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Training Community Parents for Employment and Social Innovation: An Example from Austria

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Abstract

As one of the most significant global displacement crises, the Syria crisis created millions of refugees some of whom arrived in Europe in recent years in big numbers. Due to these recent refugee influxes, the already diverse demographical structure of European countries has gone through a change. As expected, this change introduced some steps to support the integration, language learning, and employability of the people who newly arrived. This paper introduces Community Parents Action, a step taken to empower immigrant parents by enhancing their involvement in the education and schooling of their children, and justifies the necessity of empowering parents from a migrant background by relying on the relevant research and theoretical discussion. The paper also tackles the importance of parental involvement of migrant parents and the challenges of migrants in terms of parental involvement, and the correlation of parental involvement and educational achievement. The underlying theoretical perspectives and relevant literature for the Action are discussed in this paper with a focus on educational attainment, economic integration and parental involvement.

Keywords: integration, migration, educational attainment, family involvement

1. Introduction

The world has experienced an unprecedented increase in terms of migration in the last decade. According to the data of the United Nations between 1990 and 2019, the number of people who hold the status of immigrants rose by 272 million (United Nations, 2020). This number accounts for 3.5% of the whole population in the world. On the other hand, migration has become a more complex phenomenon due to the increasing diversity of people who are immigrating. This complexity has affected both parties, namely, the countries that are receiving immigrants or losing their population. As Czaika and de Haas (2014) explain, the traditional categories of immigration or emigration countries are not valid anymore either. For example, Europe, the continent of emigration in the previous centuries, has been a hot spot for immigration for several different reasons, including wars, need for the workforce, new country borders due to partition etc. These reasons stem from the European continent while sometimes from other continents.

In recent years, the big part of immigrants settling in Europe are refugees. For example, the Syrian conflict has been a reason for a large number of refugees heading towards Europe starting from 2012. Eurostat's (2020) data shows that Europe welcomed about 3.9 million refugees only in 2018. It can be said that the majority of these are the ones who had to leave their country due to the conflict there. According to the United Nations' numbers, Europe hosts mainly Syrian refugees. However, the source of the refugee population in Europe cannot be limited to the Syrian war. Ongoing violence and unrest in different parts of the world such as in Afghanistan, Venezuela or Bangladesh, is another source of the refugee population in Europe.

Big inflows of refugees bring social, cultural, and economic consequences, including whom to call a refugee. United Nations defines refugees as "persons who, because of the well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, are outside the country of their nationality and are unable to return" (Paola and Brunello, 2016 p.7). Due to their sensitive and life-threatening situations and long term plans to settle in the host countries, refugees pose different issues rather than immigrants. Hence, prompt actions should be introduced to facilitate smooth and quick social and economic integration for refugees. In this paper, refugees, people from a refugee background or people with a refugee background are used interchangeably.

Actions that have targeted immigrant integration in Europe have also the responsibility of attending to refugees. Several countries in Europe adopted policies and practices to be able to accommodate the needs of people from a refugee background along with people from a migrant background. However, as Europe has been a hotspot for immigrants, with or without refugee status, several European policies, practices, and actions have been migrant-oriented. Austria, like several other European countries, has welcomed a big number of immigrants since the '60s and people with refugee experiences mainly since the '90s. Currently, 20.7% of the whole population are considered as people from a migrant background in Austria (Statistik Austria, 2020). The immigrant-coloured demographic structure of the country yield to initiations, actions, planning and adjustment to create social harmony and to facilitate the smooth integration of people with a migrant background.

This paper tackles one of such actions that target boosting social and economic integration of newcomers through education-related initiations, namely, Community Parents Action. The Community Parents Action in Austria, planned under the framework of the project Fast Action Boost, aims to increase the knowledge of parents about school and education-related topics and to create empowered and knowledgeable parents with migration background who can act as community leaders to inform and train other parents. The project targets a smooth transition to the job market and economic integration profiting from the empowerment that the Action offers to parents in terms of knowledge access and opportunities to achieve the potential as well.

2. The Action to Empower Refugee Parents

In line with the necessity of supporting refugee parents due to their challenging experiences and long term settlement plans in the host country, several projects and actions have been launched in Europe; and Community Parents Action is one of them. Community Parents Action takes place within the framework of the main project Fast Action Boost (FAB) which is financed by the European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). This program aims to promote employment that is high quality and sustainable and to ensure the social protection of people from a refugee background. Defeating social exclusion, poverty and poor working conditions are also in the scope of the main program. FAB includes nine partners from six different European countries and pursues an urban approach to accelerate the integration into the labour market for people with migrant backgrounds especially with refugee experiences. FAB focuses on launching activities and programs in the respective cities and aims to exchange partnership models for refugees. Sharing good practices after analysing them is one of the goals of the project. The project targets the development and implementation of at least one labour market-relevant pilot measure for the integration of refugees, especially women.

The Community Parents Action targets the improvement of parent-school collaboration, parental involvement in educational decision-making, and parent empowerment. The target group of the Action are parents who find the Austrian school system and the education system for their children as a challenge and who need support to come over these challenges. On the one hand, the new, complex Austrian system creates ambiguities and uncertainties for the parents, on the other hand, these ambiguities often form the basis for misunderstandings in schools. Hence, Community Parents Action does not target only individual empowerment and learning but also the increase in the active and functioning parent-school collaboration. Through a systematic but flexible process that allows working parents also to attend the training, a group of parents with a refugee/migration background will receive a 'Certificate of Proficiency' (CoProf) using a theory-practice model after completion of a multi-step training program and will be ready to transfer the knowledge to their community and peer parents.

Community Parents Action targets increasing knowledge and building the capacity of parents from a refugee background who were recently introduced to Austrian education and schooling system. Parents' increased knowledge about how to guide their children through educational paths is targeted. Besides, Community Parents Action aims to enable quicker job market integration of parents from a refugee background by raising awareness about further education systems and by building self-confidence under the guidance of trainer parents. Hence, the economic integration of immigrants, educational achievement in the context of migration and parental involvement of parents from a migrant background are key topics that build the background of the Action.

2.1. Economic Integration and Reproduction

It is known that the economic growth of a country has a direct connection with the nation's educational outcomes. What students know and can, therefore, is very important for economic prosperity in a country (Hanushek and Wößmann, 2011). Academic achievement is an important step for migrants in terms of economic independence and growth. The increase in the educational attainment of immigrants would create a chain effect in terms of increasing the economic integration of second-generation immigrants. However, studies show that in Europe immigrants are less educated and suffer from unemployment and lower wages more than natives suffer (Crul et al., 2019). The educational achievement gap between the migrants and natives, on the other hand, creates an important issue for the countries. Several countries still experience challenges to integrate immigrant families and their children into the educational system and to support them in terms of economic integration (Algan et al., 2010). The persistent challenges in these matters create a recession in terms of intergenerational mobility among immigrant communities where limited income and low educational achievement are reproduced (Cobb-Clark, Sinning and Stillman, 2012).

Research shows that first-generation immigrants have lower education than second-generation immigrants as well as second-generation immigrants lower than native peers do (Raabe, 2019; Van Ours and Ohinata, 2011). As first-generation immigrants mainly arrive in the host country at an age after school, the investments, policies, and action target the second-generation immigrants to boost their educational achievement. The investment for first-generation immigrants stays at a level of integrating the newly arrived to learn the language and the culture of the host country to an extent where they can get integrated merely into the job market. This, however, impedes the improvement of human capital not only individually but as a family. Human capital is an important factor for economic success and naturally for economic integration in a host country for immigrants (Singer, 2012). For the integration process of immigrants, human capital plays an important role in that it influences both the employment chances and the amount of income both of which are important for socio-economic integration. Investment in human capital would mean better life standards, self-confidence, improved skills and talents for the migrants in a country, which will also lead to opportunities

to support the family sources for educational achievement. The accumulation of human capital starts at an early age and first-generation immigrants mainly start accumulating human capital in their home country. This can continue in the host country and additional investment in training or education for first-generation immigrants can pay off to break the reproduction of low economic and educational achievement among migrants (Docquier and Marfouk, 2006).

2.2. Educational Attainment for Immigrants

In many European countries, students from migrant backgrounds show lower educational attainment than native peers do (Dronkers and De Heus, 2012; Ledwith and Reilly, 2013; Ohinata and Van Ours, 2012; Shapira, 2012). The discrepancies among the test scores of immigrants and natives, especially, in languages and math, can be traced back even for the second-generation immigrant children. As education is mostly affiliated with the quality of future socioeconomic conditions, educational achievement can give valuable hints about the future socio-economic conditions of these groups in the host country. Hence, the association between educational achievement and the factors that influence them have been the topic of research for a long time in the immigrant context (Rumberger, 2010). In the literature, several factors such as the socioeconomic, cultural, environmental, and psychological factors were found to be linked to immigrant-origin children's academic performance in school. Some other factors may include, home language (Chiu, Pong, Mori and Chow, 2012), family socioeconomic status (Sung, Suk-Young, and An, 2009), academic motivation (Areepattamannil, 2012), parental monitoring (Scott, Andrew, Sands, and Brian, 2009), school-based positive supportive relationships (Su´arez-Orozco, Pimentel and Martin, 2009), or student perceptions of school climate (Su´arez-Orozco, Gayt et al., 2010). However, research, on the other hand, showed that none of these factors can account on its own for this discrepancy of educational attainment for migrant children. Linear explanations should be avoided and holistic perspectives should be adopted.

An example linear explanation is the excessive focus on socioeconomic status and its effect on the educational attainment of immigrant children. Social and economic resources that a family has may result in differences regarding educational achievement. For instance, poverty can make it difficult for many parents of migrant background to see a better future for their children even with better education (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Similarly, several studies (Dustmann, Machin, and Schönberg, 2010; Fuligni, 1997; Wilson, Burgess, and Briggs, 2005) tackled the academic achievement and its relation to students' socioeconomic status. However, several studies revealed that there is a weak relation of family's socioeconomic status to educational attainment for students from a migrant background and socioeconomic status does not account for the achievement gap between students from a migrant background and their native peers (Azzolini, Schnell and Palmer, 2012; Kingdon and Cassen, 2010; Lenkeit, Caro and Strand, 2015; Strand, 2014).

As socioeconomic status falls behind explaining the educational attainment of children from a migrant background, the research adopted other methodologies to predict the educational attainment of these groups. Luthra and Soehl (2015) suggest that the economic, cultural, and social capital of the families are better predictors of attainment than socioeconomic status. Social capital is an important perspective (Coleman, 1988) that we can employ to understand the cultural differences' impact on academic success or the given importance of schooling. This perspective points to the importance of culture and social class that can influence the qualities that individuals possess and that constitute their attitude towards education and academic achievement. In light of this perspective, Aldous (2006) points out that cultural beliefs can affect the value that parents place on their children's education and parent-child interactions concerning schooling. In addition, social networks play an important role in educational outcomes next to cultural beliefs as they have an impact on cultural and social life (Modood, 2012). Social networks are known to be tighter for migrants and ethnic social networks can provide an environment for their children that affects educational attainment (Basit, 1997; Goulbourne and Solomos, 2003). These social networks can be regarded as resources that are mobilized to transmit values and aspirations to the next generation (Basit, 2012; Modood, 2012). For instance, social networks can be used to gain information about the education system and the conditions of the contemporary labour market in the host country. However, social networks may fall behind of providing the required information and support about educational opportunities, further education or schooling system as such information may not be easily available to immigrants so easily (Shah et al., 2010).

Another perspective can be the parental expectations and parental aspirations (Fuligni and Fuligni, 2007) that should be discussed beyond socioeconomic factors in terms of affecting the educational attainment of children. Parents' aspirations can be described as the parents' wishes for their children to receive good grades in school and to pursue education beyond compulsory schooling. The academic success of children from a migrant background has been found to have a positive correlation with parents' aspiration and motivation. As Aldous (2006) discusses, parents' aspirations for the education of their children have a positive impact on the aspiration of the children for their education, as well. There is growing evidence that parents from a migrant background have higher expectations and aspirations for their children's educational attainment than native-born parents (Raleigh and Kao, 2010). Furthermore, like Raleigh and Kao (2010) point, immigrant parents are more likely than native-born parents to maintain high expectations and aspirations for their children's educational attainment over time. Similarly, the results of the study by Areepattamannil and Lee (2014) indicated that immigrant parents hold high expectations and aspirations for children's educational attainment, and these expectations and aspirations are related to their children's school performance. This shows a positive and interdependent correlation between the academic success of the children and the parents' aspirations and expectations.

Parents from a migrant background are inclined to have concerns about their children's education and they seek opportunities to support them in line with their expectations (Fuligni, 1997; Su´arez-Orozco et al., 2009). As Fuligni and Fuligni (2007) point, "regardless of their countries of origin, foreign-born parents believe in the importance of doing well in school and attempt to instil such an attitude in their children" (p. 236). This attitude can be affiliated with the fact that immigration is an arduous journey (Su´arez-Orozco et al., 2009). Immigrant parents may develop the belief that the best way to succeed in the new country for their children is to strive academically and pursue a good career (Fuligni and Fuligni, 2007).

Immigrant parents may consider education and educational success as a means to reverse the initial downward mobility that these parents had experienced through migration (Modood, 2012). Bauer and Riphanh (2006) suggest that the higher expectations and aspiration of immigrant parents result in higher intergenerational mobility among immigrants than among natives. They base this perspective on their research that found a significant hike in the academic achievement of second-generation immigrants when compared to first-generation immigrants or natives from families with higher expectations in terms of academic attainment.
In parallel to the aforementioned factors that are linked to the academic achievement of children from a migrant background, immigrant parents face challenges including cultural, linguistic, and psychological challenges in the form of social, economic, or environmental stressors in the journey of supporting their children's education and academic life (Katsiaficas, Su´arez-Orozco, Sirin and Gupta, 2013). For example, language barriers may be challenging for parents from a migrant background (Strand, 2014), or institutional discrimination may play an important role as well (Gillborn, 2005). Research has indicated how the lack of opportunities in the new country for children from a migrant background may change and affect the parents' thinking in terms of the academic success of their children. The less advantaged parents may encourage their children to get jobs, marry, and have children early (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 1995), which can be considered as a shortened path to adulthood.

2.3. Parental Involvement

There has been a great number of efforts to define parental involvement across different contexts. Parental involvement is mainly understood as involvement in school-based activities such as attending teacher-parent conferences, committee service, voluntary work etc. Besides, home-based activities such as supporting students in their homework and tasks can also be understood as parental involvement. On the other hand, parental involvement includes parents' engagement in decision-making, and school leadership (Bolivar and Crispeels, 2011). One of the most comprehensive definition was provided by Feuerstein (2010). Feuerstein (2010, p.29) explains parental involvement as "parent involvement encompasses a broad range of parenting behaviour, ranging from discussion with children about homework to attendance at parent-teacher organization (PTO) meetings".

Regardless of its definition, parental involvement in education can promote a wide range of benefits including lower dropouts, higher resilience, higher academic achievement, and higher engagement in extracurricular activities (Park and Holloway, 2013). The engagement of parents in education has a positive impact on the academic success of children. Parental involvement yields more motivated learners, higher educational aspirations and better academic achievements (Cheung and Pomerantz, 2012; Day and Dotterer, 2018; Park and Holloway, 2013). The success of parental involvement is to observe from early childhood education age and through all education careers. It promotes social and emotional skills and enhances the motivation to learn (Mena, 2011). School attendance can be more regular and students' attitudes towards school can be positively affected by regular parental involvement. Therefore, the academic literature has been paying attention to the research dedicated to informing and increasing parental involvement. Several administration plans, government development plans and programs have introduced increasing parental involvement as a central goal of their programs and agenda (Park and Holloway, 2013).

The efforts, planning, and encouragement to increase parental involvement, however, may not be enough to achieve this aim. Parental involvement cannot be performed by all parents at the required level. Several factors, such as employment situation, language competence, socio-economic status, play a role in the process of parental involvement. A few studies have been conducted to investigate the parental involvement dynamics across parents with different backgrounds. The reason can be that different parental backgrounds result in different understandings about the necessity of parental involvement and in different types and frequencies of parental involvement. Studies have found that long-term unemployment, regular low-income, or being a minority or being immigrants play a big role in parental involvement (Lee and Bowen, 2006). In addition, being a member of a specific culture or immigrant group, cultural or socioeconomic factors influence parental involvement and the way parents get involved (Turney and Kao, 2009), too.

The relevant literature shows a correlation between the educational level of parents, their employment status, and their involvement in their children's education. As discussed by Leong, Berzin and Hawkins (2019), parents with more education are more likely to be employed and with higher levels of employment ends up in increased involvement in education. They explain this phenomenon as when a parents' education leads to employment, this may lead also to higher expectations from education, which brings involvement in their child's education. As immigrant parents are known for their motivation to get good jobs and attainments in the host country (Byun and Park, 2012), parental involvement is specifically a topic to be discussed in the immigrant context, which can bring new insights.

2.3.1 Parental Involvement in the Immigrant Context

The recent movements of people globally have increased our need to understand how the change in demographics influences schooling, the interactions among parents and schools, and the cooperation between parents and schools (Koyoma and Bakuza, 2017). Similarly, such changes reflect on the parental involvement and attract the attention of the research to investigate the effects, challenges and benefits of parental involvement for children from a migrant and refugee background. As Jaynes (2003) discusses, parental involvement benefits all students but especially minority and immigrant students. The higher dropout rates and lower academic achievement among immigrant students in several countries have shown that immigrant and minority students still fall behind their native peers (Goldsmith and Kurpius, 2018). When the positive outcomes of parental involvement are taken into consideration, the academic achievement and resilience of immigrant students can make use of effective parental involvement. The research indicates the emergence of beneficial, assertive interactions between parents and school personnel that improve schooling for migrant children (Jasis and Marriott, 2010). In this process, providing support and encouraging the immigrant parents through state-funded programs as well as school outreach to parents in terms of parental involvement can increase the involvement to the required level and in the required way (Park and Holloway, 2013).

According to the research of Lee and Bowen (2006), immigrant and/or low-income parents get involved less than other families in a given definition of parental involvement. However, this may not mean less interest in education. When analysing the patterns of parental involvement among different groups of parents, several factors and barriers should be taken into consideration. Immigrant parents have mainly high aspirations and expectations for their children's academic achievement (Calzada et al., 2015). These aspirations and expectations may diverge among the immigrant groups or within the groups based on several background variables such as education level, income, or cultural understandings or values, though. Immigrant parents, hence, may try and manage to be involved in different ways than expected by teachers. For instance, diverse cultural beliefs and practices may shape how parents contact teachers or whether to shake hands or bow when they meet or whether offer teachers gifts or arrive punctually for meetings (Flaitz, 2006). Disputing with teachers, judging teachers' opinions, or stating own ideas can be also affected by the culture of the parents. Hence, the parental involvement for the parents from a migrant background should be understood concerning more complex social and cultural aspects, otherwise, it may lead to some assumptions and preconditions.

In line with the aforementioned argument, ethnicity and socioeconomic situation play an important role in determining the patterns of parental involvement (Al-deen and Windle, 2015). The endorsement of the importance of education, expectations from education, levels of home-based or school-based involvement vary among different groups of parents from different backgrounds. However, an important factor is the barriers that immigrant parents face to be more involved or involved at all. When the migrant background and low socioeconomic status are combined, parents may experience some barriers to their involvement. These barriers can be a result of cultural mismatch, hesitation, trust, language, logistic barriers etc. (Calzada et al., 2015). Similarly, immigrant parents vary from each other in terms of the reasons for their involvement (Day and Dotterer, 2018). Some may be involved for moral support while some others for academic support or some may target both.

Research has concentrated on the immigrant groups and investigated the attitudes towards parental involvement across different immigrant groups as well. The study of Hunstsinger and Jose (2009) showed that Chinese-American parents' involvement is mainly in home-based activities such as helping with home assignments. The same study showed that European-American parents are more likely to do a voluntary job in schools. On a similar topic, Chung (2012) studied the experiences of Korean mothers about parental involvement. In this study, it was found that Korean mothers, contrary to expected from immigrant parents, employed negotiation and several strategies to be heard by the school bodies and to be involved more.

However, generalizations among the immigrant or minority groups about parental involvement can be misleading as there are several confounding structural elements (Yamamoto and Holloway, 2010). Language, trust, and familiarity with the school system can be some of these confounding aspects. Socioeconomic status is another confounding aspect that has extensive connections with parental involvement regardless of migrant or minority background (Park and Holloway, 2013).

Research on the involvement of immigrant parents has focused on the barriers that parents face and on how to explain different patterns of involvement among immigrant parents. In the study of Al-Deen and Windle (2015), the involvement of migrant mothers in the education of their children has been studied. This study showed that cultural capital has a strong influence on parental involvement. Another important finding of this research is the family dynamics before immigration. Previous occupation, gendered disadvantages for women, and family economic relations were all found to be relevant for the parental involvement post-migration.

Immigrant parents face several barriers to be involved in school-based events or home-based support. Their engagement both in home-based and in school-based activities can be challenged due to several factors. One of the challenges is the lack of comfort with the language of the host country (Ramirez, 2003). In the case of language incompetence, immigrant or refugee parents may need interpreters for their communication with the school. This also limits their academic support for their children. On the other hand, lack of language competence may create the feeling of being disapproved and disempowered which keeps the parents away from engagement (Georgis, Gokiert, Ford and Ali, 2014). The study of Al-deen and Windle (2015) with immigrant mothers showed that mothers with more mobility freedom tend to speak the language of the host country better and this results in a broader social network, self-confidence and more parental involvement and parent-school interaction, which increase the academic achievement.

Logistical barriers, on the other hand, form another group of factors that affect parental involvement. Access to schools and being engaged in school-based activities may require transportation or time. Being full-time employed, having no childcare facility for the other siblings, being able to use public transportation to reach school are some of these factors that should be considered as relevant points during the discussion of parental involvement (Turney and Kao, 2009).

Apart from language or logistics, other factors have an impact on the parental involvement of immigrant parents. Unfamiliarity with the expectations of the schools, teachers and education systems in the host country can affect the relationship between parents and schools. From a historical understanding, we can expect that migrant and minority parents may have experienced unfair treatment, misunderstanding and discrimination more than other parents and that may have created a feeling of mistrust. The mistrust can keep parents away from schools. However, the schools have the tendency to evaluate the amount of parental support with the amount of their involvement in school activities and their presence in the school environment (Georgis, Gokiert, Ford and Ali, 2014), which may end up in false generalizations.

The different attitudes of immigrant parents towards parental involvement may result in some misunderstanding. Teachers may interpret the limited parental involvement as a lack of interest, motivation or value for the education (Allen, 2011). Interpreting the differences in parental involvement based on the cultural differences, background information and minority group may lead to generalizations that may cause stereotypes and marginalization. This can harm the parent and school interactions (Koyoma and Bakuza, 2017). However, as Park and Holloway (2013) discuss, not being in the school may not mean any parental involvement at all. These parents can be engaged in home-based activities rather than at the school site to compensate for their absence from schools. As Day and Dotterer (2018) found in their research, immigrant parents show great interest in being involved in home-based involvement and this involvement appeared to be beneficial for educational attainment among immigrant children. Hence, it is important to support immigrant parents to be involved more to profit from it.

On the other hand, the research with immigrant parents shows that there are different understandings of parental involvement among immigrant parents. Being present in school, taking an active part in school activities, involvement in homework, or regular communication with teachers are some of the norms among the parents. However, these norms are influenced by the interactions among immigrant parents and teachers. Bolivar and Crispeels (2011) found that immigrant parents benefit from their involvement to a limited extent if they are not appreciated by the school authorities and teachers. Their involvement may stay at the level of being present but does not affect any decision-making process at school if they are not encouraged. Similarly, the study of Doucet (2011) points out that immigrant families' engagement in school is less valued and these families are considered as needing help or encouragement from schools to engage in schools. This deficiency-oriented perspective may yield to mainstreaming and marginalizing immigrant parents by denying their interests, values, and knowledge.

Another reason for the misconception of parental involvement among immigrant parents can be the invisibility issue. As Goldsmith and Kurpius (2018) discuss, the involvement of immigrant parents is less visible than the involvement of other parents most of the time. Immigrant parents' physical existence, efforts for academic support, or participation in school events may not be recognized due to their limited engagement in decision-making processes, not taking part in the administration of parent associations or less communication with teachers or school principals.

Besides, the understanding of the involvement of immigrant parents suffers mainly from static notions of culture and norms of society. With these norms, parents are considered as passive characters who are in the recipient position who should adjust to the new education system and who should adopt it (Koyoma and Bakuza, 2017). However, immigrant families bring new perspectives, different experiences, and expectations with them. Their engagement can re-shape the norms about parental involvement and bring new insights to the school-parent relationship. Hence, attempts to increase parental involvement among immigrant parents is crucial.

2.3.2 Parental Involvement in the Refugee Context

The relevant literature has paid attention to immigrant parent involvement in recent decades; however, less attention has been given to the involvement of refugee parents (Georgis et al., 2014). Refugee parents, however, should be tackled as a distinct group of parents due to their aspirations and motivations for immigration. When compared to other immigrant parents who mostly leave their countries voluntarily and relatively in less challenging conditions, refugee parents mainly escape conflict and life-threatening situations. Unlike most immigrants, refugees leave their homelands, usually abruptly, owing to the fear of persecution because of their religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or expression of political opinion (Rutter, 1994).

As McBrien (2011) discusses, many resettled refugees have either no or very limited experience with schools and formal education systems, which requires support and encouragement in the host country. Therefore, many recent refugees arrive in the host countries unprepared in terms of school systems. In the case of refugee parents, additional life challenges make parental involvement especially difficult. Research conducted with refugee parents shows that apart from cultural understandings of parental involvement, logistics issues, or language, refugee parents confront several other challenges due to trauma, loss of loved ones or torture (Lewig, Arney and Salveron, 2010). Refugee parents may find it challenging to support their children in their education because of their severe emotional distress, lack of language and education, low socioeconomic status, and cultural integration problems (McKay, 1993).

On the other hand, refugees have experienced repressive governments and they have had to deal with lengthy bureaucratic procedures in their resettlement process. Hence, as Earner (2007) suggests, this ends up in distrust of refugees in authorities including school authorities. This trust issue gets combined with the lack of experience about schools and both can extend to less or no parental involvement. Thus, the success of refugee families' involvement depends on the supports they receive in the host country. Outreach to refugee parents can be an effective and necessary route to achieve success academically among refugee students.

Thinking that immigrant parents are not interested in the education of their children and that they are uninvolved should be considered as a harmful and pervasive myth (Giles, 2005). Instead, the required steps should be taken to increase the engagement and to overcome the challenges that keeping immigrant families away from getting more involved both in school-based activities and in home-based activities. The study of Goldsmith and Kurpius (2018) showed that the immigrant parents' effort to help their children achieve academically does not depend on a high income or high levels of parent education. The efforts were found to be rooted in their culture and influenced by the outreach of educators and school authorities. This study pointed to the necessity of the initiatives for engaging parents. Also as Jarmuz-Smith (2011) discusses, providing meaningful engagement opportunities is the key to parent involvement. These opportunities should offer concrete emancipatory ways for parents to build knowledge of the education system, school settings, and involvement possibilities and to build the capacity for further involvement in the educational system.

However, there are some requirements that programs should adopt when trying to engage parents. Firstly, these programs should be in line with the cultural aspects. The efforts to engage refugee parents should be culturally responsive and should invite collaboration more than integration. Culturally accepting and appealing practices would encourage refugee parents to participate in such programs (Rivera-Singletary, 2010). On the other hand, the factors that impede immigrant parents' involvement should be targeted by these efforts too. Family responsibilities, no help for childcare, language issues, mobility problems, long working hours, or gender-related hesitations are some of the obstacles that the initiations should outcome (Rivera-Singletary, 2010).

3. Conclusion

The relevant literature as well as recommendations of international organisations and the global players engaged in the discussion of immigrant integration point to several important aspects that should be taken into consideration while planning programs for enhancing immigrant integration (Al-deen and Windle, 2015; Bolivar and Crispeels, 2011; Turney and Kao, 2009). As it is discussed, it is very important to offer opportunities that can assist refugee parents and immigrant parents who are first-generation migrants to accelerate the re-accumulation and re-improvement of their human capital. Due to missing educational background and challenging economic and social conditions, parents may have not developed the required competency to support their children, which can be aggravated due to immigration and settlement in a foreign country where language skills add up to the existing challenging situation (McBrien, 2011). The training programs should enable fellow refugee parents to come together and increase their knowledge about the key elements of education and schooling system of the host countries as well as further education possibilities for themselves as well as for their children. Supporting parental involvement and motivating parents not to give up on their children's educational success should be an important role of the host countries.

Besides, several immigrant groups are characterized by their strong social bonds with their own cultural group and they are criticized of being socially embedded in these groups and less engaged in the integration efforts. However, as several scholars (Ferlander, 2007; Lancee, 2012; Putnam, 2007) explain, the lack of opportunities to get informed about and engaged in host country's culture, health, social or political system as well as educational provisions may lead immigrant groups to turn into ethnic groups or immigrant fellows with the hope of getting the required support to settle in the new country. Hence, reaching immigrant groups that are embedded in wide social networks, such as the Syrian refugee community in Austria, can be paramount to increase awareness about the education system and demands of the social, economic and political integration. Community Parents Action, in line with this notion, creates opportunities for members of immigrant social networks to develop capacity and to expand the acquisition to their wider network. In addition, programs should employ a culturally sensitive methodology that engages parents from a migrant and refugee background as trainers, consultants and capacity builders for fellow immigrant parents. That would allow to mobilize a number of immigrants through already existing social networks of the immigrant groups (Modood, 2012).

Given the positive influence of parental involvement on academic achievement and development, the programs for integration should intervene in the malfunctioning cycle of inheritance of education in vulnerable families from migrant or refugee backgrounds (Day and Dotterer, 2018; Koyoma and Bakuza, 2017). By engaging parents or legal custodians of the unaccompanied refugees via consultation programs and training for capacity building, higher success in academic achievement and indirectly in labour market integration for immigrants can be achieved (Macias and Paniagua, 2018). Hence, parental involvement should be a cornerstone of the programs offered to refugee and immigrant parents. Programs are suggested to provide consultation and helps families be more involved and persistent in terms of supporting their children's education by building upon the existing high expectations of migrant parents. The involvement of mothers is especially targeted as the Action adopts an emancipatory expectation from the project activities for the female migrants and refugees. Community Parents Action pays special attention to include female refugees and migrants and to encourage them to get involved in the decision-making processes of their labour market options and their children's education and future.

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