

Special Issue CALL FOR PAPERS

The role of HRM in refugee workforce integration - Advancing theory and enhancing practice

Guest editors:

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The number of refugees worldwide is increasing dramatically. A recent UNHCR report estimates that at the end of 2016 the world refugee population was over 22.5 million (UNHCR, 2017). While the refugee population can help developed countries reverse their negative demographic trends and bring economic and social benefit to host countries, research suggests that many refugees end up underemployed (Krahn et al., 2000) or dependent on public assistance (Hansen & Lofstrom, 2003), thus failing to fully integrate into the host society (Feeney, 2000).

Despite the importance of workforce integration of refugees, business scholarship for a long time remained silent regarding this group of migrants. While considerable research in business and management has explored issues related to the global mobility of professional workers (see Caliguri & Bonache, 2016) the primary focus of the literature is on international assignees/ assigned expatriates (e.g. Scullion & Brewster, 2002; Suuturi and Brewster, 2000), self-initiated expatriation (e.g. Inkson et al., 1997; Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010) and skilled migrants (e.g. Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013; Ramboarison-Lalao et al., 2012). This research is of limited relevance to refugee groups since, compared to self-initiated expatriates and skilled migrants, refugees face different, and harder to overcome, occupational integration barriers, challenges accounted for under the umbrella of the canvas ceiling (Lee et al., 2018).

Refugees did not migrate for professional reasons and were not admitted in the country based on an expected match between their skills and the needs of the job market. Moreover, the adjustment process of refugees is significantly more challenging than that of skilled professionals, and the acculturation stress is significantly higher (Berry et al., 1987). Skilled migrants and expatriates have time to consider their options, research opportunities, carefully consider their move, and prepare psychologically and financially prior to relocation. Refugees, on the other hand, do not relocate by choice, but by need. They are forced out of their home countries, often escaping violent circumstances. Many refugees come to the country after traumatic experiences and may suffer from physiological and psychological challenges hindering adjustment (McBrien, 2005). Moreover, research indicates that refugees face systemic marginalisation during recruitment, where employers intentionally impose higher standards on refugee applicants, compared to local employees (Lundborg and Skedinger, 2016). As a result, this group of migrants typically experiences a loss of occupational status (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006) as well as much lower labour market participation than other migrating groups (Bloch, 2002). With the current socio-political changes across the globe, better understanding of the socio-occupational integration of refugees should become a top priority for both organizations and human resource management professionals. A significant opportunity to contribute to the conversation on this issue is thus present for the field of HRM.

Yet, despite this opportunity the field of HRM so far remained silent on the topic of refugee workforce integration. Not only was the issue of refugee labour mobility glaringly absent in the literature of the last decades; if mentioned, this population of migrants was labelled as “irrelevant” to HRM (Tharenou, 2015, p.151). Yet, an increasing number of scholars point to the important role HRM can and should play in refugee workforce integration (Lee et al. 2018) and a growing body of work is emerging to address these issues across the globe (Newman, et al., 2018; Nardon, et al., 2018).

From a practical standpoint, further understanding of refugee integration from an HRM perspective is of special importance in light of an increasing number of resettlements worldwide. Refugee workforce integration is not only a matter of social responsibility but also an opportunity to tap on the skills and talents of this group of workers.

The goal of this special issue is to encourage theoretical and empirical developments on human resource management of refugees. We aim to foster a dialogue between human resource management scholars and other fields of research to encourage and facilitate effective strategies for refugee integration in the workplace and in the society at large.

We invite manuscripts focused on topics and themes such as, but not limited to, the following areas:

- Re-conceptualizing Global Mobility
How can we extend the existing theories and conceptual frameworks related to management of international workers to incorporate refugees and their unique challenges? What assumptions need to be revisited to better incorporate the global mobility of workers motivated by non-professional reasons? How can we enrich our work drawing from various disciplinary traditions (e.g. gender studies, post-colonial perspectives, contemporary migration)? How can HRM capitalize on its existing expertise in global mobility, to respond to the increasing urgency of facilitating refugee workforce integration?
- Understanding Refugees:
How are the management and work related experiences of refugees different from other types of international workers, such as skilled migrants and self-initiated expatriates? What barriers do refugees face to secure suitable employment and what strategies have they used to overcome them? How do various employment opportunities impact refugee integration? How does employment opportunity impact refugees' identity, self-image, self-efficacy and other individual-related outcomes? How can organizations capitalize on this potentially valuable pool of human capital?
- Integrating refugees in the workforce
What is the role of host-country agents including individuals, organizations and non-human interfaces (such as job-search portals) in facilitating occupational integration of refugees? What is the role of pre-employment support programs and on-job opportunities (e.g. internships, traineeships) in facilitating refugee workforce integration? What is the impact of refugee workforce integration on the host country employees? What is the role of organizational culture in the integration of refugees? What is the impact of labour market inequalities on refugee workforce integration?
- The role of organizations in managing refugee workforce integration
What is the role of organizations in managing refugees? How can HRM policies facilitate refugee workforce integration by eliminating workplace prejudices and

ethnic profiling in processes such as recruitment and selection? In what way can HRM processes support individuals' adjustment and their career advancement? How can additional forms of organizational support such as mentoring or training improve refugee occupational integration outcomes? In what way could MNCs facilitate knowledge transfer of best practices in refugee workforce integration across the globe? What is the interplay between HRM and CSR in relation to refugee workforce integration?

- The impact of refugee workforce integration on societal outcomes

Could refugee workforce integration impact the perception and course of the refugee "crisis"? How can HRM interventions impact structural and systemic inequality and discrimination? Could refugee workforce integration impact broader societal attitudes towards humanitarian entrants? In what way could HRM policies and practices impact country-level measures such as accreditations or skills recognition for migrants? What is HRM's role, opportunity and responsibility in integration of refugees into societies?

With this call we intend to meet a twofold aim of addressing a topical issue of increasingly global relevance on the one hand, and theoretically advance the field of HRM of international workers on the other. Our call invites submissions addressing these and other relevant topics advancing our understanding of the role of HRM in refugee workforce integration. We welcome submissions from various paradigmatic and methodological traditions and invite interdisciplinary work. We seek contributions from various disciplines, using multiple theoretical frameworks and methodologies. We invite both conceptual and empirical papers.

Full papers should be submitted between April 1 and April 30, 2019 at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/hrmj>, indicating "The role of HRM in refugee workforce integration - Advancing theory and enhancing practice" as the Special Issue.

The Special Issue will be published in early 2021. Enquiries related to the focus of papers or other queries related to the call for papers should be directed to Luciara Nardon (LuciaraNardon@Cunet.Carleton.Ca), Betina Szkudlarek (betina.szkudlarek@sydney.edu.au), or Soo Min Toh (soomin.toh@utoronto.ca).

Enquiries related to the online submission process should be directed to: HRMJ.journal@wiley.com

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