

Global Migration and Education: Schools, Children, and Families.

Leah Adams and Anna Kirova (Eds.).

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Global Migration and Education: Schools, Children, and Families is a collection of 19 studies from 14 countries and 29 authors. It reflects an extraordinary understanding of the complexities that new immigrant and refugee children around the world face in school in their host countries. All the authors present multiple challenges that educators, schools, and school authorities encounter worldwide and offer recommendations about educational policy and practices that can improve education and shared learning experiences for all children. These studies assist educators to see beyond the “notion of problems” and toward the potentially rich learning opportunities that cultural diversity can offer our school systems. Due to the broad scope of the content, the book has relevance for educational researchers, teachers, and policymakers from around the world. Educators who peruse this text will encounter continuity with others seeking new strategies to use with recent immigrants to school systems. The book also has significance to multicultural education, child psychology, comparative and international education, educational foundations, educational policy, and cross-cultural studies.

Although each chapter is unique, each reflects a common theme: the adjustments needed when families and children move to a new culture and school. The book is organized around five themes. Each section is prefaced by an introduction that provides insights into the focus of the main theme.

Studies in Theme I, *Multiple Global Issues for Immigrant Children and the Schools They Attend*, investigate the major issues teachers face when immigrant children arrive in their classrooms. The main findings from these chapters focus on the academic underachievement of immigrant students and the fact that past remedial efforts have brought about only small improvements. In particular, detailed in the study from Denmark “*Bringing Multicultural Education into the Mainstream: Developing Schools for Minority and Majority Students*” is the need for new educational policies that balance academic goals with student-centered approaches for immigrant children.

Theme II, *They Are Here: Newcomers in the Schools*, includes studies conducted in the United States, Israel, and Greece. Outlined are the challenges teachers face in understanding the needs of immigrant and refugee children and their families when they first come to school. The research studies indicate that teachers worldwide are encountering children who are different than themselves, and that these teachers are often not experienced in dealing with newcomers. Relying on stereotypes, they often default to a deficit model, missing out on the possibility of building on a child’s many strengths. This is particularly noted in Adams and Shambleau’s study from the US: “*Teachers’*

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Children's and Parents' Perspectives on Newly Arrived Children's Adjustment to Elementary School." A key recommendation from this study is the need for increased mentoring and inservice training of teachers on the most effective strategies to ensure the successful transition of newcomers. Adams and Shambleau emphasize that the time and effort required to ensure the successful transition of newcomers benefits all including the family, school, and community.

Views and Voices of Immigrant Children, Theme III, focuses on immigrant children's experiences in their host countries, their hopes, worries, likes, dislikes, and how they make new friends. Newcomers cope with many problems as they learn to adjust to a culture that is often very different from their own. The four chapters in this section provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the importance of social relationships in the overall learning experience for new arrivals. Often overlooked are the difficulties immigrant children face during unstructured times in school. Kirova and Emme's chapter "Immigrant Children's Understandings of Nonverbal Peer Interactions" considers the importance that peer relationships play in school adjustment. Belonging is a fundamental human need, and immigrant children experience feelings of social isolation and loneliness resulting in negative feelings about themselves and others. Peer conflicts are misunderstood at the nonverbal level, and the intent of nonverbal messages and what is understood are often in opposition. Producing visual narratives in the form of fotonovelas, the researchers worked with immigrant children to foster an understanding of their own as well as their peers' nonverbal behaviors during free time on the playground. Using visual narratives allowed students an opportunity to express their thoughts despite limited language skills.

Theme IV, Far From Home with Fluctuating Hopes, highlights the many hardships and stresses encountered by refugee children and families in forced migration situations. Refugees have often witnessed violence or have been part of violent acts in their country of origin. As a result, many need psychological intervention and support for posttraumatic stress disorder. The need for change in educational policies and the lack of coordinated assistance from agencies to meet the unique needs of refugee children and families are issues identified in related chapters. In the study "Refugee Families with Preschool Children: Adjustment to Life in Canada," Dachyshyn explores the multiple factors refugee families face when integrating into the local society of Edmonton, Alberta. Her findings center around eight common concerns that play a significant role in resettlement. These include reduced socioeconomic status, lack of community and family support, unfamiliar childrearing practices, changing roles and responsibilities of family members, dealing with racism and discrimination, coping with mental health issues, maintaining home language and culture, and understanding the Canadian education system. Dachyshyn proposes that access to preschool programs for refugee children could play a pivotal role in the successful settlement of refugee children and families. Although the intended audience is early educators, the main concepts discussed in these chapters also have application for older children in junior and senior high schools.

In *Searching for New Ways to Belong*, Theme V, the authors explore issues around “global nomads,” referencing transient families. The main issues discussed in this section are how children and families fit in, adapt, and maintain a sense of belonging in a world of constant change. In their study “The Experiences of Third-Culture Children,” Ebbeck and Reus conclude that teachers and parents can help children find resilience if they understand the additional challenges that relocating represents for children. Ways to involve parents were explored in a unique study conducted in China with preschool children. Zhang Yan and We-Xiao Bing, in “Community-Based Education for Children of Migrant Peasant Workers,” describe how a group of researchers set up an experimental play group for preschool children in the market square of Si Huan. As the Chinese government has proposed that early childhood education should rely on the local community, the researchers hope to promote more play groups, making affordable education for preschool children accessible to more migrant children. Strong communication between home and school is critical, not only in early education, but also for all school-aged children for whom transience is an issue.

Adams and Kirova, in the last chapter of the book “Lessons Learned and Implications for the Future” synthesize the implications proposed in all the studies. This is a critical section of the book as the major themes gleaned from the studies are presented, including key understandings. Schools worldwide need to adjust to the needs of their changing classrooms, and teachers require continued learning opportunities. For some countries, facing newcomers in the classroom is a relatively new phenomenon, whereas others have been managing diversity for some time. Education systems must continually and critically analyze policies and practices about foreign-born children.

Although labels are used to provide information about immigrants, refugees, migrants, and third-culture children, Adams and Kirova caution teachers about making generalizations as diversity exists in each category. There is no single right way to teach children who have recently arrived in a new school and classroom. Each child is a unique individual, each coming from unique circumstances. Teachers need to be conscious of personal biases and strive to address issues in the classroom around racism, prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion. As educators, we need to regard children from diverse backgrounds as offering opportunities to enrich our lives and not simply in terms of a deficit model requiring resources. Although children experience hardships when they move, they are not helpless victims. They are able to learn effective strategies to cope with change.

New immigrant parents have high expectations for their children; many hold tremendous hope that their children will be successful in their new country. Although some parents feel powerless, others confront the system and advocate for their children’s rights. Many immigrant parents want their children to maintain their cultural values, but are often living in tension with offspring who adapt quickly to the mainstream culture. These are important lessons that policymakers in government, instructors with preservice teachers, and teachers in our classrooms need to consider regarding increasingly diverse classrooms.

Global Migration and Education: Schools, Children, and Families is an important contribution to the literature on global migration. Although its focus is on preschool and elementary immigrant children and their families, application can easily be made for children of all ages and grades. The range of topics and the number of authors included in the collection suggest that the editors believe that teachers and researchers around the world can and should learn from one another. Currently no books are available that deal with such a wide scope of international studies on migration-related educational issues. For example, *Transnational Messages: Experiences of Chinese and Mexican Immigrants in American Schools* (Carmina, 2002) addresses two immigrant groups and is clearly intended for readers in the US. *Culturally Competent Practice with Immigrant and Refugee Children and Families* (Fong, 2004), although related to immigrant and refugee families, is not intended for educators. *Global Migration and Education: Schools, Children, and Families* provides current findings for much-needed discussions on globalization and immigration for educators today.

References

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