

The Experiences of Five Turkish Internationally Educated Teacher Refugees as they transition to
Ontario, Canada

Ali Shaker

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Dedication

I wholeheartedly thank the participants who volunteered their time to share and contribute to this study. I dedicate this work to the love of my life who has managed family responsibilities as I researched late into so many nights, weekends, and odd hours of so many days. Thank you Pantea for being my life partner during highs and lows and highs. I also dedicate this to my bright and beautiful daughter Parmis who has made sure to keep the energy of our home always up with continuous singing, dancing, laughing, playing the piano at the loudest possible volume, and living life to the absolute fullest! And to my most wonderful parents, Zary and Reza, my sister, Mariam, and my dog and best friend, Udo, I dedicate this success in my life to you. Thank you for teaching me the value of learning and the fun of always being curious about the world and to not take things as they are but to wonder and seek answers to the *why* behind the stories. Thank you for your sacrifices.

Abstract

This research addresses two major questions: What are the lived professional journeys of internationally educated teachers (IETs) who arrived in Ontario, Canada as refugees following their forced departure from their country of origin? In what ways can Yosso's community cultural wealth theory help us to understand how IETs navigate their life journeys? I used this framework to draw attention to experiences the participants encounter and how they navigate these as they transition from Turkey to Ontario. Through individual semi-structured interviews, participants expressed their passion and the high value of nurturing future generations as the primary reasons they chose the field of teaching. They experience various challenges in their efforts to reestablish themselves in the education system in Ontario, Canada which led some to pursue other professional fields. Language barriers, confusing bureaucratic processes, and lack of adequate governmental support including financial incentives to complete the assessment and recertification process were highlighted as the main barriers. Several implications emerged. Policy needs to be streamlined regarding credential recognition processes. Cultural biases in the hiring practices need to be addressed. Successfully advocating for policy shifts requires a multi-faceted approach. Finally, the integration of IETs into the Canadian educational space should be prioritized because of its beneficial outcome to deepening the learning for all students, colleagues, and the broader education system.

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Researcher Positionality

The driving force behind my passion to investigate the experiences of war refugees lies in the fact that I was exposed to it from birth, which has impacted my adult life. My experiences with war began before I was born. I have been told, my journey to the hospital in Tehran consisted of moments of uncertainty. As my mother and I were rushed to the hospital, we were being chased by fighter planes that were intent on stopping us. The year was 1980. Sirens for aerial bombardment squealed from every corner of the city. Then, the warning followed:

هوایی توجه! توجه! علامتی که هم اکنون میشنوید، اعلام خطر. یا وضعیت قرمز است و معنا و مفهوم آن اینست که حمل انجام خواهد شد! محل کار خود را ترک و به پناهگاه بروید

[Attention! Attention! The alarm which you are hearing indicates red alert and means an aerial bombardment will happen. Leave your workplaces and rush to the bunkers.]

The power station was hit. Darkness prevailed over light. Not a soul dared to venture far from the bomb shelters. My mother was in my uncle's car as he flashed his lights every so often to stay on the road while we made our way to the hospital. In the final moments preceding my birth, a bomb was dropped. The hospital was hit. That was all that my mother remembered. When she opened her eyes, a nurse whispered into her ears, "He made it." Many others did not survive that evening. War's ugly scenes of bloodshed and destruction decorated my childhood memories. I consider myself to be fortunate to have been able to live a portion of my life during the eight-year war outside of Iran. Although Iran has regained relative stability and so has my life, the trauma of war has stayed with me in unexpected ways. Years later, while working as an instructor at Nunavut Arctic College in Pond Inlet, an isolated Inuit community, I found myself triggered by the sound of polar bear warning sirens. The pitch, tone, and frequency of the siren were identical to the aerial bombardment alarms I had heard as a child in Iran, warning of incoming attacks from Iraqi fighter jets. In those moments, memories I thought were buried, rushed back. The sight of my mother's hand pulling mine as we ran down the stairs into the basement, the buildings shaking around us, the uncertainty of survival.

This experience reminded me that trauma travels with us. It can lie dormant for years and unexpectedly resurface. This is a reality that many refugee teachers in this study understand.

Although we come from different countries and under different circumstances, it's important to recognize that certain sounds and images can awaken pain that is hard to articulate. This shared sensitivity has shaped my approach to this research and has strengthened my commitment to appreciate the emotional complexity of the stories that have been entrusted to me.

This research seeks to illuminate the lived educational and professional experiences of five female internationally educated teacher war refugees from Turkey who have made Canada their new home. By centering their stories, we gain important insight into the diverse strengths and invaluable contributions that internationally educated teachers (IETs) bring to Canadian classrooms. These qualities include cultural richness and understanding, linguistic diversity, and a multitude of internationally gained teaching approaches. This study also explores how we might better support these teachers as they navigate Bachelor of Education programs and public-school systems, ensuring their potential to enhance the broader Canadian educational landscape is fully realized.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Rationale

The experiences of internationally educated teachers who embark on the journey to recertify in Canada's provincially regulated programs reflect a multi-layered set of challenges. This is especially true for those who come to Canada as refugees. Despite the existence of multifaceted challenges, IETs in Canada, like many other internationally educated professionals (IEP), continue to demonstrate resilience and a deep sense of commitment to their professional growth. The professional journeys of IETs in Canada is a narrative that is marked not only by their desire for academic growth and professional recognition, but also by their deep sense of desire and responsibility to contribute to the diverse and dynamic educational landscape. This qualitative research study delves into their personal and professional experiences, centering on the rich asset perspectives they might contribute to Ontario's education system and illuminating the aspirations and challenges, contributions and values that define their journeys.

As the principal investigator of this research, I share my identity as an immigrant and a visible minority in Canada with the participants of this research. In addition, as an educator who traversed the Canadian educational landscape for a substantial portion of my life, my professional journey bears some similarity to the experiences of the participants. The combination of a shared personal and professional journey has helped shape my personal perspectives, which is closely intertwined with the narratives of the visible minority IETs in Canada who have contributed to the completion of this study. This instrumental positioning, rooted in journeys of adaptation, acculturation, and professional growth in a foreign land, has deepened my human connections of empathy to connect with the experiences of the participants. For me, this has not merely been an academic pursuit. Rather, it has been a deeply personal one as we shared tears of sadness when learning of our shared personal and professional struggles. We learned from one-another and shared strategies to remain resolute, overcome hurdles, and never undermine our intrinsic power of cultural assets.

The educational landscape in Canada is diverse. This diversity of cultures, languages, and ethnicities have come together to form Canada into a colorful mosaic. Within this diversity, public schools, including and particularly those in urban centers, become a version of the diverse world itself whereby students from a mixture of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds share

classrooms and learn with and from one-another (Vidwans & Faez, 2019). In such an environment, there is great potential for cross-cultural understanding and sharing pedagogical strategies that can contribute to improvements within the broader Canadian education system. Within this context, the professional and personal experiences and journeys of IETs who come from every corner of the world become significant (Vidwans & Faez, 2019).

However, the process of recognizing and accrediting foreign teaching qualifications in Canada is not straightforward. It is a complicated provincially regulated endeavor that poses significant challenges to newcomer IETs. Some of the challenges that the accreditation process poses to IETs include the daunting task of validating academic and professional credentials that they have attained from their experiences back home, while concurrently feeling the pressing urgency to quickly adapt to the Canadian educational context and cultural settings (Marom, 2017). This challenge is situated in a historical context that has traditionally cast the field of teaching in Canada as a domain that is primarily occupied by white, English-speaking, female educators (Marom, 2017). The dynamics of this, coupled with practical challenges of the accreditation process, form a critical backdrop to this research (Marom, 2017). These pressing and persisting challenges necessitate a deeper understanding of the journeys of IETs who strive to be an integral part of the Canadian education system.

This study makes an original contribution to the field of Canadian education by centering the voices of refugee IETs from Turkey. This group remains largely under-represented in research and policy discussions. While there is growing scholarship on IETs in general, the unique experiences of those who arrive as refugees from politically persecuted communities, such as those belonging to the Gülen movement, have not been adequately explored. This study addresses that gap by documenting the barriers they face in re-establishing their careers and the rich cultural and pedagogical assets that they bring to the Canadian educational landscape. In doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of teacher diversity, systemic exclusions that they must tackle, and the potential of refugee educators to flourish inclusive learning environments in Ontario's public schools.

The Significance of Diverse Voices in Canadian Education

In a globalized world, it has become increasingly relevant to question how diverse voices, including those from visible minority individuals, could be better heard in the narrative of

Canadian education. This ever-increasing urgency is not just a matter of concern to Canada, but it stands as a pressing and pivotal concern in an ever-evolving globalized world. Canada is known and recognized as a cultural mosaic that advocates for increased diversity, equity, and inclusivity, for all who call it home. This pride has shaped the make-up of the student population in educational institutions where the students reflect the multifaceted cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds that make up this great nation.

IETs have the potential to contribute to this diversity. Yet, for IETs, getting recognized in public schools poses several challenges. Accrediting foreign qualifications and adapting to Canadian classrooms bring both professional and personal hurdles that IETs must overcome and resolve with limited established policy to support their goals (Othman, 2022).

While I originally intended to explore the potential contributions of refugee internationally educated teachers to Ontario's classrooms, this study ultimately centered their narratives to reveal the systemic barriers that forced them to redirect their career goals and underutilized cultural wealth they possess. By examining their unique personal and professional journeys and the complexities that are tied to their arrival as refugees, this research illuminates how their cultural knowledge, internationally attained pedagogical strategies, and lived experiences could benefit student learning. Ultimately, by identifying both challenges and opportunities faced by IETs, the study provides insights into how Canadian education policy and practice can become more inclusive and better leverage the potential of IETs to enrich classrooms across the province and beyond. I do not intend to merely create straightforward paths for IETs to pursue their professional goals. Rather, my hope and vision of this research was to play my part as a visible minority educator to contribute to an enhanced understanding of Canada's diversity by going beyond mere figures and statistics. To do this, in the chapters that follow I seek to highlight, encourage, and embrace the invaluable intercultural dialogue that is already happening in Ontario's public schools, but that could expand and meaningfully include the perspectives and values of internationally educated teachers who come to Ontario as refugees.

Moreover, my hope is that the impact of this study is not confined to academia as the topics that will be examined touch the very fabric of the shared Canadian identity and education. Through creating an environment where IETs can share their stories, experiences, and knowledge in the classroom, this study has the potential to contribute to a more inclusive and globally aware generation of Canadian students. In this view students become architects of the future, their own

futures. Hence, this research aims to contribute to the shared dreams of a Canada that not only respects but cherishes diversity, values holistic education, and strives for a brighter, more inclusive future.

The chapters that follow are organized to guide the reader through the context, methodology, analysis, and implications of this study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature and introduces the theoretical frameworks that inform the study, with particular attention to Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, including the narrative inquiry approach, data collection methods, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 introduces the five participants and shares key aspects of their personal and professional backgrounds. Chapter 5 presents each participant's story as narratives written from each participant's interview transcripts. Chapter 6 identifies and analyzes the recurring themes across the narratives. Chapter 7 applies Yosso's framework to further explore how the participants drew on various forms of cultural capital in their journeys. Finally, Chapter 8 offers a discussion of the findings, outlines the study's contributions, and presents recommendations for research, policy, and practice.

Research Questions

At the heart of this inquiry lie the following research questions:

RQ #1: What are the lived professional journeys of internationally educated teachers (IETs) who arrived in Ontario, Canada as refugees following their forced departure from their country of origin?

RQ #2: In what ways can Yosso's community cultural wealth theory help us to understand how IETs navigate their life journeys?

While the first question guided the initial design of this study, the second research question was developed as I sought to highlight the numerous assets that refugee internationally educated teachers including the participants of this study hold. With that in mind, I began to engage deeply with Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth theoretical framework and reflected on how participants' narratives aligned with the various forms of cultural capitals that this lens illuminates. In addition, the second question developed as a way to analyze the strategies that participants used to navigate complex systems of resettlement and re-establishment in Canada.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Canada's commitment to sharing responsibility for accepting international refugees has increased in recent years (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). Since 2007, through different types of resettlement programs, Canada accepted between 20,000 to 35,000 refugees each year (UNHCR Canada, n.d.). In 2015, under the Liberal government, the government committed to accepting 25,000 Syrian refugees; a commitment that was fulfilled four months later (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2016). Canada clearly has a strong commitment and is recognized on the world stage for its contribution to accepting refugees.

The underrepresentation of racialized teachers in Ontario's education system remains a pressing concern. Abawi and Eizadirad (2020) highlight that "bias-free" hiring practices are well-intentioned but fail to address systemic issues and this reaffirms the status quo. The Ontario Ministry of Education's Education Equity Action Plan (2017) underscores the necessity of inclusive education and advocates for culturally responsive teaching that mirrors the diverse backgrounds of students. However, data from Statistics Canada (2022) indicates that the teaching workforce does not proportionally represent the racial diversity of the student population. In regions like the Toronto census metropolitan area nearly 50% of students identify as racialized while only about 20% of teachers reflect that same diversity. The gap is even wider when we look at the province overall. This suggests that more integrated efforts are needed to bridge the gap.

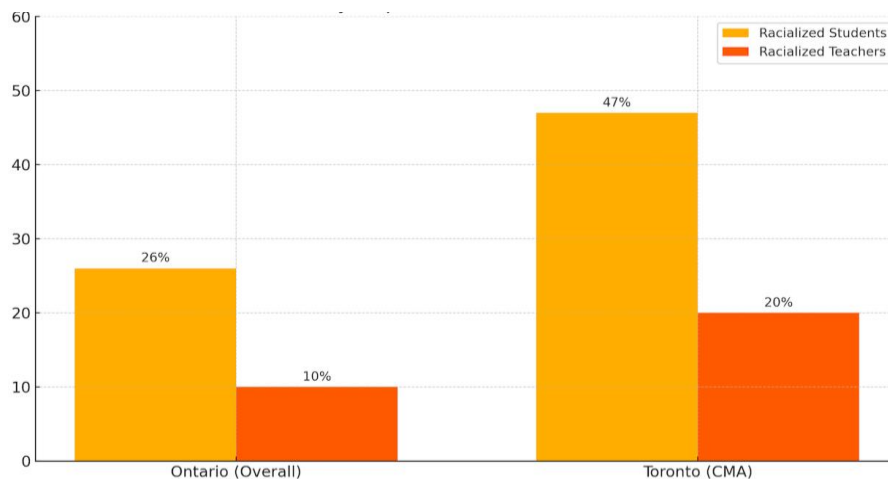


Figure 1
Teacher Diversity Gap in Ontario and Toronto Classrooms. Adapted from Voices of Ontario Black Educators, by Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators
https://www.turnerconsultinggroup.ca/uploads/2/9/5/6/29562979/onabse_voices_of_black_educators_final_report.pdf.
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In the sections that follow, I critically review literature relevant to refugee internationally educated teachers in Ontario. The chapter begins with an overview of refugee employment experiences and the structural barriers that hinder their professional integration. I then examine the recognition of foreign credentials and the specific context of Ontario's education system that shapes the recertification process for IETs. The literature review also explores challenges faced by IETs more broadly, including their underrepresentation in the teaching workforce and limited institutional support. Building on this, I highlight the potential contributions that IETs bring to culturally inclusive classrooms, focusing on their linguistic skills, resilience, capacity for role modeling, and ability to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. Finally, I introduce Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework, which underpins this study's conceptual understanding of the cultural assets refugee IETs draw upon in both personal and professional contexts.

Refugee employment experiences

The initial years following arrival emerge as a critical phase for economic integration of refugees. Wilkinson and Garcea (2017) assert that data on Canadian labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers do not differentiate refugees from other types of newcomers entering Canada. Rather, data is aggregated under the category immigrants. Yet it is important to distinguish refugees and asylum seekers as a distinct category of human migration because refugees do not choose to leave their country of residence in the same way as other types of immigrants; they are forced to leave to seek safety and protection (Brell, Dustmann, & Preston, 2020). Recent Canadian data show that refugees generally face greater challenges securing employment compared to other immigrant groups. They tend to have lower employment rates and are more often concentrated in low-skilled jobs, and earn less even ten years after arrival (IRCC, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2022). Refugees do eventually achieve parity in their employment rates and level of income compared to other newcomers as well as those born in Canada (Kaida, Hou, & Stick, 2020). However, it takes 12 to 15 years for refugees to fully integrate into the Canadian labour market (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014; Brell, Dustmann, & Preston, 2020).

The Western Canadian Settlement Survey (Wilkinson et al., 2015), although limited in scope as it primarily examined the experiences of immigrants who settled in Canada's western provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan), draws attention to the labour

context facing refugees entering Canada. The survey included responses from a random sample of 3,000 newcomers - including refugees - who arrived between 2008 to 2013. Survey participants were from countries with the highest rates of immigrants and refugees including Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan. Findings reveal that 82 percent of all adult refugees found some type of employment within the first five years of settlement in Canada. However, unemployment among this group was 11 percent higher than for other Canadians who have an unemployment rate of 7 percent (Wilkinson et al., 2015). The survey did not find a clear correlation between the unemployment rate of refugees and the economic conditions of the provinces within which they resided. This suggests that high unemployment rate among refugees is due to reasons other than the economic performance of the province. These reasons include language skills, and accreditation of the refugees' education and work experience prior to arrival to Canada (Wilkinson et al., 2015).

More recent research by Brell, Dustmann, & Preston (2020), reiterates that refugees start off behind other immigrants in employment and wages. Overall, while employment rates of refugee migrants are very low immediately after arrival in the host country, they typically increase quite rapidly over the first few years after migration. It is important to note that while refugee employment rates catch-up over time, a substantial disparity in wages remains. Furthermore, refugee employment undergoes rapid growth throughout the first half-decade after their arrival, with this growth trend persisting into the latter half of the decade, albeit at a slower pace (Brell, Dustmann, & Preston, 2020). Looking ahead, the employment levels of refugees after a decade of residency continue to display considerable variation in Canada as is also the case in western European countries. With the exception of refugees settling in the U.S.A., evidence suggests that globally, refugees often fall short of matching sector-specific employment placement of native or other immigrant levels (Brell, Dustmann, & Preston, 2020). A gender disparity is evident as well, with female refugees consistently facing lower employment rates compared to their male counterparts. Importantly, women miss the rapid employment growth experienced by men in the early years following migration.

Research on the employment experiences of refugees continues to reflect the inability to find employment and/or underemployment. A 2018 survey found only about 57 percent of Syrian refugees who had lived in Canada for 2 to 3 years were employed (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2019). Of those who were employed, a high proportion held a general sense

of dissatisfaction with their work experiences mainly because they were not in the field of their expertise. Evidence suggests that the rate of unemployment decreases among highly educated refugees, however job-dissatisfaction and poorer mental health are more pronounced in this population because of the incongruity between their professional skills and their Canadian employment (Bridekirk & Hynie, 2020; Kosny et al., 2019; Senthanara, Dalib, & Khanc, 2022; Wassermann, Fujishiro & Hoppe, 2017).

Newcomers who enter Canada as refugees or asylum-seekers are over-represented in temporary positions and in the unskilled labour market in comparison with other immigrant groups (Senthanara et al., 2022; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). Temporary jobs are often precarious and represent unsustainable sources of income, pay lower wages and are dependent on short term contracts. According to Kaida et al. (2020), refugees earn a median income that is less than economic class immigrants and less than those who apply to come to Canada as skilled employees although the exact figure has not been provided. Thus, even when they arrive in Canada, evidence suggests that refugees experience under-employment and lower income levels.

Recognition of professional and educational credentials

The economic conditions of skilled refugees in Canada are largely affected by whether the credentials that they have attained in their home countries are accepted in Canada (Kelly, Marcelino, & Mulas, 2014) as equivalent to those that are offered by Canadian institutions. The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) serves as a primary information resource on foreign credential assessment and recognition (CICIC, 2023).

In addition to general professional guidance, the CICIC has established tailored policies and initiatives that aim to assist refugees and individuals that are in refugee-like situations and face challenges in accessing their educational and professional work documentation (CICIC, 2023). On their website, CICIC states that it recognizes that the conditions of conflict refugees are often life-threatening. As such, these individuals may not have sufficient time to prepare all of their academic and professional certifications to bring with them as they flee their homes. In addition, many IET refugees have fled their home countries due to persecution targeted at them or their family members and relatives. This largely results in a lack of access and inability to seek access to, and receive, official academic and professional papers even after they have found relative safety in Canada (Kohlenberg & Loo, 2020). Further, the CICIC (2023) states that it recognizes that these

individuals possess valuable skills, knowledge, and expertise that will benefit Canada's workforce and society.

One of the key initiatives of the CICIC is the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (CICIC, 2023). This framework has been established to ensure a fair and consistent evaluation of international credentials and includes those of refugee professionals. It provides guidelines for credential assessment organizations to assess qualifications obtained outside of Canada, taking into account the specific circumstances and challenges faced by refugees. The CICIC offers additional services and programs as a way to further support internationally educated professionals' integration and transition into the Canadian job market:

- *Alternative Assessment and Recognition Process* methods of assessing credentials for individuals who cannot provide official documents due to displacement or other reasons. Through this process, they consider alternative evidence, such as work experience, letters of reference, and skills assessments, to determine equivalencies and recognition of foreign qualifications (CICIC, 2023; Kohlenberg & Loo, 2020).
- *Qualification Recognition Information Service* provides individuals with information and guidance on how to navigate the process of having their qualifications recognized in Canada. The CICIC offers resources and support to help refugees understand the requirements and steps involved in getting their credentials recognized in their specific professions (CICIC, 2023; Kohlenberg & Loo, 2020).
- *Access to Credential Evaluation Services* such as World Education Services (WES) Canada, which can help assess and validate foreign educational credentials. These evaluations are necessary in determining the equivalency of international qualifications to Canadian standards (CICIC, 2023; Kohlenberg & Loo, 2020).
- *Collaboration with Educational Institutions*. The CICIC collaborates with educational institutions, professional regulatory bodies, and settlement agencies to create pathways and support programs for refugees and newcomers. These collaborations aim to streamline the process of credential recognition and facilitate the integration of qualified professionals into the Canadian workforce (CICIC, 2023; Kohlenberg & Loo, 2020).

While the CICIC has made efforts to assist refugees in verifying their educational credentials, Kohlenberg and Loo (2020) suggest that there is room for improvement including streamlining the process to better support the vulnerable population.

Strengthening collaboration between the CICIC and settlement agencies would facilitate a smoother transition for refugees (Kohlenberg & Loo, 2020; Loo, 2019). By working closely with these agencies, the CICIC can ensure that refugees are promptly connected to the appropriate resources and support services throughout the credential evaluation process. Finally, training for staff, especially the evaluators, on the unique circumstances that refugees face and the challenges that they may have encountered when presenting their credentials can certainly enhance the understanding and sensitivity during the assessment process. This can help evaluators make informed decisions while considering the diverse educational backgrounds and experiences of refugees.

In the preceding section I explained the important role that the CICIC plays in facilitating the recognition and validation of educational credentials, particularly for refugees and individuals in other immigrant classes arriving in Canada. While CICIC serves as a central resource for information on foreign credential assessment and recognition, it is important to consider its implications for the experiences of a specific group of individuals such as the Internationally Educated Teachers who arrive in Canada as refugees who participated in this study. Canada has recognized the importance of supporting the recertification process for refugee teachers and has implemented various policies, procedures, and programs to facilitate the validation of educational credentials. I next shift focus to the specific context of Ontario, Canada.

The Ontario Context

The recognition of foreign credentials is provincially regulated in Canada. The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), the regulatory body responsible for the teaching profession in Ontario, has established specific guidelines and processes for evaluating foreign credentials of IETs and determining equivalencies necessary to teach in public schools in Ontario. The OCT evaluates the qualifications and experiences of Internationally Educated Teachers and determines if they meet standards and qualifications to teach in the province. The OCT process involves assessing the academic qualifications and professional experience of the teachers which, among other things involves consideration of the courses completed by the teachers in their respective home countries

and compares them to the Ontario curriculum and certification requirements. While embarking on the process of evaluation, they consider duration of study, content, and level of the courses, as well as the teaching practicum or internship experiences that IETs have undertaken (OCT, 2023).

IET applicants who wish to transfer their professional credentials to be eligible to teach in Ontario’s public schools must provide a letter of professional standing from the jurisdiction in which they were certified to teach and complete the Canadian criminal records check to determine professional suitability (OCT, 2021). Academic requirements to teach general education include the equivalence of at least three years full-time study beyond the Ontario secondary school diploma (or its equivalent) and an undergraduate degree from an accredited postsecondary institution that is recognized by the College. In addition, applicants must have completed a four-semester teacher education program that includes a combination of theoretical and practical teaching practice and is recognized by the College (OCT, 2021). OCT may also require teachers to provide evidence of language proficiency, usually through standardized language tests such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Following this step, based on their evaluation, the OCT determines the equivalency of the teachers’ qualifications and certifications that they obtained in their home countries with the requirements for certification in Ontario. Once completed, the evaluation process determines whether the teachers have met the necessary standards and competencies to teach in the province. The OCT may require teachers to complete additional courses, training, or examinations to meet specific certification requirements in Ontario.

The following figure summarizes the OCT certification steps that most internationally educated teachers must navigate to become licensed in Ontario.

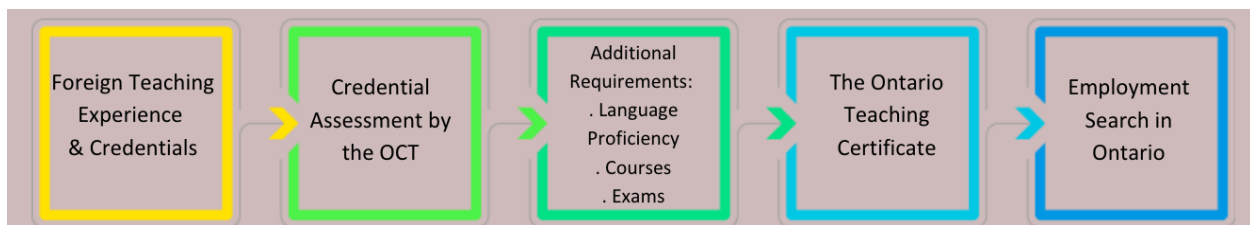


Figure 2:

Ontario College of Teachers Accreditation Pathway for Internationally Educated Teachers. Adapted from Ontario College of Teachers, 2023, <https://www.oct.ca/becoming-a-teacher/internationally-educated-teachers>

If prospective IET applicants are unable to request their home countries’ academic institutions to send the documents that OCT requires due to political instability, the College may be able to act on their behalf. IET applicants will be asked to sign and submit a letter that details

the challenges that they have experienced to complete this requirement (OCT, 2021). Recertification will be required should OCT and/or prospective applicants fail to gather the required documentation, which, given the reasons that refugees typically flee their countries (war, violence etc.) is a common problem faced by IETs. Successfully completing accreditation in Ontario is a critical step for IETs. This is because their ability to complete this step will allow them to proceed as educators in Ontario and practice their professional fields in education.

In Canada, refugee claimants can apply for an open work permit while their claims are being processed, which allows them to seek legal employment (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2023). However, delays in processing times, and inadequate access to coordinated support often makes this difficult for refugee professionals to secure stable, meaningful work quickly. For internationally educated teachers, this adds another layer of complexity: even when work permits are granted, entry into regulated professions such as teaching remains heavily restricted due to documentation requirements as a first step of assessment, high costs, and credentialing procedures that are often misaligned with the realities of those who experienced forced displacement (Frydenlund, 2023; Guo, 2015). These conditions compound the barriers refugee IETs face and contribute to patterns of long-term underemployment despite their qualifications and professional experience.

The systemic underemployment of refugee professionals is not limited to teaching. Studies across other regulated fields, including healthcare and engineering, reveal similar patterns of exclusion. Frydenlund (2023), for example, illustrates how refugee workers, particularly women, are left with little choice but to accept low-wage and at times insecure jobs that fail to reflect their expertise. Similarly, Mahboubi and Zhang (2023) found that over 25% of working age immigrants with foreign bachelor's degrees or higher are employed in positions that only require a high school diploma or less. This statistic indicates significant underutilization of skills. These patterns of deskilling underscore the dire need to view refugee IETs' challenges not as isolated cases but as part of a broader structural issue related to credential recognition, and professional gatekeeping in Canada.

In Ontario, particularly within urban schools, the student population is increasingly diverse reflecting multiple cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds (Vidwans & Faez, 2019). In order to meet the needs of a diverse student population, one strategy could be to focus on increasing the number of racial minority teachers in the workforce. In 2002 the Ontario Ministry of Training,

Colleges, and Universities (MTCU) launched the Alternative Teacher Accreditation Program for Teachers with International Experience (ATAPTIE) with the goal of providing IETs with the necessary skills and knowledge to continue their teaching practice in the province (Myles, Cheng, & Wang, 2006). The bridging program was offered by three organizations as a three-year engagement: Queen's University's Faculty of Education provided the theoretical instruction, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board allowed students from this bridging program to complete the practicum stage of their studies in their schools, and the Local Agencies Serving Immigrants World Skills Ottawa (LASI) offered social, cultural, and employment seeking support (Zhang, 2005). The ultimate goal of this initiative was to ensure that candidates complete the program and attain their degree in education, receive their teaching certificate from the Ontario College of Teachers, and secure teaching positions in the province's public schools (Myles et al., 2006).

Studies by Myles et al. (2006) and Zhang (2005) found most participants had overall positive experiences from the program as they learned a great deal from their peers, their professors, their teacher mentors, and the school environment. Most participants found the school environment to be quite different from their experiences in their respective home countries and found the teaching practicum phase of their schooling especially useful (Myles et al., 2006; Zhang, 2005). With regard to the challenges experienced by the participants, a number of interrelated areas emerged: Adapting to a new school system and instruction method, English language proficiency, and establishing and maintaining cordial relations with their colleagues. Although the three-year program is no longer in existence, Queen's University continues to offer a bridging program, in the form of a Post-Graduate Certificate for Internationally Trained Teachers (Queen's University, 2023). The program counts toward the Ontario College of Teachers' certification process. However, an examination of the program's website reveals a number of major hurdles for refugee IETs that may, given their precarious circumstances, serve as real barriers to their participation. It requires the registrants to show proof of their previous educational credentials and work experiences which is a significant challenge for many refugees who rushed to leave their home countries and may not have been able to gather all required academic documents prior to their departure. The program also requires TOEFL or IELTS language proficiency as a "firm requirement" (Queen's University, 2023, para. 10). Finally, the cost of the program at over \$27,000 is likely prohibitive given that most refugee IETs arrive in Canada with their families and ensure their financial wellbeing takes precedence over recertification.

Bridging programs, language training initiatives, and mentorship programs such as those offered by Queen's University can potentially offer tailored support to refugee teachers which could address their specific needs in terms of language proficiency enhancement, pedagogical training, and cultural understanding. In Ontario, there are several such programs designed to support internationally educated teachers in their journey to recertification and re-establishing themselves in the teaching profession. These programs are generally offered by non-profit organizations such as World Skills Employment Services, Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, and school boards such as the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, and the Toronto District School Board, and universities and colleges across the province which will benefit IETs in the following areas:

- *Language proficiency* is essential for success as a teacher in Canada. Thus, language training initiatives, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, are available to help refugee teachers improve their English language skills. These programs offer language classes at a variety of levels to ensure that teachers can effectively communicate and interact in the Canadian classroom setting (Vidwans & Faez, 2019).
- *Mentorship programs* connect internationally educated teachers, including refugees, with experienced educators in Ontario schools. Mentors provide guidance, support, and valuable insights into the Canadian education system, pedagogical practices, and classroom management (Jun, 2022). These programs help refugee teachers navigate the complexities of teaching in a new country and facilitate their professional integration.
- *Recognition of prior learning initiatives* aim to assess and recognize the education, qualifications, and professional experience of internationally educated teachers. By evaluating their credentials, such initiatives will determine the extent to which refugee teachers' qualifications align with the Ontario teaching standards, helping them identify any gaps that may require further training or education (Jun, 2022).
- Finally, *settlement agencies* in Ontario play a crucial role in assisting refugee teachers with their integration into Canadian society and the education system. These agencies offer a range of settlement services, including referrals to

appropriate bridging programs, language training, and mentorship opportunities (Vidwans & Faez, 2019).

While each of these aforementioned programs can contribute to IETs transitioning into professional work within the education sector in Ontario, it is apparent that there is no coordinated comprehensive approach across agencies; and while support and language programs are provided free of charge, educational recertification incurs significant cost to ITEs whose priorities might be more immediately focused on housing and food for families.

Challenges faced by IETs

Many internationally educated teachers, on arrival in Canada, find that their credentials do not meet the requirements of the province within which they have settled and so have to undertake further study in order to become certified to teach (Othman, 2022). This is the case for almost all refugees (Othman, 2022). The OCT may require teachers to complete additional coursework or training to address any gaps in their qualifications. Even for IETs whose qualifications are recognized and who have evidence of strong teaching experience, meeting the language proficiency standards may involve additional time, effort, and financial resources for language training and examination preparation (Othman, 2022). Undertaking additional coursework and qualifications can present challenges for teachers who need to balance their professional development with other responsibilities such as finding other types of employment to be able to financially support their families. Recertification is challenging for many skilled refugees due to the high costs associated with returning to study (Kelly et al., 2014). In addition, IETs who transition to Canada face a new education system and a significantly different culture. They may first need to take time to familiarize themselves with Canadian teaching practices, curriculum frameworks, and classroom management strategies. This requires time and financial investment and can prove to be overwhelming and may require ongoing support and professional development (Othman, 2022; Trépanier-Bisson, 2021). Despite the existence of programs aimed at assisting refugees to match their international teaching credentials to the Canadian standards, there is no mechanism that converts IETs unique professional certificates to credentials that would allow them to teach in Ontario's public schools (OCT, 2023).

For those whose credentials are approved, the lack of job vacancies for refugee teachers is yet another challenge. The process of securing teaching employment requires effective networking

and building connections, which, for recently arrived IETs may be a significant challenge as they struggle to find their place in a new culture and a new language (Trépanier-Bisson, 2021). Research suggests that the majority of employers prefer Canadian over international work experience (Kelly et al., 2014; Trépanier-Bisson, 2021; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). Refugees who have completed part of their education in Canada attain better income levels and secure more skilled positions compared to refugees who have completed their education abroad (Lauer et al., 2012; Trépanier-Bisson, 2021). Due to the often unstable and rushed nature of refugees' forced departures from their home countries, they may not have all the required educational and professional documentation, the educational institutions or professional entities that they are affiliated with may no longer operate, and the record of their education or professional experiences may have been lost or destroyed (Marom, 2019; Myles et al., 2006). Although there are multiple governmental and non-governmental services and programs that are available for refugees as they transition to life in Canada, many continue to experience prolonged challenges to move from the sidelines. Failure of the province to recognize international academic qualifications and prior professional work experiences, exacerbates such struggles.

Diversifying the Teaching Workforce

The current reality in Canadian public-school classrooms is that of increased racial diversity in the student population. However, teachers within such schools do not reflect the changing environment. The teaching profession not only prioritizes educational qualifications but also places significance on distinct cultural, social, and professional attributes that have historically aligned with Canada's perception of teaching as a domain predominantly occupied by white, English-speaking, female educators (Marom, 2019). Janzen and Cranston (2016) further underscore that this demographic constitutes over 80 percent of the K-12 teaching workforce in Canada. Over a decade ago Demsash (2007) identified this issue stating that IETs are “the most under-represented professionals in public schools in Canada” (p. 5). These findings were supported by other scholars who confirm that IETs are not well-represented in Canada's public schools (Aujla-Bhullar, 2020; Block, 2012; Pollock, 2010; Relucio 2018; Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009; Schmidt, 2010). Additionally, Deters' research in 2011 into the composition of the public school teachers in Canada found that, at the time, the field of teaching already had one of the highest rates of immigrant unemployment and underemployment in comparison to other regulated

professions. Ryan et al., (2009) claim that those responsible for the recruitment of teachers for some schools hold the assumption that IETs who come from developing countries have inferior “human capitals” (p. 605). Misunderstandings of the IETs’ professional capabilities position racial minority teachers as deficient, and this has been identified as the primary cause of the failure of many IETs to successfully recertify in Canada (Marom, 2017).

With an increasingly multicultural, and multiethnic classroom makeup, the need for a more racially and culturally diverse teaching staff is urgent. Drawing on research from the USA, Kricorian et al. (2020) suggest that teachers from minority groups serve as effective role models, mentors, cultural and linguistic translators, and advocates for minority students especially in their participation in STEM fields. Briggs (2018) and Schmidt (2010) argue that minority teachers have the capacity to tap into their culturally comprehensive knowledge and draw on their ability to reflect on the world and sensemaking of the happenings around them through their culturally unique views and influence their instruction in a way that resonates with minority students. Bahadoosingh (2021), Dee (2001), Kariwo, Asadi, & Bouhali (2019), and Sleeter and Milner (2011) suggest same-race teachers have a bigger influence on student achievement than teachers who do not share the same race as their students. They attribute this positive student achievement to their teachers’ deeper level of empathy and culturally attuned support. In addition to the invaluable benefits that students from minority cultures can receive from a diverse teaching population, the teaching staff and members of the community can attain a better perspective on how to appropriately approach culturally and ethnically unique issues that concern the student body which can help lead antiracist and multicultural education. The important role of minority teachers goes beyond minority students: All students benefit from the diverse views and cultural values that these teachers bring to the learning environment (Bahadoosingh, 2021). Despite a clear benefit that all students can reap from an ethnically diverse teaching group, teacher education programs in Canada have failed to respond to this need (Bahadoosingh, 2021; Dee, 2001; Kariwo, Asadi, & Bouhali 2019; Sleeter & Milner, 2011; Walsh et al., 2011).

The arrival of IETs in Canada presents an excellent opportunity for the teaching profession to become more diverse and reflective of Canada’s classrooms yet this opportunity has not been taken up. More recent research suggests that disregard for IETs’ valuable academic and professional knowledge combined with their rich cultural capital is a systemic problem within the teacher certification programs across several institutions in Canada (Bouhali, 2019). Equally

troubling is the situation in Ontario, the province at the focus of this research where, according to the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), IETs “...report the highest rates of unemployment, 43 percent this year, similar to 40 percent in 2019.” (2023, p. 42). Those IETs who did secure employment in 2019-2022 were predominantly hired in independent schools (50 percent of IETs hired) with the rate of hiring of IETs across Ontario public school boards decreasing dramatically, falling from 69 percent of all IETs hired in 2019 to 31 percent in 2022 (OCT 2023). Thus, although the unemployment of IETs increased just 3 percent in 2020, this is overwhelmingly due to independent schools’ increase in hiring of IETs. These employment data demonstrate that in Ontario, the focus of this study, the employment status of IETs has become more precarious even though the need for a diverse teaching workforce has become more urgent.

Cultural Appreciation

Within the diverse makeup of Canadian classrooms, the presence of refugee educators serves as a stimulus for cultivating cross-cultural understanding (Tweedie, Belanger, Rezazadeh, & Vogel, 2017). These educators, with their unique backgrounds and firsthand experiences of forced displacement, being held in transitory countries, and resettlement in Canada, can bring invaluable understandings that enrich the students’ cultural education and learning in global perspectives and international relations (Adelman, 2019; Richards et al., 2023; Tweedie et al., 2017). In addition, research by Adelman (2019) and Tweedie et al. (2017) into the potential impact of ethnic minority teachers who experienced forced displacement prior to establishing themselves in Canada found that, due to their difficult life experiences in multiple intermediary countries, they possess a unique ability to integrate their unique perspectives and life journeys into classroom discussions and thereby play a pivotal role in broadening students’ learning. Furthermore, these teachers can promote critical thinking in their classrooms on pressing social justice issues and encourage their students to seek solutions. Integrating these experiences enriches and goes beyond the curriculum that will empower students to challenge preconceived assumptions and critically analyze not only the information they encounter within their school but also information from external sources like the news media. Finally, through their firsthand experiences of migration and adaptation, and experiencing racism, refugee educators can relate to the challenges faced by newcomer students and provide support and guidance (Spangenberg, 2019).

Linguistic Abilities and Language Instruction

In the context of Canadian classrooms, particularly in linguistically diverse settings, the presence of educators with diverse backgrounds and experiences are an under-recognized and valued resource. Many refugee educators are multilingual which can be an asset especially in linguistically diverse classrooms (Huang, 2021) such as those in Canada. Through their linguistic abilities, these educators offer crucial language support that fosters the development of language skills and academic proficiency among students (Gagné et al., 2018). Additionally, their unique capacity to communicate in students' native languages creates a welcoming and inclusive environment for the students and their families. The integration of such educators into the Canadian public schools presents an opportunity to enhance all students' educational experiences. This can further facilitate the cultivation of a vibrant and diverse learning environment and provide language support to students who are English or French language learners, helping them develop language skills and academic proficiency (Gagné et al., 2018; Huang, 2021).

In the Canadian school setting, the contributions of educators from diverse backgrounds extends beyond linguistic expertise. These educators often bring rich cultural experiences and perspectives to the classroom which lead to fostering a deeper appreciation for global cultures among all students. By infusing cultural elements into their daily instruction, these educators broaden all students', regardless of their backgrounds, horizons and promote cross-cultural communication (Akintayo, Eden, Ayeni, & Onyebuchi, 2024).

Resilience and Role Modeling

Refugee educators in Canadian public schools represent a powerful story of endurance in the face of the hardships that were imposed on them by forced displacement and the complicated process of resettlement. Miller et al., (2021) argues that IETs arriving as refugees have typically endured arduous journeys, leaving behind their homes and familiar environments demonstrating resilience and determination which serves as a powerful example for students. These researchers suggest that when students hear stories of resilience and perseverance, they are inspired to overcome their own difficult experiences as they grow into adulthood. Additionally, through the experiences of refugee educators, students gain a deeper understanding of global issues and the hardships faced by displaced individuals worldwide (Pool, 2020). Pool's (2020) study on the experiences of teachers who underwent profound struggles and hardships reveals that such difficult

experiences lead to developing *Resilience Capital*. Moreover, these educators serve as living examples that by developing resilience in the face of academic and social obstacles, students have the capacity to overcome these challenges and develop into more resilient individuals.

Refugee educators serve as pivotal role models with potential to encourage students to embrace diversity, celebrate and be proud of their own unique identities, and work diligently to achieve their academic and life goals (Richards et al., 2023; Spangenberg, 2019). Furthermore, research indicates that students from diverse cultural backgrounds often feel a sense of empowerment and encouragement when they have educators who share their heritage, challenging life experiences, and have overcome them (Redding, 2019). Research by Rasheed, Brown, Doyle, and Jennings (2020) and Spangenberg (2019) emphasizes that in classrooms where diverse cultures converge, these educators create inclusive spaces that foster a sense of belonging and mutual respect. They facilitate meaningful discussions on cultural heritage that provide valuable insights into the richness of their own backgrounds. This in turn can promote cross-cultural understanding among students.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

As evidenced in scholarly research, visible minority refugees who work as teachers in Canadian public schools are uniquely able to develop classroom learning experiences that meet the learning expectations of the curriculum through a different cultural lens (Brown, Doyle, & Jennings, 2020; Redding, 2019; Spangenberg, 2019). Culturally Responsive Teaching is an educational approach that IETs and other visible minorities as teachers are uniquely positioned to implement in classroom teachings. Culturally Responsive Teaching originated in the American Civil Rights Movement era around the 1960s. The intention of the movement was to push to bring equity and social justice in education to all learners regardless of racial or cultural backgrounds. The movement was greatly influenced by the motivation to address a major gap: The stark disparity in access to quality education, and academic outcomes of racial minority students (Vavrus, 2008). The development of this pedagogical approach was influenced by the work of Paulo Freire, who advocated for access to education for racially and economically marginalized children as a form of liberation from the entanglements of extreme poverty (Beckett, 2013). His ideas became popular with educators locally and also internationally who were pained by the very same concerns. They

sought to empower marginalized communities through adopting Culturally Responsive Teaching as one form of intervention.

Freire emphasized having meaningful dialogues with students to spur critical thinking and by doing so, question the status quo including the established curriculum and societal norms. Over time, the acknowledgment of students' lived experiences became the pillars of Culturally Responsive Teaching (Vavrus, 2008). Teachers came to understand that successful educational outcomes cannot occur if education is treated as a one-size-fits-all strategy. Rather, they realized that a dynamic approach whereby the cultural and social contexts of learners is taken into consideration was far more effective (Banks, 2006) in tackling academic shortcomings. Thus, the concept of multicultural education gradually gained prominence. Educators, researchers, activists, and others who had interest in developing the curricula to address the needs of all students argued that traditional curricula overlooked the contributions of diverse cultural groups to favor and reinforce a Eurocentric worldview (Vavrus, 2008). Culturally Responsive Teaching emerged as a response to these challenges. It advocates for the inclusion of culturally relevant content, instructional strategies, and assessment in the classroom. According to Gay (2010) and Ladson-Billings, (1995) this was a historical moment. It essentially marked a major shift away from a deficit-based approach to education, which viewed students from diverse backgrounds as lacking, to instead, an asset-based perspective that recognized the unique strengths and cultural wealth that they brought to their education. Culturally responsive teaching practices brought the promise of creating inclusive learning environments that empower students and respect the cultural wealth that refugee IETs bring/can bring to Canadian classrooms (Gay, 2010 & Ladson-Billings, 1995). By adopting culturally responsive approaches, educators demonstrate that they acknowledge and respect the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of their students, including those from refugee backgrounds.

Research by Adair, Tobin, and Arzubiaga (2012) investigated the effectiveness of immigrant teachers in connecting with racial minority students and positively impacting their academic outcome through Culturally Responsive Teaching. Such teachers, including those who come to Canada as refugees, have rich and unique life experiences that they use as their assets when teaching and working with students. Their cultural backgrounds are similar or share similar values. Research shows that these characteristics are effective at bringing Culturally Responsive Teaching into their pedagogical practice. Culturally diverse teachers possess cultural insights and

sensitivity that enable them to successfully navigate sensitive topics that for minority students, due to their unique upbringing (Adair et al., 2012), are challenging to openly discuss in a classroom setting. Such teachers' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and languages empower and enable them to meaningfully connect with students on a deeper level to help build trust and rapport. Through the integration of their cultural wealth into daily teaching practices, immigrant educators, including refugee IETs, facilitate a more holistic and inclusive learning experience for all students (Adair et al., 2012). This is an important consideration in this study as the IETs potential to incorporate their cultural wealth in their classroom teaching is noted later in this thesis in relation to the community cultural wealth framework (Yosso, 2005) which is discussed in the following section.

Racial Under-Currents in Education

Despite Canada's goals of inclusion and its diverse student population, the teaching workforce does not reflect the same diversity particularly in Ontario where the Internationally IETs in this study seek employment. Systemic barriers persist that prevent IETs from fully participating in public schools. This challenge highlights contradictions within the educational system. Understanding these contradictions requires examining the theoretical literature on systemic barriers that underpin education.

Bourdieu's (1973, and 1984) concepts of social and cultural capital explain how education plays a crucial role in creating, sharing, and transmitting cultural knowledge that often upholds middle-class White norms. In the Canadian context, emphasizing cultural capital has played a contributing role to deficit narratives about minority students and professionals (James & Howard, 2022). This perspective marginalizes the potential contributions of minority groups and overlooks the valuable assets that IETs have the potential to bring to education. The structures and practices within the educational system are rooted in historical periods that are marked by colonialism and racial capitalism and continue to uphold the dominance of Whiteness (Diamond, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Christian, 2018). Concepts like White institutional space (Moore, 2020) and White habitus (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) illustrate how deep-rooted White dominance influences education and perpetuate systemic biases that hinder the integration of minority educators.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

To challenge these deficit perspectives, Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework recognizes that minority groups possess multifaceted forms of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005). By acknowledging these diverse forms of capital, the CCW framework seeks to address and dismantle biases that marginalize visible minority professionals within the educational system. In the context of this study, this shift moves the focus from perceived deficits of IETs to a focus on their assets and what they might contribute to enhance the educational experience of students within Ontario classrooms. In addition, it invites pondering on the wealth of cultural knowledge and experiences that minority educators and students bring. Embracing the cultural knowledge and experiences of teachers from different backgrounds enriches education and fosters equity within the educational system in Ontario.

An Ocean of Cultural Capitals

Building on the discussion of White habitus and its impact on racial biases, it's essential to address the challenges faced by racial minorities. By embracing asset-based perspectives, one can counter deficit narratives, and recognize the unique strengths that IETs bring to the teaching profession. Many IETs arrive in Canada as racialized individuals with rich and diverse linguistic backgrounds (Marom, 2017; Pollock, 2010; Schmidt, 2010). Having an understanding of how they navigate professional re-establishment, whether in education or in other fields, requires frameworks that acknowledge their assets. This aligns with a broader shift in educational theory towards recognizing the unique strengths and knowledge that refugee IETs contribute.

Emerging from Critical Race Theory is the understanding that racism is deeply ingrained in Western societies. This necessitates new approaches in education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Scholars advocate for centering race as a fundamental dimension of analysis to dismantle systemic inequalities (Leonardo, 2008). This shift challenges colorblind perspectives that ignore racial differences and perpetuate systemic racism (Rudnick, 2019). In this context, Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth framework offers a valuable lens to recognize the multifaceted forms of capital that minority groups have. The CCW framework moves beyond deficit views by highlighting the rich cultural strengths within socially and culturally marginalized groups (Yosso,

2005). In this thesis, I utilize the CCW framework to examine the lived experiences of six refugee IETs as they transition from teaching in their home countries to their attempt at entering into Ontario's education system or in other fields of profession. This approach aims to understand how these educators navigate systemic barriers and how their cultural wealth can contribute to a more inclusive educational environment. In the following section I provide an explanation of the CCW and the role it serves in supporting the analysis of the IETs narratives in this study. CCW is grounded in Critical Race Theory which acknowledges that race and racism are embedded in the structures of western society. In this study, CRT and intersectionality provide a broader lens to understand how my participants' experiences are shaped not solely through migration status, but also by race, gender, religion, and cultural values. All of these particularities intersect to shape the challenges and capitals that they carry.

Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (2005) framework expands the concept of cultural capital and challenges deficit perspectives to draw attention to the unique cultural assets that marginalized communities of color possess that are often overlooked in traditional educational and social contexts. As such, Yosso's 2005 Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework offers a useful theoretical framework when examining the lived experiences of Internationally Educated Teachers. It recognizes the IETs' cultural wealth as sources of power in various dimensions that go beyond the traditional concepts of what is accepted as valuable knowledge. The utilization of CCW allows researchers to consider the resilience, agency, and cultural pride that are inherent in the experiences of IETs. Through the lens of CCW, I examine if and how IET participants of this study draw upon their cultural assets to navigate and negotiate the complexities of professional adaptation, integration, and advancement in Canada.

One of the central elements of Yosso's theory is the notion of cultural capital (Richards et al., 2023). Cultural capital encompasses the cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities that have been passed down through generations within a community. As a visible minority and newcomer to Canada, I have firsthand experience of my unique cultural capitals. However, it is important not to assume that all ethnic and racial minorities hold the same cultural capitals.

Cultural capital includes the ability to navigate and utilize cultural institutions and systems effectively. It challenges the traditional notion of what constitutes valuable knowledge such as Bourdieu's cultural capital (1973) and emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting different ways of knowing. This framework was chosen specifically to support the second research

question which seeks to better understand how IETs draw on their cultural assets during settlement. CCW provides a structure that centers the voices of marginalized educators and shifts attention from what refugee IETs lack to what they possess. Unlike assimilation-based models, CCW recognizes that resilience, family, spirituality, multilingualism, and other aspects unique to visible minority groups are not barriers but strengths. These align closely with the educational contributions that refugee teachers can potentially offer inside Ontario’s classrooms.

Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework builds on and critiques Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of cultural capital. While Bourdieu described how dominant cultural knowledge reinforces social inequality, his framework tends to legitimize only the cultural resources of white, middle-class groups. CCW responds by naming and legitimizing the cultural capital held by marginalized communities, particularly communities of color, and reimagines their resistance, multilingualism, and communal knowledge as sources of strength. In this study, CCW allows for a more nuanced understanding of the strengths that refugee IETs bring and strengths that would otherwise be overlooked within a traditional lens.



Figure 3: Community Cultural Wealth. Adapted from *Community Cultural Wealth: An Ethnic Studies Framework*, by Teaching Channel, 2023, <https://www.teachingchannel.com/k12-hub/blog/community-cultural-wealth-an-ethnic-studies-framework/>. Copyright © Teaching Channel.

Aspirational Capital is referred to by Yosso (2005) as the ability of individuals of color to see beyond current life challenges and struggles to maintain hope for a brighter future for the future

generations. They are able to maintain this positive outlook in the face of real and perceived difficulties and without tangible means to achieve them. Such resiliency fosters a culture of possibilities that envisions a future for their children that break away from their current occupational, academic, and social standings (Gándara, 1995).

Linguistic capital refers to the intellectual and social skills that people of color possess through their ability to communicate in more than one language (Orellana, 2003). Individuals of color begin their schooling experience often with the ability to form social bonds through multiple linguistic skills and communication styles. Individuals from minority cultures have often been engaged in a tradition of storytelling which can better equip them for the school's social dynamic and academic skill sets of "...memorization, attention to detail, dramatic pauses, comedic timing, facial affect, vocal tone, volume, rhythm and rhyme" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). In addition, multilingual individuals develop a wide array of communication styles that they utilize dependent on the setting. Orellana's (2003) research with bilingual children demonstrated this social skill as they developed "vocabulary, audience awareness, cross-cultural awareness, real-world literacy skills, math skills, metalinguistic awareness, teaching and tutoring skills, civic and familial responsibility, [and] social maturity" (p. 6).

Familial capital in communities of color refers to close communal bonds that go beyond the confines of one's immediate family and may include relatives, neighbors, and other members of the community. This broad understanding of family encourages members to maintain a close and healthy bond to their community, and demonstrate a high degree of sympathy, empathy, and caring which reflect a high degree of emotional and moral awareness towards others (Yosso, 2005). This awareness is established both within and among families, as well as through various community engagement events such as in sports, academic, and religious settings. Tight community connectedness reduces feelings of isolation and non-belonging and an individual's struggles become the concern of the community (Gaitan, 2001). Children of minority cultures bring such skills to the classroom which can present a unique learning opportunity for all children including those of the majority white race.

Social capital is beneficial should one need professional and emotional support to properly navigate various hurdles in order to excel in the society. Access to this capital can help one in identifying and preparing for advancement opportunities, have access to guidance and mentorship throughout the process, and become aware of potential missteps to avoid (Yosso, 2005). This

access to a community of supporters as one strives to advance in a competitive setting reassures the individual that she/he is not alone. In turn, individuals from communities of color give their wealth of information and resources that they gained back to their community and social network (Yosso, 2005).

Navigational capital refers to a set of skills that allow one to maneuver through social institutions that are not conducive to the concerns or values of communities of color. In an academic institution, an individual from a racial minority background demonstrates the ability to endure hostile campus environments whereby she/he experiences racial discrimination and xenophobic acts but achieves high levels of academic achievement; a concept referred to as academic invulnerability (Alva, 1991). Thus, navigational capital highlights the importance of individual capacity to maneuver through institutional barriers but also the established community support networks that facilitate such maneuvering through various academic, employment, and judicial domains (Yosso, 2005).

Resistant capital highlights an individual's "oppositional behavior" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80) that challenges the observed injustice. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Robinson and Ward (1991) and Ward (1996) Yosso argues that individuals of color continually demonstrate their resolve to object and resist the status quo and challenge racist analogies of their ethnic background through instructing community members to think highly of themselves and believe in their capacity to succeed (Yosso, 2005). Individuals in these communities learn oppositional skills of positive impression of their minds and bodies in the face of racial inequalities. When informed of the structural forms of oppression and one's resolve to challenge it to instill social and racial justice (Yosso, 2005), resistant capital takes the form of transformative resistant capital (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This form of capital highlights the cultural awareness of the existence of deep-rooted societal racism and one's motivation to challenge it through instruction (Yosso, 2005).

In the following chapter I present the methodology. I include descriptions of the ways in which I recruited participants, and the methods used to generate data to address the research questions.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This research comprised an exploration of the educational and professional journeys that were undertaken by internationally educated teachers who arrived in Ontario, Canada as refugees. Each of the five participants were originally certified as teachers in Turkey and possess substantial teaching experience in their country. However, due to political persecution, they were forced to leave their country of origin. After moving through transitory countries, the participants subsequently sought refuge in Canada. This study used individual interviews with the participants to better understand the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that such individuals are confronted with as they journey through the path of resettlement. Moreover, as Canada is a recognized leader in welcoming refugee professionals giving a voice to this group reinforces the relevance and significance of this research endeavor.

Recruitment

I used the snowball strategy to recruit participants for the study, starting with one initial participant and expanding through referrals. Initially, I sought participants through recruitment posters and word of mouth, targeting diverse immigrant populations from various backgrounds. I distributed the posters in key community centers and places of worship that were frequented by various visible minority community members in Ontario. I secured the first qualified participant through a community contact who learned about my research and showed interest. This participant who is from Turkey and whom I did not know personally, was instrumental in introducing me to the next participant. This process continued and led to the recruitment of five participants through the snowball strategy. All participants of this study are from Turkey and belong to the Gülen or Hizmet movement.

My intention was to recruit participants from different nationalities. However, the recommendations and introductions to subsequent participants led to each of the five being from a similar community. The Gülen movement is a socio-religious, transnational, movement that is inspired by the teachings of Fethullah Gülen who is a Turkish religious cleric (Tittensor, 2011). This movement emphasizes education, interfaith dialogue, and community service. Members of the Gülen movement have established numerous schools, universities, and charitable organizations worldwide (Tittensor, 2011). However, in recent years, the movement has faced significant

political persecution in Turkey (Tittensor, 2011). This has led many of its members, including this study's participants, to seek refuge in other countries including Canada. While the participants all share a common cultural and religious background that is associated with the Gülen movement, they were not close associates.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent

Participants were clearly informed about the research and its objectives. Consent forms were provided, explained, and reviewed during the initial meetings which were held either virtually or in-person. Each participant chose the format of the interviews and if they chose in-person interviews, had the freedom to select their preferred location. Participants were given ample time to read and understand the consent form and were encouraged to seek clarification from the researcher (myself) for any queries. Only upon their full comprehension and consent did the interviews proceed.

Confidentiality

I have employed stringent measures to safeguard the confidentiality of participants and their resulting data. To safeguard participant privacy, pseudonyms were assigned to ensure their participation remains confidential. Additionally, all personally identifiable information was redacted or modified to protect their identities and maintain confidentiality.

Participant Feedback

An integral element of this study was to give voice to a sector of population that did not have equal access to portray their opinions. Thus, it was imperative to ensure that accurate accounts of participants' life stories were documented. To accomplish this, participants were given the opportunity to review their individual narratives to confirm accuracy and fidelity of their personal narratives and provide feedback and request edits. I, the researcher, agreed to fully comply with any such requests to ensure that their perspectives were accurately and respectfully portrayed in the way that they envisioned. It is worth noting that none of the participants took the opportunity to provide feedback or request modifications to the narratives which the researcher constructed based on the interviews.

Protection from Harm

Participants of this study experienced traumatic journeys represented by forced departure from their homes and their home country, and the unknowing of what the future holds for them

and their families exacerbated fear for safety. Consequently, a list of professional, religious, and cultural support centres was prepared in advance and was provided to participants should the need arise.

Data Security

All research data, including interview materials, analysis, and participant narratives, have been stored securely in password-protected laptops and desktops accessible solely by the researcher, Ali Shaker, and the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Ruth Kane. The devices are kept in physically secure spaces. These measures protect against unauthorized access. Data will be retained for a period of ten years from the study's completion to allow time for validation of findings. After this period, all data will be securely destroyed.

Methods

To gain an understanding of the participants' journeys I adopted a semi-structured interview process. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) point out, "Interview is a conversation – the art of asking questions and listening" (p. 643). As a distinct form of interview process, semi-structured interviews are popular among social science researchers. It is an open form of interview whereby new ideas presented by the interviewee are allowed and are regarded as a way to enrich the conversation. As Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, and Kangasniemi (2016) state, semi-structured interviews benefit from framing interview questions more as a guide to ensure the main topics of the study are covered, rather than confining both the researcher and the participants to a narrow scope of specific data. Thus, semi-structured interviews allow exploration of unplanned areas within the set theme, while the interview guide ensures uniformity in the types of information collected from each participant through providing guidance on discussion topics (Taylor, 2005, as cited in Kallio et al., 2016). The interviews invited the participants to speak about their past experiences of attaining a teaching certification and their professional experiences as teachers in their home countries, their transitory experiences prior to settlement in Canada, and their experiences after arrival to Canada. Semi-structured interviews represent a conversation between two individuals, the researcher (myself) and the participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Thus, with the acknowledgment that I am a part of the conversation, I played my part in determining which content from the interview was included in participants' narratives that appear in this thesis.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, I had initially intended to incorporate photovoice to further enrich the interviews and the data from each participant. As a participatory, arts-based visual methodology, photovoice has been used by researchers as a tool to encourage positive change through their research (Vecchio, Dhillon, & Ulmer, 2017). Photovoice places participants at the center of the research by enabling them to contribute to research data through their knowledge and input (Vecchio et al., 2017). Since the participants of this research were political refugees who were forced from their home country due to violence and instability, incorporating photovoice may be considered one way to ensure their emotional and psychological wellbeing. However, given the fact that they, and their extended families, relatives, and friends, are persecuted in Turkey due to their religious beliefs, revealing personally identifiable information could pose significant risks to their and their loved ones' personal safety. Thus, due to these ethical concerns, I ultimately chose not to integrate this methodology into the research. Instead of photographs of people or places, I asked the participants to select an artifact from their personal belongings that has special meaning for them. The artifacts were used as a stimulus for conversation and to support participants in explaining different elements of their journeys to resettlement in Ontario.

Interviews

The study consisted of a series of two semi-structured interviews with each participant. Interviews were conducted in English and translators were not needed. Through the interviews, I sought to gain insight of their personal and professional experiences as teachers and accounts as refugees as they settled in Canada. The second interview was conducted one week following the first. During the first interview, participants were invited to speak about their personal journeys. The semi-structured interview guide included questions about the participants' experiences of living and working in Turkey as preservice teachers and subsequently as teachers, the political instability and persecution that led to their reluctant departure from their homes, stays in transitory countries, and their eventual resettlement in Ontario, Canada. At the conclusion of the first interview, they were invited to bring along artifacts that encapsulate their experiences, past or present, and held personal significance to the second interview. In the second interview, participants shared these artifacts and spoke about the context for their chosen items. I used the Otter recording and transcription software during the interviews and subsequently verified the

transcription by listening to each recording and making corrections to ensure an accurate verbatim transcript.

Analysis

I first audio-recorded each participant's two interviews with their consent and initially transcribed using Otter transcription software. I then manually reviewed each transcript by re-listening to the full audio recordings to correct any errors. Once this step was completed, I constructed individual narratives for each participant. After constructing the narratives, I represented each to the respective participant for review and feedback. Participants were given the opportunity to suggest changes, clarifications, or omissions. None requested edits to their narratives. This collaborative review process helped ensure that participants' voices remained authentic and central to the final representation.

While the use of narrative inquiry provides a rich, qualitative understanding of the participants' journeys and experiences, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of this approach. Narrative construction from data also relies on the researcher's interpretation which introduces potential subjectivity even if every effort is made to maintain fidelity to participants' voices. Additionally, because narrative inquiry focuses on depth rather than breadth, the findings cannot be generalized across all refugee IETs. Future research could expand on this study by conducting comparative investigations across multiple provinces including larger participant samples, or exploring the narratives of refugee teachers from a wider range of countries. These measures can help better capture diverse experiences by internationally educated teachers.

My approach to coding and thematic development aligns with the principles outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) Who emphasize familiarization with the data, systematic coding, and careful clustering of ideas into coherent themes. The analysis of the participants' interview transcripts was conducted in three stages:

(1) Creating participant narratives. I used the interview transcripts to construct personal narratives for each of the five participants. Each participant's narrative was written in a story-like format to highlight the richness and individuality of their experiences. To ensure anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were allocated to safeguard their identities.

(2) Thematic analysis within and across the participants' narratives entailed a process of reading and re-reading to identify patterns and recurring themes. The objective was to better

understand the essence of their experiences and perspectives to ensure that I convey an authentic account of their educational and professional journeys. The thematic analysis commenced with a thorough review of the interview transcripts, where each transcript was read with particular attention to emerging themes. In this process, significant statements, phrases, and expressions were identified, and these were color-coded and clustered into identifiable themes. Transcripts were read repeatedly as different themes were identified to ensure that the analysis and coding was applied consistently across the narratives.

(3) Each narrative was then considered through the lens of Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth framework (2005) to identify the ways in which Yosso's six forms of capital played a role in each of the participants' journeys from Turkey to resettlement in Ontario.

In the chapters that follow I present my findings from these three stages of analysis in turn. First, in Chapter 5, I introduce you to the participants through individual narratives which tell their unique stories of relocation from their roles as teachers in Turkey to new lives within Ontario. In Chapter 6, I present the findings from the thematic analysis which speaks to the shared experiences of all or some of the participants and addresses research question # 1. In Chapter 7 I share the findings from the analysis of the narratives through the lens of Yosso and discuss ways in which the participants drew on different cultural capitals to maneuver their ways around and through the different challenges that they faced during their transitional journeys.

The combination of narrative construction and thematic analysis of participants' interviews, and their examination through the lens of Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth framework, allowed me to address the research questions by capturing the richness of participants' lived experiences and highlighting the assets that they bring to Ontario's classrooms.

Chapter 5: Meeting IETs Through Narratives

In this chapter I introduce the reader to the five female IET participants from Turkey. Each individual brings a unique story that speaks to her background, aspirations, and challenges in the new, Canadian, cultural context which is presented as an individual narrative crafted from analysis of their interview transcripts. I chose not to divide the narratives into thematic sub-sections to preserve the integrity of their lived experiences as they were shared with me. A thematic analysis across all five narratives is presented in the following chapter to explore themes.

Ms. Ada, Ms. Tomris, Ms. Hale, Ms. Lara, and Ms. Utku are five determined women with dreams of continuing their educational careers in some capacity in Canada. Their individual narratives serve as mosaics of their experiences that are decorated with challenges and triumphs, setbacks and aspirations, but most importantly, with hope. Their experiences reflect the complexities of cultural adaptation and professional integration in the Canadian multicultural society. In each narrative I include verbatim quotations directly from the transcribed interviews to emphasize key elements and out of respect for the participants and to hold space for the participant's voices.

Prior to presenting each narrative Table 1 below summarizes the participant profiles.

Table 1: Participant Profile

Participant	Gender	Length of Residence in Canada	Employment Condition in Canada	Education
Ms. Ada	Female	Arrived in 2017	Emergency Educational Assistant in public schools in Ontario	. Bachelor in Education from Turkey
Ms. Tomris	Female	Arrived in 2019	Not working in the education field in Canada	. Bachelor in Education from Turkey .ESL Certificate
Ms. Hale	Female	Arrived in 2016	Not working in the education field in Canada	. Bachelor in Education from Turkey
Ms. Lara	Female	Arrived in 2019	Early Childhood Educator in a public school in Ontario	. Bachelor in Education from Turkey
Ms. Utku	Female	Arrived in 2019	Plans to recertify in the near future	. Bachelor in Education from Turkey

All participants in this study were Muslim women from Turkey. Some wore headscarves. Their religious and cultural identities significantly influenced how their personal journeys were shaped under persecution in Turkey and also in their resettlement experiences in Canada.

Ms. Ada: Adjusting to being a single mom in a new country.

Ms. Ada recalls a conversation with a principal of a public school who tells her - "I am sorry. We cannot accept your degree because you received your Bachelor of Education 24 years ago. It's not possible." Ms. Ada responds "But, I didn't stay not working. You know, I worked. I have experience. I have a lot of experiences. I worked in the field. You should count some of them." The principal of the elementary school looks at her with disappointing eyes "I'm sorry, I cannot do anything." Not knowing how to respond to this discouraging response, she sighs "Thank you very much." as she stands up and leaves his office. Her attempt at securing a better financial situation for her children is dealt yet another blow. Days turn to weeks, and weeks turn to months. After failing to find a way to have her credentials accepted in Canada, and not having heard of, nor told by any immigration services agency that she visited, about the Ontario College of Teachers, Ms. Ada decides to attend the local college and complete a certificate in Child and Youth Care.

Ms. Ada's love of teaching was sparked by a dedicated high school science teacher who inspired her to pursue a profession in the field. "In high school, I didn't like science but when he became my teacher, he affected me in a positive way, and I liked science." She acted on this positive impact when it was time to decide her program of study. She decided to enroll in the Bachelor of Education program which, unlike in Ontario where it is a two-year program following a four-year undergraduate degree, is a four-year undergraduate degree. The first two years were a focused study of the theoretical underpinnings of education, teaching, and learning. This included, among other subject areas, teaching philosophy, teaching styles, and learning styles of students with sections dedicated to those with developmental delays and those considered as gifted. The final two years of training was dedicated to developing practical teaching skills whereby preservice teachers attend schools and learn from other experienced teachers and participate in teaching classes. Questioning the rationality of not accepting her teaching degree as a direct transition to the degree offered in Canada, Ms. Ada contests "You know, here it's only two years. I got four

years teaching and then they get two years, and then they become a teacher. I got four years and here it doesn't work.”

Ms. Ada also shared that the workload as an elementary school teacher in Turkey was high compared to here in Canada as the elementary school system requires each teacher to remain with the same group of students from grade one to grade four. “...[In Canada,] it will be easier than Turkey because every year we have to review all topics again because you know, when you teach grade one, it's okay. But [in Turkey] when you are going to teach grade two, three, and four you have to remove all topics and then you have to prepare your plan and materials. It's difficult I think.” This required her to invest a significant amount of time lesson planning and conducting individualized attention and differentiating her instruction to meet the changing developmental needs of each of her students along with administrative tasks and meetings. Despite the high expectations and responsibilities, her passion for teaching and commitment to her students remained strong.

The “15th of July 2016 was a very bad day for us.” As a member of the Gülenist movement that resisted some of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his government’s policies, that day marked the beginning of the end of Ms. Ada’s life in Turkey and a frantic search to find safety for her and her family outside of the country. “In one night, they killed a lot of people, and they shut down our schools.” Although the government passed the blame for the killings to the members of the Gülen movement, Ms. Ada disputes this. She argues that this worldwide civic initiative is deeply rooted in the peaceful, spiritual, and humanistic traditions of Islam and causing intentional harm to others is not aligned to the Gülen ideologies.

After days of watching the unrest against their group unfold, Ms. Ada and her family were unsure how they could assure the safety of their children should they decide to remain in the country. Leaving the country in search of safety was a thought that had never crossed Ms. Ada and her husband’s minds but, what they were witnessing was a level of violence against their people that they had never experienced. They packed as little belongings as they could to make the journey outside of the country. Throughout this phase of preparation and trip to the airport, Ms. Ada had kept a secret from her family that she felt she could not keep any longer. She opened-up to her husband that during the final days of her employment at her school, one of her students’ mothers approached and informed her that she’ll notify the government security service that she is a member of the Gülen movement. “I told my husband to take the kids before me. Yeah. If I stay

back, if they arrest me, just leave me and then go with the kids. Allah helped us and we just went through.”

Although they were hoping to go to the U.S. or Canada, without the proper visa, they instead traveled and settled in an African country. Several years of not knowing about the future passed before Ms. Ada along with her children were able to secure a visitor’s visa to the U.S. The embassy refused to issue the same visa to her husband as a measure to prevent them from settling in the country. After a few days, Ms. Ada took her children on a taxi ride to the Canada/U.S. border whereby they sought refugee status in Canada.

“My daughter was really angry with me because she left everything behind in Turkey. She really likes Turkey. She had everything there. Now she was a refugee.” The border guards were polite and kind and explained the process to them. They were placed in repurposed shipping containers where it was cold and uncomfortable. But after about 24 hours, they were relocated to a room within a building where other refugees were being held until their documentation was processed. Ms. Ada found it surprising that there were no doors in any of the rooms.

I told them, I cannot sleep here because I will lay down and then you know, maybe a man will pass from here. I don't want him to see me when I am sleeping. He said that you can put a sheet to cover your body and then no one can see you. We did that.

After inquiring about the reason for the missing doors, she was told that this was a security measure for the staff to be able to see the activities of everyone in the rooms.

My daughter started to cry and ‘said I don't want to live here. Why did you bring us here?’ She was blaming me. It was you know when you’re a mother it's really hard. It hurts because you want your child to be comfortable you know but you cannot provide anything.

Through her husband’s contacts in Canada, Ms. Ada secured a better living situation away from the processing building and in a friend’s home. After some time living with the friendly family, again by employing contacts of her husband's, Ms. Ada found a place to rent, began taking ESL courses, and worked menial jobs to get by. Thanks to her high school teacher’s motivation, Ms. Ada was able to improve her work status and began tutoring science lessons along with the Turkish language to children of other Turkish families that she met at a local Turkish community center; a position that she still occupies. She also works as an Educational Assistant at a local

public school in Ontario. While she is unsure of the official policy towards individuals like her who hold teaching degrees from Turkey, Ms. Ada was informed by another teacher who came to Canada from India that she would have to pass the IELTS exam with a score greater than 8 to be allowed to teach as a supply teacher in Ontario.

Currently as a student of the Child and Youth Care program, Ms. Ada concedes that, aside from new teaching methodologies and research, most course material is a repeat of content that she has mastered during over two-decades educational and teaching experiences. She finds the system of non-acceptance of her educational and practical experiences inefficient and unfair as “after 58 years, I have to do assignments and homework on stuff that I know already.”

One area that Ms. Ada finds most challenging is learning and working in English, a language that she is still developing and, at times, struggles with at work. Another challenge that Ms. Ada sometimes faces at work as an educational assistant is to understand her scope of responsibilities so that she can respect boundaries. As an experienced teacher, when she witnesses a problem unfold, her intuition is to mitigate and resolve it to help students and staff. However, she sometimes faces resistance and lack of appreciation from some of her colleagues who feel she has overstepped her scope of responsibilities.

Other factors that bother Ms. Ada are that of a different approach to students who sometimes resist following rules.

Here in Canada, you know there are many rules in the schools. Sometimes some students refuse those rules. They don't want to you know; they are coming from different cultures. In Turkey, we usually show such students love and encourage them to help us and be part of the class as a you know, community. But teacher here usually just say ‘do it, do it, this is the rule, you have to do it’ but students from our culture don’t accept that. Sometimes if I try to pat their shoulders or if they want to hug me, the teachers don’t like that because it’s a different way here.

However, Ms. Ada looks at the different approach to connect and communicate with students not as a hurdle, but as an opportunity to learn: “Because this is my world now. I'm not living in Turkey. I'm living in Canada, and I have to learn these [ways] and I have to do those things.”

Four years have now passed, and Ms. Ada’s children are no longer holding the deep level of animosity they once held against her for separating them from their friends, neighbors, relatives,

and everything that they had come to love about their Turkish home and their sense of identity. All three have recently received their permanent residency status and have learned to adjust to their new realities. However, Ms. Ada cannot stop worrying about the future of her husband. She's applied for him to be allowed to join them in Canada but, due to the unfolding Russia/Ukraine conflict, the Canadian government has put a hold on applicants in favor of focusing on assisting the growing number of Ukrainian war refugees. Ms. Ada does not feel discouraged and has committed to improving her family's living condition in Canada through hard work and resiliency. She also uses her cultural assets to maneuver around personal and professional challenges that she has faced and continues to face. "My background, my culture is my power. When I face challenges, I use what my parents taught me, you know, from my religion and my culture to feel peace and overcome my difficult days."

As discussed in the Methodology chapter, participants were invited to bring an artifact of personal significance to the second interview to support their storytelling. Due to a misunderstanding, Ms. Ada brought a photograph instead. To protect the anonymity of her family members still in Turkey, the photograph was not discussed during the interview, and a follow-up meeting to share a different artifact could not be arranged.

Ms. Tomris: From teacher to personal caregiver

Ms. Tomris' positive views of Canada quickly changed within months of her arrival to the country. Having gone through a difficult and life-threatening ordeal of leaving Turkey as a political person of interest by the Erdogan regime, Ms. Tomris made the long journey to Canada with the expectation that personal freedom was an established human right in this country.

When I was in my country, I would see the news of Canada. I would just dream about Canada involuntarily! You know, I would be glorifying this country in my head. Saying of people, all people are being heard there, you know.

Referring to her affiliation as being part of the Gülen movement, "...whereas our government is just shutting one group of people off completely." However, within months of her arrival to Canada, the extraordinary lockdown measures were introduced to control the spread of Covid-19. In her opinion, such policies go against an individual's rights and freedoms and should have never been implemented. Referring to these measures, Ms. Tomris shared

It made me feel like how I felt in my country. I thought, okay, I'm not gonna be heard. There's no chance because it's like authoritarian. I saw this process of being an authoritarian government from a free, you know, a more liberal government.

Ms. Tomris feels so strongly about such restrictive measures that “if our government changes and everything, like every reason that forced me out of my country changes, then you know, I see that it's not really different here and will go back to my country.” Nevertheless, Ms. Tomris believes that she owes Canada a lot as she was able to find the sense of peace and security that was taken away from her in her home country.

Ms. Tomris decided to become a teacher during her second year as a high school student. Her mother was a teacher, and she would share her work experiences which greatly impacted Ms. Tomris' decision to pursue the same career as an adult. Aside from her love of children, “I think sometimes that God prepared me for this journey.” After passing her university entrance exam with high marks, Ms. Tomris was offered a full scholarship to pursue her dream of becoming a teacher. She completed a four-year degree in English literature followed by a one-year ESL teacher training program that allowed her to teach at public or private schools across the country. She was quickly offered a full-time teaching position at a private school unaffiliated with the Gülen movement. Ms. Tomris enjoyed her time both as a preservice teacher and as a full-time teacher. She believes that all the courses that she registered for and completed were valuable and useful to prepare her to teach her elementary students effectively.

It's so nice that children with their bright minds look up to you for everything and I felt so lucky to be responsible to help them grow and like, learn. I never once had to you know, drag my feet to work. I always went to work happily.

Ms. Tomris' one weakness was her inability to control her high level of enthusiasm towards her students. “I love children too much! And eventually, children are smart, and they know which teacher to push you know and take advantage from. So, this caused more trouble than good.” Eventually, through work experience, class observation of experienced teachers, and taking from her theoretical coursework, she learned how to manage her emotions and direct it to encourage her students to build trust and stay motivated and engaged in the lessons.

Although she happily taught at different private schools for about a decade, Ms. Tomris' first choice was to work at public schools because she felt the students were more representative of the general population and included those who came from economically disadvantaged families. I asked what prevented her from working in public schools. Ms. Tomris sighed as she reflected on the question.

Life in Turkey as a Gülenist is very difficult and back then, since about 2013 and the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul – the period in which thousands protested the government's violent eviction of homeowners in order to make way for urban development plans -, the government brought a new regulation that basically erased all hope for me to work in public schools.

Persecution against Gülen supporters took a new turn. In order to prevent such individuals from holding a position in public sectors, including within the government, hospitals, universities, and schools, a new requirement was added in the hiring process. When the entrance exam which included technical questions related to the position was completed, prospective applicants had to go through a final interview process.

We all knew deep down the interviews, even if you pass the test, let's say you're in the blacklist, they wouldn't hire you. Because the intention of the interview was not to assess you, whether you're like qualified. It was to know your political and religious views. That's the motive and so I thought I had no chance because of my past.

When corruption and the depth of mismanagement of public funds was brought to light, the government scrambled to cover it up and pass the blame.

They [the government] started to look for a scapegoat. And this was the best scapegoat that they could ever find; the Gülen movement. Yes, so because they blamed these people are everywhere. You know, these people are just against us. They work for outside forces. They work for Mossad or CIA. serious accusation like that! Oh my God! You wouldn't even imagined. Imagine all the government affiliated media like 24/7 would be trashing us.

Ms. Tomris began to increasingly fear not just for her safety, but that of her family as the government made a concerted effort to shape public opinion.

Yeah, they wanted to make the rest of the population to also vilify us. So that even they prompted regular people to report if they, if they encounter any person from Gülen movement. They wanted to reward them with money. Yeah, those sorts of unbelievable things happened. It was very scary.

She recalls that during the first day of the school year, one teacher was questioned by the school administrator and was later sent home, never to work in the school again. “You know, she’s a citizen of Turkey and got her teaching degree just like everyone else but later we found out that her degree was annulled, and she can’t teach anywhere because she’s a Gullen sympathizer.”

Ms. Tomris’ father was also targeted by the government. As a supporter of the Gullen movement, while abroad on a work-trip, security forces went to the residence of her family members and conducted intense interrogations. This event was an extremely frightening experience, and following it, the family notified her father not to return to Turkey. Through several transitory countries, Ms. Tomris’ father was finally able to enter Canada as a refugee claimant.

Ms. Tomris’ ordeal was also one filled with moments of uncertainty and fear and with the increase in intensity and brutality of silencing Gullen supporters, Ms. Tomris felt her country was no longer the sanctuary she had loved and in which she felt a sense of security. “I didn’t want to be thinking, what if one day my door is knocked by police because you know, I’m the next one.” This was a fate her cousins experienced; one was interrogated several times while another has been in hiding for the past few years. Ms. Tomris’ other cousin has gone to court numerous times in a span of five years on charges of working to undermine the government. Meanwhile, she is unable to practice as a psychologist as her degree and credentials have been annulled and she was recently sentenced to twelve years in prison. The events surrounding her relatives pushed Ms. Tomris to act quickly and gather what little belongings she could pack and leave her home country. She was able to stay with a friend in an East-Asian country whereby she could also get a temporary working visa and work as a teacher. She was very happy with her professional life as she felt, despite the extreme challenges that she went through to leave her home country and being so far away from her family, friends, and relatives, she could find hope and joy when she met and worked with

children at work. Unfortunately, having a Muslim identity, Ms. Tomris did experience some racism. Uninclined to elaborate further, her silence on this issue spoke volumes.

Days, months, and years later, Ms. Tomris was finally able to secure a trip to Canada where she met her ill father. She was heartbroken to learn that her father, who she was very close to, was diagnosed with a terminal illness. He had a few months left in this world. This weighed heavily on Ms. Tomris. She went into extreme levels of depression. As a young single woman in an unfamiliar country, and having fled persecution, she drew strength from her faith and religion to get through perhaps the most difficult experience in her life. “Allah is with me always and without my religion, I don’t think I was still going to be here because I was alone and had so much to overcome.”

As her father grew weaker, Ms. Tomris took on more of a caregiving role and this helped her get ever closer to her father and also to the staff who cared for him. “They’re very kind like I felt so grateful to be there. Because I’m a foreign person and like, you know, the way they treated us with genuine smiles and friendliness. Yeah, I was so overwhelmed.” Once her father passed, Ms. Tomris applied to work at the same hospital as a volunteer as the staff had left a positive impression on her. Within a few months, she was offered a full-time position. I asked whether she attempted to work in schools and Ms. Tomris shook her head. “After my father, I could not think of any other place that I wanted to be. That was the last place my father was. Every wall, every room, the smell, the sounds are all memories of him.” This was reinforced during our second interview, when Ms. Tomris brought her father’s wallet as the artifact she wanted to speak about. Still holding all his cards along with picture IDs, Ms. Tomris gently opened it and shared its content. “Every card from him reminds me of a memory, of his expressions, his eyes, his gaze...” I still think about him every day.

Ms. Tomris did say that eventually she may attempt to secure an education-related position but only once her language develops further. “Language barrier is a big issue for me.” She feels that she has been able to make progress in developing her language but not to the extent where she can feel confident to teach. She does not know what the criteria are for Turkish educated teachers who would like to transition into teaching in Canada. Another aspect that she believes acts as a barrier for her to pursue recertification is the content of the sexual health curriculum. “I think all the educational material about sexual practices and health is good but not to elementary aged children. They are too innocent and too young to even think about it.” She believes that such matters are better taught to older students in high school. The fact that this is part of the Ontario

curriculum, and she cannot find a logical reason for it, in her view, indicates that the Canadian culture is so different from her beliefs and because of that, she is reluctant to immerse herself in a school system where she would have to teach children content that she disagrees with. “I am a Muslim Turkish woman in a Western country and am trying to find myself, again. It is hard.”



Ms. Tomris' father's wallet

Ms. Hale's Narrative: From teacher to hairstylist

“When I came here, maybe 5 years ago, every day I was crying, every single day.” Ms. Hale sighed and continued “Even now. You know, sometimes I miss my country, my family, you know, my friends but many people don't know my situation...”

Ms. Hale married soon after she completed high school and her husband “Promised that he will send me to university to become a teacher because it was my dream job.” Her passion to teach was sparked during her elementary years. She would always observe her teachers and “...I tried to teach my friends, not only about academic subjects but about moral values, and Turkish languages.” After completing a four-year bachelor's degree in English Literature, Ms. Hale was able to secure a full-time teaching position with a local public school where she worked for several years. There are two paths to becoming certified as a teacher in Turkey:

There are two different ways you know, and in one faculty it is like similar like here in Canada. First you get any degree and then you need to get the teacher certificate like it takes maybe one year, or less than one year, I'm not sure (for the teacher training part). ... And in the second way, they teach a teacher certificate program through other classes like psychology, and social studies at the same time with education classes.

She enjoyed every aspect of her training as a preservice teacher. Ms. Hale believes that her courses combined with the practicum portion which followed were very important to prepare her to succeed as a public-school teacher. When Ms. Hale graduated in 2005, she started working as a teacher in a public school. “Everything was good. I liked my job; I liked my life. Everything was good. But then, they came and took everything.”

2015 was a difficult year for Ms. Hale and her family. A failed coup against the government was blamed on the Gülen movement; a charge that Gülen supporters as part of a non-political, non-violent movement, strongly reject. Ms. Hale and her family were forced to act quickly to keep themselves safe “... for our children...” and so they moved out of the country. After several intermediary countries, they were able to arrive at the Canadian border where they claimed refugee status. Although Ms. Hale believes that their transitional experience from Turkey to Canada was relatively easy compared to other individuals, she believes that her, and her husband’s, ability to establish themselves as professionals in Canada is needlessly challenging. “You know my husband was an engineer, he was actually a manager and an engineer.” Once they came to Canada, Ms. Hale’s husband got all his degrees translated and verified by the World Education Services (W.E.S.). “But still every time he got to interview, they ask ‘do you have Canadian experience?’”

Ms. Hale finds her inability to fluently communicate her thoughts in English is the most significant barrier to her professional growth. “When you can speak good English, communication with people, finding a good job, anything is easier, but if you don’t know the language, everything is very much more difficult.” When she came to Canada, she wanted to continue with her profession of teaching, but the language barrier was a big problem for her and she decided to enroll in ESL classes. Her pre-assessment placed her in “level zero you know! Because I didn’t know any English!” From there, through hard work and dedication, she improved, level after level. However, thoughts of her home country, her family and friends, and the fear of having to start over in a new country became too much to bear. This pushed her into the dark paths of depression to a level that she needed to take some time away from her classes and all her active efforts to improve.

In contemplating her professional career and how she could be productive, Ms. Hale researched about recertification as a teacher in Ontario and learned that it involves her passing the IELTS Exam with a high score as one of the conditions. To prepare for the exam, she estimated that she would need at least two years of training to improve her language skills. With the need to

earn an income for her family as the priority over her professional preference of continuing her work as a teacher, coupled with a lack of confidence in her language abilities, she chose to study at a local college to receive a hairstylist certificate.

English and writing essays is hard for me, you know, and I have some skills and I'm interested in art and I thought hairdresser is a good program for me. The first, my children's education is important; not me, not my husband.

In general, Ms. Hale enjoyed her time as a student at the college and found enrolling in the program and being with her classmates a joyful experience but,

Just one teacher and some of her Canadian students were very close and sometimes because we are, you know, Iraqi, Irani immigrants and many from Eastern countries, they showed us discrimination. I got so upset about this. Why the teacher shows us a different attitude than Canadian students?

I asked if she felt comfortable to elaborate. She nodded "yes" and continued,

Every term we have to go to a salon to work as hairstylist and, for first two terms I was the best. Every time there was you know, difficult hair, the professor asked me to do it. So, I was very happy. But then the third term, you know, from the first week to the last week of term, she never wanted to give me any client. I asked her why and she said there was not enough clients but then all the Canadians got sometimes two clients right away!

Ms. Hale then spoke of a particular experience when a classmate received two clients while she was still waiting for a client. The classmate offered to share a client with Ms. Hale at which point she promptly asked her professor for permission. The professor reluctantly agreed.

When I said that, her face turned red and she was angry but she didn't say anything you know. Then, she came to the salon and started shouting at me in front of all clients and my classmates, 'why do you always give me stress? You're very difficult.' In front of all other clients!

This marked a very difficult experience for Ms. Hale as she “cried all day that day.” Now working as a hairstylist, Ms. Hale is satisfied with her professional career change. She sometimes teaches Turkish to interested students on a part-time basis at a local school board which she very much enjoys but, as it is not a regular job and does not offer any employment benefits, she cannot depend on it as a full-time profession or as a career that she can advance in. “Working as a part time teacher, that is not like yeah, that's not regular job. No, you can work 10 years and after 10 years, what will happen? Always the same.” She explained that as a hairstylist, “I can work all over the world. It’s not like teaching that I have to go to school again.”

Ms. Hale has brought an old wristband that has been passed on from generation to generation in her family. She received it from her mother once she was married. “I wear this all the time. It reminds me of my time, my life in Turkey, my friends, and my culture.” Ms. Hale continued “When I wear this I feel, you know, I feel safe. I feel strong. I feel I can do everything!” Ms. Hale elaborated that when she was just seven years old, her mother passed. She was one of five siblings. A few years passed and her father married again but this was a negative experience for them. “But she managed very well. She is a very strong lady. I remember my mom’s life when I see the wristband. When I have a bad week or month, I remember that, yeah, I can be like my mom.” In addition, she takes pride in her religious belief. She along with her husband believe that despite all the challenges that they’ve faced thus far, “Allah decides for us.” She practices patience in the face of challenges and believes that there is a purpose for their difficult experiences and that good days will come. “It is my destiny. We believe Allah chooses our destiny so there is nothing to feel worried about.”



Ms. Lara the author of children's books

After four years of theoretical and practical studies Ms. Lara received her Bachelor of Education from a prestigious university in Turkey. Turkey has a post-diploma entrance exam which all high school graduates who wish to continue their studies must take. Based on the exam result, prospective students have various choices of programs to pursue their studies. "Because my score in the exam was so good, my parents didn't want me to be a teacher, but I loved teaching so much and chose to be a teacher." Aside from being a certified teacher in Turkey, Ms. Lara is also a published author of children's books. In the past, a single homeroom teacher remained with the same class from grade one to grade 5. When Ms. Lara began her teaching career, this had been modified whereby the students were introduced to a new teacher from the fourth grade. She taught 2 classes from grade one to three. Ms. Lara prefers the Turkish approach to educating elementary children whereby the same teacher remains with the same group of students up to grade four.

I like teaching like this because I feel like a mother to the kids. When they first come to school, they don't know anything. They don't greet, they don't know yet what's right, they ask about everything and I think I solve.

Ms. Lara enjoyed working as a teacher and saw her role as one who was nurturing the young children to grow into responsible individuals as a very meaningful career. However, her family, and extended family were part of the Gülen movement. During the summer of 2016, the political instability spread across the nation which caused her a great deal of stress and anxiety. "I was very scared you know, [of] what will happen to me, my children, my family. So, one day we decided to leave Turkey quickly." To ensure the safety of their children, they were forced to relocate to an African country where her husband had business ties. "Life was very difficult for us you know. If I speak, I will cry." Ms. Lara spoke about the sense of uncertainty in a foreign country, anxiety caused by their concern for the safety of their loved one who stayed back in Turkey, and their own inability to return to the life that they worked extremely hard to build for themselves in Turkey. All this weighed heavily upon them.

After several difficult years, Ms. Lara and her family were able to go to the U.S. on a visitor's visa whereby they stayed with a relative. From there, they went to the Canadian border

and sought asylum in 2019. “That night, we only walked for two minutes but it was very difficult like many days for me. We had nice suitcases and with my children.” Once they were met by the Canadian border guards, they were greeted with “Hosgeldiniz!” which translates to *Welcome!* Ms. Lara explained that many Turkish asylum seekers had used the same route to enter Canada and the border guards learned this from them.

Upon arrival to Canada, she learned from other teachers in her community that her academic and professional qualifications and experience which certified her to teach in Turkey do not count as direct equivalencies. She was told by her contacts who were also teachers in Turkey and now resided in Ontario that she would have to pass the IELTS exam with high scores and have the Ontario College of Teachers review her completed courses at the Turkish university along with her work experience in order to determine how many additional courses she would have to complete. Her contacts informed her that she would probably have to retake most of the courses that she already completed in Turkey. With the urgency to generate an income and the lengthy process of preparing for the IELTS language exam in addition to the teacher certification paperwork and process, Ms. Lara decided to enter a college’s Early Childhood Education program instead. She enjoyed all the courses at the college. Although most of the content was a review for her, Ms. Lara found that the approach to education, a play-based learning model versus the traditional model, was a new field for her and one that she is now a strong proponent. While Ms. Lara was undertaking her studies, she began working as a lunch monitor at a local school. Once she completed her studies, the school’s principal asked her to work part-time as an ECE. After a few months, she was invited to an interview for a permanent ECE position which she successfully passed and is now working full-time. Ms. Lara appreciates the inclusive environment that her staff have maintained for everyone. “Even though most my colleagues are Canadian and not Muslim, during Ramazan, they got the students to make me a card to celebrate the Eid. I was so surprised!” The only issue that Ms. Lara finds unfair is the difference in the rate of pay between ECEs and teachers. “We almost do the same thing, but we get paid so much less. You know it’s not right.”

Ms. Lara believes that the Canadian approach to teaching and learning of children is superior to that of Turkey. “You know, in Turkey it’s very different. There we tell children to sit quietly and learn but here children learn with playing.” Ms. Lara continued “There are some schools in Turkey that teach like that but not many.” When I inquired about these schools, I learned that Ms. Lara is referring to certain private schools. In addition, Ms. Lara finds the approach to

education in Turkey follows a passive way of learning whereby the children are taught from an early age about their strict responsibility to respect the rules and their teachers and remain quiet unless the teacher asks them to respond to a question. “Here, children play and learn you know, they get dirty in the mud, touch leaves, they use all their senses to learn.” Ms. Lara also appreciates the interactive nature of learning in her school. “Teachers play videos, I sometimes buy toys and things from the Dollar Tree to help children with learning new things.”

During moments of difficulty, especially when she reflects on her life in Turkey and the prospect of “...how to change my life, it’s so hard changing you know...” Ms. Lara takes comfort by holding in her hands, a pen which was passed on to her from her mother. “When I think about my life in Turkey or other difficult things, you know, I hold this pen.” As she held the pen up for me to see she drew my attention to the top part of the pen. “In here you see these are little leaves from turkey from long time ago.” Ms. Lara continued “When I hold this pen, I feel my mother’s hand. I feel strong when I am alone in this country. I feel she is holding my hand and I’m not alone.”



Ms. Lara’s pen

Ms. Utku's Narrative: Hope under candlelight

“Honestly, in the beginning I was worried whether to do this interview or not. But now that you explain everything to me, I feel comfortable. As you know I am a political refugee and it was a dangerous situation for me.”

Ms. Utku completed a four-year Education degree and a one year English intensive program from one of the top national universities in Turkey. She enjoyed her time as a student and believed that, for the most part, the university courses prepared her well to face the many nuances of teaching children. However, Ms. Utku believes that the Turkish education system is rigid and traditional. “The curriculum is very strict where we teach and the students memorize, even kindergarten students.” She disagreed with this approach and tried to implement play-based learning approaches “...because you know, kids can best learn something while playing but it was difficult because teaching there is very strict.” In addition to theoretical courses, Ms. Utku also completed practicum courses in elementary schools. She taught math to fifth grade students. “They are so smart and innocents you know! I really liked the environment to, you know, prepare lessons every day and teach them and they learn and grow.” Although the curriculum is, in Ms. Utku's view, strict and not coherent with the way that children learn, she had the flexibility and freedom to teach the way that she felt was appropriate.

...and the parents were very supportive of how I taught the children. I remember I met with parents every month and told them what I taught and what I will teach in the next month. I remember those days were really good.

Ms. Utku's positive moments as a teacher lasted a few short years. Displeasure towards the government's handling of public funds, freedom, especially political freedoms had been brewing over three years but quickly escalated. Political unrest turned into large protests. This was blamed on the supporters of the Gülen movement and

...overnight, all my friends and myself who were teachers lost our jobs and we [were referred to as] terrorists. There were so many elderly people like in the 80s on wheelchairs that were taken to prison. Last time I checked there were 10,000 women, some with their babies who are still in prison but without any evidence.

Ms. Utku became increasingly afraid for her and her family's safety as things were only getting worse. Many people who she knows were not involved, were tagged by the government's secret police as Gülen sympathizers and terrorists which could carry harsh punishments and heavy sentences. She decided to find a way to leave her home and all belongings behind and exit the country.

Ms. Utku found refuge in an East-Asian country. She was able to quickly establish good rapport with other local teachers and began volunteering at several schools as an elementary school teacher assistant. After a few months, Ms. Utku was offered to work at two private schools as a kindergarten teacher. In general, she enjoyed her personal and professional experiences but could never feel at home because she believes "...the people there think their race is superior to not just us but anyone who is not from there." After about a year, she was able to come to Canada where she sought refugee status due to her political views. "The first days and weeks were so difficult. I stayed in my friends' homes and didn't know what to do or how to be independent." Despite the initial challenges that she faced in Canada, Ms. Utku views Canada and the Canadian culture as very respectful and inclusive. "Here I feel like I'm at home. It's not like this in Japan you know where they don't look at us the same way. Here everyone is from a different culture, and everybody is so friendly to me." Although Ms. Utku is not employed, she is eager to find the opportunity to return to the university to complete her recertification program and work as a public-school teacher. "I checked how I can be a teacher here and I think if I don't want to study again, I have to teach 400 hours in Canadian school and also pass many language and other exams." She finds this step unnecessary as she has already completed English language exams and also teacher certification programs in Turkey. "After a few years, I will go back to the university to get my teacher certification. I really love teaching."

Throughout her experiences outside Turkey, Ms. Utku never gave up the possibility that things may improve in her country so that she can return. Her journey away from home and in search of safety and relative comfort has been difficult. "I didn't know how to start again because I was getting old and now I have to make a new life again." When Ms. Utku experiences difficult moments, one way in which she finds peace and hope is to remember her life and successes in Turkey. She receives energy and motivation by holding a candle which was given to her by her mother before she left Turkey. "This candle reminds me of my childhood. It helps me to look at the positive things of everything that happened." Although she was hoping to bring photos with

her when she left the country, because of her and her family and friends' safety "We had to burn all of them. If they find these pictures, then they know who we know and will go and arrest them." When she holds the candle, she is also taken back to memories from childhood.

When I was child there were lots of electricity shortage. We have to use the candle all the time. And with my sister it was like yes, really good ambience. So, we were just sitting next to that and then asking our parents can you tell us like stories or fairy tales? So, every time when there is dark, candle lights the room and I have a kind of psychological connection with that.

Throughout her personal and professional experiences outside Turkey, from time to time, Ms. Utku has faced discrimination. When she was teaching in Japan the management told her that they prefer if she does not pray while at work. She was stared at in displeasure which Ms. Utku believes was the result of misinformation from the news media which portrayed Muslims as dangerous individuals. Ms. Utku gets strength from her Turkish identity and as a Muslim woman when faced with such discriminatory circumstances.

For my inner peace, I always try to remind myself of the religious teachings and try to portray my good feelings towards them. Whether we're aware or not we are all Allah's big family and if somebody across the ocean feels bad, it affects the energy in this world because we are all connected.



Ms. Utku's candle

Chapter Summary

The narratives of the participating IETs reveal personal challenges and triumphs in their journeys toward continuing their professional careers in Ontario and most of the participants found themselves not pursuing roles as classroom teachers.

Emotional and financial burdens of starting anew are evident across the narratives of all the participants. Participants grappled with separation from family, cultural adjustment, and the pressure to provide for themselves and their loved ones in new, unfamiliar environments in transitory countries and in Canada. Despite these hardships, each individual demonstrated resilience. They drew strength from their dedication to education, their cultural and familial values, and meaningful artifacts brought from their homeland. These items are rich with personal and cultural significance. They serve as sources of comfort and empowerment during challenging times.

Chapter 6: Findings from Thematic Analysis

This chapter presents findings from the thematic analysis across the Participants' Narratives which identifies common themes that address the first research question: What are the lived professional journeys of internationally educated teachers who arrived in Ontario, Canada as refugees following their forced departure from their country of origin?

To appreciate the participants' lived experiences of fleeing their home country and arriving in Canada as refugees, it is useful to provide some insight into their lives as teaching professionals in their home country of Turkey. Thus, the beginning section of this chapter speaks to the themes of the participants' stories of becoming teachers in Turkey and their professional careers prior to dislocation. This is followed by presentation of common themes of the participants' experiences in navigating their new personal and professional lives in Ontario, Canada. These themes shed light on the significant challenges that internationally educated and experienced teachers face when wanting to professionally integrate in the Canadian labour market and especially the education field. They also demonstrate the strategies that they employ to overcome challenges. As a whole, the thematic analysis offers further understanding of their resilience, adaptability, and the impact of their professional journeys on their integration into Canadian society.

Becoming a Teacher

Passion to Teach

Becoming a teacher is a process that requires a deep passion and dedication to educating young minds. The narratives reveal that the women all shared a common passion for teaching and for education. Indeed, this was the driving force behind their decision to become teachers and was a goal that they held since their childhood. For example, Ms. Ada and Ms. Hale both spoke highly about their love for children and how they found teaching to be a rewarding profession that allowed them to make positive impacts on their students' lives. Ms. Tomris noted that it was her dream to become a teacher ever since she was a young girl, and Ms. Ada expressed a deep desire to inspire her students and help them develop critical thinking skills that prepare them for their future lives and be ready to face the many challenges that may face as responsible adults. Ms. Ada did not view her responsibilities lightly. On the contrary, she viewed her role as a teacher as a contribution to shaping the future of her country and contributing to the growth of her community.

Ms. Hale had also always wanted to become a teacher, and she pursued her dream after obtaining her undergraduate degree. She loved the challenge of finding creative ways to engage her students and help them reach their full potential. In addition, she viewed teaching as a way to help her students become lifelong learners and responsible citizens rather than merely as a means to transfer knowledge related to the academic content of the curricula. As for Ms. Lara, her interest in education stemmed from her experiences when she was a student. A number of her teachers had a significant impact on her life as she progressed through the grades. This was a decisive period in her life as her positive schooling experiences motivated her to follow in the footsteps of her teachers. She became determined, from a young age, to make a difference in her future students' lives by providing them with quality education and helping them develop their own unique talents and interests. Early in her career, she became disappointed that she had to delay her dream of becoming a teacher due to financial constraints but as she worked through solving this challenge, she was ultimately able to fulfill her goal partly due to receiving an academic scholarship for her exemplary work as a student. Ms. Utku's passion for teaching was also similarly inspired by her own experiences as a student. She viewed the field of teaching as enabling her to help her students overcome challenges that were similar to what she experienced and had to overcome when she was in their position. Ms. Utku believed that education was the key to a brighter future for herself and her students, and she was committed to making that a reality. She decided to pursue a career as a teacher to help students realize their potential and make a difference in their lives.

As evident in the narratives, there is a strong sense of purpose and dedication to the teaching profession. The participants' passion for teaching was not just about passing on knowledge, or generating an income, but about making a positive impact on their students' lives and helping to shape the future of their communities.

Path to Certification in Turkey

The certification process for teachers in Turkey is highly competitive: a multifaceted process that involves a process of university education, practical training, and completion of certification exams. Prospective teachers must first complete a four-year undergraduate degree in education, followed by a teaching internship, and thereafter successfully complete certification exams, and engage in ongoing professional development (Saribas & Ozer, 2022). All individuals in this study completed a Bachelor degree program in education or a related field before pursuing teaching certification and Ms. Tomris completed a master's degree in education from a Turkish

university. These degree programs were designed to provide students with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills that were necessary to be effective educators.

All five participants spoke of their experiences of doing some work in schools as student teachers or other entry-level teaching positions. They considered this practical training as an important step in their certification experiences. Ms. Hale had completed a year's work in a local school where she had gained valuable experience teaching children of different ages and abilities. Participants shared that their practical experiences were very important as they enabled them to learn effective teaching practices by testing and applying theoretical skills that they gained in real-world settings while being observed and assessed by qualified educators.

Participants all completed one or more standardized tests as part of their certification requirements. These tests were designed to assess their knowledge of basic educational concepts in mathematics, sciences, linguistics, behavioural psychology, and other subject areas. Additionally, the methods of application of this knowledge in practical, classroom, settings based on grade levels was also tested. For example, Ms. Lara completed tests on child development, educational psychology, and teaching methods. These tests were designed to give individuals a thorough understanding of the basic concepts that form the foundation of effective teaching.

The participants each spoke to the competitive nature of the teaching certification process. With limited opportunities for full-time positions, many aspiring educators need to demonstrate a high degree of educational and professional excellence. This played a factor in them being considered for the teacher certification program in Turkey which was referred to by participants as a daunting task to having to continually prove their qualification and showcase their knowledge and passion for teaching to stand out among other applicants.

Overall, the narratives offer valuable insights into the path to certify as teachers in Turkey. The women all shared experiences of undergoing rigorous and competitive processes to become licensed. This process included finishing a four-year undergraduate degree in education and passing a national examination to obtain a teaching certification. After obtaining the license, they were required to complete a year of compulsory teaching service as their practicum obligations before being granted tenure. The participants' teacher education experiences illustrate the high standards and expectations placed on school teachers in Turkey. The experiences of the participants have vital implications for policymakers and educators within the west including those

in positions to influence policy in Canada as they showcase the rigorous certification method that teacher candidates undergo in Turkey.

Teaching Experiences in Turkey

All five participants in the study had teaching experiences prior to coming to Canada and their narratives speak to the challenges that they faced while working as teachers in Turkey. The narratives of Ms. Hale, Ms. Lara, and Ms. Utku spoke about having to follow rote learning methodologies despite their own lack of confidence in this pedagogical approach. Standardized testing was widely used in school systems and viewed by the participants as obstacles to effective learning. The teachers expressed concerns that rote learning and memorization was still prevalent in the Turkish education system even though the pedagogical practice has largely been demonstrated to be ineffective. Additionally, some of the participants viewed these pressures – memorization, standardized testing, and the emphasis on exams and achieving high grades- as limiting factors to students' critical thinking abilities, creativity, and their level of engagement and enthusiasm about their academic experiences.

Ms. Ada also mentioned the heavy workload that she experienced as a teacher in Turkey. Since one teacher remains with the same group of students from grades one to four, she described how she had to manage multiple responsibilities including preparing lessons, differentiating instruction, attending staff meetings, and managing a heavy load of administrative tasks. The teachers reported that the workload of being a teacher was often overwhelming and left with no choice but to dedicate long hours both inside and outside the classroom to meet the demands of administrative tasks. For Ms. Hale this greatly limited her ability to dedicate an adequate amount of time to plan effective lessons. These factors often lead to stress and cause burnout among teachers and hampers their ability to deliver quality instruction. Furthermore, socioeconomic disparities within the education system pose challenges for teachers. Despite the challenges, Ms. Hale remained dedicated to her students and found fulfillment in her role as an educator. Her narrative highlighted the significant time and effort teachers in Turkey often invest in their work. This emphasizes the commitment and dedication required in the education field.

Another commonality that is evident in the participants' teaching experiences in Turkey is the emphasis on discipline to ensure that students adhere to school rules. Ms. Ada shared that the Turkish education system prioritizes student discipline. She described how students were expected to follow a strict set of rules and any disregard towards the rules were met with consequences.

While she understood the well-meaning thought behind establishing such rules, to ensure healthy upbringing of children and ensuring education, she also expressed reservations about whether the extent to which these rules were implemented were necessary. She felt unease to follow through to the full extent, the expected enforcement of classroom rules with her students because she felt it could come at the expense of students lacking the growth of their creative and artistic talents and thought process which she believes were another, just as important, approach to education and growth of children. Ms. Tomris also voiced her concerns about discipline in her teaching experiences in Turkey. She believes that rigid disciplinary measures combined with pressures on students to conform to these strict measures were in dire need to be reformed. When students overstepped their boundaries and disregard expected school behaviour, Ms. Tomris believes in the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment where students feel valued and respected, rather than solely focusing on strict discipline. These narratives highlight the participants' observations and reflections on the disciplinary aspects of the Turkish education system. It suggests a recognition of the current disciplinary and strict school rules and policies as shortcomings in the Turkish educational model and their views on how to improve educators' strategies on encouraging corrective behaviour.

Lack of adequate resources was another common theme as teachers reported that their schools often lacked adequate resources and support for teachers, including basic materials such as textbooks and stationery supplies, educational material, and decorations for their classrooms. The participants and their colleagues were left with little options and had to rely on their own creativity to engage their students. Ms. Tomris recalled that teachers often had to pay for classroom supplies out of their own pockets. Another challenge that they shared was overcrowded classrooms with a high student-to-teacher ratio. This further negatively affected their teaching experiences and diminished the potential for high student academic outcomes. Despite these challenges, however, the participants also spoke about the intrinsic rewards of teaching in Turkey that went beyond monetary benefits. They spoke highly about their close relationships with their students, and the sense of fulfillment and life purpose that they gained from helping young people learn and grow. Ms. Ada described how her students developed a deep sense of trust and would often come to her for advice on personal and family matters, and how she felt honored to be a positive influence in their lives.

However, teacher participants mentioned that these opportunities were limited. For example, Ms. Hale felt frustrated at the lack of relevant training in her teaching career in Turkey. Her ongoing pursuit was to enhance and expand her skills as an educator by updating her knowledge. However, she encountered limited opportunities because of inadequate resources. Similar to her experiences, Ms. Lara shared the challenges she faced to find and participate in professional development opportunities in Turkey. Despite her passion for teaching and desire to improve instructional practices, there were limited resources and programs available for teachers like her.

Overall, as stated earlier, the participants reaffirmed their passion and dedication to their profession, despite the challenges they faced. They all shared a common desire to make a positive impact on the lives of their students and to help them reach their full potential. They each spoke to the importance of building inclusive relationships with students and with their families and communities. The participants' initial teacher education and years of professional experiences in Turkey allowed them to be effective teachers and overcome work related challenges. As they left Turkey, they each harboured the hopes to continue their teaching professions in Canada, and they were hopeful that they might continue to make a difference in the lives of students and in the wider community in their new home.

The Trauma of Dislocation

Peace is Not Where Home Is

This experience of dislocation and instability is common throughout the narratives of the five participants who were all forced to leave their home country of Turkey due to instability and danger. The participants recount their experiences of living in a state of constant fear, where violence and conflict were a daily reality. The participants shared their experiences of leaving Turkey and the emotional impact it had on them. They described being forced to leave their homes with little preparation, leaving behind their homes, belongings, and even family members, all the while not knowing when, if ever, they would be able to return. Ms. Tomris recounts how she had to flee her home in a state of fear and despair as overnight, her neighbors and friends could no longer be trusted due to the government's efforts to spread lies about those who belonged to the Hizmet sect. In leaving their home country of Turkey each of the teachers spoke how they lost their sense of home and community.

Departing Turkey instilled a profound sense of fear and uncertainty in the participants. Ms. Utku grappled with apprehension about the uncertainties awaiting her in the subsequent chapter of life, away from everything she had come to consider home. Ms. Ada expressed deep concern for her children and family, uncertain if they would safely escape Turkey. The ambiguity of their situation prevented the women from effectively planning for their future. They faced the fear of the unknown, lacking control over what awaited their families and whether they could endure the challenges ahead. Leaving their homeland also evoked feelings of guilt and shame for those left behind, compounded by the urgency of their departure without adequate preparation.

The participants were forced to leave their homeland due to instability and danger. Their narratives underscore the trauma and emotional upheaval of displacement. This is a common thread among conflict refugees: loss of home and community, pervasive fear and uncertainty, and a burden of guilt and shame for leaving loved ones in dangerous environments while they seek safety. The common experiences of the participants allow us to better understand the lived experiences of forced migration and shed light on the support and resources necessary to support their adjustment to new lives in Canada and elsewhere.

Hopes and Dreams of Safety in Canada

Before arriving in Canada, Turkish teacher refugees in this study had many hopes and expectations that guided their decision to seek refuge. The various reasons to leave include pursuit of safety, seeking freedom, wanting better educational opportunities for their children, and the aspiration for a better future for themselves and their families. The Turkish teacher refugees in this study envisioned Canada as a place to rebuild their lives, continue their teaching careers, and contribute to this society as they did back in their home countries. They all envisioned that they would be able to pursue their professional passion of teaching, they all anticipated an environment that would be characterized by diversity, inclusivity, and welcomeness where they would be able to nurture students' love for learning and inspire them to reach their full potential. Their aspirations included bringing their teaching expertise to Canadian schools, making a positive impact on children's lives. Participants also expressed the hope to freely practice their beliefs, being part of the Gülen movement, without fear of persecution or arrest in Canada.

These expectations were pivotal in shaping attitudes and experiences of the participants upon arrival. Ms. Ada, for instance, voiced her hopes for her children's future in Canada, including access to quality education and diverse opportunities for personal and professional growth. Ms.

Tomris aspired to find safety and security as she escaped violence and instability of her home to find and build a peaceful life in Canada. Ms. Lara dreamt of acceptance and a sense of belonging in Canada. She envisioned a place where she could be herself and think, believe, and practice in a just and free society without constantly fearing judgment, discrimination, and persecution from authorities. She hoped, and strongly believed, that she would be embraced by the Canadian society. She was confident that she could form meaningful connections and would be valued for her skills and contributions. The hopes and visions of participants before their arrival in Canada all reflect a shared desire for family safety, opportunities for professional growth, and being able to participate and have a positive impact on the growth and betterment of Canada. These shared aspirations for their lives in Canada provide insights that can further inform the policies and programs that might better facilitate successful integration and the realization of professional visions of incoming refugees.

Reidentifying Oneself in Canada

Discrimination and Marginalization

In the context of this study's participants, discrimination and marginalization emerged not only as barriers but also as reidentifying experiences. As participants navigated being perceived as outsiders or less qualified despite their extensive backgrounds, they were compelled to renegotiate their professional and personal identities in the Canadian context. These experiences shaped how they saw themselves, what roles they aspired to take on, and how they mobilized their cultural wealth in response to systemic exclusion. Ms. Ada's narrative vividly shows that she feels marginalized as she adapts to life in Canada. This sentiment arises from diverse facets that include her professional aspirations, interactions she has experienced within the education system, and the challenges that she has faced by cultural differences. Particularly, the refusal to recognize Ms. Ada's teaching degree from Turkey stands out as a glaring example. Although the individual, a school principal, who interacted with Ms. Ada was not in the position to decide the veracity of her Turkish certification, it is clearly discriminatory to undermine her qualifications and further attempt to diminish her professional achievements. In my view, this experience clearly highlights power imbalances and the resulting feelings of helplessness in the face of institutional discrimination.

Ms. Tomris was initially very optimistic about Canada as she viewed this nation as a defender of protecting individual freedoms. During COVID-19, she was shocked by the stringent lockdown measures. Drawing parallels between these measures and the authoritarian environment from which she escaped, Ms. Tomris felt that her concerns were unheard and that her personal rights and freedoms were being ignored. This perception intensified her sense of marginalization and echoed some of her difficult experiences in Turkey. Ms. Tomris also alluded to encountering racism as a Muslim woman, reporting that she faced discriminatory attitudes and behaviors because of her religious practices and her sense of Muslim identity which led to her feeling marginalized and excluded.

In her hairstylist program, Ms. Hale faced discrimination. She experienced differential treatment from some Canadian classmates, and in one incident, her professor showed favoritism toward Canadian students and publicly berated her. These experiences highlight that the theme of marginalization in Ms. Hale's and all the participants is very much a real and persistent challenge that hinders adjustment to life in Canada. Ms. Hale's narrative emphasizes the impact of biased attitudes, favoritism, and the need to provide support and opportunities for immigrants to smoothly integrate into society.

Ms. Lara's journey to Canada which was motivated by a quest for safety and a better future for her family included a unique set of challenges. Despite her qualifications and experience as a teacher in Turkey, she had to start anew in terms of professional recognition. She found herself having to navigate the complexities of having her credentials reviewed, prepare for language exams, and grapple with protracted paperwork, largely on her own with little organizational guidance. Consequently, she decided to enroll in a college program as an Early Childhood Educator instead of directly pursuing her teaching career.

The participants shared that their extensive professional experiences in their home country were disregarded, and their concerns were left unheard. Every participant of this study also encountered persistent racism and cultural clashes. These feelings, collectively, contribute to their sense of marginalization and added to the challenges of finding their place in a new country.

Challenges of recertification in Ontario

Recertification in Ontario is perceived to be out of reach for the IETs in this study who have been displaced from their home countries.

While two participants found pathways to contribute to the education sector as early childhood educators and educational assistants, others made decisions to step away from the field altogether as they were discouraged by the requirements and financial cost of the recertification process. This holds true in the experiences of some of the participants. Lack of mentorship programs, networking platforms and culturally sensitive counseling makes it difficult for Turkish certified teachers to be successful in integrating well with the Canadian education system and utilizing their expertise therein. This theme suggests that these teachers need professional development and training opportunities through which they can either develop new skills or adapt existing ones into Canadian style. This is a notable challenge since there are very few specific resources or supports available to Turkish certified teachers who require recertification.

The participants noted that the certification process in Canada required them to complete additional coursework and training. This was a major barrier as it involved a significant financial burden, would take considerable time and for some it meant having to take several courses which they had already completed in Turkey. All participants of this study pointed to the financial investment required for recertification as a major barrier to being able to recertify in Canada. Participants were often at a crossroad of either having to prioritize the financial needs of their families, and for some participants their extended families back home, over their own career goals. This reality was particularly evident when the participants realized that additional training would require significant financial investment, and some had to take the difficult but necessary decision to put their own career aspirations on hold in order to provide for their family.

In addition to the financial burden, there was a shared frustration among participants at having to re-train when they had already gone through a rigorous teacher certification and had several years of experience as classroom teachers. In addition to the need for additional training and professional development, participants faced other pressing challenges. Namely, they felt that language barriers and understanding and adjusting to cultural differences was not an easy journey for them. Biased treatment by educators towards them as students was yet another topic of concern for the participants to work towards their recertification.

The process of obtaining certification or recertification in Ontario is also impacted by differences in instructional practices. The participants all completed their certification in Turkey which reflects differences in pedagogical approaches and educational philosophy. With that knowledge, the participants now had to contemplate on navigating a new educational system. This

is a significant challenge for IETs as they have already developed their own teaching styles and practices in their home countries.

Recognition of international education credentials in Canada has a significant impact on IET refugees' ability to obtain employment in their field. Although some sectors, such as private schools, are not mandated to solely hire provincially accredited teachers, this was still a major challenge for all five participants in this study, who shared that they often had difficulty finding work in the field of education with their teaching certifications from Turkey. This is a frustrating and demoralizing experience for individuals who have dedicated significant time and effort to develop and improve their skills as educators.

Overall, the process of recertification in Ontario is a significant challenge for IETs who have been displaced from their home countries. In this study, two of the participants completed the Educational Assistant program and Early Childhood Education program respectively which gave them access to work within the education system. One of the participants retrained as a hairdresser. The remaining participants prioritized the need to support themselves and their families financially over the pursuit of recertification which required a considerable financial investment.

Despite these obstacles, the participants also emphasized the significance of professional growth and training in aiding them in acquiring new skills and adjusting to the Canadian environment. For instance, Ms. Ada highlighted that the courses she undertook enabled her to gain knowledge about the Canadian education system and become more acquainted with the teaching methodologies employed in Canada. Additionally, Ms. Utku mentioned that attending workshops assisted her in developing fresh strategies for effectively working with English language learners. Overall, the narratives of the participants underscore the considerable challenges that IETs encounter when seeking certification to teach in Canada. The necessity for professional growth and training emerges as a crucial theme, as these opportunities can facilitate the development of new skills and adaptation to the Canadian context for IETs. However, factors such as language barriers, financial burdens, and the time commitment required for these opportunities are substantial and may present significant challenges for numerous IETs in their pursuit of recertification to teach in Ontario's public schools.

Educational experiences in Ontario

The provincial need for English, French, or both official languages' proficiencies and the requirement to adapt to a new educational environment is experienced by the participants in this study as intimidating. In addition, this feeling shakes their sense of confidence at work. The participants in this study shared stories that revealed recurring themes of struggle: language barriers, cultural differences, and discrepancies in instructional practices within the Ontario education system.

Those participants who were able to secure volunteer or paid employment in the education system shared that they encountered differences in the educational culture and pedagogical approaches than those they were familiar with. Participants reported that the Ontario education system places a strong emphasis on student-centered teaching methods, such as posing open-ended questions, encouraging teamwork, and project-based learning which revolve around the students, and these pedagogical approaches are less commonly used in Turkey. Moreover, the widespread use of up-to-date technology in Canadian classrooms required them to acquire proficiency in using new software and online tools to enhance their teaching and support for students. To address these gaps without the need for a complete recertification, targeted training programs such as tailored professional development workshops specifically designed for IETs could offer training on student-centered pedagogies and technology integration.

Participants who were employed in public schools in Ontario as educational assistants viewed their educational experiences in Ontario as both challenging and fulfilling. They appreciated the opportunities to learn new skills and adapt their existing knowledge to the Canadian context, and they felt that they had grown both personally and professionally from their experiences. In contrast some shared frustration with the wage gap between educational assistants and teachers and perceived that the unequal treatment and opportunities primarily linked to language proficiency within the field of education was excessive and undervalued what IETs brought as strengths.

Language Barrier

By far, the most pressing challenge for the IETs in this study to integrate effectively into Ontario both in terms of personal and professional integration is the language barrier. Two participants who currently work in public schools in Ontario, one as an educational assistant and the other as an early childhood educator, stated that they struggled to effectively communicate

with students, parents, and their colleagues in English. This made it difficult for them to establish themselves as effective and confident teachers as they struggled to build positive relationships with their students and colleagues. Ms. Ada's struggles with English impacted her understanding of the scope of responsibilities at work and she found herself not respecting boundaries that were commonly understood by her coworkers. As an experienced teacher, but one who is certified in a different country with different sets of priorities and values, she has the intuition to mitigate and resolve problems to help students and staff, but she sometimes faced colleagues who felt she overstepped her responsibilities as an educational assistant. The refugee IETs in this study all acknowledge that lack of fluency in English was a barrier that prevented them from seeking recertification in Ontario. For some, the time it would take to reach the required level of fluency in an IELTS examination was too great an investment and they showed shorter pathways into retraining (e.g., ECE and hairdressing) so they could enter the workforce and generate an income to support their families. All participants shared that generating an income was the priority on arrival to Canada, and this left them little choice but to forgo hopes of reaccreditation and focus on securing employment that could generate an income. It is important to note that while language barrier was mentioned by the participants as a significant challenge, their experiences and perspectives varied. Each individual faced unique struggles and had different levels of proficiency in English which led to distinct challenges in their teaching and communication efforts.

Cultural Differences

In addition to language barriers as a significant hurdle to IET adjustment in Canada, Turkish certified teachers also encounter cultural differences as another challenge as they navigate the Canadian system. This gives rise to several challenges and implications for their professional integration. The participants of this study shared that they had to relearn new social norms and ways of communicating. Each of them found navigating the Canadian education system challenging, as was understanding the expectations of Canadian employers. They reported that the significant differences between the educational systems in Turkey and Canada, including different expectations for student behavior, instructional methods, and assessment practices were confusing and at times contrary to their cultural values. The participants struggled to adjust to these differences and found it challenging to integrate their existing skills and knowledge into the new context. While the participating teachers acknowledged the differences between Turkey and

Canadian teaching approaches, they recognized that in general they experienced Canada as a different, but inclusive culture.

Chapter Summary

The lived experiences of the participants as told in their narratives and highlighted through the thematic analysis provide insights into the struggles and achievement faced by refugee IET seeking to find their space in Ontario, Canada. The thematic analysis brings to the surface three stages in the participants' lived experiences: becoming a teacher in Turkey; the trauma of dislocation from home country, communities and families; and, adjusting to life in Canada. One could imagine that these steps in one's journey from home country to somewhere new, might be stressful for anyone who chooses to immigrate, for whatever reason. But for the participants in this study, the circumstances surrounding their move to Ontario, Canada are reflective of others who have had to claim refugee status due to conflicts, political unrest or persecution.

The participants share a passion for teaching and contributing to shaping the lives and communities of the children in their classes. Each participant became a teacher as a commitment to children and to contribute to shaping the next generation of Turkey. To reach this goal they underwent university study, professional preparation and practical internships in schools. They have varying years of experience as teachers within Turkey and hoped to continue to build their professional careers.

As members of the Gulenist movement, these teachers found themselves no longer safe within their home communities and their capacity to retain their positions as teachers and to ensure the safety and well-being of their families was under immediate threat, leading to the decision to leave homes, families and community and seek refuge outside of Turkey. The five teachers had different stories of dislocations, for some the journey from Turkey to Canada included years spent in transitional countries, others chose Canada to reunite with family who had left Turkey earlier. But what is shared in each teacher's narrative is the aspirations and dreams they had for resettlement and building a new life in Canada where they would be safe from persecution, they could continue their teaching profession and their children's future opportunities would be enhanced.

The narratives and thematic analysis show that adjusting to life in Canada did not go as smoothly as the participants had dreamed of. Transitioning from being a teacher in Turkey to

teaching in schools in Ontario presented more challenges than opportunities and the participants shared common frustrations as they struggled to navigate systemic requirements and barriers. Journeys of adjusting to life in host countries often include feelings of marginalization and discrimination. Overall, the participants' experiences of feeling unheard, disregard towards their professional experiences in their home countries, encounters with racism, and cultural clashes contribute to their sense of being marginalized and struggling to find their place in a new country.

Addressing these challenges requires fostering a more inclusive environment that respects diverse perspectives and experiences while also recognizing and addressing the unique struggles faced by individuals who have fled persecution in their home countries. Despite these challenges, the participants maintain their strength and resilience. They draw inspiration from their family, their cultural heritage, and values symbolized by their artifacts that they brought with them to the new home country. These important items connect them to their mothers, their lives in Turkey, their friends, and their religious and cultural identities. Through their Islamic faith, they practice patience and trust in Allah's plan believing that there is a purpose for their difficult experiences and that better days will come. It is important to note that these teachers' diverse cultural and professional backgrounds represent a significant set of assets that can enrich Canadian classrooms. Their international teaching and life experiences, multilingual capacities, and differing teaching approaches enrich student learning and foster inclusive educational environments. By recognizing and harnessing these contributions IETs achieve their professional fulfillments, and the broader Canadian education system will be representative of the student population.

Chapter 7: Examining the Participants' Narratives Through the Lens of Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Framework

In this chapter, I report my analysis of the lived and professional experiences of the five participants through the lens of Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework in response to the second research question:

RQ #2: In what ways can Yosso's community cultural wealth theory help us to understand how IETs navigate their life journeys?

While Yosso's CCW framework is a valuable structure to examine the strengths that participants bring to their journeys, it is important to acknowledge that these capitals often intersect in ways that do not neatly fit in simple categorizations. In this study the participants' lived experiences were influenced by their shared backgrounds as members of a persecuted faith-based community which creates interconnected complexities that CCW's capitals cannot fully capture. Yosso argues that the six capitals of aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance are cultural assets that members of marginalized communities hold and use regularly in their efforts to excel professionally and thrive in society, despite the existence of systemic barriers. In this study the data reveal that each of the five Turkish participants have used these capitals to various degrees not only in their transition from their home country of Turkey to settle in Ontario, Canada, but also prior to coming to Canada. The participants in this research all belong to the religiously persecuted Gülenist movement, and their narratives reveal that they repeatedly drew on the six forms of capitals to secure their safety, aid in their personal and professional growth, and negotiate their place within the societal and professional realms of their lives in their home country. Through examining the narratives of the participants, through the lens of Yosso's CCW (2005), this analysis identifies the many ways in which the participants have drawn upon these forms of capital to navigate unique and shared challenges in their life journeys. This analysis provides insights into the participants' resilience and resourcefulness and provides a nuanced understanding of their strengths and strategies for overcoming adversity.

The findings are reported according to each of Yosso's CCW capitals in order of the degree to which there was evidence in the participant's lived experiences of leaning into and finding strength from their cultural capitals.

Aspirational Capital

The narratives of the participants collectively demonstrate a strong utilization of aspirational capital through their resilience and determination in the face of significant adversity. For instance, both Ms. Ada and Ms. Hale highlight the importance of familial support and aspirations for their children's futures. Ms. Ada persistently sought recognition for her teaching credentials in Ontario and pursued additional qualifications to ensure a better life for her children, reflecting her strong desire to reunite her family. Similarly, Ms. Hale's lifelong dream of becoming a teacher was supported by her husband's promise to provide financial and emotional support. Despite the challenges, she remained committed to improving her English language skills and pursuing a hairstylist certificate to support her family.

Ms. Tomris and Ms. Lara share idealistic views of Canada and demonstrate strong aspirations for professional and personal growth. Ms. Tomris envisioned Canada as a place of individual freedoms and pursued her dream of living in a society where all voices are heard. Her determination to improve her English language skills underscores her aspiration to eventually work in the education field in Ontario. Ms. Lara's commitment to becoming an educator, despite her parents' reluctance, highlights her aspirational capital. She pursued a Bachelor of Education degree and became a published author of children's books, showcasing her long-term aspirations for success and fulfillment.

Lastly, Ms. Utku's continuous pursuit of professional development opportunities and teaching certification, both in Turkey and Canada, exemplifies her aspirational capital. She completed a one-year English intensive program to grow professionally and remains eager to return to the teaching field one day and recertify in Canada. Her hope for a better future in Turkey for her family and relatives further illustrates her aspirations for peace and security.

For all participants, aspirations were not isolated individual goals that they strived to achieve but were strengthened through strong familial support systems and community encouragements. This underscores the layered nature of their cultural wealth.

Familial Capital

Familial capital is a significant theme across all participants' narratives which reflect their deep commitment to their families' well-being and safety. Each participant made challenging decisions to leave Turkey that was driven by the desire to protect and support their loved ones.

Their journeys highlight how familial ties, cultural values, and emotional support from family members play crucial roles in their resilience and determination.

Ms. Ada and Ms. Tomris share a strong sense of responsibility towards their families, often making significant personal sacrifices. Ms. Ada's decision to leave her home country as a refugee was driven by the unsafe conditions for her family, despite the significant personal and professional challenges it posed. Similarly, Ms. Tomris was influenced by her deep familial bonds and particularly her dedication as a caregiver for her father during his illness which influenced her decision to seek employment at the hospital where he was cared for.

Cultural values and religious teachings are also central to Ms. Ada's and Ms. Hale's ability to navigate various challenges. Both draw strength and inner peace from these values which are deeply intertwined with their familial ties. Ms. Ada relies on her cultural values and religious teachings to find inner peace as she navigates challenges to resettle in Ontario. Ms. Hale was influenced by her husband's support and commitment to her education and made the difficult decision to forego her professional growth to prioritize her children's future. This sacrifice demonstrates her strong familial values.

Ms. Lara and Ms. Utku also highlight the role of familial capital in their narratives. Ms. Lara's nurturing approach to teaching children reflects the influence of familial and cultural values in her professional life. Her decision to leave Turkey as a refugee to secure safety for her children further underscores the strength of her familial ties. Similarly, Ms. Utku's narrative showcases her strong familial ties through her fear for her family's safety during political unrests in Turkey, which motivated her decision to leave everything behind to protect them.

The emotional support that participants draw from their families is symbolized through cherished items like Ms. Hale's wristband, Ms. Lara's pen, and Ms. Utku's candle, each providing a sense of connection and motivation during difficult times. These shared experiences highlight the central role of familial capital in the participants' lives, underscoring their deep connections to family, cultural values, and the emotional support they receive and provide as they navigate the challenges of resettling in Ontario.

Social Capital

The participants' social capital is reflected in their ability to capitalize on their social networks and relationships to navigate the challenges of resettlement and professional integration

in Ontario. Ms. Ada and Ms. Hale both utilized their husbands' contacts to secure better living conditions for their families upon arrival in Canada. These connections provided a foundation for their integration into the Turkish community in Ontario. Ms. Ada further expanded her social capital by building connections with other immigrant-educators, who shared valuable information about professional development and recertification criteria. Similarly, Ms. Hale's interactions with her classmates and colleagues highlight the supportive relationships she formed with other visible minority individuals, which helped her overcome experiences of discrimination.

Ms. Tomris demonstrated her social capital through her interactions with the hospital staff who cared for her father. Their kindness and friendliness left a positive impression on her, leading her to volunteer as support staff and eventually secure a full-time career at the hospital. This experience underscores her ability to create a supportive social network in a new environment, which helped her cope with the emotional pain of losing her father and develop her professional standing in Ontario.

Ms. Lara's social capital is evident in her connections with other Turkish teachers, who provided important information about the certification process in Ontario. Her positive experiences with colleagues during cultural celebration events illustrate her ability to develop friendships and foster a sense of inclusion for her and her family in an unfamiliar environment.

Finally, Ms. Utku's utilization of social capital spans multiple countries. In the East-Asian country where she first sought refuge, she established good rapport with local teachers, leading to a volunteer teaching opportunity that eventually turned into a full-time paid position. In Canada, Ms. Utku appreciates the culture of respect and inclusivity, which helps her reintegrate and network with people from diverse backgrounds.

Navigational Capital

Each of the participants demonstrate their capacities to draw on navigational capital to maneuver through unfamiliar institutional requirements and barriers on their journeys from Turkey through transitional countries (for some) and to resettle in Ontario. Ms. Ada, Ms. Lara and Ms. Hale demonstrate navigational capital by skillfully maneuvering around the various institutional barriers and registering for new qualifications at local colleges – Ms. Ada in Child and Youth Care, Ms. Lara in Early Childhood, and Ms. Hale in hairdressing. They demonstrate their abilities to navigate unfamiliar systems, adapt to different educational contexts, successfully complete

academic qualifications, and secure employment in a foreign country. Ms. Tomris' narrative also highlights her capacity in navigating complex social and institutional landscapes to find her place in new environments and secure a volunteer and then a paid position within the hospital. Both Ms. Lara and Ms. Tomris show their capacity to navigate the new institutional systems by first securing volunteer roles and subsequently being offered full time positions.

Similar to the other participants, Ms. Utku's narrative reflects her navigational capital by successfully relocating to multiple countries and adapting to different educational and social systems. She was able to establish rapport with local teachers in the East-Asian country quickly and later navigated the complex refugee process in Canada. For the participants who pursued further studies, the process of navigating credentialing and employment barriers was deeply tied to their aspirations for personal and family stability. This suggests an interconnection between navigational, aspirational, and familial capitals.

Resistance Capital

The narratives of the participants clearly illustrate their capacity to draw on resistance capital which is reflected in “oppositional behaviors” (Yosso, 2005). All five participants were members of the Gülenist movement which led to their persecution in Turkey and was a strong factor in them leaving extended families and communities behind and fleeing their homes. The participants speak to different ways in which they opposed the authoritarian government and injustice within Turkey which highlights their resilience and determination.

Despite facing serious threats which forced them to flee their home country, each of the participants reflect the capacity and commitment to speak out against what they identify as unjust systems. For example, Ms. Tomris remained steadfast and her willingness to critique what she perceives as authoritarian measures in Canada during the COVID-19 lockdown measures. Similarly, Ms. Lara's criticism of systemic inequities such as the pay disparity between early childhood educators and teachers in Canada exemplifies her ongoing resistance to what she perceives as institutionalized injustices. Ms. Utku remained resolute to fight for her professional and personal goals. She resisted oppressive labels that were imposed upon her and her family in Turkey and maintained her identity and religious practices even while facing discrimination in Japan. Her ability to navigate these challenges while, at the same time, holding close to her beliefs and values further exemplifies her strong resilience and determination to resist systemic injustices.

Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital has the potential to play a crucial role in the experiences of the participants and is evident in some of their narratives. It demonstrates their determination to professionally settle in Ontario as they navigate unfamiliar and sometimes challenging experiences. This form of capital encompasses skills and social advantages that are gained from speaking Turkish, their mother tongue, and highlights their strong sense of cultural value, resilience, and adaptability. However, in contrast, the lack of linguistic capital in one of the two languages of the school system in Canada, French or English, also serves as a barrier to the participants securing positions in the public school system as teachers.

Ms. Ada and Ms. Hale both utilize their bilingual abilities strategically to connect with their communities and maintain their cultural heritage. Ms. Ada uses her skills in both science and Turkish to tutor students, bridging cultural gaps and fostering connections. This approach not only enhances her professional standing but also underscores her commitment to preserving her cultural roots in Ontario. Similarly, Ms. Hale uses her linguistic capital by teaching Turkish part-time, which helps her build community ties, preserve her cultural identity, and expand her professional network. By teaching Turkish, both Ms. Ada and Ms. Hale contribute to cultural exchanges and reinforce their cultural heritage within the diverse environment of Ontario.

The narratives of each participant speaks to the ways in which lack of fluency in English or French serves as a hard barrier to all participants seeking entry into the school system as teachers within Ontario. What this analysis reveals is the “potential” linguistic capital held by these teachers, should they be, in time, integrated into the public school system. As evident in the narratives of Ms. Hale and Ms. Ada noted above, the promise of drawing on linguistic capital in making connections and building relations with Turkish children and parents in schools cannot be dismissed if Ontario is seeking to ensure a more diverse teaching force that reflects more closely the children in classrooms.

Chapter Summary

The analysis of the participants' narratives highlights the intertwined nature of their cultural assets and how these assets serve as resources to support their resilience and success particularly in their home country of Turkey where they were each members of a minority religious group. The

stories of the participants demonstrate the presence of aspirations, familial bonds, social connections, navigational skills, resistance to systemic barriers, and linguistic assets. These elements are not isolated; they work together to allow each participant to draw strength from their cultural heritage and personal and professional experiences to overcome systemic barriers and navigate systems and spaces towards their personal and professional goals. Their ability to draw on these capitals underscore their capacity to adapt, thrive, and contribute meaningfully to their environment. One interesting observation that emerged from the analysis is that the participants' use of community cultural wealth capitals appeared to feature more fully in their lives prior to their arrival to Canada. This may be due to the stronger, more familiar support systems they had in Turkey combined with facing persecution. In contrast, the urgent demands of survival and the structural barriers in Ontario may have contributed to limiting their ability to draw on the full range of their cultural assets as actively. This raises important questions for future research on how and when newcomers are able to access and leverage their community cultural wealth in host societies.

While Yosso's CCW framework is a valuable structure to examine the strengths that participants bring to their journeys, it is important to acknowledge that these capitals often intersect in ways that do not neatly fit in simple categorizations. In this study the participants' lived experiences were influenced by their shared backgrounds as members of a persecuted faith-based community which creates interconnected complexities that CCW's capitals cannot fully capture.

As I engaged with participants' narratives and applied Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework to their stories, it became apparent that some of the most significant sources of strength in their lives were not fully captured by the six capitals. This study revealed two additional capitals that I propose as faith-based capital and trauma capital.

Faith-Based Capital

The participants' narratives often reflected a falling back on their faith as a source of hope. Faith-based capital, as it emerged in this study, refers to the inner resources that individuals develop through their spiritual and religious beliefs which in turn enable them to endure hardship, and maintain hope during significant and challenging transitions in their lives. For the participants of this study, faith was not only a personal anchor, it was also a community connector that reinforced perseverance during experiences of persecution in Turkey and their feelings of isolation in Canada.

For example, Ms. Tomris and Ms. Hale reflected on the sense of hope and perseverance that they maintained while adapting to life in Ontario. They emphasized that their belief system provided them with a framework to remain patient and optimistic despite professional barriers. These examples demonstrate that spiritual beliefs offered participants psychological and emotional support that complemented their aspirational and navigational efforts. Faith-based capital thus functioned as a crucial, though previously unrecognized, asset in participants' resettlement experiences.

Trauma Capital

In addition to faith-based capital, participants' experiences also reveal the development of trauma capital. Trauma capital encompasses the moral resolve, empathy, and broader worldview that individuals acquire through surviving difficult experiences such as persecution, forced displacement, and the loss of professional and personal identities as the participants of this study went through. While trauma is often framed as a negative experience, the participants' narratives demonstrated that surviving adversity also develops inner-strengths that shaped how they approached their lives.

For example, Ms. Tomris described living under constant state surveillance in Turkey which led her to develop a profound sense of empathy for those who were undergoing her difficult experiences. Similarly, Ms. Hale reflected on the loss of her professional identity as a teacher and the psychological toll it took. However, she also spoke about developing greater patience, and flexibility, as she rebuilt her life in a new context. These reflections suggest that, despite profound losses, participants carried on with stronger resilience that shaped their adaptation to their new communities. Trauma capital, therefore, represents an important asset that refugee IETs possess.

In the context of this study, it is important to identify the assets and strengths that the participating IETs have drawn on in the past and during their transition to Ontario. It demonstrates the potential that IETs might have to leverage community cultural assets within the new environment and to draw on these to navigate new challenges and barriers to their personal and professional resettlement in Ontario.

Chapter 8: Discussion

This study contributes new insights to the field by specifically centering the experiences of refugee internationally educated teachers from Turkey; an underrepresented group that is often aggregated in existing Canadian research on the experiences of immigrant professionals. While previous studies have addressed immigrant teacher recertification broadly, few have examined how refugee status intersects with professional re-establishment and cultural resilience. By applying Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth framework to narrative accounts of participants, this study offers a fresh perspective that reframes refugee IETs not as underqualified outsiders but as capable professionals whose assets are under-recognized within Canadian school systems.

In this chapter, I revisit the research questions and bring the findings into conversation with existing literature to explore their broader implications. Drawing from themes in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, I connect participants' lived experiences with studies on racialized teacher representation, refugee employment, and institutional barriers in Ontario's education system. I also discuss the contributions this research makes to areas such as policy reform, teacher education, school board practice, and future research on refugee workforce integration and teacher diversity in Canada.

At the heart of this inquiry are two research questions which serve as an organizing framework for this chapter and will guide discussion of how IETs' experiences intersect with broader themes in the literature.

RQ #1: What are the lived professional journeys of internationally educated teachers (IETs) who arrived in Ontario, Canada as refugees following their forced departure from their country of origin?

Passion to Teach

Becoming a teacher is a process that requires a deep passion and dedication to educating young minds. As observed in participant narratives, this passion often becomes a driving force for their decision to follow this professional field despite the challenges. For example, Akin and Goodwin, (2016) discussed pressing challenges including unequal distribution of resources whereby schools in low-income areas and unurbanized zones faced a higher proportion of limited

funding and insufficient learning materials. Inequalities such as these add an additional burden on teachers who have the passion to carry out effective lessons but are limited due limited resources. Despite these challenges, Teachers' motivations play a pivotal role in shaping their passion for teaching as the education of children in Turkey is considered a challenging task with a high degree of responsibilities (Seferoğlu, 2021). In Turkey, educators are motivated to enter the field by a variety of factors both intrinsic and extrinsic. Their intrinsic motivations often stem from their profound sense of purpose and desire to contribute positively to their society by engaging in education. Research by Korkmazgil and Seferoğlu (2021) indicate that teachers in Turkey feel a strong calling to their profession which is also reflected in the participants of this study. They do not merely see education as an occupation to provide for financial stability but, in addition, they value the opportunity to shape young minds and make a positive impact on students' lives.

Extrinsic motivating factors such as job security, professional development opportunities, and social recognition, also contribute to some extent to Turkish teachers' reasoning to choose this field. Yeşilçınar and Çakır (2020) found that teachers who received a high degree of support and recognition from school administrators and the broader society for their work and efforts, demonstrated higher levels of on-the-job satisfaction. This reflects the importance of support systems, as discussed in the literature review, to foster IETs' motivation and professional satisfaction in a new educational context. This deep-seated passion, however, encounters significant challenges when considering the experiences of IETs in this study as teachers encounter numerous obstacles that can diminish their on-the-job satisfaction both within Turkey and thereafter. A better understanding of these challenges is important because it provides context to the barriers that these educators face when seeking to transition to the Canadian education system.

Trauma of Dislocation

While the professional challenges faced by educators in Turkey provide a backdrop to their later struggles in Ontario, it is important to recognize that these challenges are compounded by the profound trauma that dislocation causes. The trauma of dislocation is unfortunately a common experience among refugees who are forced to leave their home country due to instability and danger. In the context of Turkish teachers who become refugees, the trauma of dislocation has significant psychological ramifications. Research by Sleijpen et al., (2016) confirms experiences of loss, separation from family and community, and the disruption of one's professional identity

as contributory causes to depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) among Turkish teachers who become refugees. The participants of this study all shared their difficult moments leading up to their reluctant decision to leave their homes, their professions, and their loved ones and relatives to seek safety. Understanding these psychological impacts is necessary when one considers the different challenges that IETs face in their professional integration in Canada following transition. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of mental health support and culturally responsive practices within the recertification and employment processes in Canada.

Challenge of Recertification

As the psychological impact of dislocation greatly impacts their personal and professional lives, the journey of internationally educated teachers towards professional integration in Ontario is further complicated by the recertification process which presents both time and financial burdens to IETs. For Turkish certified teachers who arrive in Canada as refugees, this reality is overwhelming. As detailed in Chapter Six, none of the five participants of this study were able to recertify as Ontario Certified Teachers and a major obstacle was the high costs involved both in terms of fees and the cost of lost income. This financial burden forced some of them to pursue alternative careers, such as ECEs or EAs, or reluctantly entirely different fields of profession to secure an income for their families. According to a recent study by Marom (2017) refugee teachers from Turkey who come to Canada require financial support to pursue recertification. The study highlights that refugees face financial barriers because they are unable to work in their professions while undergoing recertification and are seldom eligible for financial support from the government. This highlights gaps in policy and the need to establish much needed financial support as incentives to encourage IETs, such as those who participated in this study, to remain in their professional fields.

Research indicates that Turkish certified teachers, much like the participants in this study, face several of the same barriers during the recertification process in Canada as other IETs. Janusch (2015) identifies language proficiency requirements, varying curriculum standards, and difficulties in obtaining relevant documentation as significant challenges. Language proficiency tests, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), is a demanding challenge for Turkish certified teachers as they are not native English speakers. These challenges underscore the need

for more supportive policies that acknowledge and address the unique obstacles faced by IETs, if we are to create conditions that will allow IETs to contribute to a more diverse and inclusive teaching profession in Canada. The challenges IETs face during recertification are not isolated. Rather, they are intertwined with their ongoing experiences in Ontario's education system where their professional identities are further questioned. As discussed earlier, while the public and Catholic school boards in Ontario require full Ontario teacher certification, private schools exercise greater hiring flexibility which allows some internationally qualified teachers to continue teaching. This could potentially present an opportunity for IETs such as those from the study to investigate further.

Educational Experiences of IETs in Ontario

The passion to teach greatly impacts educational outcomes in Turkey, where teaching is a respected profession. Teachers who demonstrate high levels of passion are more likely to engage students, create positive classroom environments, and foster a love for learning (Altun, 2017; Daskan, 2021; Korkmazgil & Seferoğlu, 2021; Serin, 2023). However, transitioning to the Ontario educational system presents significant challenges for IETs, often negatively affecting their enthusiasm. The study's participants expressed feeling undervalued and underutilized in their new roles which reflect the broader issue of opportunities that are missed within the education system to harness the expertise of IETs for the benefit of both educators and students. This missed opportunity is even more concerning in light of the teacher shortages currently affecting Ontario's education system where refugee IETs represent a very valuable yet underutilized resource.

In addition to professional challenges, participants in this study faced substantial language barriers, cultural differences, financial instability, and difficulties with instructional practices in a new educational system. The impact of these barriers is significant and contributes to feelings of frustration, isolation, and demoralization. Ultimately this will affect IETs' ability to secure employment in their field (Marom, 2019). As highlighted in Chapter Six, these challenges fail to acknowledge the unique experiences and qualifications of IETs. If we want to see tangible changes within Ontario schools whereby views and experiences of IETs are considered as assets to extend children's education and learning, comprehensive policy changes are necessary.

Research confirms that Turkish-certified teachers in refugee status encounter numerous difficulties when taking on teaching roles in Ontario's public schools. These challenges,

highlighted in Conteh's (2018) research, include language barriers, differences in curriculum and teaching methods, cultural adaptation, and unfamiliarity with the Ontario curriculum system. Among these, the language barrier stands out as the most pressing challenge for the IETs in this study, affecting both personal and professional integration. For the two participants of the study who work in public schools in Ontario, these communication barriers can potentially lead to significant difficulties in understanding student needs as well as effectively collaborating with colleagues.

Non-native English speakers face significant difficulties in expressing themselves, understanding classroom discourse, and meeting English language requirements for instruction and assessment (Conteh, 2018). Although only two participants are currently active educators in Ontario's public schools, all five identified their lack of English fluency as a major obstacle in their personal and professional lives with three participants citing it as a factor in their decision not to pursue recertification.

Moreover, the motivations of conflict refugees to leave their home countries are complex and multifaceted (Schmidt & Janusch, 2016). The participants' narratives in this study reveal that the drive to seek safety often comes at a significant cost: professional sacrifice. This sacrifice continues as these educators struggle to navigate their professional roles in Canada. Karki's (2021) investigation sheds light on the discrimination and marginalization faced by Turkish-certified teachers who sought refuge in Canada, including xenophobia, racism, and cultural bias. These barriers are not just external; they are deeply ingrained in the structures of the education system as evidenced in Chapters Five and Six. Discriminatory practices create obstacles to professional integration and well-being and encompass exclusionary measures, restricted access to resources and professional opportunities, biased evaluations, and disparate treatment compared to Canadian counterparts. These challenges coupled with limited language skills and unfamiliarity with the Canadian education system complicate IETs' effective navigation of the system. The negative ripple effect of discrimination and marginalization extends beyond professional development and significantly impacts one's self-esteem, job satisfaction, and a sense of belonging in their new environment. This analysis underscores the great need for targeted interventions, as discussed in the literature review, to address these ongoing challenges.

For participants in this study who gained experience working in Ontario schools as EAs and ECEs, their experiences resonate with difficulties faced by immigrant professionals across

various fields. Even those who did not work in schools shared experiences of marginalization and racism in other settings. These findings emphasize that adaptation to life in the host country frequently involves feelings of marginalization and discrimination (Turchick, Holzinger, & Zikic, 2010). The narratives of the IETs reveal that these barriers are not only personal but also embedded in the structural challenges of Ontario's educational landscape. Only two participants proceeded with certification, not as teachers but as an ECE and an EA. This highlights the need for tailored interventions to encourage and support IETs, particularly refugees, in navigating challenges to recertify and integrate into the Canadian educational system.

Poyrazli's (2021) research highlights expectations for high-quality education, inclusive policies, effective collaboration among colleagues, and a welcoming work environment where everyone feels included and valued, regardless of their background. However, the narratives from participants who have experience in Ontario's public schools paint a different picture that suggest that these ideal conditions are not reflective of their experiences of the education system. For example, Ms. Lara, who works as an Early Childhood Educator, expressed frustration over the pay disparity between ECEs and certified teachers despite performing similar duties. Additionally, while she appreciated gestures of inclusivity from her colleagues, she noted that broader systemic challenges, such as a lack of recognition of her prior teaching qualifications, created barriers to fully integrating into her role. Addressing these concerns and expectations is very important to create an environment where IETs can grow professionally and contribute to a more diverse and inclusive teaching workforce in Ontario.

Despite these challenges, it is uplifting that all the participants maintained a sense of strength and resilience. They shared that they draw inspiration from their family, their cultural heritage, and symbolic artifacts that they have brought along with them to the new home country. These important items connect them to their mothers, their lives in Turkey, their friends, and their religious and cultural identities. Through their Islamic faith, they practice patience and trust in Allah's plan, believing that there is a purpose for their difficult experiences and that better days will come. The findings of this study demonstrate the pressing need for inclusive policies which not only recognize but actively support the unique contributions of IETs to Ontario's schools.

By considering the participants' experiences through Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth theoretical framework in this study we can gain a better understanding of how IETs could potentially draw on their various forms of capital to navigate and overcome various barriers

through their personal and professional transitions in Ontario. The following section will explore how Yosso's six forms of capital: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance are present in the experiences of the participants and how these forms of wealth empower them to persevere and seek opportunities despite the systemic obstacles they face.

RQ #2: In what ways can Yosso's community cultural wealth theory help us to understand how IETs navigate their life journeys?

Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth framework offers a unique lens to examine the life stories of the participants in this study as documented in the narratives of internationally educated teachers. CCW has the capacity to function as a dynamic framework that celebrates the multifaceted cultural heritage of individuals from marginalized communities. In this study, CCW serves as a counter-narrative to traditional frameworks that tend to homogenize experiences and marginalize minority perspectives (Lee, 2009). The integration of Internationally Educated Teachers into Ontario's educational system has potential not only for the teachers themselves but also for the broader school community. These educators, who often possess a wealth of experiences, linguistic skills, and cultural knowledge, represent an underutilized asset to the Canadian education system. The findings of this study demonstrate that participants drew mostly on their community cultural wealth in their home countries and in navigating their transition to Canada. There was not as much evidence of them drawing on CCW to further their professional careers in Ontario. However, the findings do suggest that the full potential of IETs might be realized if their unique contributions are recognized and supported through inclusive policies and practices. Drawing on the findings of this study, this section discusses how the diverse backgrounds and experiences of IETs who have arrived as refugees, could enrich the educational environment in Ontario and serve as a resource for fostering cross-cultural understanding and resilience among students.

Aspirational capitals which are expressed in the hopes and dreams of the IETs, play an important role in their ability to navigate the new environment and cultural context of Ontario. Despite obstacles such as language barriers, recertification hurdles, and the need for cultural adaptation, two participants demonstrated a strong commitment to continuing their careers in education although in differing capacities. The participants also expressed hopes and dreams for

their children's having better experiences in their lives compared to what they went through (Yosso, 2005).

Linguistic capital, encompassing the multilingual abilities of IETs, is an important asset for educators. When IETs are supported to become fluent in the instructional language of the school system - English and/or French - they could enter the classroom with the ability to communicate with newcomer students from their home country and thus ease the students' transition and provide a sense of belonging. For example, their ability to communicate in multiple languages help them bridge gaps between different linguistic abilities and transitions which will ease the transition, for newcomer students, into the Canadian educational system (Gándara, 1995). This linguistic flexibility is reportedly valuable in diverse classroom settings, where students may come from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In such contexts, IETs can potentially enrich the classroom environment by promoting cross-cultural understanding and nurturing a sense of belonging among all students (Gándara, 1995). Their multilingual proficiencies allow them to serve as cultural mediators that foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment (Alva, 1991). Additionally, their presence as educators who appreciate and practice multilingualism might encourage all students to appreciate linguistic diversity and celebrate it in their school environments.

Social capital speaks to the networks and relationships that IETs build within their communities, which contributes to their ability to overcome challenges and enhance their professional experiences. Such networks were evident in this research in Turkey and less so in Ontario where they could potentially support IETs to share resources and information among themselves which will foster a collaborative approach to overcoming shared challenges (Gaitan, 2001). More could be done perhaps in the welcoming of refugees to foster these social networks and support more connections among IETs.

Navigational capital which refers to the skills and strategies that IETs develop to maneuver through unfamiliar or challenging environments such as the Ontario educational system is vital as they learn to navigate their way into the new personal and professional domains. This includes navigating the complexities of recertification processes, cultural differences, and institutional structures including the barriers in Ontario. The capacities of IETs to adapt and find their way through these obstacles show their resilience and resourcefulness (Ward, 1996). This navigational

capital also empowers IETs to advocate for themselves and seek out opportunities that align with their professional goals.

Resistant capital refers to the resilience that IETs exhibit in the face of systemic challenges and barriers (Yosso, 2005). Many IETs show determination to continue pursuing their teaching careers despite encountering discrimination, marginalization, and other obstacles. Although the participants in this study did not pursue recertification to work as teachers in Ontario's public schools, two pursued certification to work as educators in differing capacities while others decided to pursue different professions. In the broader educational context, resistant capital can serve as a powerful force for change. IETs who embody this capital not only resist discriminatory practices but also work to create more equitable and inclusive educational environments (Jez, Hauth, & Ramers, 2022). Their presence in the classroom can challenge stereotypes and encourages students to think critically about issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

Familial capital which refers to the social and cultural knowledge that is nurtured among family members carry a sense of community and close bonds. For IETs, familial capital is a source of strength and resilience that helps them navigate the challenges they face in Ontario's education system and in other journeys. This capital provides IETs with a strong foundation of support, values, and cultural identity that sustains them through difficult times. The participants in this study align with other research demonstrating that connections to their families and cultural heritage provide emotional support and a sense of belonging even when they face isolation or marginalization in their professional environments (Orellana, 2003). In the broader educational context, familial capital can enrich the educational experience by bringing diverse cultural perspectives into the classroom. IETs who draw on their familial capital can introduce students to different cultural traditions, values, and histories and this further lead to a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment.

Limitations of The Research Study

Some limitations of the study should be noted. The small number of participants who were all women originally from Turkey means the experiences and perspectives that have been captured in this research do not represent the broad range of IET experiences. While their narratives provide rich insights into the challenges of recertification, cultural adaptation, and navigating new professional environments, it is important to exercise caution when generalizing the findings.

Nevertheless, many of these observations may resonate with other refugee, internationally trained teachers, and professionals who encounter similar systemic barriers and credential recognition issues. Despite these limitations, CCW remains a strong framework that is beneficial for highlighting the often overlooked assets of minority communities including IETs.

Further, this study was initiated as an investigation of IETs' experiences of accreditation on arrival in Ontario as refugees. Yet, as the research evolved it became apparent that none of the participants engaged in the accreditation process and so this initiated a change in focus generated from the participants' narratives to understand their life journeys as they navigate their new context in Ontario and the challenges that were perceived as real barriers to their reaccreditation as teachers.

Chapter 9 Recommendations

Given the lived experiences of this small sample of IETs, one can assume that other refugee IETs might encounter similar challenges when they arrive in Ontario as immigrants including refugees and aspire to continue their professions as teachers. While newcomer IETs might face similar challenges, a one-size-fit-all approach may be ineffective in addressing all possible challenges faced by IETs. Instead, a comprehensive support system is required that includes language training programs, community engagement, and culturally sensitive resources to foster successful integration and empower individuals to overcome this obstacle (Marom & Ilieva, 2019; Schmidt & McDaid, 2015).

To work towards a more representative teaching force, it would be worth exploring alternative approaches to supporting IETs to demonstrate their professional, pedagogical and linguistic requirements necessary for teaching in Ontario schools. For example, a bridging program for IETs that addresses specific curriculum, cultural and pedagogical approaches that are important in Canadian schools might be more effective in ensuring IET's can be supported to transition to the Ontario school system as teachers. Such an approach could acknowledge the existing expertise and experiences of IETs and at the same time ensure that they are well-prepared to meet the specific curriculum demands and pedagogical approaches of the Canadian education system. A provisional certification pathway unique to the needs of IETs could be implemented that would work under supervised conditions in schools, in an internship, while they complete the credentialing process. This approach would not only help IETs to begin contributing to the education sector more quickly but also provide a framework for assessing their skills in a provincial classroom setting. Such approaches might attract more IETs to engage with the recertification and, thereby contribute to addressing the existing gaps in teacher diversity in Ontario schools.

Another strategy to improve the integration of IETs into Ontario's education system is to simplify and streamline the documentation requirements for refugee professionals seeking accreditation to teach in Ontario schools. To address this, alternative methods of verifying credentials could be introduced such as allowing sworn affidavits, personal testimonies, or references from former colleagues and employers to serve as substitutes for missing documentation. Furthermore, providing a centralized online portal for submitting credentials and

providing step by step guidance in different languages would ensure the process is accessible and reduce possible confusion and delays.

This would be especially useful as many refugees may not have easy access to their original educational and professional work documentation. Clarifying specifically which alternative methods of verification might be used and how, such as testimonies, interviews, or skills assessments, would also provide a clearer understanding to those who are seeking such services (Kohlenberg & Loo, 2020). Furthermore, enhancing the clarity and accessibility of information provided by the CICIC could help refugees who are navigating the credential evaluation process. In addition, clear guidelines and step-by-step instructions, and access to resources in the native language of those seeking guidance may help individuals better understand the requirements and procedures that are involved (Kohlenberg & Loo, 2020; Loo, 2019). These strategies would not only streamline the process but also address the structural challenges that hinder the inclusion of a diverse teaching workforce in Canadian schools.

When teachers engage in ongoing professional development programs that are tailored to addressing their specific needs, their quality of instruction improves measurably (Akin & Goodwin, 2016). This study's participants could benefit in engaging in collaborative professional learning opportunities such as mentoring programs. These are effective ways that positively impact teachers' professional experiences and instructional effectiveness (Yildirim, 2009). Such approaches might be relevant for IETs who require targeted professional development to navigate the unfamiliar educational environment in Ontario. Through linking targeted professional development opportunities with the goal of increasing diversity in the teaching profession, educational institutions can create more inclusive environments that can capitalize on the unique strengths and perspectives of IETs in schools within Ontario. Moreover, as outlined in the literature, this approach contributes to addressing the institutional challenges that hinder the integration of IETs into the Canadian educational system.

The findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of the professional and personal experiences of IET participants. Some chose to complete a college program and earn their Early Childhood Education certifications or become Educational Assistants (EAs). The other participants chose to pursue entirely different fields due to financial pressures to quickly enter the job market and earn an income for their families. This study sheds light on systemic barriers, financial limitations, language challenges, cultural biases, and recertification obstacles, that hinder

their full participation in schools in Ontario. Despite these hurdles, the narratives of the participants' experiences of transition to Canada as refugees underscore the potential that they have to enrich educational environments in Ontario. While the CCW framework reveals that the IETs drew on the cultural capitals most when they were navigating their transition from Turkey to Ontario, it also signals the potential ways in which IETs might, given the appropriate support and conditions, be able to draw on these cultural assets to navigate their professional pathways in Ontario.

As with most research, this study of five IETs who came to Ontario Canada from their homes in Turkey raises more questions than it solves. However, the findings do give rise to a number of considerations that deserve attention either through further research, policy initiatives or practice.

Teacher Education Program for IETs

There is a need for targeted teacher education and mentoring programs to support IETs to transition into the Ontario education system. Teacher education programs play a crucial role in preparing international educators to navigate the Canadian cultural landscape and engage with students from various backgrounds in a meaningful way. Additionally, mentorship programs designed and implemented by the teacher education programs could provide IETs with guidance and support as they navigate the, at times, confusing Canadian education system. Experienced educators could serve as mentors that offer insights into local teaching practices, classroom management techniques, professional development opportunities, and many other relevant points of support (Dandala, 2020). These mentoring relationships could not only facilitate the transition process for IETs but could also promote collaboration and knowledge sharing within the larger teaching community. A reciprocal culture could be fostered where IETs share their unique perspectives and knowledge, their strong assets and experiences with other educators. This practice, incorporated into IET teacher education programs, in various forms such as workshops, seminars, or panel discussions where IETs can discuss their cultural backgrounds, teaching philosophies, and approaches to pedagogy (Dandala, 2020). By providing platforms for cross-cultural exchange and dialogue, teacher education programs can foster a greater appreciation for worldwide diversity to better equip preservice educators with the necessary tools to support all students in their classrooms.

Proficiency in the country of resettlement's official languages is one of the most significant barriers to professional access and growth as a teacher. Language proficiency plays a pivotal role in effective communication with students, colleagues, and parents. Additionally, language proficiency helps IETs to better understand and adhere to curriculum standards and educational policies. Thus, expanding free programs that provide targeted support for language proficiency development and assistance in navigating certification processes specific to Canada is essential to strengthening the success of IETs within the education system.

Moreover, navigating the certification processes in a new country is an intimidating task for IETs that often involve confusing procedures, requirements, and assessments. To lessen stresses that are caused by this, qualified individuals and organizations can expand their support and guidance throughout this process (Cho, 2010). This support may come in various forms including workshops and/or information sessions on certification requirements, assistance with documentation and paperwork related to their recertification and assessments, and access to knowledgeable advisors who can provide guidance and advice.

National and International Programs for IETs

Beyond Ontario, there are other, national and international, models that offer more comprehensive support for integrating refugee internationally educated teachers than what is typically accessible in the province. The WES Global Talent Bridge initiative, operating in both the United States and Canada, has developed programs that extend beyond traditional credential recognition to include tailored supports, employer engagement, and policy advocacy specifically aimed at skilled immigrants and refugees (World Education Services, 2020). These models often promote flexible, competency-based assessments and work-integrated learning that allow newcomers to demonstrate their expertise while upgrading targeted skills. While some of these approaches are beginning to take hold in Canada, they are more fully developed in certain U.S. contexts (World Education Services. n.d.). Ontario could learn from these frameworks by building alternative assessment pathways and supporting ecosystems that treat refugee educators as asset-bearing professionals, not just applicants for retraining.

In addition to WES Global Talent Bridge, several Canadian initiatives offer promising models that could better inform how Ontario approaches supporting refugee IETs. For example, the National Newcomer Navigation Network (N4), which has unfortunately stopped operations due to facing significant funding cuts, was in collaboration with Saint Paul University. Together

they co-developed a 12-week online program that was designed to assist internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) in overcoming barriers to employment in Canada (National Newcomer Navigation Network, n.d.). This program emphasized non-clinical skills, and community building providing a holistic support system for newcomers. Similarly, the

Fostering Canadian Integration for IEHPs: From Learning to Action

ONLINE PROGRAM | 2022-2024

8 COHORTS

69 Countries of Origin
for the 432 Participants



Figure 4:

Canadian Integration for IEHPs by National Newcomer Navigation Network <https://www.newcomernavigation.ca/en/iehps/n4-spu-iehps-online-program.aspx> Copyright © National Newcomer Navigation Network.

Foreign Credentials Recognition program which is funded by the federal government aims to streamline the credential recognition process for IEHPs through offering Canadian work experience opportunities, wage subsidies, and support for easier interprovincial mobility across British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario (Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society, n.d.). These initiatives highlight the potential of integrated, supportive frameworks that address both systemic barriers and individual needs. Through the success of these programs it would be pertinent to closely examine and consider the adoption of similar models to facilitate the integration of refugee IETs into Ontario's education system.

Trauma-Informed Approaches to support IET Refugees

The experiences of refugee internationally educated teachers are not only shaped by systemic and professional barriers but also by the deep trauma associated with forced migration,

dislocation, loss of professional identity, and other challenging factors. While policy reforms and programmatic support are essential, it is equally important to create spaces and strengthen programs that effectively respond to the emotional and psychological needs of these educators. Trauma-informed approaches such as peer support groups, culturally appropriate and safe mental health services through close partnerships with community non-profit organizations can provide IETs with avenues to come to terms with their experiences and rebuild their professional identities (Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, n.d.; CAMH, n.d.; Pacific Immigrant Resources Society, n.d.; OCASI, n.d.). These supports should be integrated into bridging programs, and school board onboarding processes. Once IETs enter the teaching field in Ontario such programs can further improve retention rates.

Policy Considerations

Policymakers hold strong influence in shaping the inclusivity and equity of the Canadian education system (Walsh & Brigham, 2007). They can enact policies that address the unique challenges that IETs face. One area in which policymakers can play a significant positive contribution is in streamlining the credential recognition processes for IETs by removing bureaucratic steps that act primarily as barriers as opposed to aiding IETs' professional preparation to teach in Ontario's classes as discussed above. Expedited pathways linked to conditional or provisional certifications might enable experienced IETs to work while completing recertification requirements. Canada is currently facing widespread teacher shortages particularly in high need regions and specialty subjects (Sider, Maich, & Morvan, 2023). In this context, refugee IETs represent an underutilized workforce that could help address immediate gaps through limited-term teaching licenses while, concurrently, upgrading their qualifications.

In addition, policymakers can work to address cultural biases within the hiring practices (Walsh & Brigham, 2007). This is done by implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion (D.E.I.) initiatives to foster awareness of unconscious bias, and promote *merit-based*, not subjective, selection criteria. Policymakers can also work on securing funding and help in creating support structures to facilitate the integration of IETs into the Canadian educational workforce. This can involve establishing mentorship programs and providing financial assistance for certification and professional development (Walsh & Brigham, 2007).

Policies that are aimed at fostering diversity in the teaching force and to promote culturally responsive teaching practices could make a strong contribution to creating inclusive learning environments and broaden the views of all students (Finlayson, 2012). Additionally, these inclusive measures promote an environment where students from diverse backgrounds feel represented in the Canadian classrooms and are reassured that their cultures are valued. Additionally, policies can support and promote the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty members. This step ensures that students from minority groups have role models and mentors (Finlayson, 2012) who share their backgrounds.

These recommendations must also be grounded in frameworks that validate and sustain the cultural and linguistic identities of refugee teachers. As discussed in Chapter 2, Freire's concept of praxis which encourages a reflective view and action upon the world to transform it (Freire, 1970), coupled with Django Paris' framework of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris 2012) is a powerful way to consider how refugee IETs can be supported in Ontario. These educators should not be expected to assimilate by shedding their cultural and linguistic identities. Rather, teacher education programs and school boards should create environments that celebrate their cultural knowledge and worldviews. This includes measures to value multilingualism, recognize non-Western pedagogical approaches, and also promote spaces whereby refugee teachers can share their lived knowledge with their students as well as their colleagues. Building such culturally sustaining pathways are essential for meaningfully supporting IETs as a whole.

Successfully advocating for policy shifts require multifaceted approaches that involve conducting in-depth and continued research to identify key areas that need reform. In addition, establishing and deepening partnerships with organizations and individuals that share the importance of such inclusive initiatives, and engaging in strategic lobbying efforts, will increase the impact of efforts that benefit IETs. This may involve drafting policy proposals, partnering with non-profit organizations that serve the interests of newcomer minorities, and mobilizing grassroots support to garner political momentum for change.

The valuable international experiences of IETs can be reframed from an asset lens. These professionals come to Canada wanting to positively contribute by continuing their professions in education but research reveals the numerous challenges that they face. From facing language barriers and lack of adequate support being offered, to confronting systemic biases, IETs in Canada face the difficult reality of having to navigate an unfamiliar professional landscape that is filled

with hurdles and confusions. Yet, amidst all these obstacles and challenges, a pathway to bringing transformative change exists. Strategies that have been discussed in this study are actionable measures for teacher education programs, policymakers, and leaders to provide meaningful support for IETs and foster inclusive learning environments for all learners. Through integrating cultural competency training, mentorship initiatives, and policies that champion diversity and equity, all parties involved can benefit from the invaluable insights and perspectives that IETs offer Canadians. Through embracing the cultural assets and strengths of IETs, we can nurture dynamic, and enriching learning environments that empower all students, irrespective of their background or identity. Given the lived experiences of this small sample of IETs, one can assume that other refugee IETs might encounter similar challenges when they arrive in Ontario as immigrants and/or refugees and aspire to continue their professions as teachers. While newcomer IETs might face similar challenges, a one-size-fit-all approach may be ineffective in addressing all possible challenges faced by IETs. Instead, a comprehensive support system is required that includes language training programs, community engagement, and culturally sensitive resources to foster successful integration and empower individuals to overcome this obstacle (Marom & Ilieva, 2019; Schmidt & McDaid, 2015).

Given the importance of working towards a more diverse teaching force, it would be worth exploring alternative approaches to supporting IETs to demonstrate the professional, pedagogical and linguistic requirements necessary for teaching in Ontario schools. For example, perhaps a bridging program for IETs that addresses specific curriculum, cultural and pedagogical approaches that are important in Canadian schools might be more effective in ensuring IET's can be supported to transition to the Ontario school system as teachers. Such an approach could acknowledge the existing expertise and experiences of IETs and at the same time ensure that they are well-prepared to meet the specific curriculum demands and pedagogical approaches of the Canadian education system. A provisional certification pathway unique to the needs of IETs could be implemented that would work under supervised conditions in schools, in an internship, while they complete the credentialing process. This approach would not only help IETs to begin contributing to the education sector more quickly but also provide a framework for assessing their skills in a provincial classroom setting. Such approaches might attract more IETs to engage with the recertification and, thereby contribute to addressing the existing gaps in teacher diversity in Ontario schools. For example, Germany's approach to integrating internationally educated

teachers brings together a multi-dimensional support mechanism. It includes credential recognition, supplemental coursework, mentorship, and practical training placements which together offers a more comprehensive model to support integration of IETs into the teaching field. This model could be studied further by policymakers as a potential solution for Ontario (Niesta Kayser, Vock, & Wojciechowicz, 2021).

One strategy to improve the integration of IETs into Ontario's education system is to simplify and streamline the documentation requirements for refugee professionals seeking accreditation to teach in Ontario schools. To address this, alternative methods of verifying credentials could be introduced such as allowing sworn affidavits, personal testimonies, or references from former colleagues and employers to serve as substitutes for missing documentation. Furthermore, providing a centralized online portal for submitting credentials and providing step by step guidance in different languages would ensure the process is accessible and reduce possible confusion and delays.

This would be especially useful as many refugees may not have easy access to their original educational and professional work documentation. Clarifying specifically which alternative methods of verification might be used and how, such as testimonies, interviews, or skills assessments, would also provide a clearer understanding to those who are seeking such services (Kohlenberg & Loo, 2020). Furthermore, enhancing the clarity and accessibility of information provided by the CICIC could help refugees who are navigating the credential evaluation process. In addition, clear guidelines and step-by-step instructions, and access to resources in the native language of those seeking guidance may help individuals better understand the requirements and procedures that are involved (Kohlenberg & Loo, 2020; Loo, 2019). These strategies would not only streamline the process but also address the structural challenges that hinder the inclusion of a diverse teaching workforce in Canadian schools.

When teachers engage in ongoing professional development programs that are tailored to addressing their specific needs, their quality of instruction improves measurably (Akin & Goodwin, 2016). This study's participants could benefit in engaging in collaborative professional learning opportunities such as mentoring programs. These are effective ways that positively impact teachers' professional experiences and instructional effectiveness (Yildirim, 2009). Such approaches might be relevant for IETs who require targeted professional development to navigate the unfamiliar educational environment in Ontario. Through linking targeted professional

development opportunities with the goal of increasing diversity in the teaching profession, educational institutions can create more inclusive environments that can capitalize on the unique strengths and perspectives of IETs in schools within Ontario. Moreover, as outlined in the literature, this approach contributes to addressing the institutional challenges that hinder the integration of IETs into the Canadian educational system.

Conclusion

Addressing the challenges faced by refugee IETs, such as the participants in this study, requires the commitment to foster a more inclusive environment that respects, values, and encourages diverse perspectives and experiences, while also recognizing and addressing the unique struggles that are faced by individuals who have fled persecution in their home countries. The findings of this study reveal that the pathway to recertification in Ontario is not simply difficult but is perceived by refugee IETs as inaccessible. None of the participants in this study pursued recertification not due to a lack of professional will or capacity, but because the process was seen as overwhelmingly costly and confusing. For many, the idea of starting over to navigate a new language and system was unfeasible. Language requirements and credential verification served as gatekeepers, rather than gateways. Their ultimate decisions to seek alternative pathways reflect a need to provide immediate financial support to their families in the face of systemic inaccessibility not due to a lack of commitment or passion to teach.

To effectively address challenges related to language proficiency, any inclusive policy must include general support and specific measures such as financial assistance for language learning and the development of scaffolded language learning programs. These programs should be designed to enable refugee IETs to focus on building their language skills while receiving ongoing support. Funded opportunities for intensive language courses and structured language-focused professional development would be important components of these inclusive policies. A holistic approach to supporting IETs to meet the necessary language and pedagogical requirements ensures that IET professionals are well-equipped to succeed in the Canadian educational system.

Schmidt and McDaid (2015), highlight that exposure to diverse student populations, collaboration with colleagues from various cultural backgrounds, and access to professional development programs all contribute to an inclusive educational context. IETs have the potential to play a crucial role in shaping Ontario's education landscape. Supporting the inclusion of visible

minority IETs in Ontario education has the potential to contribute to realizing goals of inclusion within our schools. This is particularly crucial given the barriers that the participants identified in Chapter five and how they overcome them in an environment which has historically marginalized minority groups within the educational framework.

The findings from this study suggest that without inclusive policies that address the unique needs of IETs, particularly those related to language and cultural sensitivity, the potential contributions of these educators remain largely untapped. This missed opportunity not only hinders the professional integration of IETs, but also deprives the broader educational landscape of the diversity and richness they could bring. By implementing targeted policies that recognize and harness these strengths, we can transform these challenges into opportunities for growth, benefiting both the educators and the students they serve. Research by Schmidt and McDaid (2015) reinforces this need. Additionally, by demonstrating through policy and practice that their linguistic and cultural backgrounds are being appreciated as assets, Turkish certified teachers can foster a sense of belonging and support as they journey through their integration into the Canadian education system.

This research has been a personal journey. As someone who has worked to reestablish my professional identity in Canada, I saw reflections of my own experience in the narratives of the women who participated in this study. Their stories of navigating systems that are not built for them or for holding and sharing teachings about their values. This closely reminds me of the emotional work that underpins every effort to belong which is a challenge that does not dissipate as years pass because a systematic change, in my view and based on research, has not meaningfully been achieved in Canada. As I conducted this research to uncover barriers, I also aimed to honor the humanity that was behind those barriers. Ultimately in doing so, I came to better understand my own role as an educator and a researcher who is committed to challenging the systemic structures that prevent others from being fully seen.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Poster



Are you a Canadian refugee and were a teacher or educator back home?
Have you completed or are you intending to complete the teacher education program in Ontario or in another province?
If so, I would very much like to listen to your experiences.

Hi! My name is Ali Shaker. I am a PhD candidate at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education and would like to learn about your experiences of getting recertified in a Canadian educational institution and about your professional experiences as a teacher.

. Participation involves two online or face-to-face interviews (your choice), each lasting about 1 to 2 hours.

1st Interview: I will invite you to share stories of your journey from your home country to Canada. I will also ask about your professional experiences of teaching back home, and your professional educational experiences in Canada.

2nd Interview: I will ask you to photograph or bring an artifact that you believe symbolizes your experiences. Then, I will invite you to share your thoughts about your captured imagery or artifact.

Are you eligible to participate?

- . Participation will be on a first come, first served basis. Refugees in Canada
- . Over the age of 18
- . Can communicate in English
- . Worked as a teacher in home country
- . Completed or interested to complete a teacher certification program in Canada

For more information, please contact me.

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of the study:

The Experiences of Five Turkish Internationally Educated Teacher Refugees as they transition to Ontario, Canada

Name of Principal Investigator: Ali Shaker

Affiliation: Faculty of Education,
University of Ottawa

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Ruth Kane

Affiliation: Faculty of Education,
University of Ottawa

Telephone: 613-562-5800 ext. 5294

Email: rkane@uOttawa.ca

Doctoral Thesis under the supervision of Professor Ruth Kane.

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the above mentioned research study conducted by Ali Shaker

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of ten Internationally Educated Teacher (IET) refugees so that we can learn, from their perspectives, how to better support their efforts to succeed within the Canadian Bachelor of Education recertification programs and secure appointment in the public-school system.

Participation: My participation will consist of participating in two interviews. Each interview will last about one to two hours. During the first interview, I will be asked to talk about my role and professional life before arrival in Canada and then to speak about my experiences since arrival in Canada. For the second interview, I will be given three days to take photographs – or to identify photos from my own collections - of what I feel shows my experiences. I may instead choose to bring artifacts that have special significance to me. The researcher will have a conversation about what I have brought and why I have chosen them. I understand the interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. From the transcription, the researcher will write a narrative that relates to my experiences. I will be sent a copy of my narrative as a password-protected attachment to my private email account or through my preferred social media platform. The communication platform and the password will be agreed upon at the interview. I have the opportunity to read my narrative and will be able to request changes to it if I choose to do so.

Risks: My participation in this study will entail that I share my experiences of becoming and working as a teacher in my home country, and my academic and professional experiences in Canada and this may cause me to get emotional. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize risks and that I will be provided with a list of resources that I can use for psychological or emotional help. At any time during the interview, I have the option to refuse to answer any question, have the option to withdraw, and that my identities will not be revealed.

Benefits: This study values my voice and my opinions and I will be listened to as I share my experiences and stories. Findings from my and other participants' narratives and experiences can uncover significant aspects of our experiences and can potentially help Canadian policymakers,

educators, university institutions, and school administrators to create services, and support systems which will be most effective to serve me and other Internationally Educated Teacher refugees.

Confidentiality and Privacy: I have received assurances from the researchers that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used for this research and may also be combined with other research and is meant to better understand the experiences and challenges of IET refugees. I have received assurances that my identity will be protected by assigning a pseudonym. I understand that for the second interview I may choose to bring photographs and that the researcher may use them in the manuscript only if I freely choose to sign the photograph consent form. I understand that if there are any other people in my photographs that the researcher may use them in the manuscript only if each person in the photo has signed the photograph consent form.

Conservation of Data: I understand that all hard copies of data and research analysis will be kept securely in a locked drawer at the principal researcher's home. All digital data and documents will be kept through password-encrypted files. The laptops that will be used to secure the research data will be password-protected. The audio-recordings of the interviews will be immediately deleted once it is transferred and transcribed in the principal researcher's password-protected laptop. Only the principal researcher, Ali Shaker, and his supervisor, Dr. Ruth Kane will have access to the research data. Data and research documents will be kept for ten years.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be removed from the dataset and not used in the study.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or their supervisor. If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity via email (ethics@uottawa.ca) or telephone (613-562-5387). It is recommended that I keep a copy of this consent form for my records.

Acceptance: By signing my name below, I agree to participate in this research study.

I consent to the use of my photographs in this research. Yes No

Participant's name:

Date:

Participant's signature:

Date:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

Appendix C: Interview questions

Interview #1

Prior experiences

1. Tell me about your academic experiences when you went through the certification process to become a teacher back home.
2. Why did you want to become a teacher?
3. Tell me about your professional experiences as a teacher back home.

Transition in Canada and Thoughts of recertification

4. Can you talk to me about your initial months/year in Ontario?
5. Tell me your story of choosing your professional field in Ontario.
 - a. Did you consider working as a teacher in Ontario?
 - b. What reasons led to your decisions?
 - c. What challenges have you faced in seeking a teaching position?
 - d. How have you navigated these challenges– what supports do/did you draw on?

For those who are teaching within the public education system in Canada

6. Tell me your story of working as a teacher/EA/ECE in Canada.
 - a. Can you talk to me about the positive and negatives of your current position?
 - b. What challenges have you faced in your role as a teacher/EA/ECE?
 - c. How have you navigated these challenges– what supports do/did you draw on?

Interview #2

The second interview follows the photovoice activity.

1. Please tell me about this artifact that you have brought.
 - a. Why did you choose this artifact? What is the significance of it to you?
2. When you look at it, where does it take you? What do you think about?
3. How is the image related to your journey?