

University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Faculty Publications in Educational Administration

Educational Administration, Department of

2017

Talent Development of Refugee Women

Minerva D. Tuliao

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, mtuliao2@unl.edu

Katherine Najjar

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, knajjar60@gmail.com

Richard J. Torraco

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, rtorraco1@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedadfacpub>

 Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#)

Tuliao, Minerva D.; Najjar, Katherine; and Torraco, Richard J., "Talent Development of Refugee Women" (2017). *Faculty Publications in Educational Administration*. 77.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedadfacpub/77>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Educational Administration, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications in Educational Administration by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

CHAPTER 4

TALENT DEVELOPMENT OF REFUGEE WOMEN

Minerva D. Tuliao, Katherine M. Najjar, and Richard J. Torraco

In almost all refugee populations approximately half are women (Martin, 2004; UNHCR, 2014). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) describes refugees as individuals who are forced to migrate to other countries due to war, civil unrest, or fears of persecution. Not only do refugees receive no protection from their own government, it is frequently their own country that has threatened their personal security and freedom.

Refugee women face particular challenges when integrating into new communities, especially industrialized countries. Young women may unexpectedly be required to assume the role of caregivers or sole breadwinners when traditional heads of household are unable to learn local languages, or have difficulties adapting to the workforce. Older or single mothers lack the traditional support and friendship networks that extended families provide (Yakushko, 2010). Often unprepared for the new work environment, many refugee women lack sufficient language skills, technological experience, or cultural competence to adequately support a household or even themselves. Past experiences of trauma may exacerbate the difficulties of transition (UNHCR, 2008).

Part of claiming a rightful place in the host countries is full participation in society. Women who are alone or who are heads of household must be assisted with the tools and training that will permit them to acquire housing, transportation, healthcare, and other necessities, with the eventual goal of being fully independent and contributing members of their new communities. Preparing for the workforce through talent development is the first step on their journey of independence and empowerment (Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008). In this chapter, we will discuss how potential talent can be identified and developed during the critical stage of pre-employment of refugee women resettling in industrialized countries.

BACKGROUND OF REFUGEES

Refugees are persons who have “a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of race, religion, nationality, membership to a particular social group or political opinion, and unable or, because of such fear, are unwilling to return to that country (United States of America, 2016, p. 1). This definition extends to persons escaping war, other armed conflicts, or generalized violence (UNHCR, 2014). As global climate change becomes more pronounced, UNHCR expects increasing numbers of refugees due to natural disasters (UNCHR, 2008). Prior to entering industrialized countries of asylum such as the United States, most refugees typically spend years at a refugee camp where they are processed for refugee status. Once granted by the government of an industrialized country, refugees are classified as part of the *immigrant* or the *foreign-born* population. If sent to the United States, they may apply for lawful permanent residence or a green card after one year of continuous presence in the United States, and citizenship after 5 years (Lyons, 2008; Nwosu, Batalova, & Auclair, 2014). Aside from refugees, other immigrants include asylees, naturalized citizens, green card holders, persons on temporary visas, and the unauthorized or undocumented.

While refugees are referred to as immigrants, the profile and needs of refugees are distinctly different from the rest of the foreign-born population. Compared to other immigrants, the size of the refugee population is small, but it is considered a vulnerable group because of the hardships they have endured due to war, civil unrest, and forced migration (Brandt, 2010; Wrigley, 2007). Host countries such as the United States with long-established humanitarian programs ensure that refugees receive special assistance in resettlement transitions, which include family reunification; adult English literacy programs linked to employment, job placement services, housing, mental health counseling, medical care, and integra-

tion programs (Brandt, 2010; Lyons, 2008; University of Pittsburgh, 2014, Wrigley, 2007). Unlike other types of immigrants, refugees are legally authorized to work in the country upon resettlement, and in the United States are eligible for the same public benefits and services as U.S. citizens (Lyons, 2008).

Refugee Women

As of December 2016, the United States had legally admitted about 8,000 refugees. The top five groups originated from Congo, Syria, Burma, Iraq, and Somalia, and approximately half of them were women (Martin, 2004; United States Department of State, 2016).

Researchers have suggested that refugee arrivals tend to be more women than men from more rural homelands who resettle in urban communities with fewer pre-established community support structures, and refugees are more educationally disadvantaged compared to other types of immigrants (Connor, 2010; Magno, 2008; Wrigley, 2007). Additionally, female refugee arrivals from Africa and the Middle East are single mothers who are more at risk for marginalization in their new country due to having the sole responsibility of childcare and the need to attain self-sufficiency (Magno, 2008). Though the 2011 Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) report did not distinguish the education and English proficiency levels between refugee men and women (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2011), other researchers have suggested that refugee women arrive at their countries of resettlement with varying levels of skill, work experience, and education (Guerin, Guerin, Diirye, & Abdi, 2005; Martin, 2004; Warriner, 2004).

As of 2011, the employment rate for refugee men was 62%, compared to 42% for refugee women. More refugee men also actively looked for work (73%), compared to the women (53%), although it is not clear in the ORR report in what types of jobs or organizations refugee women are employed (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). However, other researchers have determined that if refugees do find employment, they typically work in low-paying, low-status jobs, and are hired often without regard to their human capital, within poor working conditions with little opportunity for career advancement (Bloch, 2009; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Lamba, 2003; Morrice, 2007; Sienkiewicz, Mauceri, Howell, & Bibeau, 2013; Yakushko, 2010). This suggests that economic adjustment can continue to be challenging for refugee populations. Connor (2010) observed that refugees generally had more room for economic progress than other immigrant groups, but only because they

entered the U.S. labor market at a much lower occupational level than other immigrant groups.

Despite these conditions, refugee women are found to be resilient, which debunks the stereotype of the poor, failing, and unmotivated immigrant (Warriner, 2004). Many are optimistic and determined to rebuild their lives in their new communities by balancing motherhood, being committed students, and pursuing or resuming their careers (Yakushko, 2006). Many refugee women want to work and become more educated. Regardless of marital status, they understand that employment will lead to improved lives for themselves and their families (Warriner, 2004). This determination is evident in an Australian study of Sudanese refugees conducted by Burgoyne and Hull (2007). Burgoyne and Hull found that despite low levels of English and formal basic education, younger Sudanese refugee women aged 25–44 years old were more eager to enter the workforce in comparison to middle-aged or older women. In order to assist their own and their children’s resettlement, the number of women attendees of English classes equally matched that of the men. Clearly, refugee women understand the need for training and education to enhance their language, skills, and therefore their economic positions in their new country (Glastra & Meerman, 2011; Warriner, 2004; Yakushko, 2010). Key to capitalizing on refugee women’s commitment as well as identifying potential hidden skills and abilities is talent development.

TALENT IS CRITICAL TO EMPLOYABILITY

Talent is critical to refugees being employable (Nilsson & Ellstrom, 2012). Employability considers the aspects of an individual’s human capital and talent including knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and personal characteristics. An individual may possess characteristics marketed as desirable to employers, however these are not necessarily associated with talent, such as formal qualifications and social capital (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Knight & Yorke, 2004; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Though employability is a complex concept, an individual’s formal credentials and degrees are generally considered to be central to individual employability (Nilsson & Ellstrom, 2012). Work experience is also valued by employers and those skills acquired on the job can have a positive impact on future employment prospects (de Vroome & van Tubergen, 2010).

Finding ways in which talent, training, and skillsets can be identified, expressed, and developed is important at all stages of an individual’s work life, but this task is especially crucial in the pre-employment stage. Talent is often perceived as an individual characteristic based on a socially acceptable and restricted set of characteristics and behaviors in situated contexts

(Barab & Plucker, 2002; Glastra & Meerman, 2012). For talent to be identified, expressed, and developed in refugee women, they must be given the opportunity to build and strengthen both human and social capital. At the pre-employment stage, human capital such as knowledge, skills, and experience can be identified, expressed, and developed through pre-employment educational and training opportunities. Further, newcomers who achieve academic qualifications still face a disadvantage if they do not also have the appropriate social capital (Morrice, 2007). Opportunities to build “bridging” or “linking” social capital (Putnam, 2000) must also be identified, expressed, and developed at the pre-employment stage, which will enable them to learn, access information, and gain advantage from extended connections and relationships built outside their own social milieu.

Accessing the workforce in one’s first job is a challenge for all workers—citizens and migrants alike. The ability to communicate and display relevant skills for the workplace is crucial to employability and the transition to employment.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT AT THE PRE-EMPLOYMENT STAGE

Upon arrival in the industrialized country of resettlement, refugee women who wish to find employment are typically assisted by resettlement agencies in education, training, and integration. This section describes the skills that refugee women bring with them to resettling countries or may gain from learning experiences during the resettlement and pre-employment stages, and demonstrates how the development of talent can occur at the pre-employment stage.

Job Skills and English Language Literacy

As an initial step toward career advancement, refugee women are assisted in finding opportunities for pre-employment training. This includes short-term training such as vocational training, on-the-job-training, or job clubs. For example, some discretionary assistance programs offer short-term vocational skill training for 3 to 4 months in a certified skill (Halpern, 2008). Some agencies may also have a “job club” where refugees can practice writing resumes and job applications.

Pre-employment training also includes English-as-a-second-language (ESL) training, with a particular emphasis on employment-related English (Halpern, 2008). ESL classes are largely offered by independent nonprofit organizations and community colleges (Martin, 2004). Though some

nonprofit community organizations offer free English language literacy training, it can be costly to study for skills recertification, earn a high school diploma or its equivalent (GED), attend higher education, or pursue other forms of adult education (Cultural Orientation Resource Center, 2012). Some pre-employment education programs also include financial literacy, where refugees learn basic skills as debit card usage, as well as more advanced skills such as maintaining credit in the context of the United States financial system (Halpern, 2008). Most of these educational programs have monthly tests that assess various competencies to see whether students are ready for employment (Elkin, Barden, & Mueller, 2008).

In a study by Koyama (2013), a Somali woman refugee was identified for her ability to learn English very quickly while undergoing English language training at a refugee camp. Her instructor recognized this skill and set her aside for further language tutoring. By the time she arrived in the United States to resettle, her English was good enough to help her ease into workforce training activities and find work. Despite the challenging conditions of being a widow and a single mother, living in poverty, and having no long-term formal education, this case exemplifies the identification and development of potential talent in the stages prior to securing employment. The ability to learn, adapt, and utilize self-efficacy are precisely the types of talent that individuals who are working with refugees need to focus on and, if possible, cultivate.

Life Skills

In addition to offering English literacy and vocational training, some nonprofit community organizations also provide refugees cultural orientation, and nonformal and practical life skills education (Magno, 2008; Shriberg, Downs-Karkos, & Weisberg, 2012; Suleman & Whiteford, 2013). Such community organizations help refugees learn how to navigate local systems of education and employment, and discuss relevant issues of tenancy, healthcare, maternal literacy and childcare, transportation, and financial services. For refugee women especially, such settings encourage the social networking needed to bring them together to learn informally from each other, communicate their needs, or help them find employment (Butterwick, 2003; Lyytinen & Kullenberg, 2013; Magno, 2008; Shriberg, et al., 2012; Suleman & Whiteford, 2013). Because this knowledge helps to build a refugee's confidence in engaging in her environment, such learning opportunities are believed to be critical in resettlement transitions and integral to occupational engagement and well-being (Suleman & Whiteford, 2013).

In such nonformal settings, refugee women are already undergoing learning activities that could build on current strengths and develop potential talent. For instance, one such community organization encourages refugee women to participate in the organization's community activities to help them learn critical knowledge and skills that they would otherwise not obtain through formal education (Magno, 2008). Some of these knowledge and skills include computer and typing skills, public speaking, and budgeting. By interacting with other women of varied cultures, nationalities, and backgrounds, they are encouraged to practice their English communication skills and broaden their understanding of different cultures. In addition, forming relationships across cultures improves their opportunities for workforce success. By connecting with others, they are able to form a peer network or support group. Ties with local individuals or other immigrants are found to be valuable in refugees' motivation for adaptation (de Vroome & van Tubergen, 2010; Sienkiewicz et al., 2013).

CHALLENGES TO THE TALENT DEVELOPMENT OF REFUGEE WOMEN

It is clear that potential talent can be developed by building on current skills and strengths refugee women bring with them upon arrival, or can be encouraged through job skill training and life skills education by participating in learning opportunities prior to employment. However, a number of issues remain as to why some of these programs may not be conducive in the identification and development of women refugee talent at the pre-employment stage.

Program Access, Quality, and Cultural Barriers

In order to build on strengths and for potential talent to emerge, programs for refugee women must be sensitive to their needs and meet the conditions for facilitative and meaningful learning. Many workforce development programs focus on male-dominated jobs (Manery & Cohen, 2003; Martin, 2004). Martin (2004) found that thus far development-oriented efforts for refugee participants have been focused on refugee men. This is because many of the projects designed to promote community development consisted of large-scale construction and reforestation schemes, which primarily involve employing refugee men. Development-oriented projects and programs in countries of asylum and resettlement are believed to enhance refugee economic independence, reduce the host country's

refugee assistance costs, and facilitate returns traditionally through infrastructure improvement (Martin, 2004).

Even if training programs are available, refugee women may not be able to access them due to issues with childcare, transportation, family responsibilities, and cultural barriers (Davison, 1981). The provision of transportation and childcare services on site can help increase the participation of refugee women in training, education, and employment. Some educational classes were found to be not culturally sensitive for refugee women (Davison, 1981). Educational classes that combine men and women together in the same room may discourage refugee women from attending and participating in classes. In attending mixed classes, some refugee women claim to be afraid that men would lose face if the women did better, and other women professed shyness in such classes. In addition, some refugee women preferred to participate in learning sessions that were held in informal settings versus formally organized classes. This was because formal classes required them to seek approval from their husbands and were perceived to be threatening to cultural beliefs about family unity and male authority.

Furthermore, literacy programs do not sufficiently assess individual learning and progression levels due to lack of resources (Clayton, 2005; Elkin et al., 2008). Some refugee women with intermediate English skills have expressed frustrations at being placed, by default, in the same classrooms as those who were just learning the English alphabet (Clayton, 2005).

Unrealistic Timelines to Employment

In the United States, refugees have an average of 90 days to find employment (Halpern, 2008; Warriner, 2004). Within this period, refugees are on welfare and receive assistance to learn English, get job skills training, and find jobs. Beyond the average 90-day period, refugees risk losing welfare assistance, thus securing paid employment is prioritized over learning English and other skills integral for long-term self-sufficiency (Dunman, 2006; Elkin et al., 2008; Sienkewicz et al., 2013). This timeline is unrealistic for anyone, but especially so for refugee women who are single parents, have limited financial and social support for childcare, lack transportation to participate in classes, have less formal education than men, and have lower levels of English proficiency (Martin, 2004; Spero, 1985; Warriner, 2004). In their study on Sudanese refugee women resettling in Australia, Burgoyne and Hull (2007) found that those with a low basic formal education and limited English needed more time to develop learning skills, and skills in speaking, reading, and writing English. Because of family responsibilities, which often include caring for many children, and/or being the sole

breadwinners, refugees women were often too overfatigued to learn. Many immigrants and refugees have reported feelings of exhaustion because of the challenges of working multiple jobs and learning the language and culture while struggling with family responsibilities (Yakushko, 2010).

Lack of Workforce Development Program Integration

In addition to the unrealistic 90-day timeline, there are very few programs that integrate English language skills with contextualized job skills training (Moran & Petsod, 2003). It is assumed that employers will provide the necessary training once refugee women are employed, but it is also rare for employers to invest in basic skills training such as reading, writing, math, and English proficiency in the workplace (Moran & Petsod, 2003; Yakushko et al., 2008). Koyama (2013) quoted several managers who did not believe improving language skills was in an employer's best interest. "Several managers concurred and candidly identified the greatest risk in hiring refugees as the possibility that once they learned more English, the refugees would find more challenging, higher-paid positions" (2013, p. 958). Balancing the best interests of both workers and employers may prove to be a long-term challenge.

Researchers have demonstrated that cultural orientation classes are not mandated nor consistently integrated with pre-employment programs for refugees. Cultural orientation classes discuss topics such as work norms, barriers to finding gainful employment in their country of resettlement, and the current economy (de Vroome & van Tubergen, 2010; Sienkewicz et al., 2013). If refugees do attend cultural orientation, these classes are not offered regularly, vary in program length, and should be reviewed to include topics that better prepare refugees for life in the country, such as positive coping strategies in dealing with stressors related to job seeking and employment identity (Sienkewicz et al., 2013).

In fleeing war and civil unrest in their home countries, many of these women have also experienced violent traumatic events. Researchers have found that refugees who experienced violent traumatic events prior to resettlement were less motivated to learn a foreign language compared to other immigrants who voluntarily left their home countries (Iversen, Sveaass, & Morken, 2012). The opportunity for refugees to learn coping strategies enough to be motivated to learn English, in addition to learning skills for employability and adjusting to a new country, could take more than 3 months to accomplish. Benseman (2014) noted that refugee learning is variable and it may take as long as 4 to 5 years just to learn survival English. However, they leave English classes because of the pressure to find jobs.

To date, there is little research on the integration of mental health and trauma counseling in current skill development programming for refugees. Because the motivation to learn a new language is affected by past traumatic experiences, and language learning is key to employability, psychosocial support programs should also be integrated in resettlement assistance and workforce development programs (Cardozo, Talley, Burton, & Crawford, 2004; Iversen et al., 2014). Doing so could increase self-sufficiency, which is linked to newcomers' perceptions of their success. Self-efficacy may be developed and reinforced through career and behavioral counseling (Yakushko et al., 2008). Similarly, Suleman and Whiteford (2013) noted the potential value of what they called "tenacity skills" (p. 206). Although self-efficacy is not a trait that individuals possess in equal measure, fostering feelings of success and competence is important to mental and emotional health, as well as economic achievement (Yakushko, 2010). Identifying evidence of self-efficacy and bringing that evidence forward as a talent to be developed is one way to recognize an individual's abilities.

Nonrecognition of Current Skills and Qualifications

The nonrecognition of the current skills and qualifications of refugees as major barriers to employability and career advancement is well-documented. Often times, employers do not recognize the refugees' work experience and education that they received from their home countries. Refugees who have earned professional degrees in their home countries often end up in jobs that they are overqualified for, thus rendering them underemployed or needing to be retrained for what is accepted as "relevant" work experience and formal qualifications (Bloch, 2009; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Glastra & Meerman, 2012; Lamba, 2003; Tomlinson & Egan, 2002). In their originating countries, many refugee women may have worked in mostly rural or agricultural jobs, skills that may not be perceived as transferrable to jobs in urban, industrialized environments (Spero, 1985). Thus, these women need to retrain for new jobs, or risk working in low-paying, low-skilled jobs with little to no advancement, or not being offered a job at all.

Refugee women bring many skills with them before they arrive at their country of resettlement. In a study on Somali refugee women resettling in New Zealand, Guerin et al. (2005) found that these refugee women possessed a diverse set of skills and work experience gained from Somalia. Some had been self-employed and had their own small businesses, from owning and operating reputable establishments such as restaurants or clothing stores, to trading dry foods and farming. Others had professional careers as nurses and factory workers. These prior work experiences reflect

varied skills and talents in business and financial management, marketing, and healthcare, as well as skills in negotiation, social networking, and knowledge of regional-specific trades, to name a few (Guerin et al., p. 45). Upon arriving in New Zealand, these refugee women were concerned about their lack of fluency in formal and informal settings in which they could demonstrate their social and communication skills. If they were to resume the same work in their country of resettlement, current programs would need to acknowledge the prior work experiences and skills obtained from their origin countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations attempt to address the challenges associated with the development of talent in refugee women during the pre-employment stage. They include the utilization of the nonprofit community organization and its partners as a source of holistic and integrated learning and development, developing strategies to identify and recognize prior skills and talent, and developing the refugee womans' current skill-sets for self-employment.

The Nonprofit Community Sector and Its Partners

The nonprofit sector is increasingly taking on the lion's share in addressing needs associated with integrated learning experiences. These nonprofit organizations partner with businesses and community colleges in providing vocational English in the context of building skills that employers need, as well as place refugee program participants in the talent pipeline for future job opportunities with employers (Moran & Petsod, 2003). In addition, nonprofit community centers in the United States and Canada that are run by and for immigrant and refugee women's increasingly provide a more holistic, integrated approach to skills development (Manery & Cohen, 2003). These training programs combine employment-related English language instruction, job training, job services, work experience, and life skills training. Community-based programs with a holistic approach to skill development are said to be more effective because they are more responsive to women's needs and goals in improving employability (Manery & Cohen, 2003). In addition, work experiences through community organization activities, if recognized as informal on-the-job experiences, enable refugee women to demonstrate and build various skills, such as communicating in English and social networking (Magno, 2008; Manery & Cohen, 2003). Such conditions of integrated and holistic learning experiences can

provide a rich avenue for identification, recognition, and development of potential talent and strengths of refugee women.

Integrate Mentoring With Education and Training

Aside from including refugee women in the talent pipeline, employers who partner with nonprofit community organizations can also help refugee women with their transition to employment by matching them with mentors from the organization. Research shows that refugee women who receive mentoring by local or native-born working women, in combination with life skills education, cultural orientation, and pre-employment job skill development, fare better in terms of their transition to employment (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007; Dennett, 2008; Manery & Cohen, 2003). In matching a refugee's career goals with a mentor's professional expertise, age, gender, and regional proximity, the mentor can guide the refugee with (a) work issues, such as work norms and culture, resume writing, computer skills, resources for education and training, and expand the refugee's network of friends and professional associates; and (b) practical life issues (such as teaching how to pay the bills, take public transportation, etc.), awareness of societal and cultural norms, and general support and understanding of refugees' experiences in rebuilding lives, finding employment, or advancing their careers (Dennett, 2008). Forming developmental relationships such as mentoring, providing psycho-social support, and career advising, is a type of talent development strategy that aims to help talented individuals understand big picture issues and see new perspectives (Garavan, Carbery, & Rock, 2011). In this relationship, the mentor's role can also be that of someone who can identify refugee strengths and talent, encourage these talents to be developed during the pre-employment stage, and recommend potential jobs where talents can be recognized and further developed. It can also be implied that a developmental relationship is a type of social capital, such that the relationship enables a refugee woman to extend her professional network and learn from a mentor who has a similar work environment. Though mentorship is said to be beneficial to refugee resettlement and pre-employment transitions, such arrangements are rare as they are only sometimes a part of volunteer and advocacy programs of employer and nonprofit partnerships (Dennett, 2008).

Integrate Counseling With Education and Training

It is also evident that psychosocial well-being and self-efficacy is critical to refugee women as they adjust to new lives and transition to employment.

Though trauma counseling is provided by resettlement agencies, research suggests that counseling and psycho-social support programs may not be well-integrated with other refugee programs that aim to improve employability (Iversen et al., 2014; Cardozo et al., 2004).

Strategies to Identify and Recognize Talent

Before talent can be developed, it first has to be identified and recognized. To date, there is growing interest in innovative strategies that refugee women, adult educators, career counselors, and potential employers can participate in order to reveal hidden talent, make these recognizable, and thus have the potential to be developed.

Educate the Educator

Educators of adult refugees are often the first to interact with refugee women during the pre-employment stage thus making these educators instrumental in the talent development of refugee women. However, most of these educators are volunteers of community organizations who service refugees and who may have little professional experience in adult learning, varied and effective teaching methods, work with interpreters, and teach non-English speakers (Perry & Hart, 2012; Tuomi, 2005). Due to the often limited funding of community organizations in providing training for these educators of adult refugees, most educators rely on self-directed learning by reading professional books, utilizing the Internet for teaching and learning resources, asking experts for advice, and observing and reflecting on teaching experiences. Benseman (2014) conducted a study in New Zealand and found that bilingual tutors are most effective, and that refugee educators in general needed greater access to cross-cultural sensitivity training and translated material to support instructional preparation and delivery. If educators of adult refugees received more support for such professional development, they may become more skilled in identifying and recognizing students' strengths, skills, and talents during their teaching experiences, which might enable them to further nurture these strengths through a variety of meaningful learning experiences.

The Importance of Life Skills

In the United Kingdom, the "life curriculum vitae" or life CV has been used with refugees to support conventional, westernized CVs where only

formal education is listed (Schultheiss, Watts, Sterland, & O'Neill, 2011). Through a story-telling process, the life CV tells (a) the experiences of the refugee; (b) enables them to expose talents, skills, and abilities that would otherwise be overlooked if the focus was on the formal education typically required; and (c) highlights how these experiences can be used in the job market. The study finds that through this process many strengths are revealed, such as coping strategies, resiliency, skills, knowledge, qualifications, support networks, and values. The life CV has also been found to reduce negative attitudes in the recruitment and development process that may undermine skills, knowledge, and self-efficacy that typically results in talents remaining hidden, unrecognized, and disrupting identity. Such a process can be used to advocate alternative practices as a means of demonstrating potential talent for development and employability. The importance of considering life experiences when evaluating the skillsets of migrants has also been noted in other studies (Suleman & Whiteford, 2013; Werquin, 2012).

Emphasize the Recognition of Prior Learning

Another consideration is the use of services and assessments dedicated to recognizing refugees' human capital. These are formal skills and qualifications obtained overseas, or for those lacking such formal credentials, the recognition of prior learning, skills, and experience. In Scotland, a study explored the need for dedicated recognition services—or recognition of prior learning (RPL)—as a response to an increasing number of migrant workers and refugees in that country (Guest & Vecchia, 2010). It was found that many education and training providers and employers were already using some form of recognition of prior skills and qualifications, albeit with different definitions. Thus, there is a need for a common, easily identifiable approach to the recognition of skills, learning, and qualifications, as well as the transferability of these skills, to support refugee access to relevant education, training, and employment. At present, relevant stakeholders in Scotland are collaborating to develop an RPL toolkit that includes information on assessing, documenting, and recording previous learning and skills, which can be used by education and training providers, employers, and human resource personnel (Guest & Vecchia, 2010; Werquin, 2012).

Self-Identification of Talent Potential

Career counselors can help refugee women in the self-identification of talent and potential. Yakushko et al. (2008) highlighted the importance of

working with newcomers to facilitate adjustment, social network development, and language skills. Using the social cognitive career theory, they noted that the context of an individual's life experiences influenced both career choices and opportunities; career advisers and counselors may need to help clients to reframe a trait (such as having an accent) as an indication of adaptability, intelligence, and resilience.

Building on Current Skillsets for Self-Employment

If being employed by an organization is not an option for personal or cultural reasons, self-employment may be an alternative choice. As discussed earlier, many refugee women arrive with limited formal schooling, limited English, and less formal credentials compared to men. But it is possible that they have skills learned as they go through their daily lives or previous work experiences, which may be perceived as strengths and potential talents to be developed. For instance, recent arrivals of Karenni refugee women from Burma have leveraged their current skills in traditional weaving and basket making into the means of a livelihood in Utah (Stephenson, Smith, Gibson, & Watson, 2013). In addition, many refugee women volunteer in the activities of nonprofit community organizations. Skills from these nonformal and informal learning experiences may be assessed given the opportunity to demonstrate them in such settings.

Currently, there are a few nonprofit community organizations that help develop the talents of refugee women and migrants in microenterprise. Aside from handicrafts, other small businesses include food preparation, tailoring, and caregiving for adults or children. Although women who have low levels of education may need support through explanation of laws and regulations, taxes and bookkeeping, and continuing education, entrepreneurialism may be a way for women to develop independence, creativity, and self-efficacy. Microlending may be a particularly promising vehicle for new business development. Its use as an economic tool, particularly for women, has been well-documented (Yunus, 2008)

FUTURE TRENDS

We can expect to see continual inflows of refugee women at all skill levels and continued efforts to successfully integrate them into society and productive lives. Although much attention is placed upon regions of the world in crisis, individuals are displaced and flee from their countries for a variety of reasons. As the global climate changes, future crises will be related to famine, riparian or coastal flooding, and drought (UNHCR, 2008). How

communities and businesses bring newcomers into the economy will be vital to the social stability and economic well-being of all citizens.

CONCLUSION

Talent development is a process wherein the pre-employment stage holds great potential for the identification and development of strengths and talents. This is particularly true when communities are seeking to successfully integrate vulnerable groups like refugee women into society. Gender roles, trauma, educational background, and family responsibility disproportionately affect these women. Community support for the investment in adult education in nonprofit sectors, microbusiness incubators, integrated workforce development programs, and social support networks all have the potential to develop the talents of refugee women and create their successful transition into the workforce and society. The efforts of many industrialized countries are noted, but much more work needs to be done for meaningful and sustainable socioeconomic development.

REFERENCES

- Barab, S. A., & Plucker, J. A. (2002). Smart people or smart contexts? Cognition, ability, and talent development in an age of situated approaches to knowing and learning. *Educational Psychologist, 37*(3), 165–182.
- Benseman, J. (2014). Adult refugee learners with limited literacy: Needs and effective responses. *Refugee, 3*(1), 93–103.
- Bloch, A. (2009). Barriers to the labour market: Refugees in Britain. In S. McKay (Ed.), *Refugees, recent migrants and employment: Challenging barriers and exploring pathways* (pp. 165–183). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Brandt, K. (2010). *Making immigrant integration work: A case study of refugee resettlement in Philadelphia*. Unpublished master's thesis, Iowa State University, Ames, IA.
- Burgoynne, U., & Hull, O. (2007). Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners: Support document—methodology and literature review. Adelaide, South Australia: *National Centre for Vocational Education Research*.
- Butterwick, S. (2003). Life skills training: Open for discussion. In M. G. Cohen (Ed.), *Training the excluded for work: Access and equity for women, immigrants, first nations, youth, and people with low income* (pp. 161–177). Vancouver, BC, Canada: UBC Press.
- Cardozo, B. L., Talley, L., Burton, A., & Crawford, C. (2004). Karenni refugees living in Thai–Burmese border camps: Traumatic experiences, mental health outcomes, and social functioning. *Social Science & Medicine, 58*(12), 2637–2644.

- Clayton, P. (2005). Blank slates or hidden treasure? Assessing and building on the experiential learning of migrant and refugee women in European countries. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 24(3), 227–242.
- Colic-Peisker, V., & Tilbury, F. (2006). Employment niches for recent refugees: Segmented labour market in twenty-first century Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 19(2), 203–229.
- Connor, P. (2010). Explaining the refugee gap: Economic outcomes of refugees versus other immigrants. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(3), 377–397.
- Cultural Orientation Resource Center, Center for Applied Linguistics. (2012). *Welcome to the United States: A guidebook for refugees* (4th ed). Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.culturalorientation.net/content/download/2185/12569/version/1/file/2012-English-Welcome_Guide.pdf
- Davison, L. (1981). Refugee women: Special needs and programs. *Journal of Refugee Resettlement*, 1(3), 16–26.
- Dennett, R. (2008). Taking the next step: The importance of mentoring. *Migration Action*, (1), 16.
- de Vroome, T., & van Tubergen, F. (2010). The employment experiences of refugees in the Netherlands. *International Migration Review*, 44(2), 376–403.
- Elkin, S., Barden, B., & Mueller, M. (2008). *The evaluation of the refugee social service (RSS) and targeted assistance formula grant (TAG) programs: Sacramento case study*. Washington DC: United States Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/sacramentocasestudy.pdf>
- Garavan, T. N., Carbery, R., & Rock, A. (2012). Mapping talent development: Definition, scope and architecture. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 36(1), 5–24.
- Glastra, F. J., & Meerman, M. (2012). Developing ethnic talent in the Dutch national tax administration: A case study. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 36(1), 105–124.
- Guest, P., & Vecchia, M. (2010). *Scoping study on support mechanisms for the recognition of the skills, learning, and qualifications of migrant workers and refugees: Final report*. Glasgow, Scotland: Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership.
- Halpern, P. (2008). *Refugee economic self-sufficiency: An exploratory study of approaches used in Office of Refugee Resettlement programs*. Washington DC: United States Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/RefugeeSelfSuff/report.pdf>.
- Hillage, J., & Pollard, E. (1998). *Employability: Developing a framework for policy analysis*. London, England: Department for Education and Employment.
- Iversen, V. C., Sveaass, N., & Morken, G. (2014). The role of trauma and psychological distress on motivation for foreign language acquisition among refugees. *International Journal of Culture and Mental Health*, 7(1), 59–67.
- Knight, P., & Yorke, M. (2004). *Learning, curriculum and employability in higher education*. London, England: Routledge.
- Koyama, J. (2013). Resettling notions of social mobility: Locating refugees as ‘educable’ and ‘employable.’ *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34(5/6), 947–965.

- Lamba, N. K. (2003). The employment experiences of Canadian refugees: Measuring the impact of human and social capital on quality of employment. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 40(1), 45–64.
- Lyons, C. (2008). Differentiating between refugees and immigrants: Two sets of challenges. In *Navigating government immigration issues: Leading immigration and refugee resettlement experts on addressing employment, education, and health care issues for immigrants* (pp. 7–20). USA: Thomson/Aspatore.
- Lyytinen, E., & Kullenberg, J. (2013). *An analytical report: Urban refugee research*. New York, NY: Women's Refugee Commission. Retrieved from http://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Urban_Refugee_Research_Analytical_Report_-_February_2013.pdf
- Magno, C. (2008). Refuge from crisis: Refugee women build political capital. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 6(2), 119–130.
- Manery, M., & Cohen, M. G. (2003). Community skills training by and for immigrant women. In M. G. Cohen (Ed.), *Training the excluded for work: Access and equity for women, immigrants, first nations, youth, and people with low income* (pp. 145–160). Vancouver, BC, Canada: UBC Press.
- Martin, S. F. (2004). *Refugee women* (2nd ed.). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- McQuaid, R. W., & Lindsay, C. (2005). The concept of employability. *Urban Studies*, 42(2), 197–219.
- Moran, T., & Petsod, D. (2003). *Newcomers in the American workplace: Improving employment outcomes for low-wage immigrants and refugees*. New York, NY: Rockefeller Foundation.
- Morrice, L. (2007). Lifelong learning and the social integration of refugees in the UK: The significance of social capital. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 26(2), 155–172.
- Nilsson, S., & Ellström, P. E. (2012). Employability and talent management: Challenges for HRD practices. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 36(1), 26–45.
- Nwosu, C., Batalova, J., & Auclair, G. (2014, April 28). Frequently requested statistics on immigrants and immigration in the United States. *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved from <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states>
- Perry, K. H., & Hart, S. J. (2012). “I’m just kind of winging it”: Preparing and supporting educators of adult refugee learners. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56(2), 110–122.
- Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Schultheiss, D. E., Watts, J., Sterland, L., & O’Neill, M. (2011). Career, migration and the life CV: A relational cultural analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 78, 334–341.
- Shriberg, J., Downs-Karkos, S., & Weisberg, S. (2012). Non-formal education as a means of supporting the well-being of resettled refugees: Case studies of community approaches in Denver, Colorado. In L. Demirdjian (Ed.), *Education as a humanitarian response: Education, refugees, and asylum seekers* (pp. 131–150). New York, NY: Continuum.

- Sienkiewicz, H. C., Mauceri, K. G., Howell, E. C., & Bibeau, D. L. (2013). Untapped resources: Refugee employment experiences in central North Carolina. *Work, 45*, 17–24.
- Spero, A. (1985). *In America and in need: Immigrant, refugee, and entrant women*. Washington, DC: American Association of Community and Junior Colleges.
- Stephenson, S. M., Smith, Y. J., Gibson, M., & Watson, V. (2013). Traditional weaving as an occupation of Karen refugee women. *Journal of Occupational Science, 20*(3), 224–235.
- Suleman, A. S. & Whiteford, G. E. (2013). Understanding occupational transitions in forced migration: The importance of life skills in early refugee resettlement. *Journal of Occupational Science, 20*(2), 201–210.
- Tomlinson, F., & Egan, S. (2002). From marginalization to (dis)empowerment: Organizing training and employment services for refugees. *Human Relations, 55*(8), 1019–1043.
- Tuomi, M. T. (2005). Agents of social change in education. *Community Development Journal, 40*(2), 205–211.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2008). *UNHCR handbook for the protection of women and girls*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/47cfa9fe2.html>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2014). *UNHCR global trends*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/556725e69.html#_ga=1.209212820.707237058.1465571786
- United States Department of Health and Human Services. (2011). *Report to congress, FY 2011*. Washington D.C.: Office of Refugee Resettlement. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/fy_2011_orr_annual_report.pdf
- United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (2016). *Refugee admissions report*. Retrieved from <http://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>
- United States of America for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2016). *What is a refugee*. Retrieved from <http://www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee/>
- University of Pittsburgh. (2014). *Keep it real: Refugee facts*. Retrieved from <http://www.pitt.edu/~sorc/keepitreal/RefugeeFacts.html>
- Warriner, D. (2004). “The days now is very hard for my family”: The negotiation and construction of gendered work identities among newly arrived refugee women. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 3*(4), 279–294.
- Werquin, P. (2012). The missing link to connect education and employment: Recognition of nonformal and informal learning outcomes. *Journal of Education and Work, 25*(3), 259–278.
- Wrigley, H. (2007). Beyond the lifeboat: Improving language, citizenship, and training services for immigrants and refugees. In A. Belzer (Ed.), *Toward defining and improving quality in adult basic education: Issues and challenges* (pp. 221–239). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Yakushko, O. (2006). Career concerns of immigrant women. In W. B. Walsh & M. J. Heppner (Eds.), *Handbook of career counseling for women* (2nd ed., pp. 387–425). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Yakushko, O. (2010). Stress and coping strategies in the lives of recent immigrants: A grounded theory model. *International Journal of Advances in Counseling, 32*, 256–273.
- Yakushko, O., Backhaus, A., Watson, M., Ngaruiya, K., & Gonzalez, J. (2008). Career development concerns of recent immigrants and refugees. *Journal of Career Development, 34*(4), 362–396.
- Yunus, M. (2008). *Creating a world without poverty: Social business and the future of capitalism*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.