Understanding Refugee Populations: Key Considerations for Educational Environments

Presented by:
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Migrant

Refugee

Refugee Claimants

Temporary Foreign Workers

Individuals with precarious immigration status

Immigrant
Economic Immigrants - 69.3%
  Skilled workers
  Entrepreneurs
  Investors
  Provincial Nominees
  Canadian Experience

Refugees - 9.2%
  Admitted based on protocols of the 1951 Geneva convention (well-founded fear of persecution)
    - Government-assisted
    - Privately-sponsored
    - Joint sponsorship (government & private)
    - Refugee claimants

Family class – 18.2%
  Spouses and children
  Parents and grandparents
  Other family members

Temporary Foreign Workers*
  • Recruited to fill labour shortage (US, Philippines, Mexico, India, China)
  • There are about 300,000 TFWs in Canada (2013)
    • Roughly 70,000 in Alberta (2013)
  • 2006- first time more people entering as TFWs than permanent residents

Independent Immigrant

- Plans to leave home and settle in a new country

Refugee

- Forced to flee, often under traumatic conditions (war, political persecution, natural disaster, etc.)
Who is a refugee?

“A person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion”

1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
Who is a refugee?

• Worldwide: 19.5 million refugees in 2014
  - an average of 42,500 persons per day left their homes and sought protection elsewhere.
• 51% of refugees are under 18 years old
• Total number of refugees resettled in 2014 by UNHCR: 103,890
• In 2015, Canada offered to place 15,032 refugees, but only 7,233 arrived. 1K more than Australia; 40K less than USA.
## Canadian Government Commitments

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The Journey from Home Country to Canada

Life in home country
- Comfortable life
- Difficult economic conditions
- War

Life in the refugee camp
- No basic amenities
- Food & supplies rationed
- No school
- Health services not available or limited

Settlement & Survival

Life in Canada: transition to integration
Unfamiliar with
- new environment
- (culture/language barrier)
- emotional stress (loneliness & isolation)

 Discrimination
- (housing, employment, services)

Different school system
- good education for children

Safety
- Access to modern amenities

Voluntary Immigrants

Refugees

Landing
Immigration Policy

Immigration and Refugee Protection Act Regulations (2002) - Change from selecting most skilled refugees to most vulnerable
Transportation Loan Facts

• Issued by Government of Canada to cover costs of refugees’ pre-entry medical exam and travel to Canada
• Loans are capped at $10,000 per family
• Loans for other family members older than 18 can increase a family’s total debt
• Refugees receive monthly letters requesting payment of set amount
Things to Consider

– Refugees are very heterogenous - ground initiatives in context and history
– Understand the importance of identity and culture
– Familiarize yourself with pre-migration and also post-migration challenges (i.e. economic integration, isolation, racism, uncertain migration status)
– Consider long term and holistic integration to also strengthen family and community ties
Best Practices – Holistic Scope

Refugee students can be supported in learning, social and emotional areas

- If you can, invest in thorough assessment

- Mental health and other social needs – invest in school, community and family partnerships
  • AAISA, libraries, FCSS, etc.

- Other activities like sports and arts can provide a space to transcend daily challenges and concerns
Best Practices – Holistic Scope

- **Leadership** from school leaders is essential; “advocacy is a practical way to demonstrate that the school cared about the student” (Taylor Sidhu, 2012)

- Family and communities of refugee students can be a huge **resource** and key facilitator for student success
Recognizing Strengths

Examples of social and cultural capital

- Bilingualism
- Biculturalism
- Education; Hope and Aspirations
- Resilience and Adaptability
- Supportive Community Networks
- Latitude in Early Childhood
- Collective and Family Capital

Give rise to

- Cognitive Versatility
- Cross-cultural Awareness
- Motivation
- Hopefulness
- Social supports
- Family responsibility
- Sense of Belonging
- Resilience
- Creativity

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Best Practices – Whole School Inclusion

- School health / social environment approaches focusing on **social cohesion** and “ethos of inclusion”

- Recognize and acknowledge discrimination can influence students’ lives

- **Integrating student supports** (ie. EAL teachers) with rest of school
Community-building can be targeted too; evidence shows that groups focused on specific identities translates to involvement in the greater community.

- Enns, Kiurova & Connolly (2013) shows that both intracultural relationships (“bonding”) and intercultural relationships (“bridging”) correlated with increased trust in others.

- Bicultural Socialization (Scherman, 2010): Higher self-esteem; More positive racial and ethnic identities; Higher educational achievement; Higher levels of adult adjustment.
Solutions – Whole School Inclusion

An explicit commitment to social justice

- Build upon the values and principles you have in your vision and mission

- Because situations are so unique for each community, **principles** can be more of a guide in complex situations
Reflection on Practice

- What are some of the barriers and facilitators to recognizing the unique needs of youth with multiple cultural identities?
- What are some of the barriers and facilitators to meeting the mental health needs of youth with multiple cultural identities?
- What benefits could we gain from addressing these concerns?
- Are there areas in my program that could better recognize the diversity of cultural identities that my youth might carry?
- Are there areas where my program could benefit from professional development or updating of resources?
Resources

“Here Comes Everyone: Teaching in the Intercultural Classroom” The Alberta Teachers’ Association
http://www.teachers.ab.ca

Caring for Kids New to Canada: www.kidsnewtocanada.ca

Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation
http://www.cmef.ca/connections.html

Centre for Race and Culture – www.cfrac.com
Bamboo Shield
Resources


Thank you for your time.

www.research4children.com

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