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## Refugee entrepreneurship development: a case study of capability training program in catering services

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this empirical study is to extend knowledge of and propose a model for capability building for refugee entrepreneurship. It introduces a model of training and learning program for capability development for refugee entrepreneurship. The model covers the whole path from the beginning to the phase of established business. This research is a single-case study based on qualitative theme interviews and focus groups from which the data were collected. The informants are persons involved in a program facilitating refugees' inclusion in society through entrepreneurship. The study finds that refugees starting an enterprise, most importantly need empowerment, learning by doing, and connections to other people. The hands-on facilitation and entrepreneurial co-creation are particularly powerful with refugee entrepreneurs. These principles are embedded in the model proposed in this study. The research implications of this study relate to refugee entrepreneurship and its development.

**Keywords:** refugee entrepreneurship; entrepreneurship training and learning; entrepreneurial development; entrepreneurship program; catering services; co-creation.

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## 1 Introduction

The number of refugees and asylum seekers is rapidly increasing, and many countries have this issue on top of the political agenda. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2019), there were 70 million forcibly displaced people, 26 million refugees, and 3.5 million asylum seekers worldwide in 2018, and the number is increasing. Currently, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR, 2023), alone more than 8 million refugees from Ukraine have been recorded across Europe. Employment is one of the key factors in successful inclusion of refugees in the host country, allowing economic independence, which is known to have mental health effects, aiding language learning and creating contacts with people as well as bridges with the host society (Mulvey, 2015). This problem is also addressed, for example by the United Nations' seventeen sustainable development goals, which include promoting inclusive growth, employment, and decent work for all and aim at reducing inequalities within and between countries (UN, 2015).

At the same time, as more and more refugees are coming to the Western countries, these countries require a larger workforce, particularly in the service industries. According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD, (2019), p.7], employment in the service sector grew by 27% over the past two decades (p.7). Enhancing refugees' employment in a host society serves several purposes: it helps the inclusion of refugees and increases their quality of life, serves sustainable development goals, and responds to the demand for workers in service industries. According to Alrawadieh et al. (2019), "enhancing the entrepreneurship capacities of refugees might be more effective for integration than supplying them continuous aid in isolated refugee camps. Host economies might also benefit from such initiatives" (p.718). Our empirical study responds to these societal needs.

The classic entrepreneurship literature has examined general motives, drivers, obstacles and methods of enhancing entrepreneurship (Ojasalo, 2004), but it includes hardly any knowledge of the special characteristics of refugee entrepreneurship or methods for enhancing it. The research on immigrant entrepreneurship does not include specific knowledge of refugee entrepreneurship either (Armengot et al., 2010; Awotoye and Singh, 2018; Bird and Wennberg, 2016; Carbonell et al., 2014; Chaganti et al., 2008; Das et al., 2017; Kerr and Kerr, 2016; Klinthäll and Urban, 2014; Ndorf and Proem, 2011; Price and Chacko, 2009; Shinnar and Young, 2008; Storti, 2014; Vinogradov and Jørgensen, 2017; Wang and Liu, 2015). Refugees are a special group among immigrants; they are forcibly displaced (UNHCR, 2019). While the research on refugee entrepreneurship is increasing (Harima, 2022; Barth and Zalkat, 2021; Desai et al., 2021;

Harima and Freudenberg, 2020; Harima et al., 2020, 2021; Heilbrunn and Iannone, 2020; Halilovich and Efendić, 2019; Bizri, 2017; Bristol-Faulhammer, 2017; Fong et al., 2007; Heilbrunn, 2019; Meister and Mauer, 2019; Obschonka and Hahn, 2018; Wauters and Lambrecht, 2006, 2008; Lyon et al., 2007), it is still mostly an unexplored area.

Indeed, the need for developing new models for facilitating refugee entrepreneurship is due to several reasons. Firstly, so far, the models and programs for enhancing refugee entrepreneurship are scarce. Models describing the hands-on facilitation of refugees at the grass-roots level and joint learning with other entrepreneurs and refugees are needed in particular. Secondly, the Western countries increasingly need workers, particularly in service industries. Effective enhancement of refugee entrepreneurship can respond to this need. Thirdly, many refugees have traumatic experiences as they enter a new country. Social connections and feeling hope for a better life help them to recover. There is a need for entrepreneurship development approaches, which increase the quality of life of refugees during the program by offering them a social network in the new country. Fourthly, countries, public organisations, and private companies are increasingly addressing the United Nations sustainable development goals (UN, 2015) through their values and activities. Employment and inclusion for all is part these goals. There is a need for programs which enable organisations to participate in enhancing these goals in the case of refugees.

The research acknowledges the need for more knowledge of and methods for increasing refugees' entrepreneurship capabilities, such as financial assistance programs, incubation, and existing regulations and laws (Alrawadieh et al., 2019). However, so far the knowledge of such programs is scarce. According to Shneikat and Alrawadieh (2019), 'although the refugee integration policies adopted by several countries have been extensively studied, "... the role of the entrepreneurship in facilitating refugees' integration is still an under-researched issue" (p.742). "... more research is needed to understand different aspects of refugee entrepreneurship" (p.757).

In brief, the problem statement of this study can be summarised as follows. The number of refugees is increasing in the world. At the same time, countries in the Western world require more workforce, particularly in service industries. Entrepreneurship is an effective way of inclusion of refugees in the host country, and it can alleviate the lack of work force, particularly in service industries. However, pragmatic approaches are lacking, and related theoretical knowledge is scarce. Our study addresses the knowledge gap related to facilitating refugee entrepreneurship and conducts a case study in the context of the catering industry. The objective statement is formulated as follows. The purpose of this empirical study is to extend knowledge of and propose a model for capability building for refugee entrepreneurship. The main result of the study is a proposed capability development program for refugee entrepreneurship.

This article starts by reviewing the literature dealing with immigrant and refugee entrepreneurship and enhancing refugees' capabilities as entrepreneurs. Next, it describes the empirical method. Then, it proposes a model of a capability development program for refugee entrepreneurship. Then, it discusses the research contribution, as well as the practical and societal value of the study. Finally, it draws conclusions and proposes avenues for further research.

## 2 Immigrant and refugee entrepreneurship

### 2.1 Immigrant entrepreneurship

Immigrant entrepreneurship refers to the self-employment efforts by individuals who voluntarily migrate to a different country and engage in business ownership (Chaganti et al., 2008). Immigrants bring fresh perspectives, energy and an enterprising spirit to the economy Savino (2014) and enrich the local culture and social structures (Munkejord, 2017). Relative to the general population, immigrants are more likely to found new ventures than non-immigrants (Vandor and Franke, 2016) and pursue more aggressive prospector strategies (Chaganti et al., 2008). They foster economic development directly through new venture creation and indirectly through coordination of information flows between their home and host countries, thereby promoting international trade and investment (Awotoye and Singh, 2018; Das et al., 2017). Both necessity-driven and opportunity-discovery based entrepreneurship are included in immigrant entrepreneurship (Szarucki et al., 2016). The special challenges of immigrant entrepreneurs compared to non-immigrant entrepreneurs are likely to be limited access to human, social and financial capital (Bird and Wennberg, 2016; Maj and Kubiciel-Lodzinska, 2020); higher stress levels (Awotoye and Singh, 2018); limited education or training, language difficulties, and discrimination (Hamid, 2020; Shinnar and Young, 2008); and lower profitability and survival of business (Miller and Eden, 2006).

### 2.2 Refugee entrepreneurship

Refugees differ from other immigrants, which is likely to affect their entrepreneurial behaviour. Refugees are forced immigrants (UNHCR, 2019), while most other immigrant groups are voluntary immigrants. Refugee entrepreneurs' migration decisions are driven by necessity rather than opportunity, and their migration decisions are usually made with little or no previous planning (Alrawadieh et al., 2019). Refugee entrepreneurs face challenges similar to immigrant entrepreneurs in general; however, these challenges are even harder for them (Heilbrunn, 2019). When starting a business, refugees suffer from hindered access to entrepreneurship in the host country, caused by culture and language barriers, lack of knowledge, discrimination and racism, regulations and compliance requirements as well as financing policies (Collins, 2016; Jones et al., 2014; Meister and Mauer, 2019; Sepulveda et al., 2011). Refugees are distinct from other ethnic minorities as they often lack access to the 'ethnic resources' (Waldinger, 1990) and 'social capital' (Flap et al., 2000) generated within well-established ethnic groups, which are key resources for enterprise formation and growth (Lyon et al., 2007). Refugees suffer more often from mental health issues and trauma caused by wars and other tragic experiences (Richmond, 1988). They may have lost their education and qualification documents and thus face difficulties in having their qualifications recognised in the host country (Obschonka and Hahn, 2018). Waves of refugees can be overwhelming, leaving institutions, such as employment agencies or education centres, unprepared and untrained for such an unexpected influx of refugees (Obschonka and Hahn, 2018). Refugees are less economic opportunity-driven and do not primarily start a business as a potential career option (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Meister and Mauer, 2019). Refugee entrepreneurs are more likely to be men than women (Alrawadieh et al., 2019). Laws and regulations are perceived to be more challenging, particularly during the establishment stage

(Alrawadieh et al., 2019). In general, the entrepreneurial characteristics of refugee entrepreneurs differ from those of native entrepreneurs and other immigrant entrepreneurs, as being more multidimensional and complex (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Bemak and Chung, 2014; Meister and Mauer, 2019).

### *2.3 Enhancing refugees' capabilities as entrepreneurs*

The literature dealing with programs and methods of increasing refugees' entrepreneurship capabilities is scarce so far, and only a handful studies are available. Harima et al. (2020) found that refugee business incubation should provide entrepreneurial knowledge, alleviate anxiety related to institutional differences, guide through the process at the incubator and motivate, tap into social capital in the host country, and provide soft support with personal matters. Local and refugee entrepreneurs can also team up, co-create and develop initiatives evaluate and pursue new opportunities (Ibid.). Fong et al. (2007) argue that refugee entrepreneurship programs should involve partnerships with microlenders and other non-profit economic development organisations, covering topics such as financial literacy (how to make ends meet on a limited budget), banking (how to open accounts at a bank), credit (understanding the use and dangers of credit), avoiding scams and telemarketing pitfalls, writing a business plan, homeownership, buying a car and car insurance, computer literacy, and introduction to the health profession.

Bristol-Faulhammer (2017) found that refugee entrepreneurship programs should include mentoring, counselling, and training; increase cooperation with state actors; enable investment and partnerships; increase collaboration between entrepreneurs and financial institutions; provide administrative support and information. Bizri (2017) argues that host countries should offer programs that educate refugee entrepreneurs about the long-term support mechanisms available for them in the host nations; programs directed at refugees who already have entrepreneurial experience; and peer development programs where refugee entrepreneurs could educate each other. Harb et al. (2018) refer to skill-development programmes such as vocational training in cooperation with local industrialists.

Meister and Mauer (2019) proposed a business incubation process framework of refugee entrepreneurs to overcome the lack of embeddedness and barriers to refugee entrepreneurs in the host country. Their model includes three phases: knowledge exchange related to socioeconomic and legal-institutional challenges; proactive guidance and introduction to the local ecosystem by prosocial stakeholders; and network development through local stakeholder commitment and expanded collaboration in the host country. According to Shneikat and Alrawadieh (2019), policymakers as well as non-governmental organisation (NGOs) on national and regional levels should focus more on the power of entrepreneurship as a tool for integration and inclusion of refugees.

Research on refugee entrepreneurship describes obstacles refugees face in the new country (e.g., Lyon et al., 2007) and reasons why they want to become entrepreneurs (e.g., Wauters and Lambrecht, 2006), but offers very few analyses or propositions for systematic grassroots-level programs enhancing refugee entrepreneurship. While the literature refers to the need to expand training programs to meet not only language needs of refugees but also other entrepreneurial capabilities (Alrawadieh et al., 2019), so far the examples and knowledge of such programs are very limited. This study responds to this knowledge gap.

### 3 Method

This article emerges from a qualitative single-case study (Koski, 2018; see also Ojasalo and Koski, 2019) on developing a model for a capability development program for building a scalable catering business for refugees in a new country. Next, we explain the empirical method.

#### 3.1 Case study method

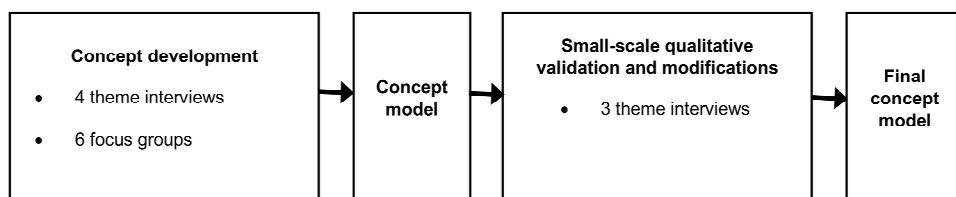
Case studies, in general, have the following characteristics. They enable *holistic and detailed understanding* (Abercrombie et al., 1984). They can involve both single and multiple cases (Eisenhardt, 1989). The empirical material of a case study may be qualitative, quantitative, or both (Eisenhardt, 1989). Their purpose may be to *provide description, develop theory, or test theory* (Yin, 1994). Developing a grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is very similar to developing a theory from case studies (Chetty, 1996). Case studies have the following limitations. They lack statistical reliability and validity, it can be used to generate hypotheses but not to test them, and direct generalisations cannot be made (Gummesson, 2000; Yin, 1994).

According to Barzelay (1993, p.305), “The single case study is an extremely valuable method of social science research when used for the purpose of analysing how people frame and solve problems”. Since this research aims at understanding how people solve practical problems in enhancing refugee entrepreneurship the single case approach provides a powerful approach. It introduces a model of capability development program for refugee entrepreneurship, which offers solutions for several practical problems in this context.

#### 3.2 Case organisation and research process

Our research followed the qualitative methodology, and thus the findings and results are based on subjective interpretation of the qualitative data collected (Glaser, 1978; Taylor et al., 2015). The data in this study were collected in theme interviews (Portugal, 2013) as well as in focus groups (Patton, 2015). Service design methods (Stickdorn et al., 2018) were used for stimulating discussion and model development in focus groups. The research project was conducted in 2018 in Finland, and it included 13 different interactive data collection occasions. The empirical research and model development process is shown in Figure 1, the data collection including the main themes and outcomes of interviews and focus groups in Table 1 (Appendix A) and informants in Table 2 (Appendix B). The main themes and

**Figure 1** The case study research process



This study was conducted in an organisation called *case organisation* in this report. It is a volunteer network with a handful (3–5) of central persons responsible for daily operations, and it is part of a registered non-profit association in Finland aiming at solving societal challenges, such as refugees' inclusion in society. The idea of *case organisation* is to support asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrant employment and entrepreneurship. This happens by creating networks of partners including government officials, companies, non-governmental organisations, congregations, communities, universities, and individuals who support newcomers to get started with their business ideas or find jobs where they can use their skills instead of being idle in reception centres. Everyone who shares these principles and offers some concrete help can join the network. The *case organisation's* network connects refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants with Finnish society by offering work from the labour market, creating educational opportunities, and providing mentoring and training. It also offers support with a hands-on approach in learning new skills and provides useful information about the Finnish job market. Moreover, it educates people about what kinds of information and mindset are needed to become an entrepreneur.

The *case organisation* runs business development programs for refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants who wish to become entrepreneurs. They may participate in programs as individual entrepreneurs or as a team working together to build up a company. Such teams are here called *business development teams*. Both teams and individuals are involved with the same development process. Many more potential participants are interested in building a business for themselves than the *case organisation* can accept in their programs.

Four theme interviews and six focus groups were conducted during the first part of the model development. In the focus groups, the informants described and gave information on the phenomenon being researched by answering the interviewer's questions based on their experience. They described broadly the central phenomenon of the research based on their experience – in other words, entrepreneurship development of refugees in catering and their integration into the new society. Moreover, they did co-creative problem solving with various service design tools (Ojasalo et al., 2015) aiming at developing solutions to refugee entrepreneurship development, its various aspects and problems. The service design methods included customer profiling, customer journey maps, and brainstorming (Stickdorn et al., 2018), as well as pain point analysis and value proposition canvas (Osterwalder et al., 2014) and business model tools (Ojasalo and Ojasalo, 2018). Thus, the participants in the focus groups had both informative and problem-solving roles. The focus groups in this study also acted as a project steering group for the practical development of the research project.

Later, after the development, three more interviews were conducted with experts who had substantial experience in management and implementation of service design and user experience projects both in the home country and internationally. The purpose of these interviews was to do a small-scale qualitative validation and receive help in finalising the model. In total, this study is based on data from seven theme interviews and six focus groups.

The central informants from the *case organisation* were the business program manager, head of business, and producer. The business program manager worked with the *business development teams* and the *case organisation's* network partners with a hands-on approach, organised events, participated in drafting offers for *business development teams*, and took care that the day-to-day work in the programs ran smoothly.



The Producer also worked with the *business development teams* and helped them from the office, taking care of social media and other material and media-related production. The Head of Business was responsible for the overall success and metrics of the programs.

All interviews were recorded with the interviewees' consent. Because of the language barrier, an interpreter was used in one of the interviews. This happened when a refugee participating in the entrepreneurship program was interviewed. Before that interview, a brief of the topic and general guidelines about ethnographic interview techniques were provided to the interpreter. After each interview, a quick draft of the most important insights was written down in a memo. Later, a more thorough analysis was conducted with the recordings and notes. This included, firstly, identification of higher abstraction level categories from the qualitative data (e.g., empowerment, learning by doing and creating connections) and, secondly, understanding the nature of the identified category in detail by analysing the data-specific data dealing with it (Glaser, 1978; Patton, 2015). While the data consist of multiple languages, we have not attempted to present direct quotations for case illustration.

Analysis of qualitative data is fundamentally categorisation of the data, which can also be called coding (Maxwell and Miller, 2008). Coding is a typical categorising strategy in qualitative research, but in this report we use the term categorisation. The current research followed the approach explained by Braun and Clarke (2006). The entire data was worked systematically through, full and equal attention to all empirical details was given, interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of larger categories across the data were identified. The goal of this process was to connect a wide range of empirical clues and narrow the focus down to higher abstraction level categories. As a result, three categories were identified which are of great importance for a successful refugee entrepreneurship training program, and they are empowerment, learning by doing, and creating connections. In the results section, we present a synthesising description of the main findings based on the empirical case. We describe the empirical case to illustrate and show grounds of the proposed model.

## 4 Empirical results

In this section, we first explain the empirically identified key principles, which were the cornerstones of the model development. These key principles are based on the most important needs and expectations of the refugees towards the program. Their identification is based on the empirical data collected from the informants during the concept development phase (Figure 1, Table 1). After that, we describe the model for refugee entrepreneurship development. The model was developed in catering services.

### 4.1 Key principles for the model development

Our empirical study revealed three important needs and expectations of refugees towards a capability development program for building their own business in the catering industry: empowerment, learning by doing, and creating connections. They were identified based on the empirical material collected during the concept development phase. Responding to these needs became guiding principles of the final model development, so that each element of the model is based on these principles.

### *Empowerment*

Our empirical data showed that empowerment is a crucial principle in building entrepreneurship capabilities with refugees. This is because some refugees participating in the business development programs come from austere environments. Their countries may have been ravaged by wars. They had just completed an arduous journey to Finland through Europe and had gone through a phase of living in reception centres. Enabling people to take charge of their own lives and giving them the necessary tools to succeed was found to be a top priority in our empirical study.

### *Learning by doing*

Our study found that every informant wanted to experiment and learn in practice. The participants in *business development teams* and employees of the *case organisation* preferred a hands-on approach to doing things. Cooking and catering are hands-on activities, which is why following this principle is inherently logical. This is in line with the empowerment principle by not placing people in traditional lectures and hands-off advising, but instead giving them an opportunity for learning by doing.

### *Creating connections*

During the interviews, a recurring theme was how people want to meet other people. Arriving in a foreign country, where a refugee may not know anyone, can be an intimidating experience. Everything is new; the culture and regulations are very different. There are language barriers everywhere. The *case organisation* informants also emphasised that because of the rise of populism in the world and Europe, it is imperative to show the people of the host country the entrepreneurial mindset many refugees have. Building a network, which helps people to succeed and achieve their dreams and aligned with the *case organisation's* values and mission, was found to be important. One of the interviewees said that creating new connections helps to see the people behind their status.

## *4.2 Model for refugee entrepreneurship development in catering*

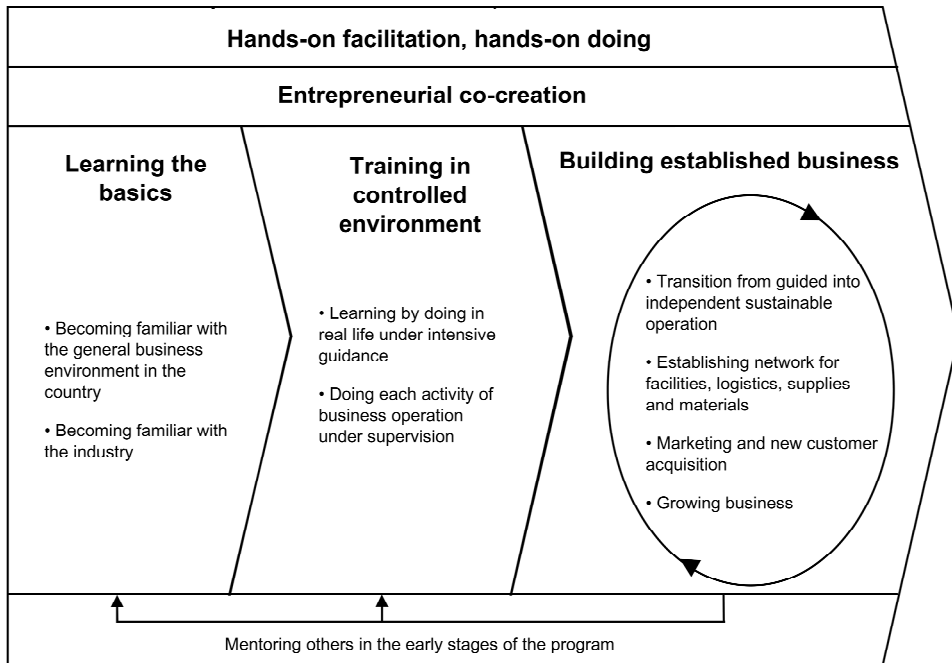
Next, we introduce the empirically developed model for the capability development program for refugee entrepreneurship. The model is founded on the three principles found in the research, namely, empowerment, learning by doing, and creating connections. The model consists of three phases (Figure 2). Participants are learning the basics from scratch, training in a controlled environment, and establishing a business. The refugees participating in the program move from intensively guided hands-on learning into independent established entrepreneurship, even mentors of other refugees in the program. Developing their capabilities and their own enterprises takes place through co-creation in teams consisting of other refugee entrepreneurs.

### *Learning the basics*

In the first phase, the refugees join the business development program and form a *business development team*. The teams consist of refugees aiming at building a business for themselves in the catering industry. Most of the activity during this stage is suited for

every participant, regardless of how advanced they are in managing a business or catering. Many of the topics in the development and training, such as local revenue law, business regulations, and funding concepts, are applicable to anyone managing a business organisation. Thus, each participant regardless of their specific field, earlier experience, and level of expertise shares in the learning. In this phase, it is important that the idea of the program is introduced to the participants, and they become committed by receiving the first positive and encouraging experiences.

**Figure 2** Model of capability development program for refugee entrepreneurship



*Case description:* facilitation offered at this stage by the *case organisation* to *business development teams* includes visiting restaurants and catering businesses, connecting with mentors, organising specific business workshops, organising universal business and regulations workshops, and issuing hygienic passes that allow working with foodstuffs in the host country.

*Training in a controlled environment*

In the second phase, participants move to a real environment with real clients. This happens in kitchens and event venues of external partners who organise events, including catering. These partners may include non-governmental organisations, nonprofit organisations, congregations, cities and small to medium-sized enterprises that wish to increase their workplace’s social responsibility and image. The current model is based on co-creation within business development teams as well as with partners in the external network and the notion that everybody wins from the collaboration.

*Case description:* the idea is to find partners who have their own kitchens and cold storage facilities. One of the biggest problems is finding kitchens with easy transportation

from wholesalers to kitchens and event venues. Catering locations with their own kitchens and cold facilities answer the biggest pain point of finding a suitable kitchen for each catering event. With fixed locations, organising deliveries from wholesalers becomes easier. This also makes menu and ingredient lists easier to standardise, if needed.

In an ideal situation, the partner organises their own events where they need catering at least a few times per year. This provides a steady stream of catering events for the *business development team* without the *case organisation* having to continuously search for new external partners. When the facilities and venues are already familiar, the *case organisation* mentors have more time to teach new entrepreneurs and chefs. With a steady stream of catering events, a *business development team* can also receive continuous opportunities to network and meet new people. Partner organisations are able to network with participants of *business development teams*. Moreover, cooking in a controlled environment creates a safer space for a *business development team* to meet the clients.

Facilitation offered by the *case organisation* to a *business development team* includes preparing wholesale contracts and delivery, car rental or sponsorship services for delivering catering to a venue, on-site mentoring when preparing for the event, helping and facilitating networking and positive experiences, translation services, opening bank accounts and using banking services, and making contracts and offers.

### *Building established business*

The third and final phase is about establishing the business. This phase involves participants who have their business up and running. These businesses have already done catering events with the partners in the controlled environment phase. The need to use partners' resources has not changed, and the same co-creation model for the partner network is used here, too. In this phase, however, the participants can now mostly manage their own operation. They can also mentor other refugees in earlier stages of the program.

*Case description:* any partner organisation with a suitable kitchen is still of great help for *business development teams*, which already can manage their own operation. In return for using the facilities of external partners, the *case organisation* and/or the *business development teams* pay provision per event or rent monthly to the external partner. The organisations that provide the facilities also get to contribute positively and participate in the corporate social responsibility movement. Having a network of kitchens distributed over a metropolitan area where the *case organisation* operates helps *business development teams* to choose the kitchen, which is close to a specific venue. The *case organisation* can negotiate fixed-price contracts with companies and institutions that are a part of this network. According to the empirical material, the acquired expertise will enhance *business development teams'* understanding of business and marketing in addition to improving their cooking and catering management skills. Moreover, people who have gone through the program and established catering businesses can mentor newcomers and less experienced refugees who are currently in the beginning of the program. This also helps to scale up their own catering business with new resources.

In this phase, facilitation offered by the *case organisation* to *business development teams* covers teaching basic marketing and branding, using social media channels, networking and finding leads, profitability and sustainability, creating a handbook of the

best practices for the *business development teams*, advising on menu creation, pricing and translations, and creating a website for *business development teams*, where a customer can send information about their event and ask for an offer. Later, it also includes helping build a commercial kitchen for the *business development teams* and introducing car rental services for them for easier transportation.

## 5 Discussion and contribution

### 5.1 Contribution to research literature

This empirical case study has the following main contributions to the literature: Firstly, it proposes a new model of a capability development program for refugee entrepreneurship including guidance from the beginning to the phase of established business. Secondly, it identifies the importance of hands-on facilitation rather than merely hands-off advising in refugee entrepreneurship. Thirdly, it found entrepreneurial co-creation to be particularly powerful in the case of refugee entrepreneurship facilitation. Both hands-on facilitation and co-creation with other refugee entrepreneurs are embedded in the model. Next, we explain these research implications in more detail.

The present study contributes by proposing a *pragmatic and systematic model for facilitating refugee entrepreneurship* in catering services. The existing literature on refugee inclusion gives some overall ideas and references to what refugee entrepreneurship enhancement could include; however, these suggestions mostly remain at a rather abstract level of policymaking recommendations – without detail-level considerations of implementation. Thus, there is a clear need for systematic and implementable programs to enhance and facilitate refugees' starting and building up their own enterprise. Only a few research reports have this focus.

Meister and Mauer (2019) introduced a 'refugee business incubation process framework' to systematise the facilitation process of refugee entrepreneurship (p.1082). Their three-phase framework supports the present model by showing that systematic, detailed and pragmatic pathways are required for effective facilitation of refugee entrepreneurship. However, their process framework is primarily for business incubators, which tend to be more established organisations. The current model also suits also facilitators with more limited resources.

Evansluong et al. (2019) introduced a three-phase model of opportunity creation for entrepreneurship. While their model is developed for immigrants in general and not specifically for refugees, it has some similarities to the current model and it clearly supports it. Both models develop the participants systematically in consecutive phases from less advanced to more so. Also, they both include a strong social integration and networking aspect through continuous interaction, both within the local immigrant community as well as with natives. This helps the entrepreneur through improved language skills, an increased sense of belongingness, and wider markets (McKeever et al., 2015). A clear difference between the present model and that of Evansluong et al. (2019) is the fact that entrepreneurship development remains at the idea-refinement level in their model. The present model not only addresses the idea's refinement, but also and most importantly, the guided grass-roots business development after the idea phase.

The present model contributes by emphasising pragmatic *hands-on assistance* and business development support in all practical situations and past all obstacles along the

path, from the very beginning to established business. While the most common support to immigrant and refugee entrepreneurs offered by various programs and institutions is advisory assistance (Bristol-Faulhammer, 2017), our empirical study shows that the hands-on approach is crucial. This is in line with the findings of Collins (2016), who reports on a program that effectively facilitated new refugee enterprise formation in Sydney. Collins explains that experiences from earlier hands-off programs led to changing the approach significantly. He found that facilitation of refugee entrepreneurship requires most importantly a ‘much more hands on/hand holding role’ [Collins, (2016), p.23]. This strongly supports the approach of the present model, which is based on hands-on facilitation as well as learning by doing.

The present model further contributes by emphasising the process of *entrepreneurial co-creation* and joint learning of participants. While most immigrant and refugee entrepreneurship studies have overlooked the role of entrepreneurial co-creation, the recent study by Meister and Mauer (2019) found it very effective. In addition, several other studies highlight the benefits of entrepreneurial co-creation and thus support the relevance of the current model. Entrepreneurial co-creation and collaboration between entrepreneurs is beneficial and effective, since it enhances synergistic interplay between the dynamic capabilities of stakeholders and the entrepreneurial mindset (Shams and Kaufmann, 2016). It also has the potential to facilitate building an entrepreneurship ecosystem. Entrepreneurship flourishes in ecosystems in which multiple stakeholders play synergistic roles and collaborate with each other, and thus build access to the human, financial, and professional resources they need (Simatupang et al., 2015; Van de Ven, 1993). Moreover, co-creation of start-up teams and various stakeholders enhances entrepreneurial innovation (Leonidou et al., 2018). When entrepreneurs are part of and engage with a start-up team, this provides them with information about innovation and the availability and character of products, resources and markets, which in turn enhance innovation management and entrepreneurship development (Davidsson and Honig, 2003). The current model is further supported by Mawson and Kasem (2019), who found that networking with other refugees enables individuals to better understand the realities of the business environment in the host country and the need for innovation, and what is sophisticated in the local market.

## 5.2 *Practical and societal value*

The present model for facilitating refugee entrepreneurship has the following practical and societal value. *Firstly*, it does not require extensive public funding or capital investments. It is developed with and for a third-sector organisation with limited resources, and it is to a large extent based on network orchestration and entrepreneurial co-creation. A large number of different programs and services are available to refugees and ethnic entrepreneurs in the Western host countries. They include start-up advisory assistance; information provision; capacity-building soft skills; consulting, marketing, and sales; advisory assistance from state officials; networking; business mentoring; mentoring personal development; facilitating access to funding; seed funding; provision grants; business administration skills; back office service; public relations; and psychological support (Bristol-Faulhammer, 2017). Often these services are publicly funded. They also tend to be scattered and provided by several authorities whose efforts are not integrated. The current model integrates many of the above services into a coherent and goal-oriented concept. Refugees participating in the program get the

assistance they need – to the extent they need – tied into a concrete goal, which is an established and self-sufficient business. Thus, the present model does not require extensive additional public funding or capital investments; instead, it is based on mobilising and orchestrating existing resources in the society. This includes the refugees themselves, who go from aid receivers to aid providers at some point in the process. Indeed, the fact that the current model does not require extensive public funding and investments is likely to make it transferable to many industries and contexts.

*Secondly*, the present model increases a refugee's quality of life even during the entrepreneurship development process, not just through a successful outcome. A main motive of refugee entrepreneurship is the desire for a better economic situation (Meister and Mauer, 2019). Refugee entrepreneurship is often the only alternative for survival in the host country (Vinogradov and Isaksen, 2008; Virdee, 2006). Achieving economic results and success often takes a long time. The success is also uncertain. The current model improves the quality of life immediately as the refugees enter the process by increasing their social capital (Kanas et al., 2009) in the host country, and this happens regardless of the economic success that may follow later.

*Thirdly*, the model enables the partner organisations that collaborate with participants in the refugee entrepreneurship program to demonstrate their social responsibility through pragmatic actions and thus improve their image. Both private and public organisations are increasingly interested in doing something for others and showing their social responsibility. For example, incorporating corporate social responsibility in the positioning of corporate brands has become widespread. Increasingly organisations want to strategically embrace corporate social responsibility to achieve a sustainable positioning of their corporate brand and long-term positive benefits for society. Corporate social responsibility initiatives should come forth from their core business processes and focus on the benefits the organisation can offer to society, creating a win-win scenario for the organisation and for society (Van Rekom et al., 2013).

*Fourthly*, the current model offers a grass-roots approach for easing the lack of workers in the service industries in Western countries (OECD, 2019). It can also be assumed that the model is transferable to other industries suffering from a shortage of workers. *Fifthly*, refugees are often perceived as a societal burden to the host country (Alexandre et al., 2019). Refugee engagement in self-generating economic activities can change their public perception as a societal burden and lessen negative public sentiment towards refugees. Thus, the model has the potential to mitigate the tensions between refugees and the local population in the host country by improving public opinion about refugees.

*Sixthly*, the current model can help in achieving the UN (2015) sustainable development goals. These goals address promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all, as well as promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation. This includes a more precise target to 'promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services'. Moreover, the UN (2019) sustainable development goals aim at reducing inequality within and among countries, with a goal to 'facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies'. The present model directly contributes to these goals by offering a pragmatic example of a program that

facilitates refugees' inclusion and employment. It promotes refugees' employing other refugees as well. Employment is one of the keys to the inclusion of refugees in the new country (Mulvey, 2015).

The proposed model cannot be solely responsible for building capabilities and a favourable environment for refugee entrepreneurship. The help of other actors in the host country and the enduring efforts of refugee entrepreneurs themselves are required. Sufficient skills in the local language are needed for entrepreneurship (Mulvey, 2015). The host society needs to offer language courses, and the entrepreneur has to actively take part in them. Discrimination is one of the problems refugee entrepreneurs are likely to face in the new country (Shinnar and Young, 2008). The role of legislation and policymaking is central in preventing discrimination (Ellermann and Goenaga, 2019). Acquiring financial capital is harder for refugee entrepreneurs (Bird and Wennberg, 2016). Participating in the capability development program of the current model does not require any capital from the entrepreneur. However, at later stages, if the entrepreneur wants to leverage the expansion of the business with external capital, the various public and private funding mechanisms for small business can be very helpful.

*Potential generalisability:* instead of pursuing the statistical sample-to-population logic, analytic generalisation can serve as an appropriate logic for generalising the findings from a case study. According to Yin (2013), analytic generalisation means the extraction of a more abstract level of ideas from a set of case study findings – ideas that nevertheless can pertain to newer situations other than the case in the original case study (see also Bromley, 1986; Burawoy, 1991; Donmoyer, 1990; Gomm et al., 2000; Small, 2009). The analytic generalisation aims to apply to other concrete situations and not just to contribute to abstract theory building. This can happen by linking analytic generalisation to the related research literature by identifying overlaps and gaps (Yin, 2013, 2003). We use analytic generalisation by comparing our findings with similar studies in different contexts. Our study was conducted in Finland. Reports dealing with refugee entrepreneurship have reported on various challenges of refugee entrepreneurship as well as the need for enhancing it. They include, for example Syrian refugees in Turkey (Alrawadieh et al., 2019) and asylum seekers in open detention camp in Israel (Heilbrunn, 2019). Since the challenges faced by the refugee entrepreneurs are similar as in study, we assume the program suggested in this study would be useful and potentially generalisable outside of Finland. Moreover, we believe that the program proposed in this study helps and has potential to be generalised for implementing the ideas of social entrepreneurship and can facilitate the entrepreneurship of other vulnerable and marginalised groups in society than just refugees. Social entrepreneurship aims at integrating social and economic value creation and contribute to the society at large, and bring benefits to marginalised society members in general (Mair and Marti, 2006). For example, the social entrepreneurship program introduced by Awaysheh and Bonfiglio (2017) includes a strong hands-on and experimental orientation together with real world applications and partners (Tracey and Phillips, 2007) like the program proposed in this study.

## 6 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to extend knowledge of and propose a model for capability building for refugee entrepreneurship. The empirical research was based on a qualitative



single-case study in a third-sector organisation that supports asylum seeker, refugee and immigrant employment and entrepreneurship. The theoretical knowledge base was grounded in the literature of refugee and immigrant entrepreneurship. Our empirical study revealed three important needs and expectations of refugees towards a capability development program for building a self-owned business in the catering industry: empowerment, learning by doing, and creating connections. The results of this article contributed primarily to the literature of refugee entrepreneurship. The article introduced a model of a capability development program for refugee entrepreneurship including guidance from the beginning to the phase of established business. It also identified the importance of hands-on facilitation and entrepreneurial co-creation and included these principles in the model.

Several opportunities for further research emerge from this study. Firstly, in many host countries, refugees are considered a burden rather than an asset. We recommend increasing research that examines the economic and innovative potential of refugees as well as pragmatic approaches for materialising this opportunity. Secondly, we encourage examining further how entrepreneurship affects the quality of life of refugees during and after various entrepreneurship enhancement programs. Extending research from traditional, mostly economic success measures of entrepreneurship with aspects of quality of life and empowerment requires more knowledge. Thirdly, while the current research contributed to certain United Nations sustainable development goals, more systematic research is required as to how the various goals could be better met with more advances in refugee entrepreneurship policies and practices.

Fourthly, the potential and role of third- and fourth-sector organisations in the enhancement of innovation and growth of service industries deserves more research. Whereas third-sector volunteering is channelled through formal groups or organisations, fourth-sector volunteering consists of informal micro-level one-to-one aid (Williams, 2002), referring to self-organising emergent civic activity based on family, kinship, neighbourhood, and acquaintanceship relations (Raisio et al., 2019). Fifthly, the research should address the potential of the platform economy and digital ecosystems (Van Alstyne et al., 2016; Wirtz et al., 2019) in the facilitation of refugee entrepreneurship. Digital ecosystems may open up several new effective and language-independent ways for refugees to share resources and provide services in a new country. Sixthly, large and complex societal problems are 'wicked problems' (Rittel and Webber, 1973). Refugee inclusion is a paragon of wicked problems. With some exceptions (Murray and Longo, 2018), this issue has not been examined from the wicked problems perspective. Wicked problems research has mostly focused on described the nature of wicked problems at a conceptual level, but effective methods for solving or alleviating these problems are in their infancy, and the empirical research and grass-root-level methods are lacking, in particular. The co-creation approach embedded in the present model might function as a starting point for examining other methods of solving wicked problems in various contexts. Seventhly, the refugee entrepreneurs usually start their business with very few resources. Refugee entrepreneurship enhancement could be examined more intensively from the bricolage theory perspective (Lévi-Strauss, 1967). The bricolage economy refers to making do and improvising with whatever is at hand (Miner et al., 2001), using whatever resources and repertoire one has to perform whatever task one faces (Weick, 1993), and tinkering through the combination of resources at hand and the invention of resources from available materials to solve unanticipated problems (Cunha, 2005; Ekanem, 2019). While bricolage entrepreneurship

typically emerges in economically depressed or resource-poor areas and working under resource constraints (Davidsson et al., 2017), some of its aspects might be fruitful both in the theory development of refugee entrepreneurship as well as in the development of refugee entrepreneurship programs.

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### List of abbreviations

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

## Appendix A

Table 1 The data collection

Date	Data collection method	Number of informants	Informant(s)	Main themes
16/3 2018	• Theme interview • Written notes made	1	• <i>Case organisation representative</i> : business program manager	• Needs of the case organisation for developing entrepreneurship training • Scope of the case
21/3 2018	• Focus group • Audio recorded + written notes made	3	• <i>Case organisation representatives</i> : business program manager, head of business, producer	• Experiences of the case organisation on entrepreneurship development • Special characteristics of asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants from the case organisation viewpoint
21/3 2018	• Focus group • Written notes made, pictures taken of documents	2	• <i>Case organisation representatives</i> : business program manager, producer	• Review of the main findings so far (validity check)
12/4 2018	• Theme interview • Audio recorded + written notes made	1 + 1	• <i>Refugee 1</i> participating in the program + <i>interpreter</i>	• Experienced pain points in participating in the program • Experienced needs of a refugee in participating in the program • Experienced jobs-to-be-done
12/4 2018	• Focus group • Written notes made, pictures taken of documents	3	• <i>Case organisation representatives</i> : business program manager, producer • <i>Refugee 1</i> participating in the program	• Identification of phases and elements of customer journey map for refugees participating in the program • Identification of main pain points in the customer journey map
17/4 2018	• Theme interview • Audio recorded + written notes made	1	• <i>Customer</i> buying catering services from the entrepreneurship program	• Identification and the nature of potential customer of the program • Identification and the nature of other potential partners of the program
20/4 2018	• Theme interview • Audio recorded + written notes made	1	• <i>Refugee 2</i> participating in the program	• Experienced pain points in participating in the program • Experienced needs of a refugee in participating in the program • Experienced jobs-to-be-done
20/4 2018	• Focus group • Written notes made, pictures taken of documents	2	• <i>Case organisation representatives</i> : business program manager, producer	• Customer profiles of the program • Scalability of the program • Elements of value proposition
27/4 2018	• Focus group • Written notes made, pictures taken of documents	2	• <i>Case organisation representatives</i> : business program manager, producer	• Development of the first version of the concept model for the program • Review of the improved version of the concept model for the program • Deeper ideation and evaluation of services related to the program
30/4 2018	• Focus group • Written notes made, pictures taken of documents	3	• <i>Case organisation representatives</i> : business program manager, head of business, producer	• Customer profiles of the program • Services related to the program • Final concept model for the program

Concept development



**Table 1** The data collection (continued)

Date	Data collection method	Number of informants	Informant(s)	Main themes
6/5 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theme interview</li> <li>• Audio recorded + written notes made</li> </ul>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Expert 1</i> with substantial experience in management and implementation of service design and user experience projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of the validity of the concept model of the program</li> <li>• The usability of the developed concept model</li> </ul>
1/10 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theme interview</li> <li>• Audio recorded + written notes made</li> </ul>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Expert 2</i> with substantial experience in management and implementation of service design and user experience projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of the validity of the concept model of the program</li> <li>• The usability of the developed concept model</li> </ul>
1/10 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theme interview</li> <li>• Audio recorded + written notes made</li> </ul>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Expert 3</i> with substantial experience in management and implementation of service design and user experience projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of the validity of the concept model of the program</li> <li>• The usability of the developed concept model</li> </ul>

Small-scale qualitative validation

In addition to the main themes in right hand column, the following themes were asked to each refugee informant of the concept development phase 16/3–30/4 2018 when they were interviewed for the first time:

- 1 Who are you?: Background and education.
- 2 The journey to Finland: the history how the informant ended up to Finland as a refugee.
- 3 The first steps in Finland: how was the informant received?, How were the reception centres?, What kind of people they met?, What kind of connections they made?
- 4 Living in Finland: What kind of opportunities existed?, To which extent was it possible to use the craft and knowledge acquitted before coming to Finland.
- 5 Pains and gains: what have been the biggest challenges in general and while working in Finland, what have been the biggest successes in general and while working in Finland?
- 6 What does future looks like?: Hopes and dreams for the future, what are conditions and requirements for them to realise.
- 7 Recap and summary: the main issues of the interview, anything the informant would like to add.

## Appendix B

**Table 2** Informants

<i>Informant</i>	<i>Origin (nationality)</i>
Business program manager (in case organisation)	Iraq
Head of business (in case organisation)	Finland
Producer (in case organisation)	Finland
Refugee 1 (participating in the entrepreneurship program)	Syria
Refugee 2 (participating in the entrepreneurship program)	Syria
Interpreter	Not specified (Middle East region)
Customer (buying catering services from the case organisation)	Finland
Expert 1	USA
Expert 2	Finland
Expert 3	Finland