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Changing Migration Patterns in the UK: Implications for Education

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During the last 20 years the UK has experienced increased international migration. From 1989 until 2002, labour migration and student migration remained fairly constant, and asylum migration increased. Since 2002, the numbers of asylum-seekers arriving in the UK has decreased, but other migratory movements have increased. UK policy responses have been framed by its labour market needs. This paper outlines the main demographic changes brought about by migration and then considers how these changes affect the education system.

The paper is based on research undertaken in 2005 and 2006. The research was focussed at education providers and aimed to highlight changing patterns in international migration to the UK and the educational responses to these changing patterns.

The research comprised of:

- An analysis of existing demographic data relating to international national migration
- Questionnaires sent to all local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales.
- Ethnographic research at two sites, Lewisham/Southwark in South London and Peterborough and its environs in eastern England. Here the research included school case studies, interviews with key informants and interviews with newly arrived children aged 12-18.

One site was urban and one was rural. Both sites had experienced long-standing international migration.

Lewisham and Southwark are two neighbouring local authorities in south London, with a combined population of just over 500,000 people. It is an urban area characterised by both ethnic and economic diversity. Some 45 per cent of the population of these two local authorities belong to minority ethnic communities. Wealthy populations live in close proximity to those living in poverty.

Peterborough, a city of 160,000 people sits on the western edge of the Fens, the UK's agricultural heartland. This region spans five local authorities: the shire counties of Northamptonshire, Rutland, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and the city of Peterborough. During the last ten years Peterborough and its surrounding towns have experienced increased international migration. The majority of new arrivals have come to work in the expanding agricultural, food processing and food distribution industries located in the Fens. While many new migrants work on Fenland farms, few live in the rural areas, instead travelling from their homes in Peterborough or smaller towns

Once an inhospitable swamp, the Fen landscape of today has been created by humankind, including many international migrants. By the 17th century there was pressure to drain the Fens. There was, however, considerable local opposition to

drainage and without a local labour force engineers were forced to recruit Protestant refugees from France and the Spanish Netherlands, aided by the labour of prisoners of war from Scotland and the Netherlands (Bevis, 1992).

During the First World War, Belgian refugees settled in Peterborough and its environs, many of them finding agricultural work. Then in the Second World War German and Italian prisoners of war were drafted to work as agricultural labourers. After 1945 Poles settled in Peterborough and its environs, again many billeted to work as agricultural labourers at a time of acute labour shortage in the UK (Rutter, 2006: 61-63; Sword, 1989). Peterborough experienced comparatively little international migration in the 1950s, but from the 1960s onwards British Pakistanis, mostly from the Mirpur region of Kashmir, began to move to Peterborough. Between 2000 and 2002 asylum-seekers were moved to Peterborough, part of national dispersal policies. As asylum numbers have declined nationally, this movement has ceased. The latest arrivals are labour migrants, mostly from Portugal, Poland and the Czech Republic. The largest local employer of international migrants is Tesco, the supermarket chain.

Two contrasting areas, but both face similar issues. Teenagers emerge as a vulnerable group. In both areas schools are struggling to meet the English language learning needs of the new migrants. In both areas new migrant children are often socially isolated and some experience racial harassment.

Forced and voluntary migration

This paper uses forced migrants and voluntary migration as concepts. Like most sociological concepts, there is no clear-cut definition of what constitutes migration or who are migrants. The UK Government, in its International Passenger Survey defines a migrant as

> a person who has resided abroad for a year or more and who states on arrival the intention to stay in the UK for a year or more. (cited in Dobson et al, 2001).

The Home Office publishes annual migration statistics. In 2002, Home Office immigration statistics suggest that some 369,000 overseas students entered the UK, compared with 85,865 asylum applicants (Home Office 2003a; Home Office 2003b). Others groups who entered in this year comprised work permit holders and dependents (120,000), working holidaymakers (41,700) and spouses/fiancés (30,300).

However, statistics rely on definitions of different groups of migrants. An au pair might well be a forced migrant. It is easy to become trapped by policy definitions and consequently most migration theorists adopt a looser definition of migration. The Migration Research Unit, University College London, suggests migration is a subcategory of a wider concept of human mobility that also embraces commuting (Clarke *et al.*, 2004).

Until the 1970s most migration research focussed on labour migration (for an overview of earlier migration research see Castles and Miller, 1998; Faist, 2000). Analysis of migration focussed on *micro-factors* and systems or *macro-factors/systems*. Micro-level

analyses of migration examined household decision-making, suggesting that migration resulted in judgements made about securing survival, wealth, status, comfort, or the minimisation of risk. Macro-level analyses of migration suggests that migration is caused by socio-spacial differences such as wage differentials and the availability of employment and land (Faist 2000, as cited in Bloch, 2001). More recently, some researchers have tried to integrate these micro-level and macro-level analyses of migration, with meso-level and systematic studies. Boyd and Koser suggest that social networks facilitate migration (Boyd, 1989; Koser, 1997.

Since the 1970s researchers have begun to distinguish between forced and voluntary migration. The International Association for the Study of Forced Migration defines forced migration as:

> a general term that refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people (people displaced by conflicts) as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects. (IASFM website www.iasfm.org)

Early researchers of forced migration portrayed forced migrants as largely distinct from voluntary migrants. More recent research has acknowledged the blurred boundary between forced and voluntary migration and an asylum-migration nexus. Castles and Loughna, among others, argue that in western Europe, the distinction between asylum-seekers and other groups of migrants has become increasingly blurred:

> Although some people entering western countries are clearly refugees while others are clearly economic migrants, there have always been people who could not be easily categorised. Often migrants respond to migration rules and policies of receiving states in deciding on their mode of migration. From the migrants' perception such rules and policies can be seen as opportunity structures, rather than absolute definitions ... (Castles and Loughna, 2002).

Castles and Loughna also suggest that that the asylum-migration nexus has three different components, namely:

- *Treating refugees as migrant workers* - Today, Zimbabweans with experiences of forced migration are choosing to seek admission to the UK with work permits, rather than endure the lengthy and uncertain asylum process. Zimbabweans are being admitted because the UK needs their labour, not because they need protection.

- *Migrants with mixed motivations claiming asylum* – Until the mid-1980s, Tamils fleeing worsening conflict in Sri Lanka sought entry first as Commonwealth immigrants and later as overseas students. After the mid-1980s, entry as an overseas student became increasingly expensive and difficult. For some Tamils, claiming asylum became the only legal route to enter western Europe (McDowell, 1996). This does not imply that some of the claims were not genuine. But people who had previously been admitted as workers and students now had to claim asylum.

- *Asylum seekers moving as irregular migrants[1]* – Since the late 1980s EU member states as well as the US and Australia have sought to restrict the entry of asylum-seekers. Legislative and policy changes have been enacted that are designed to keep refugees out of 'fortress Europe', including the use of visa requirements, carrier sanctions and diversion policies (such as rapid removal to another country). The would-be asylum-seeker has little choice but to use the services of a people trafficker or smuggler and enter the UK as an irregular migrant. That asylum-seekers have been prevented from working legally since 2002 is an incentive for them to remain in a state of irregularity [2]. Although there is no national research on irregular migrants, local studies do indicate an increase in irregular migration.

While acknowledging the mixed motives for migration of many of those who seek entry to western Europe, Castles and Loughna argue that the 'push' factors within countries of origin are very similar. Their research suggests that indicators of conflict are far more significant than indicators of under-development as a cause of migration.

Despite the sympathetic conclusions of Castles and Loughna, refugee agencies have been extremely reluctant to acknowledge the mixed migratory motives of many asylum-seekers and debate the policy implications of the asylum-migration nexus. I believe that the asylum-migration nexus is an increasing feature of international migration in Europe.

Findings – Changing Migration Patterns

The research exposed complex and changing migration patterns. The number of children of labour migrants in British schools has increased substantially since 2002. The two largest groups of labour migrants in the UK are Poles and Portuguese. In 2002, the migration of Portuguese families increased, facilitated by employment agencies based both in Portugal and the UK. Previously most Portuguese migrant workers had come to the UK as a result of family networks. Other significant national groups of labour migrants are Czechs, Russians, French, Nigerians and Ghanaians.

Many of the Portuguese are unskilled or semi-skilled workers, employed in agriculture, food processing or the tourist industry. The migration of Portuguese is complex with families returning to Portugal, and then moving again to the UK. The return can be seasonal, or if a parent gets ill. Portuguese mobility within the UK is also high, with families moving as jobs change.

Since September 2005, the number of Polish labour migrants arriving with children has increased. Polish migrants are more diverse than the Portuguese in terms of class background, parental education and skills. I estimate there are 19,000-22,000 Polish children in English schools, with larger numbers being of primary school age. Polish children are the largest group of newly-arrived international migrants across England, although not always the largest group within a given local authority.

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[1] Irregular immigrants include clandestine entrants who remain as such, visa over-stayers, as well as those who violate their visa requirements, perhaps by working more than permitted.
[2] At the time of writing in 2006 there have only been eleven prosecutions under the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 for employing those without the right to work.

Bilingual children of labour migrants are attending schools in the rural parts of the UK, not just urban areas. The English language support services in rural areas are usually small and are struggling to cope with individual language support and the training of teaching staff.

The numbers of asylum-seeking children has decreased, but there is evidence of forced migrants using other migration pathways to enter and remain in the UK, for example as overseas students or with work permits, or as asylum or visa over-stayers. In south London many forced migrants from Zimbabwe were using student visas or work permits to enter and remain in the UK, rather than the asylum system. However, a number of local authorities in the UK only children who are asylum-seekers received a planned programme of induction and English language support in schools.

There has been significant migration of minority and migrant communities from other EU countries to the UK. The largest such migration is that of Somalis from the Netherlands, Germany and Scandinavia. Other large intra-EU migrations are Tamils (particularly from Germany), Congolese and Ivorians. Lack of labour market integration in Germany appears to be a factor in Tamil migration to the UK. Racism and unemployment appear to be causes in African migration from France to the UK.

There is an increase in children living with adults who are not their parents or near relatives. Many of these children have been sent to the UK to gain and education and them to remit monies. Often children had little prior contact with the adults who became their new carers. In the majority of the cases there were problems with these private fostering arrangements. At the start of the research I assumed that this practice was most prevalent among West African families. However, I have revised this belief and now believe that many other children are affected, including those from the former Soviet Union, Somalia, Jamaica.

Very few schools knew about such private fostering arrangements and did not believe it was their responsibility to inform social services unless a child was at risk.

In London it was easy to locate families who were irregular migrants. Many of them were living in stressful and chaotic conditions. While it is impossible to make predictions about changes in the size of irregular migrant population, there seems to be an increase in children living in conditions that I term *chaotic migrancy*. This is characterised by irregular or time-limited immigration status, housing mobility, household employment in informal sector or insecure employment, separation from usual carers, little or no contact with educational or welfare agencies, possession of little educational cultural capital. Their numbers include 'Violet', a 15 year old Sierra Leonean girl. In 2004 she was sent to the UK to live with an 'auntie' and was given 6 months temporary admission to the UK. Prior to arrival she had missed large parts of her education. She has now over-stayed her visa. No school enrol her in London – despite their legal obligation to do so. Violet now has a boyfriend, an older man of about 25. He has a contemptuous attitude to her and has beaten her. Violet tries to save money for her upkeep and for her family in Sierra Leone by hair-braiding, shoplifting and some occasional minding of a shop.

Findings – Education and Welfare

Despite the demographic changes, many teachers, including those whose job was to support English language learning needs, were unaware of them. But there are a small number of teachers and other educational professionals who had taken time to get to know new communities.

There are fewer organisations working with newer migrant groups, than among refugee groups. This is because of the newness of some communities, but also the work demands upon migrants themselves means that adults have less time to invest in self-help organisations.

Many schools were unaware of who is caring for a child and with whom a child is living.

There are large numbers of newly-arrived children unable to secure school places in particular parts of England, despite a legal entitlement to a school place between the ages of 5 and 16. This problem is sometimes exacerbated by 'quotas' of casual admissions in secondary schools, irrespective of gaps on roll.

Pupil mobility is high among some migrant communities, particularly those employed in seasonal work, or living in smaller towns in rural areas. As well as moving on to other work in the UK, there is circular migration, with families returning to the home country and then coming back to the UK. I gathered much evidence of children resenting both migration and mobility.

The housing conditions of some new migrant families are appalling – rented accommodation of poor quality provided by the 'employment agency'. Housing overcrowding is an issue for many of the Portuguese families and impacting on children's education. Housing segregation was an issue too, with children mostly being resident in poor quality accommodation above shops, or in the poorest quality former social housing.

Children from visible migrant groups reported that they had experienced racist bullying much more than white children. The research showed that many children of labour migrants had little social interaction with their peers and were isolated as pupils. In schools visited in both London and around Peterborough the school population comprised a stable population of 70 – 95 per cent of pupils, then a mobile population of homeless children and international migrants. There was little social interaction between these two groups.

Pupil isolation has different causes; housing mobility and arrival after friendship groups have been formed are two reasons, lack of fluency in English and the perception of 'difference'. But there are also economic causes of pupil isolation. At school, friendship groups are cemented by visits to the cinema, shopping trips and birthday parties. Such activities require money and as many migrant households are employed in low paid jobs, their children are often excluded from such activities. The boundaries between 'us' and

'them' are thus caused by poverty, as well as by housing mobility and by a lack of fluency in English.

There is also substantial educational underachievement of Portuguese children, also noted by other researchers in the UK. (In 2002 the Portuguese were the lowest achieving ethnic group in English schools (d'Abreau, 2005)). The causes are complex but include negative parental experiences of education in Portugal and a culture that encourages the early work of children. Mobility and continued migration mean that children may never settle in a school. Limited academic literacy in English and Portuguese also causes underachievement, as does parental absences from the home due to shift work.

Recommendations

My research led to me to think about public policy responses to changing migration patterns. In the UK, Government needs to engage coherently with debates about migration, inequality and social class. Educational policy on equality is marginalised and distinctly 'add on' in its approach. As an appendage to the mainstream of education policy, planning on equality often runs contrary to it.

Debate about the real costs of providing English as an additional language support is needed. Other funding reforms are necessary, including contingency funding to provide English language support for the unplanned arrival of new migrants in a particular area.

There is a need for a discussion within Government on responses to children who are irregular migrants. If Government is to adopt a *laissez faire* approach to irregular migration, arguably children should have access to healthcare and education.

Central government also needs to take a more robust approach with local authorities (and schools) that fail to provide school places.

At a regional and local level, better planning is needed about new arrivals, sharing resources for new communities and experiences of working with them. A school or a local authority may need to have additional school places granted to accommodate new arrivals as soon as possible after arrival.

More outreach youth work and social welfare casework with hard-to-reach migrant groups, including those living in conditions of chaotic migrancy. In Southwark I was impressed by the work of a home-school support worker.

Much more cross-school planning is needed in relation to children who arrive in the UK late in their educational careers. During the research I saw two different but successful approaches to this group. The Team Peterborough KS4 Project [for the age range approximately 14 – 16 years of age] involved personalised learning plans for new migrants aged between 14 and 16 years, with the opportunity to study courses located in a number of schools, as well as the local college. The Lewisham KS4 New to Schooling project was a six week scheme where more vulnerable new arrivals receive teaching in the main National Curriculum subjects with intensive language support, prior to entry

into schools. Those leaving the scheme do so with better English language skills achieved in six weeks than many who go straight into mainstream schooling.

At a school level much good practice pioneered with in the 1990s with refugee pupils is equally applicable to other groups of new arrivals. Schools need to think about how they welcome students, meet their language learning needs, as well as how schools make links and involve parents, including those who do not speak much English.

Schools also need to consider how to counter the hostility and isolation experienced by migrant children. A key challenge is ensuring a cohesive school, rather than the divided schools that I saw – where there was little social interaction between children from settled families and groups of mobile children. Rather than focussing just on curricular interventions that impart knowledge about governance, national identity and so on, citizenship education in schools needs to promote social cohesion. This is a process and an outcome, and at its core lies a sense of belonging to a locality. Such an approach involves active and participatory learning. In one school I visited, the school, in response to growing tensions in the area, had organised a number of arts and sports workshops for new migrants as well as members of the settled, majority community. Children met at the weekend and after school and engaged in activities such as silk-screen printing and felt-making. Migrants, refugees and children from the settled community worked at these art projects in mixed groups. While participation in the activities was voluntary, there was a high uptake among the year group selected for the project. The degree of cooperation needed in activities such as football and felt-making appeared to break down barriers between 'them' and 'us'.

We are all aware that all European countries are affected by migration, whether as countries of origin, transit nations or countries of destination. Both forced and voluntary migration have their roots in conflict, injustice and poverty. There are no easy solutions to poverty; similarly, there are no easy answers when it comes to considering the causes and effects of migration. Although I have some personal sympathies with the Open Borders movement, their policies are presently an unrealisable ideal and have unforeseen short-term social consequences.

Most policies that deal with migration are national policies, yet migration is transnational in its character. A transnational social issue such as migration requires international governance, as well as transnational cooperation involving individuals and the agencies of civil society. In summary, international migration requires global citizenship.

Citizenship enshrines the relationship between the individual and the collective. It carries with it legal, political and social rights, as well as responsibilities. It is 55 years since T. H. Marshall wrote *Citizenship and Social Class*. His understanding of citizenship was equated with formal membership of the nation-state (Marshall, 1950). Since then, European societies have experienced increased international migration, as well as the development of the supernational institutions of the European community. National citizenship, with its rights and responsibilities, is increasingly mediated by their membership of other collectivities: political, social, ethnic, local, regional, supernational, as well as transnational. Yet European societies often seem unable to acknowledge

multiple and multi-layered citizenship. Cultural difference and transnational belongings are under attack from politicians and the press. Perhaps the answer is to include both difference *and* equality into our construct of citizenship, and to build global citizenship.

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