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A Liminal Perspective of Managing Highly Skilled refugee Workforce Integration: The

Role of HR Practices

Abstract

The integration of highly skilled refugees into a destination country's workforce remains a global concern. This situation can be attributed to centrifugal approaches and a lack prescience as to how organisations can better integrate these refugees. We address this need by developing a 'liminal' conceptual model to understand the specific challenges that shape high skilled refugees' experience in finding suitable employment. Liminality is a state that is temporary and transitional, and is an appropriate lens as it allows for a synoptic view of refugees' experiences that includes pre and post migratory stress, identity reconstruction and professional integration. We then show how human resource management in particular psychological wellbeing, employee engagement, and learning and development practices that are underpinned by a strong diversity climate, can help address the experiences of ambiguity and disorientation faced by high skilled refugees while integrating into the workforce.

Keywords: liminality, highly skilled refugees, workforce integration, wellbeing, employee engagement, learning and development, diversity climate

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

Among migrant populations, refugees are the most vulnerable as they are forced to leave their country of origin under hazardous circumstances and they are exposed to multiple pre and post-migratory stressors (Mann & Fazil, 2006). These factors can affect their psychical and mental health (World Health Organization, 2018), and ultimately their overall ability to settle in their host countries (Li, Liddell & Nickerson, 2016). Despite this, refugees generally show capacity to be resilient and with the appropriate support, they can become active citizens and contribute to the economy of their destination country.

We argue that highly skilled refugees' integration into the destination country's workforces is inconsistent at best. This variability can be attributed to centrifugal approaches adopted by employers and a lack prescience as to how organisations can better integrate these refugees. The aim of this paper is to develop a conceptual model of 'liminality', a rite of passage characterised by ambiguity (Beech, 2011), adopted to understand the specific challenges that high skilled refugees might experience in finding suitable employment. This conceptual framework might provide the basis of future interventions to support the integration of this specific population into the destination country's workforce.

In developing our conceptual model, we adopt guidelines provided by Gilson and Goldberg (2015), Antonakis, Bartardox, Liu, and Schriesheim (2014), and Cropanzano (2009). Firstly, we focus on identifying new relationships amongst established constructs. Secondly, inspired by contemporary approaches e.g. Lee, Szkudlarek, Nguyen, and Nardon (2018), we draw from contemprary literature across disciplines specifically refugee studies, psychology and human resource management, in enabling us to focus on the micro and meso levels of refugee integration in the workforce. Finally, our conceptual model involve developing propositions in bridging validation and usefulness.

In doing so we adopt liminality as a lens to gain insight into refugees' experiences in particular pre and post migratory stress, identity reconstruction, and professional integration.

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

We also adopt a more nuanced perspective as we argue that different management practices are required for specific groups of refugees especially in terms of gender, marital status and the presence of dependents. Finally, we integrate insights from refugee studies with the field of human resource management in particular the role of psychological wellbeing, employee engagement, and learning and development practices that are underpinned by a diversity climate.

The next section argues the value of using liminality as lens to understand the experiences of highly skilled refugee from their migratory process to professional integration. This is followed by an account of the key stages in refugees' liminal experience. We then introduce our conceptual model supported by arguments that link the human resource (HR) practices of psychological wellbeing, learning and development, and employee engagement. In these discussions, we propose the relationship between each liminal stage and HR practices. We then conclude the paper contending that a diversity climate must be present at micro and meso levels in tailoring HR practices.

Liminality as a Lens

From an anthropological perspective, liminality is a state that is temporary and transitional i.e. betwixt and between (Bamber, Allen-Collinson, & McCormack, 2017). Liminality is an appropriate lens as it allows for a synoptic view of refugees' experiences that may be critical in their integration into the destination country's workforce. Liminality traverses different spheres life (Sturdy, Schwarz, & Spicer, 2006) and provides a more holistic perspective, which is crucial given it is virtually impossible to draw sharp lines of distinction between personal and work-life (Johnsen & Sørensen, 2015). In the context of highly skilled refugees, the notion of liminality provides a synoptic lens that respects the whole person and their experiences.

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

Liminality is also a helpful lens to understand intercultural transitions in particular the focus on micro-contexts for bicultural identity integration (Aten, Nardon & Isabelle, 2016). While the spatial dimension of liminality is important as it offers a perspective of dwelling (Shortt, 2015), scholars e.g. Söderlund and Borg (2018), have argued that a focus on the temporal and ritual dimensions is also essential. Such a perspective helps to develop an understanding of how refugees can integrate into the workforce from a HRM perspective, irrespective of place.

Liminality is an important lens as refugees, if not properly integrated, may find themselves in a permanent state of limbo, immobilised and locked-in by their own specific contextual challenges (Shortt, 2015). The sense of permanent liminality adversely effects mental wellbeing characterised by a range of polar behaviours such as negative self-deprecatory talk to resentment of their new home country (Bamber et al., 2017). In contrast, the state of transitional liminality provides refugees with a sense of hope and optimism that their lives may have a chance of normality (Johnsen & Sørensen, 2015).

The role of liminality also highlights the role of personal development that occurs in identity reconstruction (Beech, 2011). Development is an important element in liminality (Hawkins & Edwards, 2015) especially through the constructivist view that infuses the learning process with both cultural assumptions and social experiences of the individuals. Bespoke learning and development initiatives provide a scaffold to refugees to unlearn and learn new ways of doing things, and to ensure that their sense of confidence and self-efficacy is retained through a process where self-doubt may arise (Hawkins & Edwards, 2015).

Extant literature e.g. Borg & Söderlund (2015b) also suggest that employers can have a significant and positive impact on employees liminal experience; from minimising the negative effects of ambiguity and uncertainty to enabling employees to co-design their futures. For example, employers can help employees to draw upon positives from being 'in-between' as a

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

time for self-renewal, and by encouraging reflection and developing reflexivity in shaping brighter prospects for themselves (Borg & Söderlund, 2015a). Indeed, scholars such as Henfridsson and Yoo (2014) found that entrepreneurs deal with liminality through 'reflective dissension' (internal dialogue) with self and others (Beech, 2011), and 'imaginative projection' in seeing the future in an optimistic and creative ways.

Liminality of Highly Skilled Refugees

Pre-Migratory Stress

Many highly skilled refugees, like other refugees, are survivors of deliberate physical and mental abuses aimed at diminishing their personal dignity, though highly skilled refugees are often targeted for their social standing (Johnson and Thompson, 2007). These abuses, including incarceration, starvation, deprivation of shelter, and physical beatings (Bemak & Chung 2017) are inflicted while refugees' protective and support factors, including their family and social connections, are destroyed (Stompe, Holder & Friedmann, 2010). The potential inhumane conditions that refugees face during their transit add further stress as they often fear being discovered and sent back to their war-torn countries, while at the same time facing abuse by their traffickers (Potter and Haslam, 2005). Furthermore, refugee camps, which are supposed to provide a safe haven to them, are often overcrowded, unclean and unsafe (Bemak & Chung, 2002), while refugees traveling with dependent children are often exposed to additional stressors because of the fear of losing them and/ or that they might be trafficked (Bhabha, 2004).

Refugees are also often exposed to gender-based violence (Ward & Vann, 2002). Refugee women are generally the target of violence in war zones, which can lead them to unwanted pregnancies and community ostracism (Blitz, d'Angelo, Kofman & Montagna, 2017). Refugee women often lose their social safety networks, and in some cases, are forced

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

to exchange sexual services for money, food, or protection (Sansonetti, 2016). Refugee women are at great risk of violence and sexual abuse in refugee camps (Spiegel, & Nankoe, 2002). Such experiences are particular of single women, including single mothers and/widowed, as the absence of male protection make them more vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Nonetheless, male refugees are also often victims of gender-based violence. Compared to women, civilian men and boys are in fact often disproportionally targeted during conflicts, including sex-related tortures and massacre on the assumption that they could become potential informants and/or enemies (Carpenter, 2006).

Post Migratory Stress

The experience of entering and settling in their destination country add further challenges to refugees, as they must learn to navigate new institutional and cultural systems, while still coping with their pre-migratory stress (Murray, Davidson, & Schweitzer, 2010). The overall process of applying for their status can be overwhelming (Quiroga, 2004) as they receive little practical and legal support in supporting their claims (Gill, Griffiths, Rotter, Burridge, & Allsopp, 2015), which happens while refugees are often separated from their families. In addition, the tone and the content of the interviews from immigration agencies and tribunals and, for some of them, the consequent appeal hearings, can trigger memories of previous interrogations (Hynes, 2003) and therefore can potentially re-traumatise them (Vitale & Ryde, 2018a; 2018b). The initial hopes and optimism that refugees may experience when they obtain their leave to remain, rapidly vanish as they might receive little practical support on how to progress with their life (Vitale & Ryde, 2016). At the same time, they may also feel the pressure to quickly attain language proficiency and financial independence in their destination country (Schick et.al., 2018).

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

However, evidence indicate that the lack of employment or underemployment represents the highest post-migratory stressor among all refugee groups, with detrimental consequences for their physical and mental health (Dhalimi, Wright, Yamin, Jamil, & Arnetz, 2018). Being unemployed or underemployed exposes refugees to social and health inequalities (Mann and Fazil, 2006), which consequently lead to isolation and discrimination (Schick et al., 2018) and affects integration and identity building in the long-term (Li, Liddell, & Nickerson, 2016). Factors such as gender and marital status might add extra stressors to refugees. Refugees with dependent children face the stress of raising them while there are simultaneously struggling with financial constrain, the lack of social support, and adjusting to changes in family roles and in cultural expectations (Pejic, Alvarado, Hess, & Groark, 2017). Additionally, refugee women, who are the only family earners, do not have time and the energy to access resources such as childcare, language and education courses that could support their integration (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009).

Identity Reconstruction

Highly skilled refugees consider finding suitable and meaningful employment (that matches their professional needs) their main priority as it allows them to rebuild their identity, internalise a sense of belonging and feel self-worth (Bloch, 2002). Despite this, highly skilled refugees also face similar challenges in finding employment as they find it difficult to prove their previous work experience and to validate their qualifications (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007), receive inadequate support to navigate the new employment system (Zetter & Ruaudel, 2018), and may even face organisational discrimination (Dhalimi et al., 2018).

Being unemployed or underemployed seems to affect male refugees more as they experience a decline in social status (Mann & Fazil, 2006). This is because they often belong to patriarchal societies, where being the main family providers is at the core of their

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

masculinity. Unemployment or underemployment has a stronger impact on the identity reconstruction of refuges who had highly-paid, high status jobs, as they often experience downward occupational mobility and deskilling (Leonardelli & Toh 2015; Williott and Stevenson, 2013). The lack of employment does not only impact on them financially, but also on their self-esteem and their mental health in general (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2003). In order to re-enter their profession, they are usually required to prove themselves again, but they are not always successful, which then affect their self-worth and professional mobility (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2007).

Professional Integration

Integration is a dynamic process that involves providing refugees with practical resources and opportunities, and also includes the destination country having a positive attitude towards them that in turn fosters a sense of belonging in refugees (Robila 2018). However, among all refugee groups, employment remain essential for integration as it provides them with economic independence, and a dignified life as they bring skills that can contribute to the economic growth of their destination country (Ziad & Saavedra, 2018).

The need to promote refugees' economic integration and rights to work has been outlined as one of the most important rights of the 1951 Refugee Convention, however, many signatory states are in breach (Mathew, 2012). There is growing evidence of discrimination towards refugees in the current climate as many assume that they reduce work opportunities for local citizens (Zetter & Ruaudel, 2018) and that they less likely to take employment, and therefore they represent a burden to the welfare system (Menz, 2009). This discriminatory view fails to recognise that refugees are human beings in need and that they did not migrate in order to work, but they have the right to work (Mathew, 2012). Furthermore, current policies that are intended to address concerns about the burden of hosting asylum seekers and refugees have ironically

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

increased costs by reducing their economic participation. Policies often force refugees to live on welfare, or take unauthorised employment where they are exposed to poor and degrading working conditions. There is a lack of coordinated mechanisms between employing firms, professional bodies and relevant government agencies to help highly skilled refugees to gain recognition of their past attainments, reskilling and professional re-integration through appropriate employment.

We argue that pre and post migratory stress, identity reconstruction and professional integration are the key four liminal stages of highly skilled refugees. Recognising these stages and refugees' personal factors enable organisations to appropriately adapt and apply the HR practices of psychological wellbeing, employee engagement, and learning and development that stems from a strong diversity climate (Figure 1).

PLACE FIGURE 1 HERE

HR Practices

Psychological Wellbeing Practices

Ryff (1995) defines psychological wellbeing as a representation of wellness, which is conceived as progressions of continued growth across a life course (p. 99), while Schmutte and Ryff (1997) define it as a general feeling of happiness (p. 551). Nonetheless, the workplace can inevitably be a stressful environment, therefore many organisation's psychological wellbeing practices starts with minimising anxiety and stress (Holman, 2002). Organisations psychological wellbeing practices can help refugees to settle more quickly in their destination country and live normal lives. Such assistance helps highly skilled refugees in avoiding long stays in temporary accommodations as refugees tend to report a higher degree of psychological

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

problems and more perceived discrimination than those living in independent housing (Haase, Rohmann, & Hallmann, 2019). This particularly affects single male refugees, who, because of their status, are the least entitled to benefits, and because of the lack of employment, find it particularly challenging to find accommodation (Vitale and Ryde, 2016).

However, any action taken by organisations to address refugee psychological wellbeing at the pre-migratory stage is mostly limited. Nonetheless, organisations can help address some pre-migratory stress by working with government agencies and professional associations that may be the first contact point that refugees have before they arrive in their destination country. Indeed, partnership amongst governmental, voluntary and private sectors have seen success in protecting the psychological wellbeing of refugees (Marano et al., 2016).

Psychological wellbeing practices can include providing (and communicating to them) the availability of language and education support for them and their families (Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010), and even potential employment opportunities and apprenticeship schemes (Wood et al., 2019). For instance, refugee women who are taking employment for the first time, can receive support to negotiate work with domestic responsibilities (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009); in addition, single mothers can be given the opportunity to receive flexible working hours as they face the responsibilities of lone parenting (Lenette, Brough, & Cox, 2012). The knowledge that there is some semblance of 'life' beyond a refugee's immediate horizon provides hope and energy (Wood et al., 2019).

P1: By working with government agencies and professional bodies, organisational psychological wellbeing practices can help alleviate some pre-migratory stress for some highly skilled refugees. Organisations should not assume that some refugees are less impacted than others but alternatively organisations need to adapt their practices for different groups based on gender, marital status and the presence of dependents.

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

At the post-migratory stage, the mere presence of organisations offering aid to highly skilled refugees signals the hope of employment. At post employment stage, organisations can draw upon a broader set of psychological wellbeing practices to help with the integration of highly skilled refugees, for example, flexible working arrangements and wellbeing schemes involving childcare (for single mothers), counselling, job autonomy, and even challenging jobs to increases motivation (Alfes, Shantz, & Truss, 2012). Research has shown that refugees' perception of a supportive social environment and perceived 'protection' from discrimination were significant predictors of wellbeing (Correa-Velez, Gifford, & McMichael, 2015). Nonetheless, Loon, Otaye-Ebede, and Stewart (2018) argue that implementing psychological wellbeing is not always straightforward as organisations have to find a balance between promoting employee psychological wellbeing that is fair and equitable to all staff.

P2: Organisational psychological wellbeing practices can help address some post-migratory stress for some highly skilled refugees. The design, bundling and offering of wellbeing schemes enable organisations to maximise the benefit for different refugees groups. For instance, comprehensive wellbeing schemes for single refugee parents that addresses both their needs and their family may be more effective.

Employee Engagement Practices

Employee engagement is a state of mind that involves feelings of dedication, enthusiasm, vigour and fulfilment (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). Employee engagement is argued to be a different construct from psychological empowerment and psychological contract, and has a stronger predictive utility on work centrality and the meaning of work (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). Indeed, some studies e.g. Mackay, Allen, and Landis (2017) show that employee

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

engagement is a higher-order measure of job attitudes and is parsimonious in predicting employee effectiveness. The efficacy of employee engagement has elevated its use and is seen as an important element of any performance management system (Gruman & Saks, 2011).

As with psychological wellbeing practices, employee engagement also addresses post-migration stress in highly skilled refugees by developing the mind-set as a personal resource that helps to focus attention, increase enthusiasm for development, and most importantly enhancing resilience through the way they perceive setbacks (Keating & Heslin, 2015). Employee engagement practices helps to do this as it cultivates trusting environments (Ugwu, Onyishi, & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2014). A trusting environment involves strong sense of distributive and procedural justice that helps to alleviate post-migration stress by renew hopes in refugees that they their welfare will be addressed (Biswas, Varma, & Ramaswami, 2013).

P3: Employee engagement practices enable organisations to support highly skilled refugees through post-migration stress by creating a trusting and supportive environment to help them develop their resilience especially with single parents in assuring them that there is support for them in meeting not just their work-related challenges but also those that are related to their family.

Employee engagement creates relational connection between staff and the organisation (Arrowsmith & Parker, 2013). Employee engagement practices are generally known enhance developmental initiatives to stimulate extra-role behaviours employees' proactivity, knowledge sharing, and creativity (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016). However, equally important employee engagement helps to promote adaptivity that promotes identity development (Hayes & Endale, 2018) including being aware of the specific aspects for refugee populations. For instance refugee fathers needs to get back in their role of family providers (Shimoni, Este,

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

Dawne & Clark, 2003). Employee engagement helps to build personal resources such as self-esteem in individuals that supports the construction of their new identities, which can only be effectual if refugees are given the opportunity to express their heritage (van den Heuvel, Demerouti, & Bakker, 2014).

P4: Employee engagement promotes a relational environmental that provides highly skilled refugee a sense of psychological safety that in turn helps them in reconstructing their identities, drawing from both their heritage and their destination country's culture. Employee engagement helps to better identify specific needs of male and female refugee professionals and to rebuild their careers.

Learning & Development Practices

Learning and development practices include actions organisations take to directly enhance the skills and knowledge of their employees e.g. classroom training, and in cultivating an environment that allows employees to learn informally e.g. mentoring (Loon, 2016). While highly skilled refugees are exactly that, highly skilled, learning and development still play an important role in rebuilding their sense of confidence and self-efficacy, and at the same time update their knowledge and skills in the context of their new country that is shaped by technology, legislative and other critical factors (Choy & Wärvik, 2019).

As refugees arrive in their new countries, there is an inevitable tension as they aim to fit in but at the same time stay true to their own culture. These intersecting identities may cause internal conflict. Learning and development opportunities extends beyond just skill-building, can also include development for social integration and cohesion (in teams and organisational culture) (Valentine, Sporton, & Nielsen, 2009) that allows refugees to amalgamate their identities in congruence (Beiser & Hou, 2006; Hatoss, 2012). Sympathetic developmental

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

opportunities (Morrice, 2013) do not only enable refugees to shed their 'refugee identity' that is usually associated with the stigma of being a victim (Alfadhli & Drury, 2018) but also rebuild their identity that enhances their dignity (Zeno, 2017). Learning and development may provide highly skilled refugees with acculturation skills to negotiate living in a new cultural environment and thereby increasing their sense of belonging through the mutually constitutive exchanges between the new place and identities (Kirkwood, McKinlay, & McVittie, 2013). Inculcating lifelong learning in refugees' improves social integration based on the reconstruction of their new intersecting identities (Morrice, 2007).

P5: Learning and development provides opportunities for highly skilled refugee to acculturate themselves in their new destination country and reconstruct their identities in a positive and congruent manner that reflects their immediate needs (e.g. finances) and desire to reconnect with their previous profession.

Highly skilled refugees are likely to be specialists, with membership of respective professional bodies in their home country. Many established learning and development approaches and initiatives are aimed at developing professional competency, which are crucial for refugees. While refugees may have been experts in their home country, it is likely that their skills need updating given their extended absence from practice (Tigau, 2019). Organisations may apply the destination countries' respective professional bodies' competency framework to retrain refugees (Atabekova, Stepanova, Udina, Gorbatenko, & Shoustikova, 2017). Such developmental initiatives coupled with a strong mentorship programme helps with professional integration (Vickers, McCarthy, & Zammit, 2017). A bespoke approach that combines various methods appropriate for the refugees' and the organisation's context increases refugees'

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

personal agency e.g. self-initiative, and adaptability capacities (Obschonka, Hahn, & Bajwa, 2018)

P6: Bespoke learning and development programmes enable highly skilled refugees to more effectively reintegrate into their professions as it accelerates their adaptability in the updating of their skills and enhance their expertise.

Diversity Climate

While we argue the application of wellbeing, employee engagement, and learning and development practices are critical for the integration of highly skilled refugees into the workforce, these practices need to be founded upon a strong diversity climate. The impact of having a diversity climate in organisations are well established as it helps to predict organisational commitment (Newman, Nielsen, Smyth, Hirst, & Kennedy, 2018), operational efficiency (Choi, Sung, & Zhang, 2017), team creativity (Lee, Choi, & Kim, 2018), innovation (Elia, Messeni Petruzzelli, & Piscitello, 2019) and overall performance (Guillaume, Dawson, Otaye-Ebede, Woods, & West, 2017). The effects of diversity and inclusion values is consistent with the conservation of resources theory (Xia, Wang, Song, Zhang, & Qian, 2019) and the rejection sensitivity theory (Creed, Hood, & Hu, 2017). We argue that individuals can conserve time in being vigilante about ill-treatment (e.g. bullying) and spend more time and resources in more productive initiatives such as professional development and integration.

A diversity climate is even more important when it comes to refugee integration especially when it is likely that refugees will come from different ethnic groups, have different cultures and religious values compared to the majority of the population in their destination country (Hennekam, Peterson, Tahssain-Gay, & Dumazert, 2018; Mahajan & Toh, 2017). Diversity and inclusion values help to guide optimal organisational decision-making (Daniels,

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

Neale, & Greer, 2017; Eikhof, 2017) as to what is fair and equitable. There is also a compelling business case for adopting diversity and inclusion values and approaches as Newman, Nielsen, Smyth, Hirst, et al. (2018) found that a strong diversity climate encourages organisational commitment and reduces turnover retention. In the following, we argue that the link between diversity and inclusion and the wellbeing, employee engagement, and learning and development is even more powerful.

Firstly, if firms, irrespective of whether or not it involves highly skilled refugees, are concerned about its employees' wellbeing, diversity and inclusion will play a more central role (Jaiswal & Dyaram, 2019). For example, organisations may take into consideration family and religious needs of staff when developing HR policies. Refugees in the workforce may be given flexibility for them to care their families who may be more in need than non-refugee families. An inclusive climate means that refugees are made to feel that they are part of the organisation and that their contribution matters (Jaiswal & Dyaram, 2019).

P7: Psychological wellbeing practices that are premised upon a diversity climate will enable organisations to be more effective in that these practices are not only more meaningful but also has more relevance across a diverse workforce.

Secondly, diversity and inclusive values also shape employee engagement practices (Muir & Hoyland, 2015). Diversity and inclusion enables employees to appreciate and even celebrate their differences and increases sensitivity, and understanding in the way they communicate and relate with each other (Luu, Rowley, & Vo, 2019). Organisations that listens and prioritises communication tends elicit dedication and extra-role behaviours from their workforce (Muir & Hoyland, 2015).

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

P8: A diversity climate enable organisations to adapt their employee engagement practices to enable them to build productive working relationships with refugees in way that may be different from other staff.

Finally, learning and development initiatives help refugees to 'fit in' not just in terms of their profession but also into the organisational culture (Morrice, 2007). Learning and development practices that reflect the values of diversity and inclusion not only provides for a reasonable array of developmental opportunities for all staff but it also takes into consideration the socio-emotional aspect of learning that can be stressful especially to learners who are in unfamiliar environments (Loon & Bell, 2017). For example classroom training may be accompanied with a buddy and mentor who can help address any anxiety or questions that arise while learning.

P9: Learning and development practices that are based upon a diversity climate are designed and implemented to comprehensively reflect the challenges that refugees have and still endure, and respects the needs and pace of their learning.

Conclusion

Access to meaningful employment is essential. In the case of highly skilled refugees, meaningful employment promotes their mental health by supporting their cultural and social integration and by fostering a sense of achievement and belonging in the destination country (Wood et al., 2019). It is therefore essential to value these refugees' education and skills, and that organisations provide them opportunities to enter in the labour market. These are in fact essential to support refugees' confidence in their employability (Wilson, 2003). Supporting refugees to go back to work is not only essential for their mental health promotion (WHO,

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

2018), but also gives communities and organisations the opportunity to learn from them, including in terms of transcultural experience, practice, and skills.

Drawing upon the liminal process, we offer the provocation that given their experience, refugees are more resilient (Wehrle, Klehe, Kira, & Zikic, 2018). Such resilience stems from 'liminality competence' (Borg & Söderlund, 2015a) as they are able to tolerate and even leverage on the dynamism and fluidity of their future. Wehrle et al. (2018) argue that learning to draw from personal resources and being able to cope with adversity cultivates refugees' personal as well as their career-related growth.

Highly skilled refugees undergo many experiences, of which some can be quite traumatic. Therefore integrating them into the workforce is not straightforward nor easy. Any attempt to help refugees to integrate into their destination country's workforce must reflect an understanding of the liminal process they experience and be proactive in helping refugees address the issues that they face at each stage. We argue that HRM is particularly crucial in facilitating highly skilled refugees' integration; psychological wellbeing, employee engagement, learning and development practices, and a diversity climate.

While our propositions argue that each practice are particularly relevant to specific liminal stage, they are not mutually exclusive. For example, learning and development practices can also be used to addresses post-migration stress in highly skilled refugees by increasing their work readiness. This is because learning and development practices help to develop refugees' psychological capital (Pajic, Ulceluse, Kismihók, Mol, & den Hartog, 2018), which increases confidence as they engage in job search behaviour on their new country (Pajic et al., 2018). Learning and development also enables refugees to not only just rebuild their skills but also assimilate them into the organisation that provides a sense of social support (Newman, Nielsen, Smyth, & Hirst, 2018). Developmental opportunities can reduce post-migration stress and other problems related to acculturation.

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

The three HR practices are complementary and its effectiveness lies in its coordinated implementation. We argue that these practices can attain their envisaged aims if they are underscored by sound diversity and inclusion values that guides how the practices are designed and implemented (Loon et al., 2018). Equally, diversity and inclusion values must be present top-down and across the organisation (Nishii, Khattab, Shemla, & Paluch, 2018) so that highly skilled refugees receive a consistent message and a positive experience that accelerates their integration. We envisage that this conceptual model will advance research and theory in this area, while enhancing practice of organisations employing highly skilled refugees.

LIMINALITY: HR PRACTICES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

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Figure 1

Figure 1: Conceptual model of a liminal perspective on managing highly skilled refugee

workforce integration: The role of HR practices