

Book review

Salinas, C. & Fránquiz, M. E. (Eds.) (2004). *Scholars in the field: The challenges of migrant education*. Charleston, VA: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools/AEL. (ISBN 1-891677-23-3)

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Scholars in the field is an excellent title for this book, reflecting as it does a pun that brings together the children of migrant seasonal workers who are sometimes literally scholars in the fields of crops in which their parents work and the educators and academics who are scholars in the field of practice and research associated with migrant education. These two complementary dimensions course through the chapters that compose the book and together they represent a substantial and original contribution to knowledge and policy in the education of mobile communities.

The scale of the book's focus is large, even vast. The back cover informs us that nearly 800,000 migrant children and their families travel across the United States each year, particularly the southern states and to and from Mexico. Although they are vital contributors to the economic prosperity of the world's only superpower, they are among its most vulnerable members, not always trusted or valued by the settled populations with whom they co-exist and are interdependent. The fact of their mobility creates particular conditions and challenges for educational policy-makers and providers that must be understood against the broader context of United States educational history and current strategies at local, state and national levels. This publication is a powerful aid in enhancing that understanding.

The book consists of 17 chapters written by the educators and academics who represent the twin enactments of scholars in the field mentioned in the first paragraph of this review. The nine parts into which the chapters are organised reflect the diversity of topics and the multiplicity of concerns canvassed in the text: a historical overview of advocacy and legislation in migrant education; the identification and recruitment of migrant students; service coordination; early childhood education; secondary education issues and challenges; the roles and responsibilities of migrant parents; technology and migrant education; culturally and linguistically appropriate practices; and ideas for the future of migrant education. These sections cover the gamut of issues exercising the hearts, minds and spirits of all those concerned with the education of mobile communities, yet they also reflect a substantial engagement with the distinctive situations confronting migrant learners and their teachers in the United States.

The book's editors are certainly well-qualified for the task of bringing together such a comprehensive array of accounts of migrant educational practice. Cinthia Salinas, from the University of Texas at Austin, has research interests in migrant

secondary education and Latina/Latino education, and co-wrote chapters about postsecondary opportunities for migrant students and Project SMART, a national distance education program for migrant learners. Previously she spent time with the Texas Education Agency Division of Migrant Education. Maria E. Fránquiz, from the University of Texas at San Antonio, co-wrote chapters dealing with a case study of service coordination in Colorado and the development of literacy via early years education among migrant families. Her earlier experience included work with a migrant community housing project in Colorado. Thus both editors combine theoretical understandings with practical experience that give added strength to their enunciation in the editors' preface of "guiding premises to consider in migrant education" (p. xiii), including avoiding being complicit with formal education as assimilation.

The editors and authors are to be congratulated for bringing together 17 diverse and specialised chapters that nevertheless exhibit a coherence and common purpose. In doing so, they have provided a substantial service to migrant educators and researchers alike, in extending their and our comprehension of the educational experiences and opportunities of a large number of migrant children and their families. More broadly, the book represents a significant signpost in the developing terrain of research in Traveller, nomadic and migrant education. It therefore makes an important contribution to bringing to national and international attention the activities and aspirations of both sets of scholars in the field.