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Silencing Refugees' Voices in Educational Practices

Perspectives on School Textbooks

 Springer

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Preface

In the often tumultuous journey of displacement and refuge, education stands as a beacon of hope, a means of empowerment, and a pathway to rebuilding shattered lives. However, the narratives within educational practices, particularly those found in school textbooks, play a pivotal role in shaping the perceptions and experiences of refugee students. *Silencing Refugees' Voices in Educational Practices Perspectives on School Textbooks* delves into the complex intersection of education and displacement, unraveling the ways in which textbooks can either amplify the voices of refugees or perpetuate silences that hinder their integration and understanding.

The genesis of this book lies in the recognition of a critical void in the discourse surrounding refugee education—the often overlooked impact of textbooks on the educational experiences of those who have been forced to flee their homes. As the global refugee crisis persists, the urgency to create inclusive and empathetic educational environments becomes paramount. School textbooks, as conduits of knowledge and cultural representation, have the potential to either bridge gaps or fortify barriers. This collection of essays seeks to explore, analyze, and critique the various ways in which textbooks either amplify or mute the voices of refugees within the educational landscape.

The chapters in this volume bring together scholars, educators, and practitioners from diverse backgrounds, fostering a rich tapestry of perspectives that collectively illuminate the multifaceted issues at the intersection of refugees, education, and textbooks. Through rigorous research, critical analysis, and firsthand experiences, the contributors navigate the intricate web of challenges and opportunities inherent in crafting educational materials that reflect the realities of displaced populations.

As we embark on this intellectual journey, it is crucial to acknowledge that the silencing of refugees' voices in educational practices is not a mere oversight; rather, it is a symptom of deeper systemic issues. By examining these issues head-on, this book aspires to be a catalyst for change, encouraging educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers to critically assess and reevaluate the narratives presented in school textbooks. In doing so, we hope to contribute to the creation of educational spaces that not only educate but also inspire empathy, understanding, and a shared commitment to fostering a more inclusive and compassionate world.

Ultimately, *Silencing Refugees' Voices in Educational Practices Perspectives on School Textbooks* invites readers to reflect on the power dynamics embedded in educational materials and encourages a collective effort to amplify the voices of those who have often been marginalized. It is our hope that this book sparks conversations, prompts action, and serves as a stepping stone toward a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape for refugees around the globe.

Eređli, Türkiye
Eređli, Türkiye
Mersin, Türkiye

Menşure Alkiş Küçükaydin
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Overview of the Book

The book consists of 11 chapters.

Chapter 1 discusses the identity crisis encountered by Afghan migrant students. Within this particular framework, concerns pertaining to students' education have been examined, and recommendations have been proposed to rectify such matters.

Chapter 2 examines the effects of contemporary conflicts on refugees. Some insights regarding the peace language that ought to be incorporated into curricula for the education of refugees are presented at this juncture.

Chapter 3 examines how the Iranian education system relates to the roughly 1.6 million Afghan refugees residing abroad. Within this framework, significant emphasis has been placed on the analysis of textbooks, more specifically investigating the portrayals of Afghans in Iranian textbooks.

Chapter 4 emphasizes on the proficiency of refugee students in writing. An analysis of the writing proficiency learning abilities of refugee students in their newly integrated community was conducted via interviews with six of these students.

Chapter 5 examined the language learning processes of adults relocating to a new community. In this context, research has been conducted on the effect of brief literary texts that reflect the target community on the language acquisition of adult immigrants.

Chapter 6 is the examination of female immigrant representations in Italian textbooks in the years 2012, 2017, and 2023. The analysis of the textbooks indicates a focus on the more poignant facets of female immigrants.

Chapter 7 analyzes initiatives and strategies devised to provide Syrian refugee children residing in Lebanon with an education that is appropriate for their age and class. Within this particular framework, it is noted that the pertinent initiatives and strategies are directed toward improving the academic accomplishments and reading comprehension of Syrian migrant children.

Chapter 8 examines the situation of Syrian refugees residing in Turkey and assesses the degree to which textbooks correspond with the objectives, preferences, requirements, and anticipations of refugee students regarding language acquisition and utilization. Positive characteristics of the textbooks were identified in this

interview-based study, including well-designed language input and content, appropriate activities, and effective approaches and methods for language acquisition and usage.

Chapter 9 addresses the topic of migration and refugees in the textbooks taught in primary schools during the academic year 2022–2023 in Turkey. In this context, 39 textbooks were examined, and content analysis was employed. The findings indicate that refugees are generally portrayed in the textbooks as “guests” or “in need of assistance.”

Chapter 10 presents findings based on two case studies addressing refugees in the Australian education system. In this context, contemporary perceptions, stereotypes, and misconceptions about refugees being a burden on the settled community are examined through metaphor analysis.

Chapter 11 aims to observe how the voices of refugees or immigrants are represented in selected Iranian textbooks by examining the textbooks offered in Iranian high schools. In this context, an interdisciplinary approach has been adopted, focusing on the refugee state with language pedagogy and identity formation.

Target Audience and Potential Uses

This book is intended for: teachers, higher education students, academicians, policymakers, curriculum designers, material designers, researchers, and textbook authors.

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Introduction

Abstract The world is experiencing an unprecedented refugee crisis, with millions of individuals forcibly displaced due to conflict, persecution, and environmental disasters. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of the latest data, over 26 million refugees are currently seeking asylum across the globe. This crisis has profound implications for host countries, which often struggle to integrate many displaced individuals into their social, economic, and educational systems. Education plays a pivotal role in the integration and empowerment of refugees. It provides essential skills and knowledge, fosters social cohesion, and offers a sense of normalcy and hope for the future. However, refugees frequently face significant obstacles to accessing quality education, including legal restrictions, socioeconomic barriers, and language and cultural differences. These challenges are compounded by the often under-resourced and overstretched education systems in host countries, particularly in developing regions. This book underscores the importance of inclusive and representative educational practices in aiding refugee students.

International legal frameworks, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, underscore the right to education for all individuals, including refugees. These frameworks obligate signatory countries to provide refugees with access to education that is equivalent to that enjoyed by nationals. Despite these legal protections, the implementation of refugee education policies varies widely across countries and is often influenced by political, economic, and social factors (Crul et al., 2019). Many host countries have developed national policies to integrate refugee children into their educational systems (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019). These policies typically include provisions for enrolling refugee children in public schools (Evans et al., 2020), offering language support programs (Papa-postolou et al., 2020), and providing psychosocial support services (Raslan et al., 2021). However, the effectiveness of these policies is frequently hindered by a lack of resources, insufficient teacher training and cultural and linguistic barriers.

Socioeconomic barriers are among refugee students' most significant challenges (Lambrechts, 2020). Many refugee families live in poverty and struggle to meet

basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare (Bove & Sharmahd, 2020). This economic hardship often forces children to forgo education in favor of work to support their families. Additionally, the costs associated with education, such as school fees, uniforms, and supplies, can be prohibitive for refugee families (Aydin & Kaya, 2020). Refugee students also face social barriers, including discrimination and xenophobia (Cureton, 2020). These negative attitudes can manifest in the classroom through bullying and exclusion, which can severely impact a student's academic performance and psychological well-being. Moreover, the trauma experienced by many refugee children due to displacement, violence, and loss can further complicate their ability to succeed academically (Karkouti et al., 2020).

Language barriers are a significant challenge for refugee students, particularly in countries where the primary language of instruction differs from their native language (Stathopoulou & Dassi, 2020). Limited proficiency in the host country's language can hinder a refugee student's ability to engage with the curriculum, participate in classroom activities, and form relationships with peers and teachers (Papapostolou et al., 2020). Language support programs, such as bilingual education and intensive language courses, are crucial for helping refugee students overcome these barriers (Stolk et al., 2023). Cultural differences also pose challenges for refugee students. Educational systems are often designed based on the cultural norms and values of the host country, which may differ significantly from those of the refugees' countries of origin. These differences can create misunderstandings and difficulties in adapting to the new educational environment (Papapostolou et al., 2020; Aydin & Kaya, 2020). Culturally responsive teaching practices that acknowledge and respect the diverse backgrounds of refugee students are essential for fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment (Kotluk & Aydin, 2021).

Textbooks and curricula are crucial in shaping students' understanding of the world and their place within it (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; O'Neill & Short, 2023). They are potent tools for transmitting knowledge, values, and cultural norms (Oeschger et al., 2022). However, the representation of refugees and displaced populations in educational materials is often limited or stereotypical. This lack of representation can contribute to the marginalization and invisibility of refugee students within the educational system (Risager, 2021; Tolley, 2020). Inclusive and representative textbooks and curricula are essential for promoting understanding and empathy among all students. They can help to challenge stereotypes, foster intercultural understanding, and support the integration of refugee students. Educational content that accurately reflects the experiences and contributions of refugees can also empower refugee students by validating their identities and experiences.

Previous research on refugee education has highlighted the critical need for inclusive and supportive educational practices (Kaukko & Wilkinson, 2020; McIntyre & Abrams, 2020; Veck & Wharton, 2021; Yilmaz & Yeganeh, 2021). Studies have shown that refugee students benefit from educational environments that provide psychosocial support, language assistance, and culturally responsive teaching (Bajaj et al., 2017; Bennouna et al., 2021; Block et al., 2014; Kanu, 2008). Research also emphasizes the importance of teacher training in refugee education, as teachers play a crucial role in creating inclusive and supportive classrooms (Kirk & Winthrop, 2007;

Mogli et al., 2020; Rose, 2019). Despite these findings, there is a gap in the literature regarding how textbooks and curricula can be leveraged to support refugee education. Most studies have focused on general educational practices and policies, with less attention given to the content of educational materials. This research addresses this gap by exploring how textbooks and curricula can amplify refugee students' voices and experiences, supporting their integration and success in the educational system.

Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for personal and societal development. However, for refugees and displaced persons, access to quality education is often beset with numerous challenges, ranging from legal and socioeconomic barriers to cultural and linguistic obstacles. This book, *Silencing Refugees' Voices in Educational Practices Perspectives on School Textbooks* explores the complex relationship between educational practices, mainly through the lens of school textbooks and the representation and inclusion of refugee experiences. Through a series of detailed case studies and thematic analyses, this volume aims to illuminate how educational content can either support or undermine the voices and identities of refugee students.

The Identity Crisis among Highly Educated Afghan Refugees

Identity formation and maintenance are crucial psychosocial processes, particularly for individuals uprooted from their home countries. Among Afghan refugees in Iran, the struggle for identity is particularly pronounced. In the chapter "Identity Crisis in Highly Educated Afghan Immigrant (EFL) Students: Challenges and Promises," the authors apply acculturation theory and qualitative narrative inquiry to examine the identity crises faced by Afghan refugee students. This chapter draws on the lived experiences of four highly educated Afghan students, revealing the socio-psychological barriers and distress they encounter. These barriers include the concealment of their ethnic identities, experiences of educational and racial discrimination, and broader societal stigmatization. The narrative analyses highlight these students' coping strategies to navigate their complex realities and reconstruct their identities, offering a nuanced understanding of their resilience and adaptive mechanisms.

Textbooks as Cultural Artifacts: Representation Matters

Textbooks are educational tools and cultural artifacts that embody and transmit societal values, norms, and ideologies. The representation of refugees and global crises within these materials can significantly influence students' perceptions and attitudes toward displaced populations. The Chapter "An In-Depth Analysis of Foreign

Language Course Books to Investigate How and To What Extent Current Global Crises Are Covered in Them” critically examines how foreign language textbooks used in Türkiye address issues such as ethnic conflict, social inequality, terrorism, forced migration, wars, and poverty. This analysis underscores the potential of incorporating a “language of peace” approach to enhance students’ understanding of multiculturalism and conflict resolution.

Case Studies: Voices from the Field

This book’s central theme is providing a voice to refugee students and understanding their perspectives within educational systems. “Afghan Immigrants in Iranian Educational System: A Case Study to Give Them a Voice” explores the perceptions of Afghan high school students regarding the educational practices and textbooks in Iran. Through in-depth interviews, this chapter identifies five significant barriers these students face: emotional and social, economic and financial, cultural, welfare, and political. The findings offer a foundation for understanding the multifaceted challenges Afghan refugees face in the Iranian educational context and highlight the critical need for inclusive educational policies. Similarly, the chapter “Representation of Migrant Women in Textbooks—Insights from the Italian Context” addresses the evolution of migrant women’s depiction in Italian textbooks. The authors’ analysis of textbooks from 2012, 2017, and 2023 reveals progress and persistent issues in the representation of migrant women. The study notes an improvement in the portrayal of migrant women in various roles, including professional and public spheres, while addressing ongoing challenges related to stereotypes and underrepresentation.

Imagined Communities and Educational Engagement

The concept of imagined communities, which pertain to how individuals perceive their social affiliations and their roles within these communities, plays a vital role in educational engagement for refugee students. “Delving into Conception of Community of the Immigration: The Association between Imagined Communities and Learner Engagement in Writing Tasks” investigates how these imagined communities affect Afghan students’ engagement in English language learning. The study, involving 112 university students and six in-depth qualitative interviews, reveals a strong positive correlation between students’ imagined communities and their motivation and engagement in writing tasks. This finding underscores the importance of fostering positive and inclusive imagined communities to enhance educational outcomes for refugee students.

Practical Strategies and Recommendations

Beyond theoretical insights and case studies, this book offers practical strategies for educators and policymakers to improve refugee students' educational experiences. In "Initiatives and Strategies to Improve Reading Skills and Academic Performance of Syrian Refugee Children: Case of Lebanon," the authors detail successful initiatives in Lebanon, such as providing bilingual educational materials and leveraging digital learning resources. These strategies are presented as potential models for other countries facing similar challenges, emphasizing the importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure their effectiveness. The Chapter "An Evaluation of Turkish Textbooks Used in Language Teaching for Refugee Students" provides a comprehensive assessment of textbooks' alignment with the language learning needs of refugee students. The study identifies strengths, such as well-designed content, practical language learning approaches, and improvement areas. The authors offer concrete recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of these textbooks, ensuring they better meet the educational needs of refugee students.

The Chapter "Reading Approach in L2 Learning Techniques for Adult Migrants" delves into the significant role that reading in a foreign language plays in assimilating linguistic resources. For adult migrants, learning a second language (L2) is not merely about acquiring new linguistic skills; it involves a metacognitive process that integrates their native language skills and long-term memory. This bilingual process enables them to navigate and interpret new cultural values through short literary texts, making these texts pivotal resources in L2 learning. The chapter emphasizes the importance of equipping adult migrants with sufficient skills, knowledge, and attitudes to facilitate their integration into new societies and enhance their ability to react appropriately in diverse sociocultural contexts.

Educational Needs of Refugees and Migrants

The educational experiences of refugees and migrants are multifaceted and complex, shaped by diverse factors, including cultural integration, linguistic challenges, and socio-political contexts. This book delves into various aspects of these experiences, highlighting the struggles and strategies to overcome them.

The Chapter "Reading Approach in L2 Learning Techniques for Adult Migrants" delves into the significant role that reading in a foreign language (L2) plays in assimilating linguistic resources. For adult migrants, learning an L2 is not merely about acquiring new linguistic skills; it involves a metacognitive process that integrates their native language skills and long-term memory. This bilingual process enables them to navigate and interpret new cultural values through short literary texts, making these texts pivotal resources in L2 learning. The chapter emphasizes the importance of equipping adult migrants with sufficient skills, knowledge, and attitudes to facilitate

their integration into new societies and enhance their ability to react appropriately in diverse sociocultural contexts.

In “Elements Related to the Refugee and Migration Phenomenon in Primary School Textbooks,” the focus shifts to the representation of refugees and migration topics in textbooks for grades 1 to 4. This study reviewed 39 textbooks from public primary schools in Turkey during the 2022–2023 academic year, employing a qualitative research paradigm and document analysis to examine how these textbooks address refugee and migration issues. The findings reveal that these topics are discussed only to a limited extent and are often portrayed in a manner that reinforces negative stereotypes, depicting refugees predominantly as “guests” in need of assistance. This inadequate coverage calls for a more comprehensive and empathetic inclusion of refugee experiences in primary education to foster a better understanding among young learners.

The Chapter “Conflicting Demands of Settlement and Tertiary Education in Australia for Refugee Background Students: A Critical Metaphor Analysis” explores the educational challenges faced by refugee students aged 18–25 who arrive in Australia. Education is seen as a crucial element for successful settlement; however, the unfamiliarity of the education system, coupled with significant cultural and linguistic differences, makes this transition difficult. Using metaphor analysis, this chapter examines the experiences of these students through case studies, revealing how they navigate the complex educational landscape. The metaphors of “meandering,” “helter-skeltering,” “hedging bets,” and “making do” illustrate the competing demands of settlement and education, highlighting the need for tailored support to enable these students to participate and succeed in their educational pursuits.

Lastly, the chapter “Politics of Representation: Nationalist Discourse, Normalization, and the Afghan Diaspora in the Iranian High School Textbooks” investigates how Afghan refugees are depicted in Iranian high school textbooks. Education plays a crucial role in fostering justice, belonging, and identity formation, yet the voices of refugees and migrants are often silenced due to socio-political marginalization. This chapter critically examines the selected textbooks to uncover the extent of representation of Afghan refugees and the impact of nationalist discourses on their portrayal. The study finds that these textbooks often marginalize or omit the experiences of Afghan refugees, reinforcing a societal narrative that excludes them. The findings underscore the need for more inclusive educational materials that reflect the diverse experiences of all students, promoting a fairer and more informed society.

The chapters in this book collectively emphasize the critical role of inclusive and representative educational practices in supporting refugee students. By examining how textbooks and educational systems can either silence or amplify the voices of refugees, this book contributes to a deeper understanding of the educational experiences of displaced populations. Combining theoretical frameworks, empirical research, and practical recommendations provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers dedicated to creating a more equitable and empathetic educational landscape. This book aims to foster a more inclusive approach to education that recognizes and values the diverse experiences of refugee students. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the broader goal of ensuring that all students, regardless

of their background, have the opportunity to succeed and thrive in their educational journeys.

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Chapter 1

Identity Crisis in Highly Educated Afghan Immigrant (EFL) Students: Challenges and Promises



Rajab Esfandiari  and Kaveh Jalilzadeh 

Abstract Previous research suggests that the Afghan migrants residing in Iran struggle to survive the numerous challenges (including education, employment, and social acceptance, among others) they encounter. However, identity is one of the critical socio-psychological aspects of this minority group, which merits exploration and analysis. To fill this gap, the researchers examined the identity crisis of four Afghan-educated refugee students. Following the acculturation theory, the authors used the qualitative narrative inquiry to frame the research study and followed narratives and narrative interviews to collect the participants' lived experiences. Through reflexive thematic analysis, we coded the data, analyzed them, and reported the significant themes. The results of narrative analyses show that Afghan students suffer from socio-psychological barriers, distress, and other social problems such as concealment of their identities, education and racial discrimination, and stigmatization. The findings suggest that highly educated Afghan migrant students use coping strategies to survive the ordeal and construct and reconstruct their identities.

Keywords Identity Crisis · Autobiographical narratives · Racial discrimination

Introduction

Iran has received the most significant number of refugees and migrants in the world since four decades ago, and the overwhelming majority of these populations tend to be Afghan people (Siavoshi, 2022). Iran is among the top ten countries sheltering the largest number of forcibly displaced people (Seddighi et al., 2022), and, after Türkiye,

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