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Book Review: “Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education—Building Bridges, Not Walls” by the Global Education Monitoring Report Team

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BOOK REVIEW

**“GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT 2019:
MIGRATION, DISPLACEMENT AND EDUCATION—
BUILDING BRIDGES, NOT WALLS”**

**BY THE GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT TEAM
UNESCO, 2018. XXI + 412 PAGES¹
ISBN 978-92-3-100283-0**

One of every eight people in the world today is a migrant. Noting that human migration is an increasingly important reality to which education must attend, UNESCO’s “Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education—Building Bridges, Not Walls” takes a timely look at the relationships between education systems and migration around the globe. Providing a nuanced analysis of the challenges and potential of these relationships, the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report holds that “providing education is not only a moral obligation of those in charge of it, but also is a practical solution to many of the ripples caused by moving populations” (p. v). The authors situate the report in the midst of a policy landscape that is beginning to respond to the educational needs of both migrant and host populations. This includes the recent passage of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and the Global Compact on Refugees. Nevertheless, many challenges remain unaddressed, particularly integrating the commitments made in such global agreements into regional and national plans.

The focus on migration occupies the first third of the GEM report (chaps. 2-6), while the remainder of the text follows the report’s core mandate by describing approaches to monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and challenges they face in so doing (chap. 7), monitoring performance on the SDG international education targets (chaps. 8-17) and related objectives (chap. 18), addressing financing concerns (chap. 19), and giving final recommendations (chap. 20). These later chapters continue to attend to the thematic issue of migration through dedicated “policy focus” sections.

The report’s conceptual framework highlights myriad bidirectional relationships within the issue of migration and education, such as those between country of origin and country of destination, those who remain and those who migrate, and migrants and host country nationals. Across these categories, the report asks

1 The report is available online at no cost: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265866>.

two questions, How does migration affect education, and how does education affect migration? As an example, the report notes that internal migration—when individuals move to another region within their country of origin—is the most common but least acknowledged type of migration. Education affects internal migration, in that many migrants move to urban areas in search of higher education or to use their education to find meaningful employment (p. 15). Migration in turn affects education, such as when urbanization forces rural schools to close or policymakers institute regulations that prevent recent migrants from enrolling in urban schools (pp. 18, 26). The report’s conceptual approach demonstrates the intricate factors affecting the relationships between migrants, home and host communities, and education systems, and the need to develop responses that attend to context.

Scholars and practitioners in the field of education in emergencies will likely find chapters 3 and 4, which address international migration and displacement, and chapter 5, on responding to diversity in policy, curriculum, and teacher training, the most compelling. In keeping with SDG 4’s attention to the quality of education, chapter 5 highlights how education content and policies can serve to support or undermine students’ and teachers’ prejudices, tolerance, understanding, and critical thinking skills, all of which are relevant to creating societies built around cohesion and peace. As the report acknowledges, a central challenge moving forward will be how teachers can be supported in practicing inclusion (p. v).

While acknowledging contextual considerations, the GEM report does not shy away from what it identifies as the responsibilities of stakeholders worldwide to respond to migrants’ educational needs. The final chapter provides seven recommendations on this point, each with specific actions drawn from the data presented throughout the report. The recommendations call on governments to protect and uphold migrants’ right to education; understand and plan for the needs of migrants, including through an inclusive curriculum that fights prejudice and targeted teacher training; and recognize and harness the positive potential of migrants. These recommendations follow from the authors’ argument that “investing in the education of those on the move is the difference between laying a path to frustration and unrest, and laying a path to cohesion and peace” (p. iii). By laying out this choice through compelling and accessible text backed by hard data, the 2019 GEM report provides an important counterpoint to those who encourage fear, nationalism, and closed-mindedness in response to today’s unprecedented global migration.

This report should be of great interest to scholars and practitioners in the education in emergencies community. A key strength of the 2019 GEM report is its accessibility to a wide variety of audiences. While the primary target readers may be policymakers, the general public also will be able to access this clearly written text, and education researchers will find that it provides a highly relevant overview of recent scholarly literature, important initiatives, and areas for future study. “Key Messages,” the executive summary provided at the beginning of each chapter, and a summary report enable readers to quickly understand important takeaways. Each chapter provides current statistics, recent research literature, and case descriptions that provide much-needed detail that supports the key messages, allows comparisons across contexts, and illuminates areas that need further research. Two other versions of the report, which are focused on gender and youth, provide additional lenses tailored to specific audiences. In keeping with UNESCO’s open-access policy, all versions of the report are available online, free of charge and in multiple languages.

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