Chapter 5

Educational Expectations of Refugee Mothers for Their Children

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to determine refugee mothers’ educational expectations for their children. It is a qualitative research designed with phenomenological approach, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Twenty volunteer mothers coming from Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan were participated in the study. An interview form, including open-ended questions, was used as a data collection tool. The data was collected by face to face meetings with each participant. Content analysis was applied to the data gathered. Findings indicate that the refugee mothers’ expectations from the schools are guidance and counseling services for refugee students, more social activities at schools, more intensive Maths and language courses, effective communication and interaction between students, parents and schools. Most of the refugee mothers would like to settle down in a more developed country and they don’t want their children continue their education in Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

The job of the school is to teach so well that family background is no longer an issue.
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (AZ Quotes, n.d.)

Migration is a societal phenomenon that has been getting more and more important throughout recent decades due to the current crisis in the Eastern part of the world and the unprecedented number of asylum seekers. It should be taken more seriously than ever. Not only does it affect the demographic features of a settlement but it also has a deep impact on socio-cultural structure of the society. Migration is an

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interdisciplinary concept that has a great deal of descriptions, but in general it can be defined as leaving a country due to economic, social and political reasons and settling down in another one (Kurt, 2006). “If a person leaves his/her country with fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion and s/he is unwilling to return to his/her country back, s/he shall be granted with refugee status” (Law on Foreigners and International Protection, 2014). Recently, the world has been witnessing a flow of refugees escaping form their homeland. The motivations for this massive migration from the Middle East are both political and economic: the refugees are escaping from terrorism, civil war, poverty, political pressure and ethnic conflict in their countries (Wit and Altbach, 2016). Migration brings many strains for families who have to leave their residential areas. Especially, it is difficult for children to be able to continue their education life, to adapt to a new society and to be able to survive as an individual. In addition, there are problems related to the host country. For example, with the migration, the number of students increases and this affects how much students benefit from educational opportunities. Also disciplinary problems may arise and education-training personnel can be inadequate (Karakuş, 2006). Although refugees and asylum-seekers face many hardships, especially during the adaptation period, host countries also have some responsibilities to promote social cohesion, which is not so easy without an effective education system. Education systems are crucial to reintroduce refugees and asylum-seekers to society, help them develop social skills to ease their adaptation. As a social institution, education can change the behavior of the individual and help him/her adapt to the society. Education is one of the building blocks of the society (Can, 2015). The level of education at the place of migration and the educational attainment of the refugees and asylum-seekers affect both migrants and the host country. One of these effects is economic. The level and quality of education refugees and asylum seekers have, leads to employment in the country where they migrate (Papademetriou, 2005). If migrants do not know the official language of the country, they are probably unable to find work or they work in low-paid jobs. And also most of the time, migrants give up the education because they need to earn more money. This situation turns into a vicious circle, causing individual dissatisfaction in the sociological, economical and psychological aspects. (Docquier and Rapoport, 2004). The knowledge and skills gained through formal education, while increasing the economic income, facilitate adaptation in the new country of settlement and reduce the risks they may encounter (Stark and Bloom, 1985).

Migration as a Challenge for Turkey

Turkey attracts more and more refugees and asylum-seekers due to the ongoing political turmoil in the Middle East countries. Associated with this conflict, the number of refugees and asylum seekers has increased considerably since 2010. The number of asylum application has increased so dramatically that in 2011 UNHCR Global Report declared that Turkey is among the top five countries receiving asylum seekers. The conflict in the neighbouring countries hasn’t come to an end and this situation signaled that long term solutions are required. Although Turkey is a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention, Turkey adopted the convention with a ‘geographical limitation’. It means that Turkey accepts refugees from the countries that are members of the Council of Europe but for the ones coming outside of the Europe, Turkey doesn’t have responsibility to accept as refugees. Instead, temporary status and limited protection may be granted. However the individuals qualifying international protection may be granted to stay in Turkey till they find a long-term solution outside Turkey. In 2013 Turkey’s migration policy was rearranged to meet international standards. The Turkish Parliament adopted a bill called as ‘Law on
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