

And Labor Came to Us: Making Use of an Opportune Workforce—Enhancing Migrant Integration into British Economy

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Abstract

This article considers the opportunities presented by the availability of migrant labor in the U.K. employment market and its utilization. The research found that despite their qualifications, migrant labor is underutilized, thereby resulting in a readily available workforce being shunned and excluded from participative integration. This raises economic and ethical questions whose exploration revealed structural barriers (individually, communally, and institutionally) that impeded migrants' fulfillment of citizenship obligations to host communities and U.K. businesses. The article's key contribution is to highlight a skills mismatch and the persistent absence of institutional, communal, and strategic frameworks to support migrants' integration.

Keywords

migrant worker, employment, social mobility, structural disadvantage

Introduction

The migrant debate has been high on the British and the global socio-political agenda for decades (Kogan 2007; Wagner and Childs 2006). Such a debate is positioned within the wider context of a resurgence of a migration crisis mainly from the Middle East and Africa, as well as within Europe itself. With the influx of thousands of people fleeing upheavals, questions have arisen about the capacity of the host countries to absorb them and the impact of such migration on the host economy,

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organizations, and public services. In the past two years, Europe accommodated over two million refugees, of whom more than half were from Syria (European Commission 2017). The European Union absorbed over 1.5 million in 2015 (*ibid.*), and a good proportion migrated from Eastern to Western parts of Europe. In President Trump's "Two-for-One Regulation Executive Order," the intention is to reduce the burden of regulation on businesses, curtail human resource costs, and bolster business and economic activities. Media and political discussions have highlighted the detrimental effect of migrants on the economy, service provision, and race relations, but questions still remain about how migrants' skills are integrated into recipient societies. Others have addressed the question of integration and the wider migration context in the form of positive contributions (Browne and Braun 2008; Lyamouri-Bajja 2008).

Part of the literature adopts a pessimistic view as migrants are regarded as a cost, a burden or "precarious" (Anderson 2010; Coleman and Rowthorn 2004). The validity of these views is questioned (Bell 2015; Bloch 2002), but research that draws from immigrant laborers from the wider African and European contexts is limited and therefore timely (Bernhardt and Osterman 2017; Lyamouri-Bajja 2008). What seems clear from the literature is that migrant human capital still poses problems (Osterman and Schulman 2011), although some informal as well as formal ways of surmounting the challenges are highlighted (De Lara, Reese, and Struna 2016). However, other challenges in the form of impediments remain underexplored within the wider and more specific African and Eastern European migration contexts.

The article incorporates the extant literature with the findings and analysis to enable a potentially deeper understanding and appreciation of the linkages between shaping a framework for upskilling the quality of work migrants do such that it would benefit both the migrants (as suppliers of labor) and the host or recipient country. The research considers the experiences of the African and East European migrants as they try to access work in the host country and those they had in their countries of origin to ascertain the extent to which they fulfill their obligations and contribute. Given the work opportunities often attributed to developed countries, the article preoccupies itself with the questions of the extent to which East European and African migrants are given the opportunity to contribute and thereby fulfill citizenship responsibilities and how the new society's infrastructure responds to migrants' aspirations, skills, and potentials. The article contributes in highlighting the limitations of the institutional and more strategic frames within the U.K. employment market and draws examples from the U.S., European, and African contexts. These structural constraints or impediments to integration are brought to the fore as the combined set of the lived experiences of especially Eastern European and African migrants point to a story of exclusion and marginality.

The next section examines some critical literature in the area of migrant employment by looking at migrant labor theory and some of the mediating aspects of class, race, gender, and education to establish what their contribution might be to the structural barriers faced by migrants.

Literature Review

In the developed world, there seems to be an increasing acknowledgment of the effects of an aging population and skills shortages (U.K. Commission for Employment and Skills [UKCES] 2016; Keep and James, 2012) and the need to respond appropriately. The United Kingdom is not alone in facing these challenges as worse reports abound (Monti and Pellizzari 2015). In the U.S. context, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service noted that there are significant demographic and labor benefits of integrating migrants into U.S. society through the provision of learning, networking, collaboration, English training, and technical assistance. Wright and Irene (2012) has criticized what it refers to as the “broken” U.S. immigration system. Despite this recognition, the extent of the barriers and their implications remain underexplored. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1995, 13) argue that the “structural disadvantage of groups” in the labor market could be explained by several factors including class, race, gender, education, and training as well as the length of stay. However, structures alone (e.g., personal and professional networks, reward systems, social mobility, and so on; Cote and Bynner 2008; Eurofound 2015) are not sufficient to understand the dynamic nature of the impediments and the context within which migrants could contribute in employment. Simms (2017) adopts a counter structural view to explain issues around labor supply and notes the interaction between structures and agency. Although she weighs the way that collective actors (e.g., Unions) can facilitate potential access to employment, she does not scrutinize migrants’ view of their own roles and responsibilities and whether job quality could be viewed as tangible contribution to the new society (Osterman 2013).

In cases where migrant labor theory has been used, it is sometimes situated within Marxist ideas (Castles and Kosack 1973; Farris 2015). However, this view reinforces the need to look at the perceptions of employees and by extension migrant employees. Migrant labor theory does not place race at the center of the limitations faced (Castles and Kosack 1973) or the mediating role of age and gender (Sharone 2013). The limitations of migrant labor theory resides in its overemphasis of regional, contextual disparities that act as push or pull factors for migratory movements. It does little to capture the critical dynamics in the receiving societies that may disfavor migrants at the local organizational contextual level (Mendy 2017). For instance, Bonilla-Silva (2010) has squealed loud about conscious racist endeavors to perpetuate the status quo, that is, keep migrants at the lower end of the social ladder. Various levels of analysis are used in this research because the sample chosen does not represent a homogeneous racial category as it includes Central and Eastern Europeans (CEE) and black Africans. However, all these categories share minority status in exile (Markova and Black 2007) and marginalization, issues that are crucial to determine the extent of migrants’ contributions. Therefore, the fit between personal perceptions and workplace culture is a vital but missing element in the discussions. Doing so does not guarantee success, nor does an emphasis on equality for all (Findlay, Kalleberg, and Warhurst 2013; Findlay et al. 2017) or even making jobs more “central” (Day 2015) help.

Structural impediments, though vital, do not critically capture the dynamic nature of migrants' experiences (Borgna and Contini 2014; Rasool and Botha 2011; Slack 2014) and how they could collectively contribute to the public and private contextual spheres (Anderson 2007; Kirkpatrick and Hoque 2006). For example, the literature has not sufficiently expounded the idea of immigrant resilience developed by Korteweg (2008), which posits immigrants as economic, social, and cultural assets in many industrialized nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, and so on. In this perspective, the article examines the critical issues experienced by migrants, the ways these are presented from various theoretical viewpoints, and the obvious need to focus on what migrants can inject into host collectivities.

Method

In-depth interviews were conducted with thirty migrants from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Africa into Britain. The participants were from the London Boroughs of Croydon, Greenwich, and Lewisham. The choice of the regional categories was motivated by the interest in attempting to contrast different perceptions regarding migrants' economic and social life in host country context, with the view to establish whether factors such as race (Sharone 2013) and cultural background have important impacts on the wider socioeconomic integration, the institutional and strategic frameworks of the host country. Implications for policy formulation and research development are considered.

A snowball sample was used. A small number of participants were contacted in the first instance, and they, in turn, led the researchers to other migrants who were likely to meet the selection criteria: for example, people fleeing upheaval and persecution, resettling into a new socioeconomic in which they wished to contribute. Time and resources were saved, and suitable participants were found by using the snowball technique.

In-depth interviews allowed more freedom to the participants to provide a detailed account of their stories and expand on aspects they considered relevant. The issues uncovered formed the basis of contextualized case studies on migrants' experiences of employment in the migrants' home, integration in the host country, and so on. Discussions started with the introductory question: Can you tell us about your story of migrating from your country and your experiences of personal and professional life in Britain? Several other questions followed to attempt to capture the essence of migrants' experiences of employment, training, economic life, and related labor infrastructures in organizational contexts in Britain. Individual interviews lasted on average 45 minutes and yielded rich data. The analysis followed a coding process that helped define critical categories that informed the discussion on migrants' work experiences. After the review of the data, codes were established and then grouped in larger categories. The latter were further reduced to arrive at two thematic categories, mainly (1) participants' employment and (2) social realities affecting employment in the host country. The researchers then developed subcategories for each of the two main categories: first, qualifications, employment in the country of origin, and employment in the United Kingdom, and second, language, race, social, cultural boundaries, and employment cultures in the host country.

Table 1. Job Category of the Migrants in the Native Country.

Types of jobs	Total
Managerial	4
Teaching	5
Clerical/administrative	11
Students	5
Unemployed	5

Findings and Analysis

This section examines migrants' previous experiences and compares these with their present perceptions in the U.K. labor market context. Where possible, the exact context (either home or host country) of the migrants' experiences are highlighted for ease of reference. This section also considers the structural as well as nonstructural barriers that migrants encountered and how they chose to respond within their specific contexts.

At the time of collating the findings and the categories, all but two of the migrants had occupied jobs that could be classified as "status inconsistency" (Lin 1986), and these were described as economic and social losses. Table 1 exhibits the types of jobs migrants once held to ascertain their expertise.

Two thirds of the migrants were in employment in the countries of origin, with a significant number of them being in jobs regarded as high socioeconomic status (e.g., managerial and teaching). However, this trend is reversed in the United Kingdom where most of the participants were in employment, but only few had jobs that were commensurate with the levels of those held previously. More migrants were unemployed in Britain than they were in their home country thereby reflecting a variation in class and socioeconomic positions. The comparison that the data provide not only shows that fewer of the migrants were in employment in the United Kingdom but also fewer had jobs that met their expectations. This finding corroborates Bell's (2015) research, which found migrants were worst off in terms of employment and class status. The issues show a trend of high professionalism and low employment status experienced by migrants in addition to the challenges noted by De Lara, Reese, and Struna (2016). The Basedow and Doyle (2016) reported similar findings thereby highlighting the unemployment and underemployment of migrants, key elements of impediments to labor mobility. A lack of a joined-up and supportive training infrastructure added to the difficulties migrants faced in accessing and staying in work different from integration strategies advocated by Lyamouri-Bajja (2008) and Wright and Irene (2012) of the United States. Mokhtar, an African migrant who was an accountant in Somalia, but an unskilled worker in the United Kingdom, explained that:

There's nothing you can do. When you look back and see what you did and what you do here, it hurts. Being an immigrant is like starting from scratch.

The situation was aggravated by the difficulties migrants faced in having their educational and professional credentials recognized (Qualifications and Credit Framework,

Table 2. Occupation of Respondents in the United Kingdom.

No. of respondents	Occupation	U.K. occupation classification code
02	Office (managerial/senior officer)	2
01	Teaching	2
05	Driving	4
05	Security/office (clerical)	6
06	Cleaning/factory	8
03	Unemployed	-
08	Not declared	-

UK 2012). This observation begs the question whether such widespread nonrecognition of qualifications and skills from the developing world is not linked to questions of ethics and class as raised by some respondents. Henriette, an African former secondary school teacher, reported,

I was a secondary school teacher [back home] since graduating. I feared a protracted time out of work because of political upheaval.

Robert, a CEE high school graduate, who helped at his parents' farm since he left school with A' Levels three years prior to fleeing pointed out:

I enjoyed working at the farm in the end [in my country]. I was with my family and that was enjoyable . . . if you don't know anybody you can't do anything.

Employment in the Host Country

This section examines the types of jobs the migrants do in the United Kingdom and how they perceive their professional standing. This section also considers the routes to employment in the host country with the view to assess the effectiveness of the support system available to the newcomers.

Many of the migrants hoped that they would reconstruct their socioeconomic class through employment. However, the process was not always as smooth despite some liberal and nontraditional perspectives (Bernhardt and Osterman 2017). Marxists see work as alienating and the supply of human labor as a commodity to be rationalized and used. The migrants seem to think that they have limited control over what they could contribute and therefore become "precarious" (Anderson 2010). They thought about different strategies to access work although they landed in jobs below their capabilities and could not contribute positively (Lyamouri-Bajja 2008). The Migration Observatory (2016) reported similar trends although the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service begs to differ. The metaphor of jungle work is in place here although this does not concur with Sharone's (2013) notion of fit, and migrants feel trapped (Barker 1993).

Table 2 describes the jobs that the respondents held at the time of the interviews

Table 2 indicates that all but three were in what they considered low status jobs, often manual in nature (U.K. Standard Occupational Classification). The interconnection between employment, housing, and health is further linked to the socioeconomic position of the migrants despite the participants' attempts for enhanced quality of life. Serious implications range from social marginalization and exclusion to risks of psychological, mental, and physical health. However, migrants are not conscious of what others may see as poor or substandard living or even substandard jobs (Osnowitz and Henson 2016). A Central European migrant said,

I'm lucky to be living with many other countrymen and women (six in total in the two-bedroom flat). We're live like a family, like back home. We spend time together and help each other. It's cheaper to pay the rent.

From a Marxist perspective, these migrants will be viewed as a "class in itself" because the members have low class consciousness or rather have low consciousness of their perceived substandard conditions. Perhaps the failure of the workplaces to recognize their professional status might have contributed to heighten the perception of marginalization. It is clear from Table 2 and also from other studies (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1995; Castles and Kosack 1973) that the jobs that migrants take up are not commensurate with their qualifications and experiences. However, a small number of migrants were in occupations that were not classified as employment back home (e.g., farming) while others were higher aspirant job seekers (e.g., A Levels and University students).

Social Realities Affecting Migrant Training and Employment

Language

Marshall (1992) has described language as one of the key barriers to migrant employment. Marshall (2009) identified the impacts of mass migration on minority-group's language while Wagner and Childs (2006) identified "subterranean forms of racism." The authors argue that more complex forms of racism have emerged, which attempt to bypass social and political detection mechanisms, for example, legal frameworks in place, government equality and diversity actions, and more involvement of formal social institutions such as trade unions, schools, and so on in combatting racial disadvantage. In the American context, Bonilla-Silva (2010) has referred to subterranean racism by coining the term *color-blind racism*, which refers to frames used by some people in society to perpetuate the status quo avoiding to be perceived as racist. In the same perspective, Clair and Denis (2015) and modern sociology of race have referred to these practices as "new racism." An exemplification of this would be the use of the subjective notion of language insufficiency to keep migrants out of some types of jobs. Marshall found that two-thirds of the clients he interviewed did not have English as their first language. The present study has revealed that migrants' language proficiency and their occupation affect their level of integration into the British socio-economic (including employment) context.

The choice of first jobs is strongly motivated by migrants' language abilities. Those with limited competence in English usually entered the unskilled world of the factory or cleaning, areas they consider to be of low status and where their contributions do not count for much prompting Wright and Irene (2012) strategy in the United States.

Two Somali migrants stated that they had no choice but to take up such employment because:

You didn't need to speak English in those types of jobs.

For instance, the experiences of Abdul, a Somali respondent, and Paul, a Kosovan migrant, provided enlightening insights. Abdul was asked whether he would like to clear boxes for two hours and that became permanent employment for him; Paul accompanied his cousin on a building site just to ward off boredom, and he got started in a job on the spot. Castles and Kosack (1973, 5) see migrants as a reserve army of labor, given the subaltern role they fulfill although Anderson (2010) sees them as a cost. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1995, 67) regard such a pool as a consciously orchestrated strategy "to keep wages down" and lower the quality of work (Bernhardt and Osterman 2017). From a Marxist perspective, migrants become a capitalist tool of production, profit, and exploitation.

The most eligible candidates to fill vacancies at the lower employment spectrum are migrants who cannot speak the language of the new country and are therefore not aspiring for what they described as "unreasonable" positions. The migrants would aspire for roles that are congruent with their academic and professional credentials, but the structural and linguistic represent barriers to fulfilling such aspirations, thus leading to underemployment. Khalid explained that,

I've always been an ambitious person working very hard. I want to be in a good job in London. But now my English level and accent are used against me. With my age (he's 45 years old) it's difficult to go to school and do long years of training.

Khalid's views were shared by a number of female and male participants. Underemployment confirms the assertion that language is a powerful tool of communication and socialization. The lack of support structures causes physical and perceptual exclusion (Dustmann, Frattini, and Halls 2010; Kallas et al. 2010) from work endemic.

Race

Brennan and McGeevor (1990, 93) note that "employment opportunities are limited for migrants as a result of the lack of consistent implementation of equal opportunities policies." This is similar to what has been described in some U.K. quarters as discriminatory (United Kingdom, Equality and Human Rights Commission, & Bennetto, J. 2009) as organizations fail to take the necessary steps to address racial imbalances in the workforce, contributing to deny training and other professional opportunities to

minority groups and further entrenching inequalities. Racial discrimination and structures exacerbate this practice and contribute to keep migrants in unskilled low status work, partly due to what Wright and Irene (2012) regards as a “broken” immigration system. Fewer respondents have described experiences of direct racism although references to “pain” are made. Likewise, the fear of racism being confined to silence and strict obedience in the workplace abound (Wagner and Childs 2006). Many respondents agree that they rarely ask any questions regarding employment rights, procedures, training, and so on for fear of evoking some sentiments of racism. Henriette, a Congolese migrant, expressed such fear in the following terms:

You take whatever they give you. You do your job and you go home. You never know what will happen to you tomorrow if you talk too much. I heard that some people were dismissed because they spoke out about some things, I don't know what.

Racism in employment is exemplified in metaphors of “exile as sadness” and “exile as a strange place” although the sometimes subtle and mediating role of race, age, and gender are acknowledged (Sharone 2013). While those interviewed were quite happy to be earning, they felt that they were being robbed of legitimate opportunities by the new society, which judged them on the basis of language, accents, or ethnicity. This triggered “nostalgia,” a sense of inferiority, loss of self-esteem (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1995, 2), and an inability to contribute at the appropriate level of intensity.

Sociocultural Boundaries

Social cultural boundaries here are understood as behaviors or social and cultural practices that migrants bring to the U.K. context. These contrast with those of the host country and contribute in identifying the newcomers as outsiders (i.e., those outside the predominant sociocultural norm). These may include religious beliefs, national dress, language, social behaviors (e.g., address and greetings), employment practices, respect for time, and so on. The migrants in this research sometimes had to abandon “old” cultural practices and embraced new ways as part of the adaptation to the new environment. This was considered a very painful sacrifice but a necessary survival and coping mechanism as the migrants sought to make valuable contributions to the host society. Migrants who were not prepared to undergo such cultural metamorphosis further suffered personal isolation and socioeconomic disadvantage, thereby dislocating earlier intentions to integrate, thus putting them in a weak labor market situation (Simms 2017).

Dependant wives are entangled into the cultural enigma that does not always fit the receiving societies. Women are therefore trapped between the need to adapt and the need to comply with minority social fabrics and orders that migrants have lived through. This was particularly profound in the Kosovan and Somali communities. A Kosovan woman voiced the gendered division of labor and widely spread assumptions in ethnic communities that women should look after the home and men go to “work” by stating that,

The man is the bread winner. That's how it worked back home and I do not know why this should be different here.

However, these apparent acceptances of the status quo can be forced acceptance and attributed to the weight of culture. In fact, Kosovan interviewee presaged the researchers about the cultural conservatism of male Kosovans toward their females (Moser 2003). African women were more liberal as their Nepali counterparts in Gurung's (2015) study in the United States. There were more African women in employment despite the fact that women from segregated communities do not seem to actively participate in education, training, and employment.

The effects of cultural antagonism between the "old" and "new" have been found to affect not only women. Male respondents were faced with dilemmas. While receiving ad hoc training for jobs, three Somali migrants had to resign themselves to be in the same training room as women. Yom, a Somali migrant, found it difficult to accommodate saying,

I was really embarrassed because a girl was sitting right next to me. This is not usual in my culture. Later, the lecturer saw my embarrassment, and we discussed the issue.

The clash of cultures continued in the context of the workplace for male respondents from Somalia and Kosovo. Musa, a Somali migrant, found working with women peculiar:

I was so shy among all these ladies with whom I was sticking labels on products. As I was slower than the colleagues, mostly ladies, the supervisor asked me if I wanted to try another post. I was then trained in driving fork lift, which I thought was a "male job."

It seems as though Musa wanted the supervisors to have a view of him as motivated, willing to work, and adaptable despite the strange cultural and work situation he found himself. In most cases the migrants managed to overcome the cultural barriers and continued their learning and employment. This demonstrates the migrant resilience and social adaptability, being congruent with Korteweg's (2008, 438) assertion that migrants develop the capability to "resist forces of domination and avoid the gendered subordination." However, in other instances as shown in some cases, the cultural boundary was so strong that the respondent had to give up job and seek another one. Idriss left working in a sausage factory and took some considerable time before finding other employment. The experiences of migrants showed that it took time to adjust to new cultural realities, thereby entrenching their perceptual isolation.

Employment Culture in the Host Country

The research found a further cultural barrier, and this relates to the complexity of the British employment culture. The vast majority of the respondents, except two, did not know how to go about finding a job in the United Kingdom. This sharply contrasts with their knowledge and practices back home. Success in the African and Central and

Eastern European job contexts where the respondents had their initial experiences depended on one's connections, acquaintances, and other networks. Such networks did not only "fit" within the structural impediments found in the extant literature but highlighted a more institutionally, strategically, and culturally endemic limitation faced by migrant workers in the United Kingdom. Although authors such as Cranford (2005) and Hack-Polay (2008) have argued that immigrant social networks are not necessarily social capital but could be impediments, there is limited literature evidence to back the social capital argument (e.g., Bankston 2014; McMichael and Manderson 2004; Tamim and Nasrat 2016). Evidence suggests that the lack of networks and host country work experience is a limiting factor for employment in contrast to the European Parliament (2016) where support is identified. The terror and pain of not making it into the employment market was unanimous as Jean pointed out:

When I started looking for a job, I didn't have a clue as to where to start. Later, I heard that I could approach employment agencies. I didn't know what employment agencies were and where to find them. Back home when I qualified as a teacher, the government gave me the job; they sent me to a school in a region. When I wanted to come to a bigger city, I spoke to relatives who had connections and got moved.

Jean's experience is not isolated and reiterates the loss of confidence and capability to deal with migrants' perceptions of the social and professional issues. These findings are different from those discovered by Osnowitz and Henson (2016). CEE and African respondents evoked similar experiences of varying intensities. These have not sharpened migrants' job search abilities in the United Kingdom. The respondents needed training, advice, and guidance in job search, which is a common practice in the U.K. employment culture. The Peabody Trust (1999) found that the most common method for migrants to find jobs was "through friends."

The application procedure was found to be lengthy and disconcerting. A Kosovan migrant told the researchers:

The form had many pages. And they asked for references from your previous employer and other qualifications like GCSE, City & Guilds, etc. which I did not understand. I said to myself "I'll never be able to do this." So I asked my friends if they could help me get a job in their restaurant. I was introduced to the chef who hired me.

The unfamiliarity of migrants with the United Kingdom are echoed in metaphors of "exile as a strange place" and "exile as a new beginning." These illustrate that the migrants felt lost in an employment culture and structures that felt alien and disorientating (Civic Trust 2002).

Conclusion

The professional status and the way work was perceived by the migrants in the host country context contrasted with the migrants' experiences in their native country. In exile, migrants were mostly in unskilled or semiskilled employment, what is classified

in the extant literature as low status work. Most respondents would use networks and acquaintances to find jobs in their pursuit of the fulfillment of their obligations to the new communities. As part of the drive to emerge from the subaltern status, the second most used route into employment was through ad hoc training although a small proportion would make individual efforts to secure a job via this route. Job types found in this study are similar to those reported in previous research (Marshall 1992) but differ in terms of migrants' status, expectations, and perceptions. The respondents' employment prospects were adversely affected by language, racism, employment cultures, and procedures (Cook, Dwyer, and Waite 2010) as well as the structural barriers (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1995; Bernhardt and Osterman 2017).

This suggests that employment and some of the ad hoc training opportunities were below what they generally expected and how they could positively contribute. This answers the first research question of the present article (which is in line with Wagner and Childs 2006; Cook, Dwyer, and Waite 2010). The findings highlight the institutionalization of structural, strategic, and cultural impediments in migrants' pursuit to contribute meaningfully within work environments.

Although they found the employment procedures laborious and difficult to navigate, they were generally satisfied about the opportunity they have had to contribute in some form of work, although most of this was of low status. This answers the study's second research question. Integration is partly dependent on migrants' prior education and current participation levels within the labor market. The lack of proper consideration given to migrant prior qualifications and experiences and lack of recognition of migrant contributions highlight the need to address critical challenges (De Lara, Reese, and Struna 2016). The migrants' narratives underscore the missed opportunities within the U.K. labor force different from the strategic outlook of Wright and Irene (2012) in the United States.

This finding re-echoes UNHCR's acclaimed campaign message, "A bundle of belongings isn't the only thing a refugee brings to the new country." Einstein was a refugee (in Lyamouri-Bajja 2008).

Based on the findings, more dynamic, structured, and constructive training and development programs would help remove some of the "hell" and "pain" migrants face (Robinson 2000, vii). Such training should be of a scale that includes the range of issues found in this study, that is, language, employment procedures, and socio-cultural practices so as to begin to integrate migrants' skills and experiences into the British workplace. Based on the empirical data, this research concludes that migrants are yearning for such socioeconomic and training opportunities.

Policy (re-)formulations should put migrant issues at the heart of the design, implementation, and evaluation frameworks as the United Kingdom stands to gain from such an opportune workforce. Migrants ought to be perceived, beyond a reserve army of labor, as a strategic opportunity in a time of critical skills shortages and aging population. Ad hoc training policies need to be formalized and incorporated into small- and medium-sized enterprises (similar to the ones explored in this article) where the migrants interviewed appeared to have been working in the short-term. In the longer-term, training policies need to be available within formal structures in companies that recruit and make use of talent (World Economic Forum 2014) as well as encourage a culture of learning, adaptation, and integration within socioprofessional networks.

The findings of the study also point to an imperative for U.K.'s Qualification and Credit Framework to develop specific protocols and procedures that are necessary to first recognize and second accredit the prior qualifications and experiences of migrants. This will facilitate socioeconomic mobility especially in the aspired "centrality" of roles as discovered by Day (2015). In addition, such a career uplifting will enhance the educational and employment prospects for migrants who choose to make the United Kingdom home. More and more reports are emerging that show that several key government strategic priorities are heavily reliant on migrant labor (at least in the short to medium term). For example, the current government's pledge to build two million new homes in the United Kingdom by 2020 will face critical difficulties if twenty-five percent of the workforce in this sector who are migrant workers from the EU were not available (BBC 2017).

Working with a diverse range of voluntary sector institutions such as British Red Cross, Refugee Council, and related charities, as well as local authorities in the public sector, organizations can set up job trial schemes, similar to the apprenticeship scheme for school and College graduates. The private sector also has a critical role to play in terms of offering the work trial opportunities (Anderson 2007) that will help assess migrants' actual capabilities but also potentials. Such a scheme will not only provide the migrants with the first step into the U.K. employment ladder but will also serve as a cultural eye-opener for the new migrants to begin to develop an appreciation of what the employment and economic procedures and processes are like in the United Kingdom. Such a scheme also has the added advantage of identifying appropriate employees' skills, qualifications, and experiences and signposting them to the right levels of employment. This could facilitate appropriate use of talent, qualifications, and work experiences.

Central to the study's findings is that it brings to light differences in the degree of success migrants experience in the search for and retention of work. Attendant issues also include race, ethnicity, language, and cultural fit as differentiating factors for socioeconomic integration. Although structural issues such as wages, type and status of employment, experience, qualifications, and skills counted as impeding factors for migrants' access to work, one of the key theoretical contributions is that culture was found to be a critical differentiating factor of success between the African and East European migrants. This finding has led to the suggestion that institutional frameworks geared at migrant integration need to take the cultural dimension into consideration. This is in addition to the work already done by De Lara, Reese, and Struna (2016) and their followers.

Companies can set up incubation centers where migrants could be attracted to join and contribute to various types of work that match with their skills and qualifications levels. These could be instituted along the length and breadth of the country, especially in areas with high migrant communities (e.g., London, the South East, and the Midlands) in a coordinated and more strategic way. This is anticipated to tap into migrants' experiences and develop them in training and other skills' acquisition and cultural expertise.

Future research could expand the investigation into practical ways in which organizations and related agencies can work collaboratively to establish appropriate and

more structured support mechanisms to integrate migrant labor into the British socio-economic context. Such research would create a greater understanding of the role of nonformalized networks and the desire for migrant small community-based movements to assist in the process of enhancing the migrants' cultural and labor fitness for the host economy.

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