Chapter 12

Refugee Education Policies

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ABSTRACT

Continuing conflicts and wars in emergencies are the main sources of refugee flows around the world. Dealing with refugee crisis loads social, political and economic burden to the host countries based on the preferred durable solutions. And the educational services provided to refugees are also changing in accordance with the legal recognition of the immigrant status issued by the host countries. In this study refugee education policies are examined by identifying legal definition of refugees and types of durable solutions, discussing controversies of refugee education in mass public education of nation states, dealing with refugee education in camp and urban settings, criticizing the will of international organization in handling refugee crisis and education, and focusing on a current refugee flow from Syria in the context of Turkish refugee education policies and practices. At the end, importance on taking responsibilities in refugee crisis and education by all nations of the world is emphasized, considering that quality refugee education would be helpful for rebuilding refugees' society and nation in their country of origin again.

INTRODUCTION

Existence of nations states brought up a new question: How to treat legally to displaced people who either voluntarily or involuntarily seek settlement? Because nation states surrounded by their borders in which their citizens live, after the end of the World War 2, this question occupied a huge place on the table of Western countries which had lots of causalities with more than 50 million displaced people. With the foundation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the case of displaced people became an official issue in the international context. Hence, handling the refugee issue has been a great deal in the political agendas of host countries and international humanitarian aid organizations since that date. Because of the nature of refugee crisis, all agencies focus on the emergency solutions first, then deal with the long-term developmental programs. Education of refugees is one of the longest-term development action for refugees, coming after temporary solutions in dealing with refugee crisis.

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Hence, refugee education is always taken into consideration in accordance with the willingness of the host country based on the preferred durable solutions. Besides, refugee education is controversial issue for nation states which want to keep social and political homogeneity among citizens for the survival of the state.

In this chapter, it is critically aimed to examine refugee education policies and practices in international and national contexts. In order to reach this goal, the chapter is structured into four main parts. In the first part, emergency countries producing mass refugee flows and the status of their educated people, changing education approaches towards refugees from WW2 to 2000’s, defining refugees and the changing educational services, refugee education as challenging complex issue for mass public education of nation states, and durables solutions and the changing educational services are discussed to form a background and a rationale to educational policies for refugees. The second part includes a brief information about refugee education in camp and urban settings, and identifies what kind of problems exists in both settings. The third part is questioning the will of international organizations at refugee crisis, and identifies which constraints they have in handling refugee education. The last part of the chapter serves for a national look to refugee crisis and education, dealing with the refugee history of Turkey and its operations for Syrian refugees and their education.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES FOR REFUGEES

Education is a powerful agent for the transition and integration of refugees into the social and cultural life of the host country. Education has a capacity to repair the social and emotional wound of young refugees from their past and it can navigate acculturation process by challenging disadvantage, discrimination, oppression and conflicts (Matthews, 2008; Sinclair, 2001; Huyck and Fields, 1981). UNHCR (2003), emphasizes the importance of refugee education by declaring:

- Education is a human right
- Education is a tool of protection
- Education helps meet psychosocial needs
- Education promotes self-reliance, social and economic development


Although the above policy papers, international humanitarian agencies and governments have taken inadequate attention to the education of refugees because of immediate interventions like nourishment, shelter and health services until early 1990s when the resettlement and integration policies were popular solution for refugee problem. However, concerning long years of displacement covering entire school age, protective role of education and its importance in meeting psychological needs of refugee children
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