

Thesis Abstract

Title

Schooling of Refugee Youth and its Effect on their Identity

Name

Vivian Turk

The world is currently witnessing one of the worst refugee crises since World War II, with around 60 million people escaping violence, war, and persecution (MIFKJF, 2016). Children make up over half of the 26-million refugee population (Save the Children, 2019b), and this staggering figure compels policymakers and researchers alike to act towards sustainable solutions for securing the survival and futures of those children. For that objective, this thesis studies the impact that schooling has on the identity development of refugee children and adolescents in host nations. Using qualitative research methods, this thesis seeks to address the following research questions: How does the literature handle the topic of identity construction with regards to refugee youth? how does schooling impact the identity creation of refugee adolescents in host countries that impose integration policies and how do they perceive their experiences?

This thesis focuses on Syrian refugees in Germany because of the protracted catastrophe that this refugee group is experiencing, among other reasons. Much of the research on refugee identity creation occurs after settlement, when distinctions between immigrants and refugees become blurred. This thesis attempts to define where these limits should be established and when identity building should be prioritised in order to provide more sustainable chances for refugee children's futures. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the role that education plays in the creation of identity from the viewpoint of refugee kids. Taking refugee youth's voices and narratives into account is the most authentic way to achieve more effective education strategies for this population of students.

The data indicates that educating refugee students in countries where integration is the norm has a number of benefits and drawbacks. Several of these benefits are evident in refugee youth's capacity to reconstruct their lives in a new and safe place while obtaining formal qualifications that would enable them to compete in the new place's labour market. On the other hand, the disadvantages include a slew of social and psychological realisations that negatively affect the refugee children, including degradation of their dignity, feeling forced to adapt to the host country's culture, and having to bear with their othering.

Oraganisation of the Thesis

Chapter 1 offers a substantial introduction to the research topic and the rationale for choosing the research focus. As this research highlights the experiences of refugee children who are forced into schooling that is meant for full integration, this chapter spotlights the dilemmas this approach has in its folds towards refugee identity development. This chapter will provide the context of the research topic, as well as the study's objective, research questions, and definitions of terminology.

Chapter 2 explains the reasons, merits, demerits, and application of a systematic review of literature related to the research topic. The chapter moves on to present the protocol, eligibility criteria, selection process, and results. The chapter then discusses the most important findings of the results and highlights the limitations and gaps.

Chapter 3 covers debates and discussions in the literature that the systematic review could not manage to retrieve on the intricacies of identity construction, especially for children, and how education plays a role in this regard. The chapter extends the literature review to refugee children's identity specifics and how integration into host nations plays into the whole equation.

Chapter 4 presents background information for this research. To help the reader get a better understanding of the research topic, the first part of this chapter presents the plight of refugees in our times. The second part discusses the German immigration and integration policies. Finally, this chapter addresses the situation of refugee schooling in Germany, with supporting examples and details.

Chapter 5 illustrates and discusses the methodology used, as well as the rationale for using qualitative design. This chapter provides discussions of ethical protocols, sampling rationale, and methods for participant recruitment. This chapter will include the researcher's partiality and positionality, in addition to limitations and specific considerations.

Chapter 6 presents the findings of the research, and it is divided into two parts. The first portion familiarises the reader with the participants who were essential to this investigation. Then, the second section discusses the major themes and sub-themes that arose from the participants' stories. The chapter concludes with a thorough discussion of the research results and the mechanisms through which the identity development of the participants have taken place.

Chapter 7 starts with summarising the answers for the research questions. It then proceeds into a discussion of the research implications for educational policy and practice. Finally, it presents conclusions, limitations, and finally state some future research recommendations.