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Preparing Teachers To Support Syrian Refugee Students Through Awareness Of The Impacts Of Trauma And Interrupted Education

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Impacts of Trauma and Interrupted Education

by

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Abstract

Trauma brought about by war and displacement impacts all affected people in lasting ways; however, its effects can often be felt most by the children exposed to it. This project examines the impacts of trauma experienced through the process of being a refugee, specifically focusing on children who have fled the violence in Syria since 2011. An extensive review of literature on the topic is present in the paper, which has been turned into a professional development presentation. The aim was to create a three-module professional development presentation that could better prepare teachers in the United States who may have Syrian students arriving in their classrooms in the future. The first module raised awareness on the common situations being faced by refugees from Syria, while focusing specifically on the impacts of the disruption in education and traumatic experiences facing the youth. The second module examines the situation within Syria now and before the war, as well as discusses the educational opportunities available to refugee children in three neighboring countries that also happen to host the largest numbers of Syrian refugees: Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. The third and final module looks at the challenges and barriers to the successful educational resettlement of refugees, and the role that educators could have in making the transition easier for students.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The first time I ever stood in front of a classroom and taught a lesson, I was a twenty-one year old college student in the basement of a library on the north side of Minneapolis. I was more anxious than I had ever been; partially due to my inexperience and discomfort standing in front of people, but also due to the nature of the students. This was an adult beginning ESL class being offered to adults who had limited exposure to the English language and whose spoken proficiency levels were quite low. These students came from the area around the library, and were either from Central America or East Africa. All had endured significant hardship on their journey to the United States, and to that library basement, with several of them being refugees, though I did not know this at the time.

Researcher Background and Interest

I managed to successfully fake my way through that first lesson, much to my own surprise. While each week brought me anxiety, as I doubted my teaching ability, it also began to become an enjoyable experience. As most of the lessons centered on survival English such as how to go shopping, ride a bus, or go to the library; I developed a common theme each week. I would ask the students to share, to the best of their abilities, how they would accomplish these tasks in their lives before arriving in the United States. It is through this activity that I received my first education on what life was like in a

refugee camp. While all the students had interesting and important stories to tell, it was the refugee students that interested me the most. It was the first time I was given a first-hand account of what life is like for a refugee.

Of course, different refugee populations will have different experiences, as will different members of a specific refugee population. The women in my class who were Somali refugees had spent years living in camps in Ethiopia or Kenya, after fleeing the violence and famine that afflicted their home country, Somalia. Their stories and life experiences were shared in class, and many of them bonded over their shared experience of having been living in a camp. It was a small class, around seven or eight students, but after three months together, I am confident I learned as much as any of them did.

This first experience with refugees led me to seek other learning opportunities while I was finishing my bachelor's degree in political science. I was able to do coursework surrounding human rights and development, two of the topics we often see linked to that of forced migration. It wasn't until I was doing the student teaching for my K-12 ESL license at Hamline as a part of this master's degree that I had another chance to work with refugee students, however. As a K-12 ESL teacher in Minnesota, it is highly likely that some of the students you work with will have origins as refugees.

My first student teaching placement was at one of the large high schools in Minneapolis, which had recently absorbed a portion of the Minneapolis Public Schools newcomer program. Much like in that initial adult ESL class, the majority of these students came from either Latin America or East Africa, though there were several students from other places such as Vietnam, Nepal, Cambodia, and Burma. Again though, many of the students from East Africa were refugees from Somalia, who had

spent their time prior to arriving in the United States at one of the refugee camps set up to handle the forced migration of Somalis out of their homeland.

The eight weeks I spent at this high school confirmed for me that there were significant disadvantages faced by the students who were arriving from refugee camps in East Africa. It was a joy to work with these students and to learn of their stories and experiences before coming to the United States, but at the same time it was an immense challenge as some of them had received little to no formal education or English language training prior to arriving in the United States. From then on, I became interested in how to better approach the education of refugee students, many of whom are students with limited or interrupted formal education, commonly abbreviated as SLIFE.

One thing that I have been struck by in working with students who are refugees is that they are a group with often very high needs, but also some of the most resilient students I have had the privilege to know and work with. Most refugees experience trauma in some way or another, be it the trauma of having to flee their homes in the middle of the night, or even something worse. A colleague who does some theater work with young refugees in the Twin Cities Metro area once asked me to come along with a group of his students to a dinner. Throughout the meal, I was impressed with how hard these students were determined to work and succeed. It was only after the meal that I learned that one of the most motivated young women there had witnessed the execution of her family in the middle of the night, and fled into the forest to escape. That is the sort of trauma some of these students bring to the classroom when they arrive, and they deserve a group of educators who are prepared for the task of helping them adjust and succeed to the best of their abilities.

Definition of a Refugee

Since that time, over a year ago, I have undertaken to do reading and informal research into the educational programs and offerings available to students who find themselves living in a refugee camp. The most obvious problem is that this is a very multi-faceted and diverse group of people, that can hardly be unified under a single label, "refugee." It will help to have a general understanding of the numbers and statistics involved when discussing the refugee situation in 2017. The primary agency in charge of overseeing the situation of refugees is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, often shortened as the UNHCR, which was created in 1950.

The United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted in 1951 by the United Nations. The Convention was originally passed in response to the end of World War Two, which saw the largest forced migration of people up to that time. While the initial scope of the Convention was limited, in 1967 a new protocol was passed that removed this limitation, and broadened the definition of who was considered a refugee and qualified for UNHCR support and protection (UN, 1951; UN 1967).

According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a *refugee* is defined as, "As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." (Article 1)

The stipulation in the above definition regarding "events occurring before 1 January 1951" was removed according to the 1967 Protocol. More recently, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2015), at the end of 2015 there were 63.91 million people of concern for the UNHCR with about 16.12 million of those people qualifying for the status of refugee. This is the most recent data published by the UNHCR, as the 2016 year-end data is not yet available. However, one can assume that with ongoing situations in places such as Yemen, Syria, and South Sudan, it is quite likely that this number has risen even higher. It should be noted that also in this same data, the UNHCR states that the majority of refugees do not live in organized refugee camps. In fact, only about one-quarter of the world's refugees are in a camp or settlement designed for refugees (UNHCR, 2015).

Scope of the Project

Now that I have established my personal connection to this topic, and helped to show the UN mechanism for determining refugee status, I will shift the focus to the specifics of this capstone project. I will review the research on the current Syrian refugee crisis and its effects on children, determine the demographic information and educational climate in Syria prior to the outbreak of conflict; look at the educational opportunities afforded to Syrians in exile now, and also determine the international standards; and best practices for refugee education. Then, I will attempt to determine the likely gaps and predictable issues that these Syrian students may face upon arrival in public schools in the United States in the future related to their educational resettlement. I want to find this information out in order to provide a better transition for these students upon their arrival in the public education system in the United States, and to inform other educators as well.

While the current political climate may mean there are no Syrian refugees arriving in the United States, this is unlikely to remain the situation for long, and educators should be prepared to work with students from this new group of refugees. It should be noted that the purpose of this project is to inform on the possible previous experiences of refugees of Syrian origin, not to discuss the ongoing issues they will face upon arrival in the United States. There are many sources available to discuss the common experiences of refugees in the United States, and the discrimination and barriers that they face, and I would encourage those dealing with refugees to read several of these, as well as just talking to refugees about what they are experiencing.

Students coming from refugee camps and arriving at schools in the United States, such as those I worked with in Minneapolis, have a variety of needs that need to be met by their new schools and teachers in order for them to be successful. What are these needs? Well, it likely depends on who the student is and what their experiences have been in education and their former homes prior to arrival in the United States. For this capstone project, I will look at refugees from Syria who have been forced to flee violence since the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011.

Summary and Chapter Outlines

The first chapter has provided background on my own personal interest in the topic, as well as laying framework for understanding the current global refugee crisis. Starting with the definition of what makes a person a refugee, and then discussing the current growing numbers worldwide. For this project, I will review the research on the current Syrian refugee crisis and its effects on children, determine the demographic information and educational climate in Syria prior to the outbreak of conflict; look at the

educational opportunities afforded to Syrians in exile now, and also determine the international standards; and best practices for refugee education. Then, I will attempt to determine the likely gaps and predictable issues that these Syrian students may face upon arrival in public schools in the United States in the future related to their educational resettlement. I want to find this information out in order to provide a better transition for these students upon their arrival in the public education system in the United States, and to inform other educators as well.

The second chapter of this write-up will be a literature review that is split into four sections. The first section will discuss the research on the effects of forced displacement on school-aged children in general. The second section will discuss the specific issues facing a Syrian refugee student, including looking at the education system in place in Syria prior to the outbreak of conflict in 2011. The third section will consider the current educational opportunities available to Syrian refugees in the three countries hosting the most refugees: Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. The final section will review the international standards for refugee education, and common best practices for educating refugee students after their resettlement, according to the available research.

The third chapter will describe the audience and the context for the project, and synthesize the information from the literature review chapter in several ways. First, it will determine whether Syrian refugee children, from several different contexts, are being given an education that is meeting, exceeding, or falling short of the international guidelines for refugee education. Secondly, it will seek to determine what are likely issues with educational resettlement that teachers of these students may encounter when they arrive in the United States public education system. Finally, the project will offer an

informal professional development presentation to present this to educators who are likely to be working with Syrian students in the future.

The fourth and final chapter of this capstone project will discuss the implications and limitations of this project, while also reflecting back on each of the previous three chapters. The findings and conclusions of the project will be summarized in the final chapter, and the dissemination of the informal professional development materials that were created will be discussed as well. The fourth chapter will also include personal reflections and observations made throughout the process of creating the following write-up, conducting the literature review, and compiling it all into the accompanying presentation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educating children who find themselves in crisis situations, or protracted refugee situations, has long been a challenge for the agency that is globally recognized as the leader of this task, the UNHCR. Of course, there are countless non-governmental organizations (NGOs), host country governments, and private groups that also take on the role of providing education to school-aged refugee children. Despite all of this, as the following literature review will show, the majority of refugee students around the world are not receiving a quality education, if they are even receiving any education at all (UNHCR, 2016). This creates additional challenges for their teachers when, and if, such students are able to return to formal schooling. Educational opportunities have been linked to a child refugee's sense of purpose and belonging, while assisting in providing a needed distraction from their everyday life situations (Crea & MacFarland, 2015).

While much research has been conducted assessing the situation of education in many long-established refugee camps, there has been less attention shown to short-term or recent refugee situations. This is changing as global awareness is being raised and focused on the plight of refugees, especially those in Syria. While the current political climate in the United States does not allow for Syrian refugees to be resettled, that is likely a short-term situation. As such, educators need to be better prepared to work with

these students when they eventually begin to arrive. This project will aim to provide an informal tool aimed at assisting in that preparation.

Effects of Forced Displacement on Children

Having to flee one's country of origin to avoid persecution or conflict is undoubtedly a traumatic experience, and one endured by many refugees. Fazel and Stein (2002) believe that there are three different stages where refugees experience trauma during their experience. The first is when they are still in their home country, and exposed to violence, persecution, famine, disaster, or any other experience which often creates an exodus of refugees. The second traumatic experience for is the journey from their home country to the place they intend to seek refuge. As we have seen in the news recently, the journey for refugees is often perilous and many different obstacles are faced on their journey. This can be stressful for both children and adults alike. Fazel and Stein's (2002) third stage of traumatic experience is when refugees arrive in their country of resettlement. Shukoor (2015) complements the authors in their assertion that this stage can be an ongoing cause of stress and trauma for refugees. The integration into a new country, the fear of being sent back, coping with the traumas and stresses from the first two stages, and the process of applying for and receiving asylum can compound existing or create new points of trauma for refugees.

Shukoor (2015) discusses the effects on children in the third stage of traumatic experience further by citing the work by Tyrer and Fazel (2014) in which they argued that for children, the third stage will likely have an ongoing traumatic effect. They posed that even in a stable and safe environment, children are faced with the social and cultural pressures of a new school system, possible language barriers, and often face uncertainty

in their home life as newly arrived refugees are sometimes moved several times before being permanently resettled. Refugee youth often have much higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, mood disorders, and peer problems than the general school population in their countries of refuge (Tyrer & Fazel, 2014).

In addition to these common mental health conditions, children exposed to interpersonal trauma, including those who are refugees, have a high rate of dysregulation in their affect and behavior (D'Andrea, Ford, Stolbach, Spinazolla, & der Kolk van, 2012). Symptoms of this sort of dysregulation could possibly include explosive anger, a numbed affect, withdrawal, or even self-injury among a list of other possibilities. Recently arrived refugee children have been studied to assess the prevalence of anxiety; Tyrer and Fazel (2014) cite that the results have been that between 49% to 69% of these children showed signs of having anxiety. According to Kinzie (as cited in Tyrer & Fazel, 2014), the higher prevalence rates were linked to children who either had experience torture within their family, or those whose families had been forced to separate.

As Rouseau, Measham, and Nadeau (2013) discuss, schools in the countries of asylum are in the position to often be the first place of a possible diagnosis for refugee students suffering from trauma or another mental health issue. They discuss the key role that schools can play in early intervention for those refugee students who are suffering the effects of trauma. Hart (2009) concurs that schools are one of the first points of diagnosis for refugee children. However, he cautions against simply assuming that issues are related to a child's previous experiences. In other words, going back to the work by Fazel and Stein (2002) and their three stages of traumatic experience, Hart (2009) would

caution against only paying attention to the first two stages. He adds that the third stage is often an ongoing experience, and the trauma can continue as children are re-housed, moved to new schools, or experiencing many of the other challenges of acculturation. This complements the ideas on the third stage put forth by Fazel and Stein (2002) and Shukoor (2015).

Refugees often face many challenges in accessing care for their mental health. Shukoor (2015) compiled a list of these challenges, citing the work of Tyrer and Fazel (2014) and Vandiver and Duncan (2010). She concluded that refugees often face an initial language barrier in attempting to seek out services. They lack the language skills to both look for services, but also to communicate with service providers who may be attempting to help. There is often a stigma attached to mental health issues coming from the refugee's home country or culture, and a refugee's level of acculturation in their host country plays a role in their willingness to seek out services (Tyrer & Fazel, 2014). The accessibility of services is also an issue for many refugees. With limited financial resources, refugees often find themselves unable to afford mental health care. In addition, depending on the community in which they are resettled, the availability of mental health services, and specifically those that are equipped to deal with refugees, may be very limited (Vandiver & Duncan, 2010).

While the above research has all focused on the mental effects of displacement on children, there can also be physical effects. A study conducted on Croatian refugees following the conflict in the Balkans in the mid-1990s found that approximately 1200 Croatian children were physically wounded in the early years of the conflict within Croatia, with 220 of these injuries resulting in permanent disability (Ajdukovic &

Ajdukovic, 1998). Sugerman, Hyder, and Nasser (2005) looked at the rate of injury

amongst Afghani refugee children who were displaced to refugee camps in Pakistan

following the conflict in the region. They found that of the injuries, 15% were attributed

to assaults, 11% to burns, and another 11% to animal bites. While these injuries were

unlikely to result in permanent disability, they could have lasting effects in terms of the

child's mental health and adjustment.

The research discussed thus far has primarily focused on refugee children in

general, avoiding discussing specific populations. In the following sections, the specific

concerns for refugees from Syria will be addressed. Additionally, the above section

focused on the mental, emotional, and physical effects often felt by school-aged refugees.

As the research review continues, further focus will be placed on the disruption often

caused to a child's education. As many refugees arriving in the host country classrooms

are students with limited or interrupted formal education (hereon abbreviated as SLIFE),

these considerations will be important for educators faced with working with refugee

students.

The Syrian Conflict and Ensuing Refugee Crisis

Education in Syria before and after 2011. Prior to the conflict beginning in

2011, education in Syria was a highly valued national priority. In fact, according to data

referenced by the UNHCR in a report in 2013 on Syrian education, in 2009 several years

prior to the outbreak of conflict, the government spent 19% of its budget on education

related services (UNHCR, 2013). The same report pointed to Syria having a high literacy

rate as well, at over 90% of adult men and women being literate. While Syria often faced

issues of overcrowding and infrastructure problems, it remained a national priority to ensure that students were offered primary and secondary education.

According to the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees' report entitled *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis* (2016), in 2009 over 94 percent of school-aged children in Syria were enrolled in primary or early secondary education. The number did decrease when you include upper secondary education; however, the rates of education were on par with regional peers such as Jordan. In July 2016, that number had fallen to 60 percent of children within the borders of Syria being enrolled in school. That means that within Syria alone, not including refugees, there were approximately 2.1 million children without access to education. In the three countries that host the most Syrian refugees; Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, the percentage of students enrolled is even lower. 39 percent of those of the appropriate age in Turkey are enrolled in primary or secondary education, while 40 percent are in Lebanon, and 70 percent in Jordan (UNHCR, 2016).

Effects of the conflict on Syrian children. A study designed by Elsafti et al. (2016) in four of the Northern Governorates within Syria in May 2015 aimed to document the impact of the conflict on Syrian children still remaining within the borders of Syria. They gave a data sheet to members of the Qatar Red Crescent to collect information related to the impacts of the conflict on children's public health, family life, and education. The results concluded that four years of conflict had greatly decreased, or even removed, the progress that Syria had been making towards the Millennium Development Goals (Elsafti, et al., 2016). Bouchane (2016) cites data from UNICEF that

shows the loss of human capital from the insufficient education within Syria to be 10.7 billion dollars, which represents 17 percent of Syria's pre-conflict GDP in 2010.

The study included mainly children from hard hit areas such as Aleppo, and found that 64 percent of children did not have access to pediatric health services, 23 percent lacked access to sanitation services, and almost 20 percent were internally displaced. In the youngest group of children, 72 percent had incomplete vaccinations, and the authors cite this as grounds to worry about possible disease outbreaks. In the data relating to education, 51 percent of the children surveyed did not have access to education. Of the 49 percent that did have access to education, 72 percent of those students were not enrolled in school provided by the Syrian government. Instead, outside agencies and organizations were found to be educating the highest number of students. Without these groups, the authors conclude that the number of children receiving education in these four war-torn governorates would be negligible (Elsafti et al., 2016).

Jabbar and Zaza published a study in 2014 that detailed their work examining the effects of the conflict on Syrian children; specifically those living in the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan near the Syrian border. They used two control groups that were further removed from the border to determine whether proximity to the conflict created greater effects in the children. One of their control groups was in the Jordanian capital city of Amman, the other in another Jordanian settlement further from the border. Their findings confirmed that the children in the Za'atari camp near the Syrian border were experiencing the most emotional trauma, and of the three groups, this was the only group where they found children with suicidal thoughts (Jabbar & Zaza, 2014). This was attributed to the

fact that Za'atari is closer to the ongoing conflict, and these children were more likely to have recently encountered violence of trauma, affecting their mental health.

The study conducted by Jabbar and Zaza (2014) assessing how proximity to the conflict is affecting children would seem to be confirmed by the previously mentioned work by Elsafti et al. (2016). The results of this study showed a high amount of distress being experienced by the children within Syria, who are often being exposed to the ongoing violence of the war. Jabbar and Zaza's (2014) study concluded that proximity to the conflict played a role in how greatly affected a child would be. It would be logical that those children still within the borders of Syria would be in the most risk of emotional distress and trauma, as well as physical danger.

Charles and Denman (2013) add to the above findings by discussing the additional ways in which displaced Syrians are experiencing violence, both within Syria and in external displacement. They conclude that women and children are much more likely to be victims of trafficking, resorting to survival sex (sex for pay), forced into early marriage, or increased domestic violence as a result of increased stress throughout a community.

Jabbar and Zaza (2014) also found that in their study of refugees within the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan that children were at a much greater risk of sexual violence. They conclude that educational opportunities for refugees provide them with a sense of belonging, safety, and comfort. Despite this, they cite data that only around 2 percent of humanitarian assistance is directed towards educational programs (Jabbar & Zaza, 2014). In a study published in 2015, Crea and MacFarland agreed that educational opportunities provided refugees a sense of purpose and distraction from their living

situations and the seeming limbo in which they found themselves living (Crea &

MacFarland, 2015).

Host Nation Capacity to Educate

While the previous section focused on Syrian students in general, and the effects

they feel from the violence, the next section will examine the situation in the three

countries that host the largest number of externally displaced Syrians: Jordan, Lebanon,

and Turkey (UNHCR, 2016). While an understanding of the situation inside of Syria is

critical in beginning the process of understanding the needs of Syrian students, it is

equally important to look at the refugees. While Syrian refugees are spread throughout

the world, the highest concentrations are found in the countries listed above. The current

political climate in the west is ever-shifting, but it is likely that at some point in time,

groups of these refugees may be resettled in countries such as the United States. For that

reason, examining the situations they are coming from will be important in predicting

their needs, especially those of students who may end up in our classrooms.

Jordan. In Jordan, around 600,000 Syrians were registered as refugees at the end

of the year 2015 (UNHCR, 2016; pg. 21). However, while this is the last report issued, in

the last year and several months, it can only be assumed that that number has grown, as

there has been little reduction in violence within Syria. In fact, only two months after this

report was issued by the UNHCR, the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* stated

the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan at 635,000 (Sprusansky, 2016). The jump of

35,000 in the quoted figures in a two-month period may be indicative of the rate of

external displacement facing Syrians today. In fact, as of May 1st, 2017 according to the

most recent data available from the UNHCR, they list 659,246 persons of concern within the borders of Jordan (UNHCR, 2017).

The same short report mentioned Jordan's taking in of almost two million Palestinian refugees over the previous several decades, as well as its role in providing refuge to Iraqis following the US invasion in 2003, and the ensuing violence (Sprusansky, 2016). As a country that has demonstrated its willingness to shelter those fleeing its neighbors' borders over the years, there has been much research conducted in Jordan on the welfare of the refugees. While the Syrian crisis is still relatively new by the normal measures applied to refugee situations, there is beginning to be a body of research looking at the situation within Jordan for Syrians forced to flee the civil war.

According to the 2016 United Nations report entitled *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis,* 70 percent of the refugee children from Syria in Jordan are enrolled in primary or secondary education. While this may seem low, compared to the 40 percent enrolled in Lebanon and the 39 percent enrolled in Turkey, Jordan is experiencing a higher rate of success in allowing Syrian refugees to continue their educations. However, when one breaks that data down by dividing up primary and secondary education, one gets a better sense of the situation. The primary school education rate is much higher than secondary. In Lebanon, for example, only 4 percent of adolescent refugee students are enrolled in secondary school (UNHCR, 2016).

In Jordan, refugees are split amongst living in camps or being classified as urban refugees, many of whom are living in the nation's capital, Amman. Only about half of these children actually attend Jordanian public schools, despite all registered refugees receiving a card from the government that entitles families to enroll their children

(Wieser, Gigliarano & Verme, 2015, pg. 127). Those students that do not enroll in public education yet still receive educational services are often receiving help through an NGO or private source (Jabbar & Zaza, 2014, pg. 1512). According to the 2015 book by Wieser et al., *The Welfare of Syrian Refugees,* the reasons for parents not enrolling their children in the public education, which they are technically entitled to, varies. For some, it is the financial burden of books and uniforms, which the government does not provide for public education. For most, however, it is simply a lack of educational infrastructure in the areas with the highest concentration of refugees. Overcrowding in Jordanian public schools is common, and the infrastructure is not prepared to absorb the total sum of the school-aged refugees currently seeking safety in Jordan (Wieser et al., 2015).

The aforementioned study by Jabbar and Zaza (2014) also discusses the difference in enrollment rates between urban refugees and those within refugee camps. They cite data that shows 58 percent of school aged Syrian refugees outside of camps are within the school system, while only 45 percent of those within camps were enrolled in school. The likelihood that a child has access to education is tied to their position as either an urban or camp refugee, it would seem.

To attempt to handle the demand of the refugees, many Jordanian schools have implemented a "double-shift" system, where Jordanian students often attend school in the first shift, and Syrian refugees in the second. While this allows greater numbers of students to be served, there are drawbacks, as discussed in the work by Wieser et al. (2015). For example, the later hours are linked to higher absenteeism, teacher fatigue, and lower educational quality (Wieser et al., 2015). Culbertson and Constant (2015) point to the ongoing need for alternative programming options so overcome the

limitations put in place by infrastructure. One advantage listed for students in Jordan over the other two countries who will be discussed in this literature review is the language of instruction. Jordanian public schools are conducted in Arabic, as that is the sole official language of Jordan. Syrian students benefit greatly by not having to overcome a language gap in their studies, as will be shown when discussing both Lebanon and Turkey in the following two sections of the review.

Lebanon. As stated in the previous section, the 2016 United Nations report entitled *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis* found that only 40 percent of school-aged children were enrolled at a school in Lebanon. Even more disheartening when looking at the case of Lebanon, according to the UNHCR (2016), only 4 percent of adolescent refugee students are enrolled in secondary school which amounted to a mere 1,000 secondary students in the 2014 school year (Constant & Culbertson, 2015). Lebanon has seen a drastic change within its borders as the onslaught of the Arab uprisings which eventually led to the Syrian Civil War have taken their toll. The Gross Domestic Product, or GDP, growth rate of Lebanon fell from 8.5% to 1.4% between the years 2009 and 2012 (Dahi, 2014). The bulk, or around 60%, of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon are found in the Beka'a Valley and North regions of the country, which also happen to be the poorest (Dahi, 2014).

How then, has the Lebanese government coped with the task of hosting a large number of Syrian refugees, while being just a small country with pre-existing sectarian divisions (Fakhoury, 2017)? As Charles & Denman (2013) pointed out, Lebanon hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees, while being the smallest of the three main sanctuary countries: Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon. In fact, after taking in over one

million Syrian refugees, the dynamic in Lebanon is now such that one in every four people in the 4,000 square mile country is a refugee from Syria (Kelley, 2017). According to these authors, in theory, the response of the government has been very promising. The Ministry of Education issued a memorandum in 2013 that instructed all schools to enroll Syrian students, regardless of legal or registration status, and to waive school and book fees for them (Charles & Denman, 2013). This has not; however, resulted in a 100% enrollment rate for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon as evidenced by the previously quoted figures. Why then is there such a barrier to enrolling Syrian children if the government has mandated it?

Where Jordan and Turkey have allowed the creation of refugee camps, many having schools in them or NGOs providing some level of education, Lebanon has not allowed the building of such camps. In his analysis of the Lebanese response to the refugee influx from Syria, Fakhoury (2017) points out that this is a result of the past experience of allowing Palestinian refugee camps within the borders. These camps later became, as he says, a hotbed of political and extremist activity, and Lebanon has tried to take a different course of action with Syrian refugees by attempting a policy of integration (Fakhoury, 2017). While this has had many critics within Lebanese society who do not want Syrians integrating, and instead want them to be temporary guests, the policy has had mixed results (Fakhoury, 2017; Kelley, 2017). Undoubtedly, the Syrian refugees themselves also hope to return to their old lives at some point in the future as well. Until then, without the defined area of a refugee camp, they must turn to civil society and Lebanese state institutions to meet their needs, including the education of their children (Dahi, 2014).

Constant & Culbertson (2015) point out that the case in Lebanon is unique in that the number of spaces needed in Lebanese public schools for Syrian children actually outnumbers the spaces needed for Lebanese youth. The authors state that 70% of Lebanese students attend private, often religious, schools and only about 275,000 Lebanese children are in public education. This contrasts with the over 400,000 school-aged Syrian refugees currently in Lebanon (Constant & Culbertson, 2015). To try and increase enrollment and access, schools have added a second shift to accommodate double the number of students each day. However, this also doubles operating costs and salary requirements, and further stretching the already overcrowded Lebanese schools and overworked Lebanese teachers (Charles & Denman, 2013).

According to Charles & Denman (2013), once a Syrian child is lucky enough to find a spot in a public school in Lebanon, the challenges are far from over. The difference in curriculum between Syria and Lebanon is vast, with the majority of Syrian students only ever having been taught in Arabic. In Lebanon, however, English and French are official languages of instruction, and are mandated as such in math and science courses. This has resulted in a high drop out rate, as the stress of being a refugee combined with learning in a foreign language can understandably overwhelm Syrian students (Charles & Denman, 2013). The authors also point to the economic needs of the family often coming before the education of the children, with older children specifically needing to be helping the family earn an income. Another issue, affecting female students, is that Lebanese public schools are co-educational and in more conservative Syrian families, this can be a factor in not sending their children, specifically their daughters, to school. This will have a lasting impact on these young girls, as they will be

at a disadvantage to their male counterparts upon resettlement who have received some type of education while in displacement. These girls are also often going to be at risk of gender-based violence at home and outside, and this too will have an impact on their ability to return to formal education in the future (Charles & Denman, 2013).

In Lebanon, access to education for Syrian refugees is a privilege for the few, and not the many. The influx of refugees from Syria has taxed the state health, education, and infrastructure institutions in Lebanon to the breaking point. Without foreign donor funding, Lebanon would have collapsed under the burden of adding 30% to its population in a matter of a few years (Kelley, 2017). The experiences of refugees in Lebanon, and the unfortunate lack of access to education, will surely affect them in the future as they either remain in Lebanon, return home to Syria, or resettle in a third-party host nation such as the United States. It will be important for those teachers encountering such students to remember their experiences in Lebanon, as a way of understanding their needs.

Turkey. In the 2013-2014 school year, only around 8,500 Syrian refugees were enrolled in public schools in Turkey, out of a registered school-aged refugee population of 345,500 (Constant & Culbertson, 2015). While these numbers fluctuate annually, they have never risen to the relatively higher levels seen in the Lebanese public school system, as shown in the previous section. What could result in this large difference and very low rate of enrollment in Turkish public schools? Much as was the case in Lebanon, language plays a large role in this low enrollment rate, as the official language of all instruction in Turkey is Turkish (Constant & Culbertson, 2015). Also, as Aydin & Kaya (2017) point out, contrary to the above case of Lebanon, Turkey has relied on a series of

refugee camps to house the majority of its refugees from Syria, with the majority of the rest settling in urban areas such as Istanbul. This has kept the majority of the refugee children out of public schools, as either Syrian NGOs or other international actors often manage and oversee education within the camps.

The Turkish Ministry of Education has attempted to bring all education, both inside and outside of the camps, under its control as the situation has developed. However, this has only been mildly successful as many unofficial education centers have been setup by refugee communities hoping to avoid creating a lost generation of Syrian youth. There are around 625,000 school-aged Syrian refugee children in Turkey, and only about 290,000 of them are believed to be receiving any sort of education inside or outside of a refugee camp (Aydin & Kaya, 2017). In an attempt to widen the access to Turkish public education, programs have been set up to teach the Turkish language to students. However, as we know from ESL education in the United States, learning a second language under even the best circumstances is an arduous process. Learning a second language as a refugee, in a barely funded program, is a very slow process and one that is not seeing a high level of success in placing students into formal schools at an appropriate level (Aydin & Kaya, 2017).

Aydin & Kaya (2017) found in their qualitative case study of Syrian refugee students in Istanbul that they were also experiencing the ongoing traumas associated with being displaced. This is not unique to the students in Turkey, as the previously cited research in this literature review shows (Shukoor, 2015; Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1998). However, this finding just highlights again how trauma can have lasting effects on refugee children and be a barrier to finding success in education in foreign systems that

are often stressed by the influx of refugees, and find they do not have the resources to deal with children exhibiting behaviors related to mental health issues.

While Jordan and Lebanon are fellow Arabic-speaking countries with somewhat similar and shared cultures, albeit with many differences, Turkey and the Turkish people do not see themselves as Arab or having as much in common with their Syrian neighbors. Since its founding as a Republic, Turkey has used education and the Turkish language as a way of unifying diverse people into a national identity (Constant & Culbertson, 2015). The idea of Arabic-language instruction and separate systems for Syrian students counters this long-held philosophy; however, many Turkish people do not wish for Syrian integration into their society, instead hoping for them to be temporary guests and to return to their homes at the end of the conflict. In addition, there have been rumors circulated by certain media outlets that Syrian refugees are receiving more assistance than Turkish citizens in comparable situations, such as after a natural disaster. This has only fueled public resistance to further expanding refugee assistance programs. There are also a large number of people in Turkey who remain indifferent to the refugee situation, especially those who find themselves outside of the border region with Syrian and the major urban centers, which are hosting the bulk of Syrian refugees in Turkey (Tolay, 2013).

Where the governments of Jordan and Lebanon have attempted to open their education systems to Syrians, Turkey has been less willing to do so, as the above sources discuss. Taking this into account, it is likely that Syrian students arriving from Turkey are going to have experienced even more disrupted education than those from the other two countries, though no two refugee experiences are going to be the same. The above

challenges in Turkey help to provide an understanding as to why, despite being the largest country of the three main host nations, Turkey has the lowest percentage of refugee students enrolled in school.

International Standards and Best Practices for Refugee Education

This fourth and final section of the literature review will look into the international standards for education in emergencies. The findings will be summarized to provide context as to how successfully the three countries profiled above are able to fulfill these minimum recommendations, with the financial and other means at their disposal, which have been shown above to be less than what would be needed to provide an education system capable of handling all of the refugees from Syria currently within their borders. Additionally, several best practices for educating refugees when they have arrived in the United States' public education system will also be discussed.

International standards for education in emergency situations. The International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) is an international group of more than 13,000 professionals and 130 organizations (INEE, 2017) that aims to provide a universal framework for education in emergency situations, such as the Syrian Refugee Crisis and other disasters. The INEE has worked with its many partner organizations to create the "Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises, and Early Reconstruction (MSEE)". This is a framework which various UN agencies, NGOs, governments, and other actors contributed to, and is the so-called gold standard in terms of a guide for education in emergencies.

The MSEE was launched in 2004, and has been periodically updated as new research and situations have unfolded across the world (Kirk and Cassity, 2007). In Kirk

and Cassity's (2007) breakdown of the standards, they point out that the standards consist of five categories, each consisting of between two to four individual standards. The five categories of standards in the MSEE are:

1) Community Participation and Analysis

2) Access and Learning Environment

3) Teaching and Learning

4) Teachers and Other Education Personnel

5) Education Policy and Coordination

(Cassity & Kirk, 2007, p. 53; INEE, 2004)

While these standards have been in place since before the start of the Syrian Civil War and ensuing refugee crisis, after reviewing the literature available on the three major host nations previously in this review, it can be seen that they are not being fully implemented. As the UNHCR pointed out in their 2016 report "Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis", the major obstacle for them as an organization is gaps in funding and donor pledges. To be able to adequately provide education for all registered Syrian refugees is beyond their current operational capacity. This is why they rely on building partnerships with host nations, donor nations, and other NGOs to help make up the gap; but still they fall short, as evidenced from the numbers cited above (UNHCR, 2016).

Best practices for educating students of a refugee background. It is outside the scope and space of this project to review all literature regarding educating students in general who have experienced trauma or violence in their past. This could apply to any student, in any educational context within the United States. Instead, the literature

surrounding refugee students specifically will be reviewed, for the sake of later making recommendations to educators in the professional development component of the project.

One of the first considerations that educators need to make, though this is more at a district policy level, is the idea of *educational resettlement.* According to Lerner (2012), this is the concept of placing refugee students into a new educational setting, much as they are now living in a new geographical setting after they have been resettled. This can prove problematic in several ways, with no clear best practice discernable for most situations. Lerner cites a work by Szilassy and Arendas (2007) that determined refugees are often placed in classrooms using one of two methods. The first, that they are placed into early primary grades, regardless of their actual age or educational background. The second would be that they are placed in the grade that would normally correspond with a student of their chronological age (Lerner, 2012).

Both of these situations are problematic, for reasons that Szilassy and Arendas expand on (as cited in Lerner, 2012). If a student is placed amongst younger students, they are likely to experience social and emotional issues related to the disparity in age. Not to mention that their own feeling of self-worth may be diminished, which may result in a loss of interest in education. Secondly, when students are placed according to their chronological age, they often struggle academically for several reasons: they are frequently SLIFE students and so their content knowledge is not at grade level, and they are often in need of ESL services which are not provided in all settings. As Lerner (2012) discusses, refugee educational resettlement in the United States is often unsuccessful and that most districts fail to properly support and integrate their refugee students.

What then, is missing in integrating refugee students and allowing for them to be academically, and socially, successful in US public schools? As Taylor and Sidhu (2012) point out, much of the existing research in this area focuses on the deficits present in the current system. That is, the research primarily looks at the limitations of, and the problems within, the system for supporting refugee students in the school system. There is little research conducted on the positive side of the issue, in other words, on those programs that are having a high success rate. This possibly explains why there are so many different models and program designs in districts across the United States, and even throughout the world where refugees have resettled.

These authors also point out that refugee education research has often painted refugees as a homogenous group, making it seem like each population had similar experiences and therefore what worked for one population could be applied to another (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Lerner (2012) points out that this idea of homogeneity from an educational programming standpoint then can come into conflict with a refugee family or student's desire to maintain a certain cultural identity. It is also pointed out that refugees often feel lesser than equal in their new schools, and often find themselves the victims of bullying (Lerner, 2012). In the study conducted by Sidhu and Taylor (2012) in several Australian schools found that those that created a more inclusive and supportive environment for refugee students had greater educational outcomes in return. Both of the articles cited here conclude by stating that moving forward, research should be focused on gaining a deeper understanding of these students' pre- and post- upheaval lives and education, which is what the following project has attempted to do for the case of Syrian children (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Lerner, 2012).

Reflection on the Research

From the beginning of the literature review through the end, the decision to create a tool to better assist educators working with Syrian refugee students has only been affirmed for me as a worthwhile endeavor. At the beginning, while researching the effects of displacement and being a refugee, it became clear that no refugee student will be arriving without carrying some hidden trauma. This needs to be understood by all who will work with such a child, as it may affect everything from academic performance to behavior and ability to create relationships at school.

The examination of education within Syria prior to the war showed that the vast majority of children were enrolled in K-12 education at the outset of the conflict. What has happened since 2012 seems to be a matter of luck and circumstance for each student. Different countries have taken different approaches, as shown in the sections for Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Missing from this literature review and outside the scope of the project, however, was an examination of the circumstances of refugees who may be in Europe or other host nations, and those students who have been internally displaced in Syria. Additional considerations may need to be made by teachers confronted with such students in the future.

Reviewing the standards for education in times of crisis was helpful to see what students should be receiving as a minimum in terms of education. However, as the sources cited later on point out, even these minimum standards are not being met in the majority of cases. It would be impractical than to expect most refugee students to arrive from Syria and be at the same level as other students their age. This information is going

to be critical in properly returning these students to formal education, and scaffolding them as much as needed to reach the level of success to which they are capable.

Summary and Preview of Chapter Three

Throughout the above literature review, several key areas of the literature pertinent to this project have been discussed. To begin, the general effects of trauma and being a child refugee were looked at. What followed was an examination of the situation within Syria prior to the outbreak of conflict, and more recently as the civil war has raged. Next, an analysis of the educational access and programming situation in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan; the three countries with the largest concentration of Syrian refugees, was assessed. Finally, both the international guidelines for education in emergency situations, and the trials and errors of refugee educational resettlement in the United States were reviewed.

The third chapter of this write-up will detail the project created for this capstone. A PowerPoint Presentation to be used as an informal training tool for educators working with Syrian refugee students will be created based off of the information uncovered in the literature review. The presentation will provide educators background information on the Syrian Civil War, ensuing refugee crisis, and the educational conditions in which their new students likely found themselves in prior to arriving at their new school. While many educators may have refugee or SLIFE students already, further background knowledge of their Syrian students is an important step in ensuring success for both teacher and student in this process.

In addition, the third chapter attempts to justify the rationale for choosing the selected presentation medium and style. By examining some of the research in

andragogy, or the teaching of adults, the third chapter will seek to explain the reasoning

behind the format of the completed project detailed above. Since the aim of the project is

to be both an efficient means of delivering information and enable easy retention of this

information, some research into the best practices for teaching adults is necessary.

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Unfortunately, at the time that this project is being undertaken, the current political situation in the United States, and in fact, in the world at large has left the fate of all Syrian refugees at a point of uncertainty. With an indefinite ban put in place by the US Administration, but being battled in the court system, the idea of Syrian refugee students in classrooms is currently theoretical, with the exception of the very few already in the country prior to the current actions of the US Government. However, it is my hope that in the near future, Syrian students will be finding safety within schools in the United States once more and this project could be a tool to assist their new teachers in better meeting their needs. In addition, the information gathered in this project could be helpful and applicable to non-Syrian refugee populations as well.

Project Overview

What was created with the information that has was gathered is a presentation that helps better prepare educators to assist in the educational resettlement of Syrian refugee students. As Lerner (2012) says, educational resettlement is rarely a smooth process, or even a successful one. How then, can educators better serve their refugee students who are arriving from Syria or the surrounding refugee host countries? These are the questions that are answered in the presentation by synthesizing the information gathered throughout the literature review.

In addition to providing the information gathered from reviewing the literature and conditions on the ground faced by the new refugee students, a reading list has been included to further guide the school stakeholders in better assisting their new students. A list of articles, books, and videos was created to complement each module of the PowerPoint Presentation. Recommended readings come from works often cited by other researchers, and those that were discovered through the literature review process that are highly relevant to the topic of the presentation.

Both the slides from each module and a transcript of the detailed notes for each slide will be included in addition to this write-up, to ensure that all information can be conveyed without overcrowding the presentation itself with dense text passages. In this way, teachers who are going through the presentation in the future will be able to see the slides and take in that information, but also see the more detailed transcript as they go slide-by-slide.

Audience. The intended audience for this would be all stakeholders responsible for a refugee student's educational resettlement. This includes not only educators, but additionally the school counselors, administrators, assistants, and those working at district offices to ensure that the entire team involved in making decisions regarding these students is aware of the impact and consequences their decisions can have if made from an informed position.

Rationale for chosen medium. The purpose of presenting the information via PowerPoint is the intention that it is an interactive, multimedia presentation. While a poster would have undoubtedly presented all the information and not have required an actual presenter, it would have been dense and full of text. With the presentation, the

speaker such as myself is able to give background and findings to the audience, while being able to adapt to specific questions based on the audience interaction. A multimedia presentation also allows the information to be distributed for personal review by educators around the country, and even the world, if they were so interested. With the ability to include detailed notes, or even embed audio, PowerPoint could be used to get the information out to a wider audience of educators and other stakeholders. This presentation delivered over three different professional development (PD) modules. The first module covers the background information, general refugee definitions and attributes, and effects of forced displacement on children. The second module looks specifically at education in Syria prior to 2011 and takes an in-depth look at the three host nations that were focused on in Chapter Two: Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. The third and final module looks at the best practices in refugee education and how these can be applied to students from Syria.

My goal is simply to better prepare educators to help ensure a smoother transition for these students, who are quite likely carrying a significant amount of emotional baggage and stress with them, and will likely continue facing trauma and distress as they acculturate to the United States. The end result has been uploaded to Hamline University's Digital Commons for later dissemination as desired.

Creating Valuable Professional Development

At the conclusion of this project, I hope that I have created an informal tool that can be used to provide educators and other stakeholders an overview in the information obtained from undertaking the literature review. In the absence of in-depth training on working with refugee students, a basic understanding on the situation is bound to result in

a better outcome for the students in question. To do this in an engaging way that also helps participants retain information from the presentation is an important outcome. Ruey (2010) uses the constructivist ideas of Piaget and Vygotsky to assert that constructivist learning can lead to a greater retention of knowledge. Discussing an idea put forth by Wang, Sierra & Folger (2003), he writes that the focus of adult learning should be to create independent thinkers, instead of passive knowledge receivers (Ruey, 2010).

An oft-quoted researcher in the field of andragogy, or the teaching of adults, is Malcolm Knowles. Kesiah Scully summarized Knowles' theory of andragogy,

His 1980 theory of andragogy is based on four characteristics of adults as learners: a reservoir of experiences upon which learning can be built, a developmental readiness to learn, a present and problem-centered orientation to learning, and a self-concept tending toward self-directedness. (Scully, 2002)

Knowles also put forth the idea of the adult learner as an active participant in the learning process, as referenced by Ruey (2010) previously (Knowles, 1992). He felt that if adults could perceive the context of what they were learning in relationship to their own life situations, then better retention would follow. Additionally, when it is perceived that the knowledge could help them better progress in their lives and careers, adults will have a better retention of information (Scully, 2002). Keeping this in mind, it will be important that the project being created imparts the importance of the information being presented to the viewers' success in understanding their Syrian refugee students and the positive outcomes this can have for such students.

Marcia Tate (2009) put forth a series of ideas on creating workshops that are fun, engaging, and meaningful; all things which she says will help participants to retain the information being disseminated. Several of her points align nicely with Ruey's (2010) assertion that constructivist learning methods can create a better retention of information. For example, Tate (2009) argues that it is important for participants to have time to interact and reflect on the information being given in order to construct deeper, retainable meaning. She also discusses the importance of capturing the attention of the audience, and being sure that everyone is aware of the purpose and outcome goals of the professional development (Tate, 2009). Knowles also agreed on the need for audience interaction with the presentation and knowledge being presented (Knowles, 1992).

Tate (2009) also lists a series of activities that she would recommend implementing into a development training in order to get participants moving and collaborating. Were I to be giving this as a traditional professional development activity, as a facilitator, I would surely utilize many of these strategies in the session. Since this final project will not be facilitated in person by myself, I will be unable to do that. However, I am still going to put several reflective activities into the presentation.

The need for this is furthered in my mind by another study by Fejes & Andersson (2009), in which they found that the focus in a professional development opportunity for adult learners should be in a two-way discussion format instead of the traditional method of adult learners being the passive receiver of information, which aligns with the ideas put forth previously by Ruey (2010). Since I will not be there to facilitate discussion, and there is no guarantee that learners viewing my presentation will not be alone, I will instead embed reflective writing activities into the presentation, starting at the very

beginning with the introduction. Teachers will begin by taking time to write down a few short answers to questions that they can then reflect back on at the end of the presentation, as their knowledge has hopefully grown.

Reflection on prior knowledge and learning has been identified as another method for retaining information in adult learners (Fejes & Andersson, 2009). This can lead to the creation of new knowledge, or the expansion of knowledge on a topic. Since no teacher should be learning of the idea that there are diverse needs and experiences in their students, by reflecting on what they do already know, they will be better equipped to imagine how the can reach their new refugee students from Syria.

Summary and Preview of Chapter Four

This third chapter served the purpose of explaining the rationale behind the project, as well as why the chosen medium was selected. A breakdown of the project specifics was provided, as well as a discussion on what each module of the presentation would include. In addition, background information on andragogy was presented, mostly focusing on the ideas put forth by Malcolm Knowles, a major contributor to the field of teaching adults. The aim of the research is to enable the creation of an effective tool for professional education that results in the retention of the presented research.

The fourth and final chapter of this write-up will be a critical reflection on the process as a whole, including both the write-up and the presentation that was created as a result of the research for this capstone project. The fourth chapter will directly refer back to each chapter, commenting on any further questions, interesting points, or takeaways from the writing and research process.   The chapter will end with my personal thoughts

and reflections on the process that this project has involved and the journey it has taken

me on.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

This project began with a research question and the goal of creating a presentation aimed at educators and administrators who are working with refugee students from Syria. My original goal was to review the research on the current Syrian refugee crisis and its effects on children, determine the demographic information and educational climate in Syria prior to the outbreak of conflict; look at the educational opportunities afforded to Syrians in exile now, and also determine the international standards; and best practices for refugee education.

After completing the above, I attempted to highlight the likely gaps and predictable issues that these Syrian students may face upon arrival in public schools in the United States in the future related to their educational resettlement. I wanted to find this information out in order to provide a better transition for these students upon their arrival in the public education system in the United States, and to inform other educators as well.

Introduction

Chapter Four will discuss the learning that occurred from me throughout the research and designing of this project. I will return to the original goals of the project, and address whether I met those. In addition, the limitations in the scope of the project will be discussed, as will the implications of the project. Finally, I will reflect on my own

growth as an educator and a researcher as a result of completing this capstone project and accompanying capstone paper, while also discussing my future plans as an educator.

Important Lessons

Throughout the course of completing this capstone paper and project, I have come away with a great number of important lessons as an educator. These have only been compounded in importance by what I have experienced in my career up to this point. Through doing the research and reading required to compile the literature review for this paper, which also served as the basis for the material in my project, I came away with a new appreciation for the sheer immensity of the refugee problem in the world. When I use the term problem, I do mean the fact that there are tens of millions of people being forced from their homes, and the world is for the most part not addressing the root issues of these conflicts.

Since these conflicts are occurring, and there are people being displaced by violence and war, that is where NGOs, the UNHCR, host nations, and donor nations all come in to try and alleviate the suffering and disruption to normalcy that refugees face. However, despite this willingness, and especially as relates to education, the response falls very short. As seen in each of the three sections of the literature review that focused on a major host country, the number of school-aged children enrolled in schools is far lower than one would hope. This was my major learning while looking at refugees while they are still in camps or urban areas, prior to being resettled in a third-party country such as the United States, which is a very rare opportunity, and indeed is now at the time of this writing, impossible for Syrian refugees.

My learning continued as I moved from looking at the educational opportunities available to displaced Syrians within Syria; and externally displaced to Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon, to looking at what happens if they are lucky enough to arrive in the United States. Through the experiences I detailed in the first chapter, I was slightly more aware of how difficult it can be for refugees once they arrive in the United States, especially once they enroll in school. My experience; however, did occur in a school district that has at least tried to implement programs and policies to aid in the educational resettlement of refugee students. Having said that, the situation there was far from perfect and the struggles of the students were evident.

As I read about the difficulty of educational resettlement, I was struck and disheartened by how it seems to be universally challenging to accomplish this in a way that is successful. While I was unable to provide a method that has been proven to work, I was uplifted by the common agreement in the literature that showed teachers can have a huge impact on this process. As the literature review ends, I discuss the idea that creating warm, welcoming, and inclusive school cultures can help to alleviate the impacts of traumatic experience of refugee students (Sidhu & Taylor, 2012).

As part of creating the project, and writing chapter three, I needed to do research on adult education and effective presentations. This led me to modify some of the ways that I presented information, while also making me more aware of the importance of allowing for reflection, and engagement with, different mediums in the presentation.

There were opportunities for learning at every stage of conducting the research for this project. Additionally, as I began to compile the presentation as part of the project, I noticed gaps in the research and had to head back to the literature review and extend it

further. This research has resulted in the learning described previously. The next section of this chapter will detail the description of my project, before discussing the limitations and implications of the completed project.

Project Description

  Audience. The intended audience for this project at the outset was the educators, school counselors, administrators, assistants, and those working at district offices to ensure that the entire team involved in making decisions regarding these students is aware of the impact and consequences their decisions can have if made from an informed position.

  Project Format. The project presentation ended up consisting of fifty-one slides, most with a comprehensive notes section below. Since I will most likely not be presenting this PowerPoint in person, the detailed notes were crucial to ensuring that the necessary information can be conveyed to anyone independently going through the presentation. I chose to split the presentation into three modules. The first module covers information on the legal recognition of refugees, background on the Syrian refugee crisis, and traumatic effects of forced displacement on children. The second module, the longest and most information-dense, examines education in Syria prior to 2011 versus the current situation, and takes an in-depth look at the three host nations that were focused on in the literature review: Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. The third and final module discusses the best practices in refugee education and the role educators can play in helping ensure a successful educational resettlement for their students.

  While I initially intended on a master list of recommended readings, this eventually shifted to a slide in each module with recommended readings, websites, or

videos that complemented the information in a given module and could be perused if desired. Each module also included a slide that chronologically offered access to the open-source platforms from which I used images in that module. An APA reference list was included at the end of each module as well. Each module includes at least one final reflection slide, where participants are asked to write down their responses to a series of prompts. However, there is more than one present in two of the modules, and I think this better serves to help with retention of information. Participants are encouraged at the beginning to do all the reflection activities in order to be able to look back on their learning through the course of the presentation as a whole.

My goal from the beginning was to better prepare educators to help ensure a smoother transition for Syrian refugee students, who are quite likely carrying a significant amount of emotional baggage and stress with them, and will likely continue facing trauma and distress as they acculturate to the United States. After completing my project, I believe that my goal has been met. I do recognize, of course, that the outcome is far from perfect. The next section of this chapter will discuss the limitations of this project and the process that I took to complete it.

Limitations

A project of this type is sure to have limitations and not be as effective as researcher might hope, and my completed project is no different. I have identified three main limitations of this project and will discuss them below. The three limitations have struck me most are: the ever-evolving situation, the simplification of some of my conclusions, and the narrow geographical focus I have taken. Even though I will focus on these three limitations, I am aware that there are likely many more.

The first limitation is that the Syrian refugee crisis, like most conflicts that produce large numbers of refugees, is always changing. Data can change within a month in regards to the number of refugees in a country, or the sort of educational programming available to them. Throughout the process, I have attempted to update the data to reflect the most current information available, but sometimes that isn't always easy to find. I have gone with the most current, reliably sourced data I could find at the time of publishing this. In the beginning of the project, there is a disclaimer offered in the slideshow so that those viewing this in the future know that I was aware of this limitation from the outset.

The second limitation is that, since I only had so much time and space to write, some of the conclusions drawn had to be extrapolated. What works well in one refugee camp, may not apply to another, for example. All Syrian refugees from Lebanon will not have had the same experiences when they arrive in the United States, for another. So this project had to over-simplify the situations in order to succinctly present them. It could take several books to do the job this project sought to do properly. Some of the recommended readings in the project attempt to guide the participant to a deeper look.

The third limitation that I will discuss, and allude to in the beginning of chapter three, is that this project and paper had a narrow geographical focus. I chose to focus on Syrian refugees, first of all, despite there being refugees from all the regions of the world. Secondly, I only focused on those in the three countries of Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. It is entirely possible that refugees will arrive in teachers' classrooms whose journeys have looked quite different. Many refugees have found themselves making the dangerous journey through Europe, for example. For the sake of my project and

research, I chose to keep a narrow focus in an effort to dig a little deeper at the data available in these three major host nations. Whereas this section has focused on the limitations of the project, the next will look at the implications that arose as a result of the project.

Implications

After concluding my project and the write-up of my capstone, I can see the value in the result for both myself, and for professionals who use the resulting project as a means of developing deeper awareness on the topics covered. The presentation that was created is a valuable tool for professional and personal development, yet is not presented in an overtly academic way. I feel it is approachable, and can easily be perused independently over a short period of time.

An attempt was made to provide professionals with further reading to deepen their awareness on the impacts of trauma on refugee students, as well as provide some background information to the situation in the three main host countries. As was mentioned in the limitations section previously, some of the data may need updating on occasion, but the format of this presentation will make it very easy to change and to update the references. If I were to be made aware of a group using this project, I would be happy to do the updating.

While I am not currently in a setting where I will be giving this presentation in person anytime soon, I hope to some day be able to. I hope the notes provided with each slide, as well as the attached videos, are enough to impart the importance of this topic on those who are viewing the presentation. The videos served to add the emotional component that is removed by doing a professional development module independently

without a live presenter, and I hope they accomplish that. As I have just mentioned, I am not currently in a setting where I will be giving this presentation, but in the next section I will discuss my future plans and growth as a researcher and educator.

My Growth and Future Plans

I grew immensely as this project was taking place and unfolding. As the story I begin chapter one with occurred in February of 2016, it has been almost two years of working towards this ending. At that time, I thought I might be working with refugees in the near future. However, I took my first full teaching job in the Kingdom of Bahrain shortly after, and completed a school year there. It was a year of learning, and also allowed me the opportunity to travel to Jordan as I mentioned in the presentation. Being in the Middle East kept the topic relevant, even though I slowed down the progress I was making and did not rush to finish.

The job in Bahrain did not work out for me, and so I had to make the choice to continue working on this capstone topic or to change entirely this fall. I decided to stay with it, even though I now find myself teaching in Cambodia. I did not expect I would find much value in my capstone in relation to my current job, but I have. Cambodia is a country still clawing its way out of violence and tragedy, and many of my students come from homes that are wracked with family members who have experienced trauma. Indeed, some of my students themselves have been subjected to violence and trauma. It is here that I find relevance from my research in my current work. The connections are glaring and I found myself reading some of the research and thinking how similar it sounded to my students now.

I see myself staying put for a few years, and really trying to have an impact in my current school. My students motivate me every day, and I truly don't see leaving anytime soon. In the future, I would love to partake in some more research as I really did enjoy the process. Next time however, I would like to do more in-person research instead of researching via the literature having been produced by others. I would also like to move into a policy or non-profit role at some point in the future where I am able to work on a larger scale to assist those students who have been subjected to violence and trauma.

This capstone, and my time at Hamline as a whole, has really reaffirmed my personal beliefs and values as an educator and a human. I believe in leveraging my abilities and privileges to offer others as many of the opportunities that I have been afforded as possible. Where students may have only been met with violence and trauma in the past, I hope that when they are in my classroom or school they are able to feel welcomed and are offered the absolute best chance of success possible. Many professors at Hamline imparted upon my classmates and I the importance of being an advocate for the best interests of our students. In a small way, this capstone serves as a first step in my journey of advocating for the best interests of refugee students.

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