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Mapping International Refugee Access to Higher Education

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Project Summary

Knowledge Mobilization & Impact



Mapping International Refugee Access to Higher Education

Background

There are approximately 25 million refugees around the world, and over half of this 25 million are under the age of 25. While many refugees hold strong aspirations to attend higher education, about 3% of refugees have access due to political, social and economic challenges. The challenge is how to understand, support, and develop successful greater access to higher education for refugees.

The Problem

In Canada and the European Union, upwards of 40% of the population have completed schooling beyond the secondary level. Over the past decade numerous initiatives headed by government, higher education institutions, student groups, and NGOs have emerged in an effort to welcome refugees into higher education and go beyond initial emergency assistance. While recent efforts to map which actors are involved in advocating refugee access to higher education in Europe, little is known about how these actors interact with each other.

The Project

The purpose of this research is to map the advocacy networks of actors working on issues of refugee access to higher education in Canada, France, and England. Using digital methods, we aimed to explore which actors make up the broader issue of refugee access to higher education, what the relationships are between these actors, and how the issues of refugee access to higher education are constructed differently between our three countries of interest. This research is important in order to better understand the complexity of challenges for refugee students pursuing higher education, and to what extent advocacy for refugee access is a transnational issue.

Phase One involves looking at the networks of actors that are involved in the broader concern of refugee access to HE in each country. For example, which actors are leading the advocacy efforts in each country? Phase Two examines the issues surrounding refugee access to higher education that are taken up in each national context. For example, we want to know what kinds of issues in the category of education are important in France, England and Canada. Are there issues that are more important in each context? And why?

Next Steps

The implications for policy and practice are real, as the findings will be shared with higher education policymakers and practitioners interested in developing stronger initiatives. This research is focused on the central goal of ensuring better access for refugees to higher education, and impacting practices among programs and initiatives. The outcomes will inform policy in both international and national contexts, as well as local practices in higher education institutions looking for best practice for refugee resettlement.

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