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Book Review: Higher Education in the Era of Migration, Displacement, and Internationalization

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ABSTRACT

Higher Education in the Era of Migration, Displacement and Internationalization by Khalid Arar, Yasar Kondakci, Bernhard Streitwieser, and Anna Saiti provides a multifaceted exploration of the dilemmas involved in higher education policymaking and administration in keeping with the accelerated pace, scale, and diversity of transnational migration. Assuming that higher education empowers displaced persons to better themselves and their host communities, Arar et al. consider specific dynamics that shape the educational trajectories and choices available to these populations. The co-authors list activities and initiatives employed in various world states to create higher education pathways for displaced persons, highlighting different variables that affect policies and indicating the hurdles faced by the populations being served and the institutions supporting them. These country-specific examinations of approaches facilitating access are the richest contributions of the book. The discussion of the gendered dimensions of migration is less rewarding. Ultimately, this book is a timely investigation and can inform and improve higher education policies, practices, and narratives concerning displaced and refugee students.

In *Higher Education in the Era of Migration, Displacement and Internationalization*, co-authors Khalid Arar, Yasar Kondakci, Bernhard Streitwieser, and Anna Saiti explore the issues and dilemmas involved in higher education policymaking and administration in the face of accelerated globalization and large-scale transnational migration. Having either experienced statelessness themselves, observed it intimately, or studied it at length, the four authors bring diverse perspectives to book, approaching the topic through multiple lenses. Assuming that higher education (HE) empowers displaced persons to better themselves and their host communities, Arar et al. go over the specific dynamics that shape the educational trajectories and choices available to these populations. The co-authors list activities and initiatives employed in various world states to create HE pathways for displaced persons, highlighting different variables that affect policies and indicating the hurdles faced by the populations being served and the institutions supporting them. Arar et al. suggest that much work needs to be done to make HE spaces more inclusive and responsive for these vulnerable populations, utilizing data by UNESCO and third-sector organizations to substantiate their claims.

In the first chapter, Arar et al. force us to rethink our oversimplified definitions of migrants, reminding us that migrant students are a variegated and stratified group, with many having access to more financial, sociocultural, and educational capital than others. The authors establish differences between forcibly displaced and voluntarily mobile students, pointing out that student mobility should not be conflated with voluntary migration. While many migrants, entitled and well-resourced, migrate by choice, others are forced to flee their homelands by circumstances of war, conflict, political upheaval, economic hardship, and/or environmental catastrophe. Displaced migrants may lose their legal documents and credentials, sometimes their very homes and belongings, in search of safer havens. Their displacements lead to deprivations from social and economic statuses and lost educational opportunities.

Arar et al. lament that despite these realities, colleges and universities view and treat diversified international students as a monolithic group, failing to create and implement suitable admissions processes and procedures for their enrollment and success. Despite their disadvantaged backgrounds, refugees and asylum seekers get lumped together with regular international students who have the upper hand. Even their credentials are not fairly evaluated and recognized. The authors suggest that forcibly displaced students should be reclassified as a distinct category of student type alongside the existing categories of international students, foreign students, and credit-mobile students. Policymakers and practitioners are urged to discern differences in mobilities and build appropriate structures to accommodate forcibly displaced persons into HE. These alternative programs and procedures should take into consideration the unique needs and dispositions of refugee students and at-risk migrants, help mitigate the impacts of their displacements, and empower them to integrate harmoniously.

In the second chapter, Arar et al. contextualize global mobility flows, framing the global dimensions of mobility. International migration tends to flow from low- to high-income countries, and the authors expand upon the multifarious reasons why migrants move and relocate across borders, as well as the differing reactions of nation states to newcomers — receptions

ranging from welcoming to lukewarm to outright alienating. The authors distinguish between migrants, forced migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, displaced persons, and stateless persons, and trace the perilous journeys that involuntary migrants make, shedding light on policing, xenophobia, marginalization, and racism that migrants often endure along the way. In the following chapter, Arar et al. discuss how five countries — Morocco, Jordan, Mexico, Germany, and Bangladesh — on five different continents each deal with involuntary migrants, going over different public and political approaches and policies towards these mass influxes, the moral and ethical issues involved, and the newcomers' feelings of in/exclusion and un/belonging.

In the fourth chapter, Arar et al. share lessons gleaned from empirical scholarship on the subject of access to HE for asylum seekers and refugees. In particular, the authors assess varied governmental and institutional responses to newcomers' needs. They also address major personal and systemic challenges faced by displaced students when they seek to access pathways into HE, including eligibility, discrimination, transcript recognition, barriers to admission (such as high school accreditation, entrance exams, language literacy), as well as sociocultural, academic, and economical unpreparedness for HE. Arar et al. note that insufficient data exists on the numbers of displaced persons enrolled in HE institutions and suggest the need for more granular data. They also observe the need for more intersectional research. Overall, the literature reviewed has shown that integrating in and attaining HE helps displaced persons build confidence, feel secure, cope with trauma and abandonment, and assimilate into the local social fabric.

Arar et al., in the fifth chapter, go on to report on the experiences of Syrian refugees accessing and studying in Turkish HE, citing critical factors in the refugees' adaptation process and revealing that past policies have not been properly aligned to serve refugees' needs. This chapter also reiterates the rehabilitative, uplifting, and restorative role that HE has on the economic, social, and psychological conditions of forced migrants. The sixth chapter covers refugee support actions and programs, including those initiated by governmental actors, universities, community-based nonprofits, and tertiary sector agents. Arar et al. urge for support actions to be evolutionary and adaptable to actual needs, adequately funded, free from political influence, and humanitarian in intent. Arar et al. wrap up their book by dedicating the final chapter to the discussion of global discourses, future research, and recommendations (such as a shift away from a 'box ticking' approach to a more holistic approach to refugee resettlement).

This book draws on Edward Said's critical and scholarly musings on deracination and adds to a growing body of scholarship on refugee-background learners. Birtwell et al. (2020), for instance, have established that HE is fundamental in restoring dignity, security, and hope for refugee students. HE opportunities likely cushion refugee students from the negative aspects of forced migration and ease their transition into communities (Peralta, 2020). Refugee students display an unwavering commitment to the value of HE and to their future selves, even in the face of barriers such as bullying, lack of language fluency, and identity dissonance (Luu, 2020). Therefore, HE educators must reflect on their inclusion practices and address deficit thinking towards refugee students (MacIsaac et al., 2019).

Said has referred to our contemporary era as "the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration" (p. 174), and as Arar et al. themselves note, international migration will probably increase during the coming decades. Migration drivers such as economic pressures, environmental stress, and geopolitical transformations are likely to not merely persist but intensify, as exemplified by the crisis in Ukraine. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused social, economic, and political disruptions, influencing migration flows. This book serves as an important guide and resource for policymakers in countries faced with unexpected mass inflows, who must be prepared to meet these uncertainties and meaningfully absorb newcomers, tend to their needs, and foster their development.

This book also supplies the educational leadership and research community with tools and strategies to unfold the full potential of inclusion programs, especially those HE leaders and staff working to further the mission of accommodating displaced, disenfranchised, and destitute people within the fold of HE. Scholars and practitioners alike are offered a nuanced and fleshed-out understanding of the complex intersection of immigration policies with HE. Additionally, this book is valuable to students both at the undergraduate and graduate levels pursuing Higher Education, International and Comparative Education, Human Rights and Humanitarian Policy, Global Inclusion and Social Development, Migration Studies, and related fields.

While this book has many strengths, one of its significant limitations is that it fails to sufficiently include within its scope of discussion the plight of returnees and how HE systems in returnees' home countries might support successful or sustainable repatriation. Similarly, while internally displaced persons (IDPs) are mentioned sporadically throughout the book (for instance, a mention of 11,000 IDPs hosted by Mexico), the unique needs of IDPs and how these might best be served by HE are not identified. Furthermore, the gendered nature of migration is not adequately delved into, leaving me wondering: How might we envision gender-sensitive refugee HE and resettlement policies? Svinjar (2020) has found that the likelihood that a woman refugee obtains a college degree is less than her male refugee peer. Displaced girls and women who are unaccompanied, pregnant, or disabled are especially vulnerable in the process of HE (Obradović-Ratković et al., 2020). While Arar et al. note that cultural taboos vigorously oppose education for girls and young women in refugee camps, they do not address how HE leaders might overcome gender-specific obstacles.

Overall, however, this book fills an important lacuna in the literature, since the subject of access to tertiary education for refugees and migrants remains a relatively understudied trend. By suggesting ways that HE systems worldwide can create policies and structures that respond fairly and adequately to the distinctive and respective demands of displaced people, refugees, and international students, this book also successfully bridges theory and practice. In order to make HE just and equitable, it is crucial that we generate spaces for reimagining citizenship, identity, and human rights. It is imperative to undo systemic barriers that prevent the entry or threaten the success of outsiders; after reading this book, it seems the very notion of the outsider and the "Other" must be questioned, revised, and perhaps done away with altogether.

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