal bins to classify the extent of relationships in terms of low to high levels. For example, a high value on the financial relationship indicator means that the organization says that it receives funding from at least one UN agency and is likely also an implementing partner for the some of the agency’s programming. In contrast, a value of 0 would indicate the organization has no formalized relationships with refugee-serving UN agencies.

To preserve the largest number of observations, we use the Cohen and Cohen (1975) method to fill in missing values with the regional mean and include a binary variable for missing, coded as one in observations with missing data. The interpolation of data results in small changes to coefficients, but overall findings in terms of sign and significance are robust. In the findings that follow, we present models with the missing data filled in, but models with alternative models, without missing data filled in, are presented in the Appendix.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics.

Variable	Mean	Min	Max	N
<i>Outcome Variables:</i>				
UN Legal Documents	1.14	0	2	140
INEE Document	1.13	0	2	147
UN Development Documents	1.03	0	2	135
<i>Organization Type:</i>				
UN	0.20	0	1	176
INGO	0.41	0	1	176
NGO	0.39	0	1	176
<i>Mechanisms</i>				
Financial	1.26	0	3	114
Normative	1.60	0	3	118

Analysis

We carried out two types of analyses: descriptive analyses and ordered logistic regression analyses. In the descriptive analysis, we conducted a series of ANOVA difference-of-mean tests, where we test differences in references by global documents by organizational type. In the ordered logistic regression, we examined the relationship between mechanisms and references to three types of global documents while controlling for organizational type.⁷

Findings

In this section, we discuss differences across organizational types and then examine how types of relationships are associated with relying on different discourses. It is worth noting that there is variation among respondents; some organizational respondents claim to draw heavily on all of the documents, while some have never heard of any of them, and do not draw on the documents in their programming. That said, as Figure 1 illustrates, respondents generally state that they do reference the three types of documents. At the same time, the UN is more likely to mention legal and development documents, INGOs are most likely to mention legal and humanitarian documents, and NGOs are most likely to mention humanitarian documents.

Using a series of ANOVA difference-of-mean tests, we test differences in references by global documents by organizational type (Table 4).

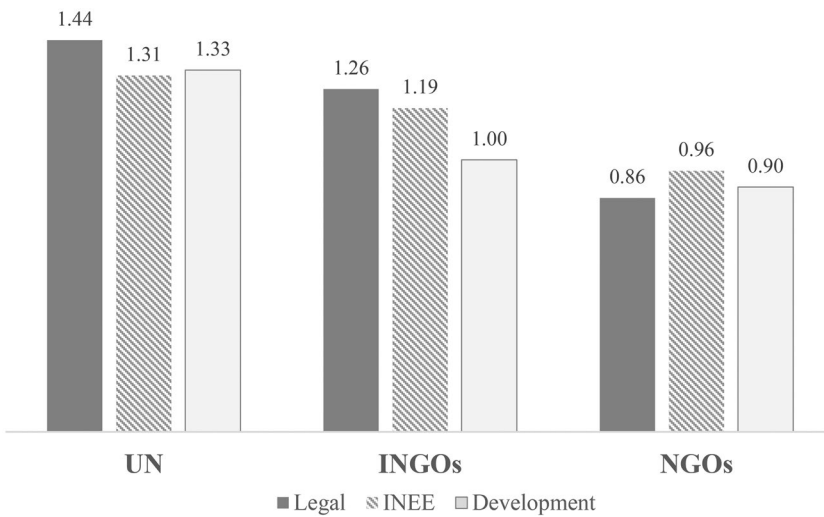


Figure 1. Reference to global documents by organization type (mean).

Table 4. Reference to global documents by organization type (mean).

	UN	INGOs	NGOs	
UN Legal	1.44	1.26	0.86	***
INEE	1.31	1.19	0.96	
UN Development	1.33	1.00	0.90	+

Note: +p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

We find, as expected, that UN agencies are more likely to reference all three types of documents, followed by INGOs and NGOs. We find a statistically significant difference across organization type for mentions of legal documents (significant at the $p < 0.001$ level): using a Scheffe multiple comparison test, we find that both the UN and INGOs have statistically significant higher means than NGOs, suggesting they are more likely to reference global legal documents than the NGOs, in line with our initial hypothesis. In addition, we also find statistically significant differences in mentions of development documents, with the UN having a higher mean compared to INGOs and NGOs (significant at the $p < 0.10$ level); a Scheffe multiple comparison test shows a statistically significant difference between the UN and NGOs. For the INEE Minimum Standards, we do not find statistically significant differences across organization type, indicating that organizations working in this field are similarly influenced by these humanitarian documents. Coupled with the high mean across organizations, this finding implies a high level of diffusion of INEE Minimum Standards in the field.

In summary, in our descriptive analyses, we test for differences in the extent to which different organizations draw on global discourses by organizational type level of embeddedness (i.e. international versus national). Our findings demonstrate that there are statistically significant differences based on an organization's level of embeddedness for all three types of discourses. Both UN organizations and INGOs are more likely to reference these global discourses compared to national NGOs. Further, our findings show that legal discourses are most influential in INGOs, such as UN agencies, and least relevant for national NGOs, which supports our hypothesis that legal discourses are more relevant to INGOs, while humanitarian discourses, such as those produced by INEE, are more relevant to national civil society actors.

Types of relationships

Secondly, we examine how specific types of linkages to UN agencies (UNHCR, UNESCO, and UNICEF) — namely, financial and normative relationships — are associated with the uptake of specific discourses. We conduct an ordered logistic regression to analyze the relationship between relationship type and mentions of global discourses, by type of discourse. National NGOs are the reference category. Table 5 shows regression models of legal discourses,

Table 5. Results of ordinal logistic regression of mentions of global legal documents (odds ratios).

	Model 1a	Model 2a	Model 3a	Model 4a
UN	4.472** (2.059)	4.646** (2.172)	4.706*** (2.190)	4.705** (2.219)
INGOs	2.750** (0.989)	2.927** (1.065)	2.761** (1.000)	2.852** (1.041)
Financial Relationship		1.350+ (0.240)		1.178 (0.240)
Normative Relationship			1.431* (0.256)	1.325 (0.274)
N	140	140	140	140
ll	-143.7	-142.2	-141.6	-141.3
BIC	307.1	314.1	312.9	322.1

Note: + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

All models include a binary variable for missing data, which is not shown since it does not change the substantive findings.

Table 6 shows models of humanitarian discourses and Table 7 shows regression models for educational development discourses. In each table, Model 1 includes binary variables for organization type. Model 2 includes the indicator of a financial relationship; Model 3 includes the indicator for a normative relationship, and Model 4 is a combined model including both types of relationship. Findings are presented as odds ratios; a value greater than one indicates a positive association and a value less than one indicates a negative association.⁸

Regarding legal discourses, the findings in Table 5 support our hypothesis that organizational type matters for usage of global discourse: more internationally networked organizations are more likely to reference global legal documents, with UN agencies most likely to do so. This finding makes sense, given their important role in global governance.

In Model 1a, we find that UN organizations and INGOs are much more likely to mention legal documents compared to NGOs, and these results are statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. Being a UN agency is associated with a 4.47 increase in the odds of referencing global discourses, and being an INGO increases the odds of referencing them by 2.75. In Model 2a, we find that financial mechanisms are positively and significantly ($p < 0.10$) related to referencing of global legal documents: financial mechanisms are associated with a 1.35 increase in the odds of mentioning legal documents. In Model 3a we find that normative mechanisms are also positively and significantly ($p < 0.10$) related to usage and are associated with a 1.43 increase in the odds of mentioning legal documents. Model 4a, which includes both organization type and mechanisms shows that organization type is the most important predictor of legal documents: the coefficients for UN and INGOs are positive and statistically significant (at the $p < 0.05$ level), while mechanisms are no longer significant. UN organizations associated with a 4.71 increase in the odds of mentioning legal documents, while for INGOs, a one-unit increase in influence (from low to medium or medium to high) is associated with a 2.85 increase in the odds of mentioning legal documents, even after controlling for various mechanisms. In contrast, specific mechanisms of diffusion are no longer significant. Our BIC statistic indicates that Model 1a is the best fit, which shows the importance of UN and INGO organizational type for predicting reference to legal discourses. These findings suggest that organizational size and mandate, as well as embeddedness into the global governance system are likely to be most strongly correlated with referencing global legal discourses. In contrast, it seems likely that national NGOs are embedded more strongly within national legal discourses than global ones, which is not surprising.

Table 6. Results of ordinal logistic regression of mentions of humanitarian documents (odds ratios).

	Model 1b	Model 2b	Model 3b	Model 4b
UN	2.102+ (0.906)	2.492* (1.130)	2.248+ (1.005)	2.418+ (1.106)
INGOs	1.674 (0.578)	1.798 (0.648)	1.567 (0.564)	1.707 (0.626)
Financial relationship		1.934*** (0.359)		1.531* (0.319)
Normative relationship			1.993*** (0.375)	1.705* (0.367)
N	147	147	147	147
ll	-153.3	-146.0	-145.8	-142.8
BIC	326.5	322.0	321.6	325.6

Note: + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

All models include a binary variable for missing data, which is not shown since it does not change the substantive findings.

Table 7. Results of ordinal logistic regression of mentions of development documents (odds ratios).

	Model 1c	Model 2c	Model 3c	Model 4c
UN	2.721* (1.250)	2.730* (1.299)	2.936* (1.389)	2.863* (1.377)
INGOs	1.245 (0.441)	1.230 (0.453)	1.055 (0.385)	1.142 (0.427)
Financial relationship		2.206*** (0.427)		1.900** (0.419)
Normative relationship			1.850** (0.356)	1.368 (0.308)
N	135	135	135	135
ll	-145.1	-134.4	-138.0	-133.3
BIC	309.8	298.2	305.4	305.9

Note: + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

All models include a binary variable for missing data, which is not shown since it does not change the substantive findings.

In Table 6, we examine the relationship between organization type, mechanisms of diffusion, and references to the INEE Minimum Standards, a widely circulated and well-known document that articulates professional best practices in EiE. Model 1 b, shows that the odds of UN organizations referencing humanitarian documents is 2.10 higher than NGOs (significant at the $p < 0.10$ level), while there is no statistically significant difference between INGOs and NGOs. In Model 2 b, we find that financial mechanisms almost double the odds of referencing the INEE document, regardless of organizational type: (significant at the $p < 0.001$ level). Similarly, in Model 3 b we find that normative mechanisms almost double the use of the INEE document (significant at the $p < 0.001$ level). In Model 4 b, both financial and normative mechanisms are positive and statistically significant predictors of the use of the INEE document. For financial mechanisms, a one-unit increase in influence (from low to medium or medium to high) is associated with a 1.53 increase in the odds of mentioning humanitarian documents (significant at the $p < 0.05$ level), while for normative mechanisms a one-unit increase in influence (from low to medium or medium to high) is associated with a 1.71 increase in the odds of mentioning humanitarian documents (significant at the $p < 0.05$ level). UN organizations continue to be positively related to the use of INEE documents, but only significant at $p < 0.10$. Model 3 b is the best fit, as indicated by the lowest BIC statistic, showing the importance of normative horizontal relationships. Thus, the findings indicate that INEE best practices seem to diffuse throughout the field due to normative professional networks. This finding aligns with our descriptive analysis, which found that there were no statistically significant differences across organizations in the extent to which they reference the INEE Minimum Standards. At the same time, the analysis of mechanisms points to the important role that professional networks and communities are playing in diffusing best practices in this emerging field.

In Table 7, we examine the extent to which organizations draw on global development documents in their work. Model 1c shows that the odds of UN agencies stating that they draw on development documents in their work is 2.72 times higher than NGOs (significant at the $p < 0.05$ level); however, there is no statistically significant difference between INGOs and NGOs. In Model 2c, we find that financial mechanisms more than double the odds of drawing on development documents (significant at the $p < 0.001$ level). After including financial mechanisms, UN organizations are still more likely to mention these documents than NGOs: the odds of UN agencies referencing them is 2.73 higher than NGOs

(significant at the $p < 0.05$ level). Similarly, in Model 3c we find that normative mechanisms nearly double the likelihood of referencing development documents (significant at the $p < 0.01$ level). UN organizations are more likely to refer to them as well, with the odds of UN agencies making greater reference to them 2.94 higher than NGOs (significant at the $p < 0.05$ level). In Model 4c, financial relationships continue to be positive and statistically significant predictors of the use of development documents: for financial mechanisms, a one-unit increase in influence (from low to medium or medium to high) is associated with a 1.90 increase in the odds of mentioning development documents (significant at the $p < 0.01$ level), whereas normative relationships are positive but no longer statistically significant. The BIC statistics indicates that Model 2c is the best fit, showing the importance of financial relationships and UN organizations for explaining references to development discourses, and suggesting that normative or other horizontal types of relationships matter less.

In sum, we find support for our hypotheses that apart from organizational differences, including their mandates and embeddedness in global society, organizations' linkages to originators of global discourse, primarily the UN, also matter. In addition, the findings suggest that certain types of relationships seem to be more powerful at diffusing certain discourses than others; in particular, linkages to normative mechanisms have a stronger relationship with the diffusion of INEE Minimum Standards, while financial mechanisms are especially linked to the uptake of development discourses in refugee education programming.

Conclusions

The findings point to the diffusion of global legal, humanitarian, and development documents to a broad range of organizations working on issues of refugee education in four regions of the Global South. We find that UN agencies are more likely to rely on these global legal, humanitarian, and development documents compared to INGOs and NGOs. This may be explained by the fact that most of the global legal and policy documents emanate from UN agencies, and thus are more likely to be used by them in field offices. In this context, UN offices serve as local "receptor sites" (Frank, Hironaka, and Schofer 2000) of global norms capable of receiving, interpreting, and transmitting global documents within a localized context. Frank, Hironaka, and Schofer (2000) identify various "receptor sites," or social structures, such as individuals, research institutions or local organizations, that receive and interpret global ideas for the local context. When it comes to legal discourses, nation-states and the UN are the natural receptor sites, since these international treaties often contain binding provisions.

We also find that INGOs are more likely to refer to legal documents than are NGOs. We interpret this finding in terms of the fact that INGOs are more likely to be embedded in a global society (Cole 2017) and thus would be more likely to reference global UN documents. Further, these organizational linkages serve as receptor sites between states and world society (Cole 2017).

The smallest differences across the three types of organizations is found in the use of the INEE Minimum Standards, indicating a significant diffusion of humanitarian standards for the field of education in emergencies regardless of organization type (Burde et al. 2017; Lerch 2017). Moreover, the importance of normative horizontal relationships for the

diffusion of these discourses implies that professional norms and best practices may be diffusing through horizontal relationships and networks, rather than vertical or top-down processes that imply dependency or power imbalances. The importance of normative relationships, such as the dissemination of best practices and models through workshops for facilitating professional networks, has implications for the “professionalization” and standardization of the field. Lerch (2019) presents evidence of the role of international organizations in fueling network membership in INEE and professionalization of the field.

When we test for mechanisms of diffusion via linkages to the UN agencies, some differences emerge. Our findings indicate that financial relationships are particularly important for the diffusion of development documents, specifically the MDGs, SDGs and EFA. In contrast, normative relationships are most important for the diffusion of INEE documents. These findings align with, and also build on, findings of prior studies. In his work on the diffusion of environmental discourses in Kenya, Beer (2016) also found that both financial and technical linkages to be important in influencing norm diffusion. Our findings lend support to the idea that the nature of specific mechanisms influence the way in which organizations integrate global discourses, and moreover, that they matter differently based on organization type and type of discourse.

Although our study does not address the causality or directionality of why certain mechanisms may lead to more discussion across certain global documents, our findings may imply that donors have been successful at diffusing certain development discourses via aid packages. Conversely, our findings may point to the power of financial relationships for diffusing certain types of discourse, but normative or more horizontal relationships for others. It is possible that historical differences between development and humanitarian sectors are at play; donors working through development actors historically relied on funding to diffuse norms to national government actors and selected aid recipients, while the humanitarian sector has typically been understood as operating outside of direct state control.

The key implication of our findings is that the salience of global norms and their uptake at the local level may be more complicated than exposure to these norms; rather, it seems that both organizational type and mechanism of diffusion intersect to influence the salience of certain discourse to a given organization. We find that certain mechanisms may be more effective for diffusing global discourses, even to the same receptor sites. It seems that financial mechanisms are more effective at diffusing developmental discourses, while normative mechanisms, including information sharing and technical support, are more effective at diffusing professionalizing discourses. These findings resonate with prior studies examining mechanisms of diffusion. Even though developmental discourses are embedded within rights discourses, prior research has found that development assistance has helped to diffuse certain educational models globally (Mundy and Murphy 2001; Mundy 2007). At the same time, research in organizational sociology has found that professional associations have been very influential in synthesizing and diffusing ideational norms, often in the form of best practices in newly professionalizing fields (Bromley 2010; Bromley and Meyer 2015; Lerch 2017; Suárez 2007). Our study contributes to discussions in neo-institutional theory around “multiple diffusion,” which is a concept that describes the existence of multiple and competing global models for a single issue in world culture (Pope and Meyer 2016). While other studies have examined how competing global models of environmentalism result in distinct policy approaches (Frank,

Hironaka, and Schofer 2000), our study is the first to apply this concept to refugee education, and brings new attention to the role of mechanisms. Specifically, the results from our study show that multiple diffusion exists in regards to refugee education and that both organizational type and mechanism (financial and normative) interact to diffuse global models.

Our findings have important implications for organizational programming and understanding how organizations providing educational services to refugees choose to incorporate global discourses in their work and the mechanisms that facilitate this integration. While the assumption is that all organizations draw on these global documents in their work, which are important for upholding rights for refugee populations, our findings indicate that this might not always be the case in practice or that reliance on global discourses may vary by organization type or be mediated by financial and normative relationships. From a rights perspective, it is imperative that these organizations are aware of these global frameworks in their work. Further research is needed to understand the extent to which drawing on these global frameworks is important for the delivery of effective programs.

In addition, our findings further elucidate differences across how organizations engage and adopt global scripts in relation to their work. However, we also note that the study drew primarily from organizations working in the Global South; prior research in global sociology and comparative education has argued that countries in the Global South tend to adopt global discourses rapidly due to a variety of external pressures, including financial dependence (Cole 2015; Pope and Meyer 2016). Future research should investigate if organizations working in refugee education and resettlement in Europe and North America are also referencing global legal, humanitarian, and development discourses. It is possible they are embedded in more national legal and development discourses. In addition, our data focuses on the growing and rapidly professionalizing field of EiE, which has been shaped by at least three complementary global discourses. Future research should investigate if and how other professionalizing organizational fields are influenced by the same mechanisms.

Notes

1. International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) also establishes the right to education for all children regardless of nationality, but we did not include this in our survey
2. The Urban Refugee Project was based at Teachers College, Columbia University and was led by co-PIs S. Garnett Russell and Mary Mendenhall. For more information see <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/refugeeeducation/urban-refugee-education/>.
3. As part of the broader study, we also carried out in-depth interviews with more than 90 stakeholders (including government officials; personnel working for UN agencies, international and national NGOs; and principals and teachers) in three country case studies (Lebanon, Kenya, and Ecuador). However, in this article, we focus on the survey data.
4. The survey was translated into seven different languages (including Spanish, French, Urdu, Malay, Turkish, Arabic, and Farsi).
5. We did not include the New York Declaration or the Global Compact on Refugees, as our survey was conducted during 2015–2016 before the development of these global documents.
6. We categorized the organizations evenly across the three groups rather than by specific cut-offs.
7. We also tested for the interaction between different mechanisms and organizational type but did not find any statistically significant differences by organization type and mechanisms and thus do not show these results.

8. A value of 2.0 can be interpreted as a one-step increase in the strength of the financial or normative relationship (e.g., moving from low to medium or medium to high) doubles the odds the organization will be in a higher category of the dependent variable (i.e., from not likely to mention to somewhat likely to mention).

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Appendix: Results with missing data

Table A1. Results of ordinal logistic regression of mentions of global legal documents (odds ratios).

	Model 1a	Model 2a	Model 3a	Model 4a
UN	4.472** (2.059)	3.336* (1.838)	3.641* (1.920)	3.409* (1.884)
INGOs	2.750** (0.989)	2.855* (1.200)	2.968** (1.235)	2.805* (1.182)
Financial mechanism		1.370+ (0.247)		1.215 (0.250)
Normative mechanism			1.429+ (0.261)	1.290 (0.274)
N	140	102	106	102
ll	-143.7	-104.2	-107.4	-103.5
BIC	307.1	231.5	238.1	234.7

Note: +p<.10, *p,.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Table A2. Results of ordinal logistic regression of mentions of humanitarian documents (odds ratios).

	Model 1b	Model 2b	Model 3b	Model 4b
UN	2.102+ (0.906)	2.023 (1.091)	1.777 (0.907)	2.055 (1.123)
INGOs	1.674 (0.578)	1.222 (0.498)	1.128 (0.456)	1.137 (0.474)
Financial mechanism		1.871*** (0.347)		1.455+ (0.304)
Normative mechanism			2.005*** (0.385)	1.840** (0.411)
N	147	108	112	108
ll	-153.3	-108.6	-112.1	-104.7
bic	326.5	240.6	247.9	237.6

Note: +p<.10, *p,.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Table A3. Results of ordinal logistic regression of mentions of development documents (odds ratios).

	Model 1c	Model 2c	Model 3c	Model 4c
UN	2.721* (1.250)	2.876+ (1.637)	3.200* (1.734)	3.139* (1.807)
INGOs	1.245 (0.441)	0.953 (0.403)	0.923 (0.381)	0.862 (0.371)
Financial mechanism		2.197*** (0.434)		1.843** (0.410)
Normative mechanism			1.869** (0.368)	1.480+ (0.350)
N	135	101	105	101
ll	-145.1	-99.19	-106.6	-97.80
bic	309.8	221.5	236.4	223.3

Note: +p<.10, *p,.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.