

How to integrate expectations and priorities of refugees and newcomers

There are many different motivational factors connected to the journey away from one's country of origin – whether you are trying to escape from violent conflict or persecution, or leaving in the hope of improving financially from otherwise poor living conditions do to a high level of poverty in general (Konle-Seidl & Bolits, 2016, p. 20).

All share the common wish of seeing better days for the future, and one of the key constituents in order to realize such an improvement is employment. It is also important to highlight themes such as housing, health issues and the inclusion of the family of refugees and newcomers as these represent main concerns alongside the question of employment – altogether providing a framework for the hope of basic settling (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 169-173).

Concerning the domain of employment however, finding a job is indeed acknowledged as being a main priority among refugees and newcomers that include expectations regarding “promoting economic independence, planning for the future, meeting members of the host society, providing opportunity to develop language skills, restoring self-esteem and encouraging self-reliance” (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 170).

In Denmark, one of the concepts being used for boosting refugees' access to employment is the so-called ‘Branchepakke’ concept (in English ‘Industry Packages’) that focuses on internships in companies. A key constituent of this concept is the role played by a job center – a public unit forming a part of the citizen service in a Danish municipality. During the process, the job center will act on behalf of the refugee/newcomer in terms of finding a relevant internship inside the geographical area of the municipality, as well as tracking the progression of the refugee/newcomer in cooperation with the company.

Some of the best experiences with Industry Packages have been those, where the municipality is aware of the needs and expectations of the refugees and newcomers. Industry packages will always focus on those sectors where the labor demand is greatest and where the opportunity for future employment is high. At first glance, this might seem like a personal restriction, but in truth, the refugee/newcomer will experience a much more effective procedure, providing the best opportunities for realizing the goal of employment. Furthermore, during an introductory course before the actual internship, the refugee/newcomer will actually be provided with the opportunity to choose between different sectors of labor, which the municipality has deemed relevant.

Together with this provision of choice, the professionals in the job center might also take further steps in considering the expectations of the refugees/newcomers. These have included examples, where professionals have taken into account different kinds cultural and personal preferences of the participants. During the introductory course for example, professionals invited the personal partner

of the refugee/newcomer to participate – thereby assuring, that the whole family was understanding and agreeing to the terms of the internship. Another example was the decision to only hire female educators during the introductory course for a group of refugees/newcomers that only consisted of female participants. This decision resulted in making the whole introductory process a much more comfortable experience for the group of women that were all used to this kind of segregation between the sexes from their daily lives.

In general, the whole framework of Industry Packages is very considerate of the expectations and priorities of the refugees/newcomers. It provides internships in the geographical proximity of the participants – thereby overcoming challenges of transportation. It provides the participants an opportunity to enter the labor market as fast as possible, and the professionals of the job center – cf. the different given examples - have the means to form the Industry Packages independently in a way that takes the cultural background of the refugee/newcomer into great consideration (Foreningen Nydansker – Industry Packages).

Resources

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