Chapter 13

Migration and Refugee Crisis: Structural and Managerial Implications for Education

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ABSTRACT

Migration has always been studied by various scholars for multiplicity of purposes. Sociologists always focus on social and cultural aspects of migration; geographers are interested in time and distance antecedents of migration. This paper is attracted by an educational intrigue and draws on educational gimmicks enshrined in migration. It is important that educational managers and educational authorities acknowledge need to incorporate policies and programs that can game challenges arising from migration and refugee crisis to fullest. This paper is thus, explicitly aimed at an educational management audience and is intended as a primer to conceptualizing the complexities and challenges of migrant education as well as serving as a drop shot for eliciting practical approaches that augment this intricate dilemma. There is no gain saying that this paper is not only timely but one with a telling practical guide on how school managers and educational policy makers should approach migrant education.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, migration is as old as mankind and the concept is rooted in the annals of both the past and modern human history. The earliest concern for migration was simply a reflection of academia where migration took on a teaching and learning aspect. Indeed, students were taught about the great migrations of the world like the great European migrations, Religiously inspired migrations, Trans-Atlantic slave trade, Bantu migration, Ngoni migration and Luo migration in Africa just for the sake of it. At this level, therefore, migration was simply informative to the general populace. It was even harder to ascertain the exact numbers of migrants since it was not a planned concern of those charged with authority. Only rough estimates were in abundance to all those seeking information about the migrants.

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Fast forward and realities have quite significantly changed. Migration became a world crisis that has affected all nations alike. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2010) mobility and migration tend to be highly sensitive even emotive subjects associated with “deep-rooted prejudices, issues of ethnicity, national identity and sovereignty, and relations with neighbouring country governments, and partners from the private sector and civil society”. Efforts to stop the daunting prospects of migration were thus engaged. At this level, therefore, migration took on another dimension of preventive measures as countries feared its escalating pattern.

The United Nations Development Programme (2010) contends that a series of migrations have taken place in various parts of the world. The Wikipedia (n.d.) then concurs to the effect that historians often identify an ‘age of mass migration’, occurring from c. 1850 to 1914 (sometimes 1940), in which long distance migration occurred at an unprecedented and exceptionally high rate. And these migrations have been pretty global covering all parts of the world and in all forms, that is, losing people to other areas and receiving people from other areas in return. As far as Europe is concerned, one of the largest European migrations witnessed 20 million people move after the Potsdam Agreement signed by the Western Allies and the Soviet Union in 1945 at the end of the Second World War. Accordingly, “16.5 million Germans were forced westwards from Eastern Europe, and millions of Poles were forced to resettle in some ‘rediscovered territories’”. (Anitha et al, 2011; Wikipedia, n.d.). In the Indian sub-continent, the partition of British India in 1947 into “Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India”, meanwhile “resulted in the movement of over 14.5 million people - Muslims going to Pakistan from India and Hindus and Sikhs going in the opposite direction” (BBC News, 2007b). Meanwhile, during the Transatlantic slave trade, “between 9.4 and 12 million African slaves moved to the Americas between the 15th and 19th centuries”, sources say it could have been even more than this. Equally, some 10-20 per cent of these could have lost their lives during the infamous shipment. (Wikipedia, n.d.). And more interestingly, China is currently boasting of the biggest mass migration in human history. The next 25 years will witness over “345 million people moving from the rural areas to cities”. This has led to many calling it, perhaps arrogantly, the second Industrial Revolution. (BBC News, 2004)

The reality of migration has been well documented indeed. According to a report by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) founded by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December 1950, around 60 million people have had to abandon their countries due to reasons like war, conflicts and risk of mortality and when the numbers are distributed by the years the highest recorded number is in 2014. The war continuing in Syria since early 2011 is shown as the main reason for this rapid increase (UNHCR, 2016). Fast forward and figures from the United Nations Population Division inform us that, as of 2010, there were 214 million international migrants in the world (representing 3% of the world’s total population) that is to say, people residing in a country different from that of their birth. Moreover, the growth rate of migrations has also skyrocketed to over 3%. De Paola and Brunello (2016) also opine that international migrations accelerated between 1990 and 2013 to a tune of 77 million (50%) with the highest figures occurring between 2000 to 2010.

Today, migration has reached a level where avoidance is no solution since it has become a sweeping volcano and a hurricane of sorts. This is because the factors that spelt it have since changed and this has ushered in even more concepts like refugees, asylum seekers and immigration which imply that those arriving in different countries may not go back any time soon if ever anyway. Thus the attachment to migration has had to shift from prevention to another level of accomodativeness, wherein countries have to accept the migrants and or refugees as part and parcel of their jurisdiction.
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