

Higher Education in Contexts of Mass Displacement Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

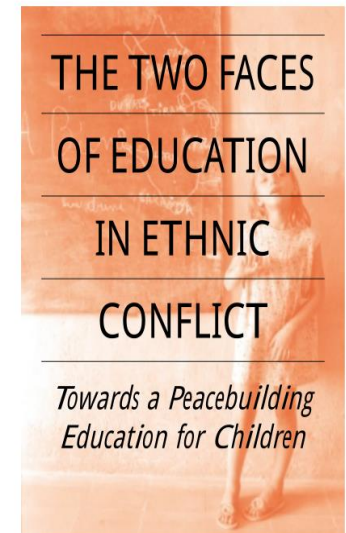
Dr. Mai Abu Moghli
UCL Institute of Education
UKFIET, 3 October 2018

Higher Education in Contexts of Mass Displacement

- High levels of demand for university-level programmes among refugee students (Gladwell et al, 2016)
 - Refugees from countries with high enrolment rates;
 - Protracted nature of displacement; and
 - Availability of knowledge intensive jobs
- Only less than 1% refugees have access to higher education (UNHCR, 2014)
- Global campaigns – INEE, Education Cannot Wait, SDGs

The Role of Higher Education in Conflict and Crisis Settings

- Providing vital human capital, acting as a point of critical reflection on national development – also incentives for completing primary and secondary education;
- Serving as a training ground for national political elites, a key point of socialisation for a new generation of citizens;
- Higher education as an autonomous space, between state and capital, religion and society, where key issues can be debated and solutions developed [potentially] through democratic engagement and debate;
- A protection mechanism in refugee situations to rebuild lives and communities and cultivate hopes and aspirations for future;
- But also, higher education could be:
 - a mechanism of elite closure, a key tool in the maintenance of elite power, a reproducer of colonial hegemony/dominance;
 - a space of silence, rote learning and memorisation; a place of alienation and victimisation, a place of false hope and frustration



Edited by
Kenneth D. Bush
Diana Saltarelli

Higher Education for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

- Before the Syrian crisis, 26 % of university-aged Syrians from towns and cities, and 17% of men and 15 % of women from rural areas, were enrolled in some form of tertiary education in Syria (El-Ghali, Berjaoui & McKnight 2017).
- Between 1-5% of the total number of university age refugees from Syria living in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq were enrolled in tertiary education programmes regionally (El-Ghali, Berjaoui et al 2017).
- In Lebanon, the right to public education limited to Lebanese citizens only. Access to public education for guests is a *privilege* not a right
- 95% of Syrian refugees aged 15-24 are not enrolled in secondary or tertiary education in Lebanon (El-Ghali, Berjaoui, and McKnight 2017).
- Despite programmes such as RACE I/ RACE II, 48% of 6-14 year olds are not enrolled in primary or secondary education in Lebanon – barrier to higher education access for Syrians

Available Opportunities

- Students who completed their schooling in host countries (face-to-face/ physical presence)
- Vocational pathways - targeted support from UNICEF, UNHCR, SPARK and HOPES (UNESCO 2017).
- Collaborations between private universities and humanitarian organisations – AUB, LAU and LIU programmes for refugees
- Host country/institutions scholarships
- Scholarships through UNHCR and other organizations
- Online courses

Academic, technological and pedagogical features and content of existing modalities, sustainability and impact as well as the impact of the refugees themselves

Challenges to Access

- Acute poverty among refugees and high costs of university education
- Complex political, economic and demographic conditions in Lebanon, e.g. graduate unemployment
- Refugees are doubly disadvantaged from professional sectors e.g. medicine, engineering, nursing, teaching etc.
- Mobility and Security issues
- Stigma and marginalisation
- Syrian Palestinians facing further exclusions including - bleak prospects of relocation or return – no protection
- Public universities account for 30% of Lebanese higher education which cost between USD700-900 – still difficult to access for refugees despite fee reductions

Other Challenges

- Long-term demands vs. short term crisis response
- Higher education is not prioritised
- Lack of residency permits, IDs, certificates
- Assuming that countries in the region are transit countries
- The broad availability of internet courses often remains inaccessible to refugees settled in rural parts/ camp settings of host countries
- Coordination
- Language
- Outreach
- Lack of career guidance

Facing Challenges and Overcoming Barriers

- **Online education** is being promoted as a viable solution
 - Attractive to refugee host countries – easing direct financial and resource pressures - Subcontracting education to external/ non-state actors
 - Deflection from the real crisis of access, quality and funding
- Providing **vocational training** for employment – online based
- **Arabic** online courses

Facing Challenges and Overcoming Barriers (cont.)

Partnerships

Multi-dimensional partnerships (University – NGO partnerships; University – MEHE partnerships; University – INGO/Donors partnerships; Scholarships – in host country/region/ other)

- Are they collaborative? Or North-South partnerships as neo-colonial project in action?
- Further strengthening existing elitist institutions through new collaborative projects – enhancing social/ economic/knowledge gaps
- Educational partnerships in conflict-affected contexts: risky, sensitive and difficult to implement
- Project-based interventions – largely depend on donor priority areas

Future Education

- Think about questions dealing with the purpose of education for refugee contexts, living under various political, social and economic constraints
- What should education look like to deal with complex issues in contexts of mass displacement and **future of refugees**
 - A relocated society that is other than their host or the country of origin;
 - Protracted transitional situation in a host country;
 - The host country where they become legal residents/ citizens with all the rights; or
 - Their country of origin, after return
- Holistic approach to higher education beyond the market oriented approach: peace-building, equity, diversity and knowledge production and moving beyond the idea of the homogeneity of the refugee population, their needs and aspirations

Reflections

- Innovative approaches – rethinking conventional notion of education
- Sustainable approaches – financial, institutional and including various actors (primarily the refugee community)
- knowledge production - bottom up, needs-based and driven by aspirations of displaced populations
- Rights based approach and equity
- Think critically about homogeneous categorisation of refugees: intersections of gender, displacement, refugeehood, age, marital status and sexuality
- Multi-dimensional partnerships: refugee communities, universities, host governments, private sector, humanitarian organisations and charities

References

- Bush, K. D., & Saltarelli, D. (2000). The two faces of education in ethnic conflict: Towards a peacebuilding education for children.
- Downes, G. (2013). A critical analysis of North-South educational partnerships in development contexts.
- El-Ghali, H. A., Berjaoui, R., & McKnight, J. (2017). The Regional Conference on Higher Education in Crisis Situations.
- Gladwell, C., Hollow, D., Robinson, A., Norman, B., Bowerman, E., Mitchell, J., Floremont, F., Hutchinson, P. (2016). *Higher education for refugees in low-resource environments: landscape review*. Jigsaw Consult, United Kingdom.
- Kot, F. C. (2016). The perceived benefits of international partnerships in Africa: A case study of two public universities in Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Higher Education Policy*, 29(1), 41-62.
- UNHCR (2014). Global Child Protection, Education and SGBV Strategy Implementation Report. Geneva. <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/children/5592a6c39/2014-global-child-protection-education-sgbv-strategy-implementation-report.html>
- UNESCO. (2017). "Higher Education in Lebanon Q&A. UNESCO
- UNHCR. (2017). Syria Regional Refugee Response. UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>