

Traveller, Nomadic and Migrant Education, Danaher, P. A.,
Kenney, M., Leder, J. R. (Eds.), (New York: Routledge, 2009,
264 pp.)

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When we think about distance education, we often think about how it facilitates access and enables the learning of specialty groups. *Traveller, nomadic, and migrant education* (2009), edited by Patrick Alan Danaher, Mairin Kenny, and Judith Remy Leder, is a collection of studies that will be of particular interest to persons who belong to such groups as well as those who develop and deliver educational programs for this learning population as a whole and its culturally-specific sectors. As a research-based collection of papers that explores the learning experiences of people “on the move” on four continents, this book acclaims the value of culturally relevant pedagogy in addition to new pedagogical approaches, perspectives in teacher training, and teaching methods based on the experiences of on-the-move learners.

As the preface indicates, *Traveller, nomadic, and migrant education* is a “difficult and challenging book” (2009, p. xxiv). The reason for this is that it prods the reader to examine prejudices held by the educational majority regarding persons who make non-sedentary life choices and to think about how these choices affect learning; in other words, it challenges the reader to think about attitudes and practices that may discriminate in the context of teaching and learning. The authors furthermore emphasize that a shared experience of discrimination by different mobile groups does not mean that there is any homogeneity across these sub-groups. Hence, the educational issues related to teaching and learning pertaining to these learners are uniquely complex. Reflecting this complexity and diversity is the organizational framework used by the editors which does not follow expected patterns based on geography or some other principle. At the same time, the reader is assisted in his or her meaning making by commentaries offered by various experts in the field: these include a Foreword by Jean-Pierre Liegeois, a Preface by Willam Binchy, a Conclusion by Judith Remy Leder, and a Respondent's Text by Judith A. Gouwens. While each is valuable in challenging the reader and positioning ideas, Leder's and Gouwens' remarks are especially welcomed since they point out strengths and weaknesses in the essays as research studies and certain ideas that the reader may be tempted to take

away: the latter include generalizations about teachers who work with mobile students and the temptation to romanticize the peoples involved.

A thread that does create some cohesion among the 14 chapters in this text is the idea of “changing schools” (p. 2). The concept of “changing schools” works at three levels: it speaks to the fact that mobile learners physically move from one school to another; that schools attended by mobile learners are demographically changed as these students come and go; and that such schools are changed by interactions with this learner group. Ten countries (Spain, Italy, England, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, the Russian Federation, India, Nigeria, and Australia) and nine groups of mobile learners are represented in the essays. The mobile people who find voice are circus people, fairground workers, farm workers, fisherpeople, herders, hunters, nomadic pastoralists, Roma (gypsies), and Travellers (persons who travel and who are part of the Roma/Traveller ethnic spectrum).

Taken together, the contributors present a disturbing picture of how mobile learners across the world are largely “marginalized, ignored, and disrespected” (p. 74). They additionally comment in no uncertain terms on the prejudices of some teachers and their inadequate responses to the needs of migrant learners. Balancing the essays' finger-wagging at teachers and schools is recognition of the complexities facing teachers, school administrators, and policy makers. Understanding, respecting, and reflecting cultural diversity in educational practice is the dominant message for all members of the educational team. The ideas that there are no simple solutions and that the need for discussions about access, participation, socially just pedagogy, and alternate forms of state-based education including distance education (see “Australian Romani” by Wendy Morrow and “Inclusion Versus Specialization: Issues in Transforming the Education of Australian Show Children” by Geoff Danaher and Patrick Alan Danaher) are likewise messages to be taken to heart if we hope to better respond to this sector of the learner population.

In closing, *Traveller, nomadic, and migrant education* is an intriguing compilation of essays which represents the different facets of an educational conundrum. It does not, however, provide easy answers. Instead, it challenges educators to reconsider what we think and know about human dignity and its role in teaching and learning.

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