A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH FOR SOCIO-CULTURAL INCLUSION: A STUDY ON IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS IN FINLAND

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Abstract

According to the United Nations in 2019, the number of migrants worldwide reached 272 million and the wave of migration is expected to increase after the pandemic. As the number of immigrants increases, a strategy for their socio-cultural inclusion becomes essential. Finland is a Nordic country with a limited population that considered culturally, ethnically, and linguistically homogeneous, however, it is gradually changing as the number of immigrants increases. Promoting the integration of migrants and increasing their access to public services, labor market, private sector and opportunities in the host country is included in the strategies of the European Commission. Regarding the importance of entrepreneurship in the cultural inclusion of immigrants, this case study was conducted with an emphasis on the role of information technology in facilitating entrepreneurship for immigrants in Finland. Accordingly, a group interview was conducted to understand the challenges that migrants encounter in obtaining the information that they need. The results showed that immigrant entrepreneurs with different fields and backgrounds had difficulties finding some required information on Finnish websites. Some information or sources of information are known to locals while unknown or inaccessible to immigrants. In addition, participant of the study expected more variety and interaction in content on Finnish websites. This study proposes technological pedagogical content design (TPCD) as a systematic approach to design websites with more attention to multicultural users. TPCD assumes immigrants as learners who need to learn the new knowledge and skills in the host country. It utilizes pedagogical principles to define the needs of immigrants to clarify goals, create and organize content, and design web pages.

Keywords: Socio-cultural inclusion, immigrant entrepreneur, TPCD, user-centered design.

1. Introduction

Based on a United Nations (2020) report in 2019, the number of migrants worldwide reached 272 million. According to Eurostat (2022), 23 million non-EU citizens lived in the EU in 2020 which represented 5.1 % of the EU population and 13.5 million with citizenship of another EU country. Immigrants in any country need to be adjusted, integrated, and cohesive in the host country. In a general sense, inclusion refers to "the process of increasing the degree of participation of all citizens in social life" (Chernukha et al., 2021, p.213). The Council of Europe has defined social cohesion as "the ability of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization" and promoting immigrant inclusion and social cohesion is at the core of the work of the International Organization for Migration in Europe (IOM, 2022). Increasing immigrants' access to public services, the labor market, the private sector, and opportunities in the host country are key strategies for their cultural inclusion. In this regard, this study investigates some of the challenges of the socio-cultural inclusion of immigrants, to find information for entrepreneurship in Finland.

2. Cultural inclusion of immigrants in Finland

Finland is a small country with a limited population that is still considered culturally, ethnically, and linguistically homogeneous. With the growth of the European Union, which facilitates greater labor mobility, Finland is gradually changing. According to Finnish statistics, the immigrant population was about 444,000 out of 5533793 at the end of 2020. (Statistics Finland, 2020). The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare defines inclusion as the meaning that "everyone's right to health, education, work, income, housing, and social relationships. Everyone should have the possibility to participate and exert influence in matters that concern themselves and the development of society" (FIHW, 2022). However, there is still no clear definition of the social cohesion of migrants, according to FRANET, the Agency's

multidisciplinary research network of contractors in each EU country. Only some aims have been identified in the government integration program for 2012-2015. One of the aims outlined in the programme is "to bring the level of immigrants' living conditions closer to the general population in the areas of housing, income, employment, education, and participation. The measure proposed to achieve this is monitoring of living conditions of immigrants and considering positive measures as a result of monitoring" (Sams & Anttila, 2015, p. 7).

3. Employment and cultural inclusion

The concept of cultural inclusion is linked to the employment rate of immigrants in the labor market (Sotomayor-Morales et al., 2017). Unemployment is an obstacle to the socio-cultural inclusion of immigrants by keeping immigrants in their cultural repression as a disconnect from society. Studies have acknowledged a bilateral relation between cultural compatibility and business success in the host country (Jun, Gentry& Hyun, 2001; Tretyak, Weck & Ivanova, 2013). Martínez and Prior (2011) believe that the social integration of immigrants is closely related to their presence in the labor market and the development of sustainable employment paths. Employment as a major source of income and position of individuals is essential for the integration of economic migrants into host societies. In fact, the employment of immigrants is important both in socio-cultural and economic terms.

As the number of immigrants in Finland increases, a strategy for their inclusion becomes essential. According to the UTH survey (2014), people with a foreign background accounted for about six percent (144,000) of all employed people aged 15 to 64 in 2014. The survey found that Finnish origin people have an employment rate of 10 percent higher than those with a foreign background and that the unemployment rate is even higher among educated immigrant women: 62 percent for foreigners, compared with 83 percent for highly educated Finns. Despite of efforts and strategies to enhance the cultural inclusion of immigrants in Finland, still, the unemployment rate of immigrants living permanently in Finland was higher than the total unemployment rate (27.5% vs 0.7%) in 2021 (Yle, 2021). Heikkilä, research director of Migration Institute of Finland believes: "Immigrants are sometimes ready to take a job not corresponding to their education just to get on the first step of the labor market and through this integrate into society". He believes some factors may be responsible for this discrimination, such as language barriers or foreign certificates that are not valued in Finland (Heikkilä, 2021). The unemployment of immigrants has negative effects on the economy and culture of the society. Finland, therefore, seeks to increase labor migration and international students for the future (Valtion Koulutuspoliittinen Selonteko, 2021). While there is a negative significant relationship between the regional employment rate and immigrant self-employment rate (Fornaro, 2018), facilitating immigrants' entrepreneurship seems important. Given the importance of information technology, this study focuses on the role of information in facilitating immigrant entrepreneurship and their inclusion in Finnish society.

4. Immigrant entrepreneurship in Finland

According to Merriam-Webster, an entrepreneur is "one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise". In this sense, entrepreneurship is the process of starting this business. Entrepreneurship is defined as a fundamental strategy for economic growth. Based on the OCE report "The self-employment rate in Finland was below the European Union average in 2016 (12.4% for Finland vs.14.0% for the EU)". The Finnish environment for entrepreneurship appears to be strong, with the aim of achieving a national employment rate of 78% (OECD, 2017), however, the current rate of immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland is not significant. According to a UTH (2014) survey, full-time and part-time employment for salaried employees with foreign experience in the age group (26 to 64) was relatively similar to the Finnish age group (14 to 25) in 2014. Immigrant employees and entrepreneurs also differed slightly in terms of working hours, shifts, and field of entrepreneurship. The data of the nationality of immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland shows that at the lowest level are immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa (including Somalia, one of the largest immigrant communities in Finland) with an entrepreneurship rate of 4%. At the other end of the spectrum is the highest self-employment rate for immigrants from Turkey, at around 40%. The industry with the largest share of immigrant entrepreneurs in the restaurant business. Other industries in which immigrants work most are personal services such as hairdressers, beauty salons, etc. (Fornaro, 2018).

5. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand how foreign entrepreneurs in Finland find the information they need. Accordingly, a group interview was conducted to understand the challenges that

migrants face in accessing the information they need. In coordination with Suomen Yrittäjät in Finland, six immigrant entrepreneurs of different nationalities were participated in an unstructured interview. The Suomen Yrittäjät is the largest and most influential business federation in Finland. The company consists of more than 115,000 businesses of different sizes from all over the country. The group interview was conducted online with unstructured questions. It helps the participants share their unexpected experiences. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the results were obtained through thematic analysis.

6. Results

The results of the study demonstrated that entrepreneurs have encountered some difficulties to access the information they needed to start and continue their business in Finland.

6.1. Lack of content

There is some information who immigrants need to know but they are not available online while it is obvious for the local people. Entrepreneur A. believed "there is a huge gap in information about running a business, especially for someone from a different [country and] background running a business in Finland". Entrepreneur C. stated, "there is a lot of information that people (immigrants) even do not look for them and do not know it exist".

6.2. Finding content

In addition to the lack of content, finding and accessing some available information seems to be a serious challenge for entrepreneurs. "*They [immigrants] may not have the same organization as Suomen Yrittäjät that they seek [in their own countries]*," Entrepreneur D. said. The other entrepreneur believed that for some businesses, such as opening a restaurant, the rules may be well known and similar, but for a particular industry, they have to know many specific rules that they cannot find. He needed to know what the law is and what the restrictions are on sales, etc., and he has not yet found a source to learn them. "*There are a lot of [forbidden] rules in sales marketing that took me 5 to 6 years to realize,*" he said.

6.3. Diverse and interactive content

The participants believed that there is a need for practical information and presenting information in different formats. One of the participants suggested including podcasts and videos. Another stated "*You can see many organizations (websites' organization) have many materials that you get bored, and you become lost in those materials. Nowadays there is a need for audio and video materials when you are not required to read*". Entrepreneur F. expected websites to be more interactive: "*information of the different industries be available [on the personal profile in the site] like a calendar year so that an entrepreneur receives the alarm that what, when and which action should be done [in its exact time].*"

7. Discussion

Immigrants are a potential human resource in a host country, especially for the aged countries. Analysis of the age structure of the population in Finland shows that the average age of foreign nationals is lower than that of Finnish nationals; an average of 45 vs 36 years (Eurostat 2022). Immigrants, especially the educated, consider their cultural integration and inclusion to be more related to employment in a decent place in the market, rather than having Finnish friends or attending Finnish events to feel part of Finnish society (Hosseini et al., 2020). Although Finland has made great efforts and investments to integrate culture and include immigrants, the unemployment rate in Finland is still higher than that of locals, and migrants' wages, working hours, and shifts vary from locals, the UTH report said. In addition, people with foreign backgrounds were less likely to be employed in specialized occupations than people with Finnish backgrounds, and compared to people with Finnish backgrounds, people with foreign backgrounds were somewhat more involved in service and sales, as well as in other labor occupations (UTH Survey, 2014).

Familiarity with the rules is an important key to success in entrepreneurship and business. The available data show that foreign residents, originally from Western and Southern Europe, have a slightly higher entrepreneurship rate (12%) than the self-employment rate of the entire immigrant group (Fornaro, 2018). The probable reason is that they may be more familiar with commercial law in Europe. Websites are one of the most important ways of distributing information (Hosseini et al, 2022$_a$). However, some deficiencies in the content of the website have been reported due to lack of expected content (Bernstein, et al., 2021) or difficulties in finding and reading content despite the ability to access and pay too much attention to the aesthetic features of the web pages instead of appropriate content (Shao et al., 2020).

As the results of this study show, Finnish entrepreneurs as locals may be familiar with many regulations, which an immigrant entrepreneur with different needs and backgrounds may not be aware of. It reduces the usefulness of content on websites for immigrants in Finland. While the culture of silence and privacy, communication seems a challenge for foreigners in Finland (Hosseini & Sirkku, 2021; Hosseini, 2022), some Finnish websites (such as the university website) have also shown that they do not meet the needs of foreigners (Hosseini et al., 2020). All these together further hinder the cultural inclusion of foreigners. This may be due to Finland's homogeneous population, which has left locals familiar with the information and how to access it, while foreigners are confused about finding information from the right people, resources, or on websites. With the rapid growth of immigrants in Europe, especially Finland, websites need to be multiculturally designed. Since immigrants are adult who needs to transform their knowledge, we suggest using pedagogical theories principles specifically for designing websites.

Surprisingly, none of the entrepreneurs interviewed complained about the language barrier to receiving information through the website. Maybe because some of them were familiar with the Finnish language or more probably, if the information they need is available, findable, and accessible on the Finnish sites, they could use the software to translate and understand it if the information is readable or transferable formats by software. However, a fact is that many important applications, documents, and forms on non-translatable Finnish language formats, which makes the language barrier more prominent for non-Finnish speaking users. Regarding the growth of immigrants in Europe, especially Finland, an integrative pedagogical model has been proposed for the design of a multicultural website.

8. Conclusion

This study focuses on the relationship between employment and socio-cultural inclusion and the role of access to information in employment and entrepreneurship, especially among immigrants. Despite the high rate of immigrants' unemployment in Finland, immigrants are encouraged to be an entrepreneur. Since the immigrants are new in each society, they need to learn new knowledge, skills, and attitude as adult learners and websites are the potential sources to answer their need. However, finding unbiased, accurate, and up-to-date information from websites in the host country seems to be a challenge for them. With a pedagogical viewpoint, this study introduces Technological Pedagogical Content Design (TPCD) to prepare and present the required information for immigrants (Hosseini et al., 2021). This is a model for integrating pedagogy into technology (Hosseini & Kinnunen, 2021) and designing a user-centered website (Hosseini et al., 2022$_{a, b}$). TPCD is a systematic approach based on Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework that utilizes information technology strategies as well as pedagogical theories and methods such as user experience (UX), human-computer interaction (HCI), web-based learning, and user-centered design. TPCD focuses on the needs, expectations of immigrants as adult learners learning new knowledge and skills in the host country and utilizes pedagogical theories and principles for each stage of information transfer (Hosseini et al., 2022$_d$).

Pedagogical integration in designing a website has more focus on human learning functions in technology design. Pedagogical findings provide knowledge about how the immigrants receive, communicate, and understand new concepts through the website. Further, it helps designers to systematically define the immigrants' needs, expectations, experiences, abilities, culture, learning styles, etc., as well as which materials are right for them. Due to the variety and background of immigrants, it is recommended to provide alternative content for different immigrants with different backgrounds. By considering the results of learning theories, designers find a clear picture of the human mind in the face of different information and data formats. This can help designers organize content across pages so that immigrants can find it easier, faster, and more efficiently (Hosseini et al., 2021). Pedagogical knowledge can help web designers in every stage of creating a website. For example, Gestalt design principles are examples to guide web designers to use graphic techniques based on mind processing (Hosseini et al., 2022$_d$). Overall, the integration of pedagogical theories and principles assists the designer in collecting data, formatting, organizing, and presenting the content based on multicultural users (immigrants and locals) which facilitate socio-cultural inclusion and integration of immigrants.

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