

Job Demands and Challenges Faced by Teachers of Refugee Children in Klang Valley: Preliminary Findings

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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, refugees have no legal rights for employment and education because Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1961 protocol. Refugee children therefore, can only obtain education through informal community-based education centres or other similar means. In Malaysia, there are 23,823 school-going refugee children and only 30% of them are enrolled with the existing 128 community-based learning centres. To meet the demands for education among the refugee communities, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as of 2017 has supported 700 refugee teachers and registered 400 teachers of refugees through their programs. Due to the legality of the refugee status, teachers of refugees often faced challenges of protection, safety and financial difficulties, where the refugee teachers in specific, are forced to compromise the quality of lesson preparation. Given the increasing challenges encountered by the teachers, this study aims to explore the job demands and the difficult challenges faced by the teachers of refugee children at work. Using qualitative research design, focus group interviews were conducted with 42 teachers of refugees from Klang Valley. Teachers of refugees refers to both Malaysian and refugee teachers who teach refugee children. Respondents were selected from Klang Valley where there is a high concentration of refugee population in Malaysia. Data obtained from the content analysis discovered five major emerging themes: - two for job demands and three most difficult challenges encountered at work. Teaching and marking, preparation for lessons and teaching materials were most demanding in teaching refugee children. The most difficult challenges to handle were language barrier, mixed-ability classes, and behavioural problems. The findings provide valuable insight of the challenges faced by teachers of refugee children and a need for additional educational resources to assist the teachers to provide quality education which is a fundamental right of a child.