

## Editorial

This special issue *‘Refugees in/and education throughout time in Europe: Re- and deconstructions of discourses, policies and practices in educational contexts’* goes back to a joint call for papers from the networks *‘Social justice and intercultural education’* and *‘Histories of education’* of the European Educational Research Association (EERA) in 2020. The aim is to contextualize and historicize discourses and voices of refugees in education. Recent debates tend to see the so-called refugee crisis as a singular event which implies new and unexpected challenges for education systems in host countries. This special issue wants to bring refugee immigration and its specific histories back on the agenda and to highlight research that generates a positive impact on improving the situation and opportunities of newcomers.

Throughout the years 2015 and 2016 the numbers of refugees who came to Europe and applied for asylum reached the highest level in the post-World War II era. In both academic and public discourse, the phenomenon received a great deal of attention. The focus on the presence and actuality of the so-called refugee crisis indicates that the entry of refugees into the European education systems is not only a new occurrence, but also that it had not been researched and discussed before. The result is an over-dramatization and a neglect of already existing resources of both communities and the education system.

To study migration, also in the field of education and its history, is important because public discourse, is it optimistic or pessimistic with regard to migration movements, suffers from a “weak understanding of the past, and thereby of the nature of these phenomena” (Lucassen, Lucassen & Manning, 2011, p. 5). It is necessary to highlight continuities as well as changes, and to understand refuge not only as a single event, but also in a historical context as an inter-generational social process. These aspects are interwoven with given (global and national) power relations that must be considered in terms of generating social justice and inclusiveness. Indeed, Kleist (2017) outlined with reference to Marfleet (2007), “the multi-disciplinary field of refugee studies lacks a reflection on conceptual, theoretical and methodological challenges of its historical perspective. Until recently, it faced a historiographical lacuna, with few historians researching forced migration systematically and, in turn, little historical research being adopted in refugee studies” (Kleist, 2017, p. 161). This diagnosis also applies to educational research on refugees. Furthermore, “there is much to recommend in an approach to refugee experiences over time which is sensitive to one or another of the senses of generation” (Loizos, 2007, p. 207). This is particularly important to educational research. To understand and act in the current

situation as educational researchers and practitioners, we need to historicize the phenomenon.

The starting point for our reflection on the topic of the call *refugees in/and education* was the rising level of migration worldwide and the form of discussion about it. Migration is told in figures. The presence of the so-called refugee crisis stress that the entry of refugees into the European education systems and the necessity to ‘integrate’ them in the existing is not a new occurrence. However, history of refuge and refugees is not that common. The lack of refugees and refugee movements from history is related to a “general amnesia in relation to forced migrants” (Marfleet, 2007, p. 142). Even though, we have emerging refugee histories, which includes the experiences of those who migrated, and the “response of receiving states, including individuals, charities, and aid organizations – that increasingly seeks to represent the refugees’ experience rather than simply seeing them as passive objects of persecution and recipients of rescue” (Stone, 2018, pp. 101 f.), the more than ten years old call of Marfleet to study history remains relevant. The field of refugee studies is “dominated by sociology, anthropology, political theory and law” and research focusses almost exclusively on the now, “border control, human rights and human trafficking” (Stone, 2018, p. 102). The present-day perspective obstructs among other a deeper contextual understanding of the current age of movement.

Refuge needs to be understood not only as a single event but as an inter-generational process related to particular contexts. The existence of refugees and the necessity to provide refuge and humanitarian aid is a continuity, when we address the topic historically. Forced migration forms an important part of European history during the last century, and it effected the lives of millions. Displacement of humans from their homes, violating lives to make people flee, let alone only the fact to leave family, community and source of income is traumatic (Naimark, 2016, p. 14 f.). Regardless of historical continuities, refuge within the nation state and in the educational system was never considered systematically or provided for.

Particularly, border regions experienced continuities. That both editors of this issue picked up on the theme, is partly related to working at universities in the margins of Germany. Anke Wischmann is professor for qualitative educational research and works in Flensburg, which is bordering Denmark. Susanne Spieker worked in the South, at the University Koblenz-Landau, Campus Landau, bordering the French-Alsace, before coming to Hamburg as a substitute professor. In these regions not only people crossed borders but also borders crossed people, minorities became majorities and natives became foreigners. This is still evident, when wandering the streets of these university towns, where different representations of past migration are visible in public space.

The aim of our joint call in 2019 was to bring the history of refugee immigration on top of the agenda, to highlight continuities as well as changes and to understand refuge not only as a single event but also in a historical context, with particular discourses and practices, and as an inter-generational social process which sees migrants as actors transforming education.

Hence, a cooperation between the network 7 '*Social justice and intercultural education*' and network 17 '*Histories of education*' turned out to be fruitful with regard to this topic. As the '*Histories network*' understands itself as a network "not only about the past" (Iveta Kestere, convenor of network 17). The interpretation of past events, former social practices, visual sources, and/or the circulation of knowledge, results from an actual experience. Therefore, the research on the past and the present as well as our vision for future are inherently related. Educationalists aware of historical transformations understand the present through the past while creating the future. The historical approach supports to understand actual practices and policies when challenging issues of social justice in intercultural education. Network 7 '*Social justice*' focusses on the now, on what actually happens concerning social justice in the field of intercultural education, for instance with regard to human aid, schooling and/or unaccompanied minors. The network emphasizes to explore power relations and hidden curricular.

The initiative led to four rich and interesting joint sessions at the digital European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) in 2020. But even before, at ECER 2019 in Hamburg, a joint symposium was held, which was initiated and organized by Anke Wischmann and supported by both networks. Hence, there was an extensive pool of interesting and important work, which motivated us to initiate this special issue. It gathers five contributions from different European countries, with various theoretical and methodical perspectives that aim to combine recent and historical perspectives on refugee education.

The first paper from *Jolien De Vuyst* and *Angelo Van Gorp* argues that sources in historical research on refugees often have a dehumanizing effect or deprive the refugee of its agency. Oral history and post-memories are important sources that allow to include refugees' perspectives and the particularity of their experiences. With that aim the presented study interviewed descendants of Belgian refugees, which had fled to Birmingham and lived there during the First World War. The paper takes a view on inter-generational transmissions and legacies of refugees in families.

The second paper, written by *Hanna Ragnarsdóttir* and *Anh-Dao Tran*, examines the history of refugees in Iceland since the 1970s. This paper presents findings of the social, cultural, and educational acculturation process of the Vietnamese and Syrian quota refugees, who arrived in the country between 1979 and 2016, with a special focus on education. The sources to reconstruct the historical and actual evidence are

divers. Therefore, this paper is an interesting example for research, trying to capture a broad social discourse with shifting social context and media frames. They combine history and qualitative research.

The third paper from *Patricia Mothes* and *Sandra Cadiou* discusses the situation of unaccompanied migrants in France throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Firstly, the media discourses on unaccompanied migrants are reconstructed, to secondly examine the role of schooling and finally compare conclusions to point out differences appearing between social representations and living migrant experiences and try to explain in what way such gap reveals upon social difficulties to integrate unaccompanied migrants.

The fourth paper, written by *Luca Agostinetti* and *Lisa Bugno*, researches critical events regarding education in multicultural residential care communities in Italy. The authors explore how to support and improve the effectiveness of the residential care system, because this system plays a central role and accommodates the majority of minors. In order to make it clear, the purpose of reception facilities is to guarantee minors the protection and care necessary for their best interests, starting with room and board, but above all a social/educational project that includes linguistic formation, education and professional training, health care, and primary socialization.

The fifth paper, written by *Lisa Rosen* und *Fenna tom Dieck*, sheds light on actual school practices in the context of new and forced migration after 2015/2016 in the German context. The approach is ethnographic. The outcomes seem to imply that still the same measures known from the migration of workers in the 1970s and 1980s are applied in schools for the newly arrived children.

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