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Part 2

Free movement in education

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The chapters in this section focus on examples of migration taking place within formal education, with emphasis on student mobility at tertiary level. In keeping with some of the ideas already introduced in this book, there is recognition that young people, including students, tend to make their own mobility, using their agency to help them cope with the challenges of living in foreign countries. It is also largely up to these individuals to make value, and make sense, out of this mobility, and to secure the transition from one mobile learning phase to another. Therefore, while the topics discussed in the subsequent chapters are all substantially different, they share recognition of students' role in managing their own mobility. As such, what we have are accounts of free movement in tertiary education; free in the sense of being guided by one's own needs and desires, but not free in terms of emotional and economic costs.

These chapters also recognize the significance of external contexts; the range and quality of mobility chances open to tertiary educated young people, and the challenge of moving between the Global North and Global South. Starting point clearly matters a great deal and the liberty they have to make spatial choices is affected by place of residence, alongside limitations relating to personal circumstances and barriers associated with cultural and social

norms. As observed during the Covid-19 pandemic, major societal events can have a devastating impact on the freedom to practice mobility, enforcing a rapid and hard to reverse change in circulation patterns.¹ Nevertheless, the seven chapters collected here provide some examples of how young people have used their agency to become mobile for educational purposes, across a range of different global contexts: Greece and the United Kingdom (Chapter 7), Brazil and Germany (Chapter 8), Finland and Sweden (Chapter 9) and Italy (Chapter 10). Also included is discussion of migrant teachers (Chapter 11) and a case study on the internationalization of science (Chapter 12).

We begin with an exploration of what Lucia Lo and her colleagues term ‘intellectual migration.’ One of the defining features of the development of internationalized tertiary education is the fact that while there may be a certain amount of cooperation between universities, and conviviality among students and staff, these institutions are ultimately in competition with one another, including the enticement of student migrants from whom universities profit from in terms of tuition fees and an internationalization presence. This chapter brings together some of the key aspects of intellectual migration; for example, acknowledging the need to integrate internal and international migration, two facets that are frequently presumed to be unrelated. Such a perspective is important for this book, which also, without intending to do so, privileges cross-border mobility. In keeping with another theme in this section, there is also acceptance that free movement in educational contexts can have a durable influence upon the development of subsequent careers. And while being an educational migrant can be facilitated or constrained by individual, institutional and structural factors, the constraints of time, resources, places of origin and destinations all come into play in determining success.

The system itself can also be disrupted by existential threats to tertiary education. Prior to the 2020 pandemic, one of the greatest challenges facing educational mobility was the 2008

economic crisis. This is a topic revisited by Vasiliki Toumanidou, focusing on Greek students' migration to the United Kingdom at the time of the crisis, and prior to Brexit.² At this time, it was noted that students' decision-making was grounded in two outstanding factors, relating, on the one hand, to using educational mobility as an opportunity for self-discovery and self-growth, representing a path to independence and autonomy, and on the other, as the first step in a broader migration project, in keeping with the idea of migration as incremental introduced in the first section of this book (see Cairns, 2021a). Major world events such as the economic crisis, Brexit and now the pandemic however challenge the ability to follow these highly individualized migration trajectories, putting mobility back on a more instrumental footing (à la classic migration norms), leaving us to ponder if we might soon witness a move back to more rigidly structured forms of student mobility, catering to a small population, and undertaken with a view to settlement as opposed to circulation.

Regional diversity in the practice of educational migration is also explored in this section of the book. Javier A. Carnicer and Sara Fürstenau look at transnational mobility in education as part of a process of 'social positioning' between Brazil and Germany. This topic, of educational migration in Brazil, will be returned to later in this book (see França and Padilla, 2021), but outgoing mobility to Europe has been increasing significantly in scale since the 1990s, particularly among specialists and the children of higher and middle class parents, introducing claims of a possible brain drain. Nevertheless, their research shows that international educational opportunities appeal to young people from a diverse range of socio-demographic contexts, enabling us to explore divergences in experience according to issues such as personal and familial wealth. For example, the children of the rich can afford to attend private schools in Germany, and benefit from multilingual education and international credentials, and use this mobility as a means of enriching their families' social and economic capital, while young people from disadvantaged backgrounds rely on au pairing and care work

to gain access to forms of higher education in Germany from which they are excluded in Brazil. This work also brings to light some of gender dimensions of inter-continental youth migration, linked with broader societal inequalities linked to the gendering of certain professions; in this case, the undervalued status of women who work in social care. Boutros et al. (2021) meanwhile in their chapter emphasize the gendering of refugee movement, with disproportionate numbers of young women forming part of what they term a ‘lost generation.’

Not all student mobility takes place following inter-continental dynamics. In fact, movement between neighbouring countries and regions may be much more prevalent. One example in this book concerns the Nordic countries, with Blanka Henriksson’s chapter looking at the migration of Finnish students to Sweden. While often presented, locally, as a form of brain drain, with highly educated young Finns supposedly ‘fleeing’ to Sweden in search of better opportunities, this situation is nuanced for those who are members of the Swedish speaking minority in Finland who are seeking education in their own language. Doing so raises a number of important issues, including the impact of language on decision-making; the initial decision to leave Finland and whether or not to remain in Sweden for the foreseeable future. How these moves are perceived by students also differs. Moving to another country might be seen as a migration process for some but more of an expected life change for others. In some cases, spatial choices are more pragmatic, linked to seeking a higher quality of education, while others talk more about finding themselves and wishing to move away from small communities, as well as being able to study in their mother tongue. This chapter is therefore a reminder that what, from a distance, can appear as a relatively straightforward migration trajectory involves taking into account a range of different factors, some of which we can also observe in other chapters.

One of the most misunderstood areas of the migration field concerns the circulation of young people legally defined as refugees. While not often discussed as active participants in

defining their own migration pathways, beyond having chosen to escape from difficult or even dangerous circumstances, refugees have nevertheless made spatial decisions and enacting these choices using their agency. Furthermore, they may demonstrate a desire to move out of problematized categories and be recognized as migrants rather than refugees. Tertiary education represents one means of doing so, and the chapter of Marcela Gola Boutros, Dulce Pimentel and Alina Esteve explores this scenario in the Italian context. While there may be a strong aspiration to self-redefine oneself as a migrant, various barriers and restrictions remain, also limiting the ability of these young people to access higher education and, eventually, the labour market in the host country. The agency of these individuals is hence curtailed, locking them, involuntarily, within refugee status.

Two further contributions in this section address different aspects of mobility at tertiary education level. The first, by Grada Okken and Robert Coelen, takes a look at how internationalization became an essential part of teacher education study programmes. As school classrooms diversified, professionals were required to develop the ability to cope with multicultural learning, with study abroad experience being one means of helping newly qualified teachers become better prepared. Internationalization also applied to scientific disciplines. The chapter of Nicolás José Isola looks at mobility dynamics within Physics at a Brazilian university. This demonstrates how students from other South American countries came to study in Brazil, taking advantage of the ability to undertake entrance exams in their home countries before migrating.

All the chapters in Part 2 of this book confirm the importance of various forms of transnational circulation in education, with students, academic staff and host institutions dependent upon the existence of international systems of exchange and circulation. Significantly, while we can talk about student migration as a system, it is dependent upon the efforts of many individuals. Public and private investment may establish and sustain the

institutions but the participation of young people who populate the global centres of learning is essential, and neither should we forget to acknowledge the efforts made by staff to support internationalized education. This human dependency produces both dynamism and fragility, flexibility and predictability, not to mention a potential for the reproduction of inequality alongside addressing social exclusion where people seek to profit at the expense of others. It is, in short, a very difficult system to manage in a fair and equitable manner.

In summing-up this part of our book, when we talk about ‘free movement’ and the once taken for granted liberty to globally circulate, we might do well to remember that this was always an incomplete and somewhat inefficiently realised aspiration. Even in global centres of heightened circulation such as the United States and the European Union, unpredictable elements served to confound and limit the spread of student migration as a generalized practice, but occasionally led to successful outcomes in individual cases. While we may now be looking back on the later years of the twentieth century and first two decades of the twenty-first as a golden age of sorts for educational free movement, this does not mean that everything was perfect or that there is nothing more to learn from looking at what happened during this period. For example, students do not necessarily circulate for simple reasons, or for one simple reason. A range of factors are at work - social, cultural, economic and political – that help define mobility choices and migration trajectories in terms of destinations and durations, as well as the likelihood of realizing one’s educational dreams abroad. The chapter of Grada Okken and Robert Coelen (2021) also recognized the importance of values in decision-making (see also Cairns, 2021b), introducing what might be interpreted as an ethical dimension into choices about internationalized education. Institutions and teaching professionals also play an important role, with much of their expertise acquired through engaging in mobility.

Also, and in keeping with one of the main themes of this book, we have reminders that educational migration cannot be regarded as a discrete form of migration, disconnected from

other forms of circulation, especially in the discussion of Toumanidou (2021). Interdependency exists in many forms and at different levels, linking the work of policymakers at national and supra-national levels to individuals seeking to improve or at least change their lives through a change of location. Unforeseen events, such as the Covid-19 pandemic (see Cairns et al., 2021), drastically alter these scenarios, repositioning mobility protagonists in different ways, with most impact likely to be felt by those least equipped in terms of social and economic resources. Institutions may survive, but many individual mobility trajectories will not.

Notes

1. This is topic returned to in the concluding chapter of this book. See Cairns et al. (2021).
2. The 2008 economic crisis was also explored in various works by the editors, albeit focusing largely only upon students in Portugal and Ireland (see, e.g., Cairns, 2014; Cairns et al., 2014).

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