Book Review: School Leadership for Refugees' Education: Social Justice Leadership for Immigrant, Migrants and Refugees

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In *School Leadership for Refugees' Education: Social Justice Leadership for Immigrant, Migrants and Refugees*, Dr. Khalid Arar imparts a human-oriented and agency-driven lens to a dialogue that often revolves only around statistics. Arar's book provides educational leaders, policymakers, NGOs, and researchers with a clear resource for understanding the cultural and socio-political context regarding the movement and resettlement of refugees. The author incorporates both theory and data from empirical research he conducted in the Middle East, Europe, and North America, to illuminate the challenges and opportunities facing migrant populations. He speaks simultaneously to the responsibilities and prospects for educators and school systems in varying school contexts that absorb migrant populations. Arar presents a Culturally Relevant Leadership (CRL) model that aims to shape a holistic approach for welcoming migrant and refugee students into schools and societies.

To write this book, Arar draws on his experiences as a high school principal, along with his insight from two decades of researching K-12 and higher education policies through the lens of equity and diversity and studying refugees in diverse settings. As an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy at Texas State University and an Associate Editor of the International Journal of Leadership in Education, Dr. Khalid Arar is well positioned to propose a model for how educational leaders can use CRL to welcome refugees into their school communities. Arar's academic research primarily examines how educational leaders consider equity and social justice while shaping policies and practices to meet newcomer students' educational needs. His research also emphasizes the essentiality of contextualizing practices through inclusive pedagogy and the involvement of school leaders in practice and policy formation. Arar incorporates this research into the book by emphasizing educators' roles in shaping the social perception about refugees, thereby speaking to the broader influence Arar believes that school leaders have in the dynamic nature of global refugee movements.

Throughout its eight chapters, the book offers a global analysis of policy guidelines, obstacles, and coping strategies concerning refugee education, comprehensively framing a synthesized model for CRL. Chapters 1-2 define key terminology related to migrant populations, before turning to an examination of the policies that host states employ in response to the waves of incoming refugees. Arar notes the tension between nationalism and globalism as competing forces in policy approaches. He expressively highlights how government policies affect the social integration of refugees as well as educational institutions' abilities to welcome newcomer students. Arar also emphasizes the challenges countries face in developing educational policies due to the global lack of reliable, consistent, and accessible data on refugee students. He proposes the creation of

an electronic information bank to better inform policy decisions related to the resources needed to achieve educational goals.

Chapters 3-4 provide an in-depth account of political, financial, cultural, pedagogical, social, and psychological challenges that affect refugee students and school leaders, along with diverse coping strategies that educators use to address these issues. Arar draws from ten years (2009-2019) of scholastic literature to outline three themes that he argues could serve as theoretical pillars for refugee education praxis. These themes include a) The implementation of international and national policies for the absorption, resettlement and integration of children in host country schools; b) School-based psychological and social support; and c) Practices for academic leadership and instruction that directly address the needs of refugee students. In doing so, Arar highlights that even in cases where no formal barriers to educational access exist, the degree of actual inclusion varies greatly.

Chapters 5-6 critically examine how CRL and Leadership for Social Justice (SJ) approaches, which have previously been implemented in racially and culturally diverse settings, are relevant for refugee contexts. SJ seeks to change systems, structures, and processes to abolish unequal starting points for marginalized students. CRL, which derives from culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching, allows students to achieve academic excellence without abandoning cultural integrity. Arar advocates for a synthesized model of CRL based on SJ and three established CRL frameworks: an ethnographic account of CRL (Khalifa, 2018); and a framework of CRL by Horsford et. al (2011) consisting of political context, pedagogic approaches, personal journeys, and professional commitment. Arar's holistic CRL model highlights four dimensions that apply to refugee education across these frameworks: personal awareness, inclusive pedagogy, policy mediation, and leader professionalism. The main premise of the model centers on school leaders' self-awareness, as well as their critical reflexivity on themselves and their school contexts.

Arar aptly underscores a need for educators to adopt a CRL model even when government policies toward immigrants may be ineffective or hostile. He also stresses educators' roles in extending their pursuit of social justice into the wider community. This point feeds into the final two chapters, Chapters 7-8, which reemphasize the importance of a whole-school model when developing schools that operate as socially just environments. This holistic approach incorporates six interrelated areas that create a common vision for effective refugee education: building welcoming policies; strategies that ensure access to educational resources; hiring, development, and training of managers; collective responsibility of the school and community; teaching according to a curriculum; and teachers' professional development.

The book leaves us with a vision for what could be while also broadening our contemplation of what should be, particularly how educational leaders can positively influence the wider societies within which they operate. This speaks to a consistent strength throughout the book, which is its poignant emphasis on the importance of contextualization, achieved through the authentic engagement of refugee communities in shaping school policy. Arar draws attention to this goal by infusing authentic narratives throughout that illuminate refugees' experiences, as well as by continually

emphasizing the need for educators to better understand the context facing migrant youth. Another significant strength is the way in which the author guides readers toward understanding the necessity of a whole-school approach to creating an inclusive atmosphere, with holistic responses ranging from teacher training and the crafting of inclusive curricula to school and community partnerships. He does so while acknowledging that what is right for one situation might not be suitable for another, as the intricate dynamics of refugee movements create complex layers that make a single solution impossible.

The author's argument would have been bolstered with further discussions about the wider effects on educational leaders of undertaking an advocacy-oriented approach. While school leaders are indeed well positioned to influence societal conversations, doing so may put educators and schools at greater risk, particularly in hostile environments, as they may come to be seen as politicized. Discussions of the potential risks involved with using social justice approaches would be beneficial, including strategies of how education leaders can mitigate harm to themselves and others when using such approaches in politically charged contexts.

Adding examples of CRL implementation in a wider array of host-country contexts would also strengthen Arar's analysis. The book draws largely on the author's first-hand research in North America and Europe, with some concrete examples also drawn from his research conducted in the Middle East. Arar notes repeatedly, however, that a vast majority of refugee populations live in economically poor countries, whereas just 9% of the global refugee population live in the world's six richest countries (Arar, 2020). Though a guide for refugee education is still relevant for countries that host this 9%, additional research would be valuable to better understand how the proposed framework may apply in fragile environments. Presenting further cases of CRL implementation in conflict contexts and countries that have the largest influxes of refugees would complement the author's argument. Arar could also more concretely analyze differentiation in school leadership approaches between countries of first asylum and resettlement countries, as the goals and experiences of refugees in those varied contexts differ.

Finally, as an extension to the concepts presented in this book, educational leaders would also benefit from information about the refugee teachers entering their school communities. Refugee teachers encounter their own challenges related to political, social, economic, and psychological barriers in education systems. Although they are certified to teach in their home countries and may be well positioned to contribute to a CRL vision, refugee teachers often encounter challenges, such as recognition of teaching certifications. Though the book speaks extensively about migrant students, it does not touch on the lived experiences and barriers to entry for migrant teachers, or their potential to be drawn into a CRL model. Including approaches for understanding and engaging teachers within migrant populations would make the book an even stronger resource for equipping educational leaders to holistically engage and support migrant populations in their school communities.

In conclusion, Arar's work serves as a timely guide for understanding the dynamic challenges and opportunities connected to global migration flows in the context of

school communities and provides concrete examples of research-informed practices that school leaders can implement to create inclusive environments. As Arar notes from the beginning, there are no "lightning solutions" to the challenges facing refugees or the educational leaders who support them, but this book is certainly a start.

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