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Refugees, Interculturalism and Education

Roula Kitsiou^a 

BOOK REVIEW

Refugees, Interculturalism and Education. Edited by Marco Catarci, Miguel Prata Gomes, and Sávio Siqueira. Routledge, 2020, 186 pp. ISBN: 9780367664275 (paper), 9780367024574 (cloth), 9780429399466 (eBook).


HISTORY Published 2023-12-28

Refugees, Interculturalism and Education addresses the crucial issue of refugee education from an intercultural perspective. Taking into consideration the great challenges forced migration has posed for nations and educational systems, this volume calls for the development of humanistic and transformative educational settings, the offering of specialized culturally responsive training for professionals involved in the field, and awareness raising on “the humanity of receiving” (p. 94) for local societies. Specifically, it integrates previously published articles from the **Intercultural Education** journal, and within the 13 chapters of the book, various socio-political national contexts are explored, including Canada, Norway, New Zealand, Italy, Portugal, Turkey, the United States, Germany, Belgium, and Sweden. In addition, the book includes studies on the European educational policy regarding the right of refugee youths to education, as well as on research methodologies used for children-friendly and hierarchy-defying refugee studies on an international level, such as participatory and visual method-

ologies including photovoice, fotonovelas, digital storytelling, and quilting.

Not only do the contributors propose theoretical frameworks to analyze refugee learners’ background identities and processes of (educational) integration, such as critical race theory, performative politics, the third space, politicized transnationalism, and strengths-based approaches. They also explore the potential of methodological approaches in refugee-background learners’ research, such as participatory, arts-based approaches and the KARDS language teacher education model (Knowing, Analyzing, Recognizing, Doing, and Seeing). In addition, the volume includes examples of best practices for putting refugee families and youths “at the heart of the story” (p. 163)—for example, through digital stories shared in intercultural dialogue spaces, documentary reviews, or conferences organized by non-governmental organizations—integrating bottom-up perspectives on addressing the implications of refugee experience and overall raising local societies’ awareness about aspects of forced migration.

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Chapter 1 discusses aspects of the educational integration of a nine-year-old Palestinian boy in the Canadian context. Beauregard, Papazian-Zohrabian, and Rousseau explore how the boy made sense of his in-classroom drawings, expressing what they call "a wounded identity" (p. 7), indexing spatial disorganisation and enmeshment. They support that drawing and space offered by teachers for identity experimentation may become part of a healing process towards refugee well-being and facilitate school adjustment.

In Chapter 2, Vecchio, Dhillon, and Ulmer discuss how they think a third space theoretical framework, as well as arts-based and participatory visual methodologies, may defy hierarchies in refugee studies by putting children at the centre of research as co-creators of knowledge. Towards this aim, they present relevant research techniques already used in the field, such as photovoice, fotonovelas, digital storytelling, and quilting.

In Chapter 3, de Wal Pastoor, based on socio-cultural and ecological developmental approaches, explores the out-of-school settings young refugees participate in and examines their opportunities for meaningful learning and social inclusion. Conducting interviews with educators, social workers, and unaccompanied young refugees in Norway, she emphasizes the need to reconceptualize refugee education involving schools, local community organizations, and wider society in order to promote refugees' "educational resilience" (p. 58) through learning "in and across contexts" (p. 37)—that is, to facilitate young refugees in transition from being "legitimate peripheral participant[s]" (p. 41) to becoming full participants in the communities of the host society.

Chapter 4 details educational programs' approaches coordinated through the Centre for Refugee Education in New Zealand. Hay-

ward points out the demoralizing character educational programs may have for newly arrived settlers causing additional psychological stress when not designed following a strength-based paradigm. This paradigm can address a nexus between trauma and pedagogical strategies, thus serving as a therapeutic intervention for refugee-background learners (RBLs). She thus recommends that educators, when working with RBLs, first examine an understanding of trauma from an individual perspective before exploring refugees' life trajectories.

In Chapter 5, Migliarini explores the subjectivation of asylum-seeking teens as particular raced-nationed-disabled subjects and their possibilities for discursive agency. Specifically, analyzing interviews with professionals from refugee services in Rome and two young Black "sub-Saharan" teens' aspirations for the future, she shows how young asylum-seeking and refugee children are subjectivated by the current model of what she renames "neoliberal integration" (p. 83). Professionals' discourses lead refugee teens to interiorize this model of integration that wants them as low-skilled workers, suppressing their expectations in the new country, while teens' counter-discourses unsettle such hegemonic meanings as they reimagine a different educational and career future for themselves, thus deploying what Butler calls "performative politics."

In Chapter 6, Vieira and colleagues present the Portuguese refugee support platform initiative (PAR: Plataforma de Apoio aos Refugiados), which includes a 10-module online course designed as a path that, through mediation and intercultural dialogue, leads from "the humanity of receiving" to the deconstruction of prejudices and stereotypes. Participating in the "Intercultural Dialogue" module, the authors illustrate how the trainees constructed a third culture, ac-

quiring new knowledge through the course—that is, discovering a new paradigm of intercultural mediation; questioning Cartesian dualism by constructing third places and cultures; acknowledging the importance of understanding diverse cultural backgrounds, such as religion; and identifying the need to empathize with the refugee.

In Chapter 7, Essomba compares global and local policies in order to juxtapose the European policy framework on asylum and refugees while discussing some of the policies that failed to implement the right to education for refugees.

In Chapter 8, Gagné, Schmidt, and Markus employ a self-study methodology to narrate their own experiences of training different teacher groups who are unprepared to work with war-affected and refugee children and youths. They use the KARDS language teacher education model to compare and revisit the three Canadian teacher education contexts they refer to, suggesting that we may start with experiential education with critically oriented tasks to help teachers develop culturally responsive pedagogy.

Chapter 9 discusses primary school teachers' and a school principal's views on the needs of Syrian refugee students who attend two elementary schools in Istanbul. Aydin and Kaya acknowledge the welcoming and secure learning environment of the schools examined; however, they identify barriers that impede the provision of high-quality refugee education, such as the limited capacity of teachers, a lack of specialized teachers, inadequate resources, and inappropriate curriculum planning.

Chapter 10 examines the impact of the course titled "Citizenship and Education in the US" on raising college students' intercultural understanding through service-learning experiences with refugees. Tinkler, McGann, and Tinkler point out the impor-

tance of participants' familiarization with aspects of refugee resettlement and attaining citizenship processes through the course, as well as their increased intercultural understanding on a cognitive (getting to know other cultures) and an affective level (developing respect, inspiration, and connection when realizing refugees' strengths).

Chapter 11 refers to the initiatives of the Association for New Education (ANE) (with parents for parents), a Berlin-based non-governmental organization that works with migrants and Arabic refugees. Specifically, Kyuchukov and New present a 2016 international ANE conference organized on post-traumatic stress disorder and developmental traumatic stress disorder, integrating experiences of various German NGOs working with refugees.

Chapter 12 refers to two digital storytelling workshops López-Bech and Zúñiga conducted with small groups of young asylum seekers in a three-day learning journey of self-discovery and community building. While stressing the participants' sense of belonging, which was reinforced through this process, the authors note that to reach "we" as the full potential of intercultural dialogue, future workshops need to involve heterogeneous groups, including the participation of "locals."

Chapter 13 is a very short film review of the 2014 documentary **On the Bride's Side**. This is about the true story of an escape to Sweden by five Palestinians and Syrians who challenged the idea of borders as they claimed the right to move around Europe.

Refugees, Interculturalism and Education gives an overview of socio-political topics that are currently of great concern for researchers and practitioners involved in refugee youth education. Through a variety of studies, ranging from literature reviews and position papers to arts-based and qual-

itative evidence-based research, the book provides an overall picture not only of the challenges and barriers researchers and educators are faced with in refugee education contexts but also of the prerequisites required to design culturally responsive teaching and learning environments. The volume well documents the impact of inclusive learning environments on RBLs' healing trauma processes and well-being. It sheds light on inequalities, ineffective policies, experiences, and reflections from the field, in- and out-of-school learning contexts, bringing to the front voices of RBLs, and various practitioners involved in praxis, while presenting state and NGO initiatives for sensitizing local communities on forced migration phenomena.

This book is a useful compilation of papers that map successful responses to refugees'

educational and social integration needs across socio-political contexts. Above all, it emphasizes the role intercultural education may play in the lives of war-affected social groups in allowing them to escape from invisibility and multilevel exclusion.

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