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Transitions from education to employment for culturally and linguistically diverse migrants and refugees in settlement contexts: what do we know?

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ABSTRACT

Access to and experiences of education among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Migrants or Refugees (CALDM/R) is a site of increased scholarly interest. While research emphasises new CALDM/Rs' desire to work and meaningfully contribute to their new country, many remain under employed even though many hold multiple tertiary qualifications. This article offers an interpretive review of literature relating to the higher education and employment experiences of CALDM/R, so as to contribute to debates about how universities should facilitate the pathways from university to employment for these students. From our reading of the literature, we argue that current policy fails to address areas of language proficiency, work experience and recognition of work and study from countries overseas, all of which contribute to high levels of unemployment. This review also highlights structural workplace issues of racism, discrimination and exploitation and discussed the role and responsibility of universities in contributing to the employment outcomes for CALDM/R. It concludes that as tertiary education providers have a commitment to ensuring their graduates are 'job ready', particular attention to the needs of CALDM/R is required.

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CALD migrants and refugees; transitions out; tertiary education; higher education; pathways to employment; pathways to further study

Introduction

Education is considered a fundamental aspect of integration for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people from migrant or refugee backgrounds (henceforth CALDM/R) in a resettlement country (Ager and Strang 2008), and contributes significantly to developing a sense of belonging to that host country (Fozdar and Hartley 2013a; Strang and Ager 2010). Education also significantly affects the key settlement goal of attaining meaningful employment, albeit less so for prior education, as pre-arrival qualifications and experience rarely translate into employment opportunities in resettlement countries (Curry, Smedley, and Lenette 2018; Fozdar and Hartley 2013b; Hugo 2011). Meaningful employment for CALDM/R can be described as that which is aligned with the individual's work skills and training, is appropriately remunerated, and

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also rewarding in that it cultivates the individual's sense of self and work/life balance (Codell et al. 2011; O'Donovan and Sheikh 2014). Despite strong consensus that CALDM/R want to gain employment in settlement countries (Losoncz 2017a), many are subject to discrimination and remain un- or under-employed (Ager and Strang 2008; Losoncz 2017a; McDonald-Wilmsen et al. 2009; Pittaway, Muli, and Shteir 2009; Schech 2014).

There has been increased scholarly interest in CALDM/Rs' access to, and experiences of, higher education (for example, Baker et al. 2018; Harris, Spark, and Watts 2015; Mestan and Harvey 2014). This work strongly attests to both the aspirations that migrants and refugees hold with regard to higher education (Abada and Tenkorang 2009; Gately 2014, 2015; McWilliams and Bonet 2016), and the challenges that students face in this area – including accessing the necessary information to navigate systems (Bajwa et al. 2017; Gately 2014), language and literacy proficiency (Baker et al. 2018; Perry and Mallozzi 2017), and a sense of being 'other' in a system that has yet to fully embrace and respond to the diversification of the student body (Rowntree, Zufferey, and King 2015).

While this work has explored issues of access and engagement in higher education, very little previous research has considered what happens when CALDM/R finish their studies in higher education and seek employment, although there is a rich body of work that has examined employability and graduate outcomes in the context of equity and educational disadvantage (for example, Merrill et al. 2019; Pitman et al. 2019). To date, however, little research focuses exclusively on pathways between higher education and employment for CALDM/R students. In this paper, we provide an interpretive review of existing research concerning CALDM/Rs' experiences of employment and education, so as to argue for a research agenda that makes explicit the kinds of pathways needed to support this group of students to gain meaningful employment related to the discipline of their tertiary education studies.

Australia's migration programme and access to education: the policy context

With nearly a third of the Australian population born overseas, it is perhaps unsurprising to note that Australia has a relatively large migration programme (per capita), which contributes to its substantial annual population growth (1.6% in 2017), compared with other western countries (ABS 2018). In 2017–2018, Australia's (permanent) migration programme accepted 162,417 people under the skilled, family, special eligibility and child streams (Department of Home Affairs 2018) (referred to here as 'migrants'), with an additional 16,250 places offered to people through its 2017–2018 humanitarian scheme¹ (Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) 2018a) (referred to here as 'refugees'). The composition of new permanent migrants has shifted significantly over the last decade, with nearly the vast majority of new permanent migrants arriving from India and China in 2017, compared with the dominance of migrants arriving from the UK in 2007 (Doherty and Evershed 2018). It is significant that none of the top 10 countries of origin for permanent migrants to Australia are 'refugee producing' countries (World Vision 2018).

As part of its commitment to the *1951 Refugee Convention*, Australia has accepted over 870,000 refugees post World War II. Australia has the third largest programme in the world for resettling refugees after the United States and Canada (UNHCR 2017a).

However, it is important to note that the number of refugees accepted under Australia's humanitarian stream represents less than 10% of the total number of migrants accepted into the country (Parliament of Australia 2016). Australia's humanitarian programme is comprised of two components based on where an individual's application for status resolution is processed. Specifically, 'refugees' are people who have been processed by the UNHCR and offered permanent protection visas and residency in Australia via the offshore programme. In contrast, 'asylum seekers' are people who apply for refugee status on arrival in Australia, and current policy dictates that they will only ever be offered temporary protection if they are found to be refugees.

This distinction is significant considering the stark difference in the rights afforded migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, with asylum seekers offered limited supports and rights, particularly with regard to educational entitlements, as well as welfare and financial support (for further discussion of the hostile environment for people seeking asylum in Australia see Hirsch and Maylea 2016; White 2017). Schooling is available to young people on most migrant, refugee or asylum seeker visas, but affordable access to tertiary education is not granted to asylum seekers, with the temporary nature of their visa meaning that they are classified as international students, and are therefore ineligible for government-subsidised university places. The imposition of full-fees means that higher education is unaffordable; this financial hurdle was further complicated by punitive federal government policy changes in early 2018, which saw welfare payments cut if asylum seekers engaged in full-time study (see Hartley et al. 2018; RCOA 2018b). In contrast, refugees on permanent protection visas, as well as permanent migrants, are entitled to subsidised tertiary education under several policies and programmes in Australia. While for brevity in this paper we use the term CALD M/R, we make specific reference to asylum seekers where appropriate.

A contextual overview for this study: current issues for CALD migrants and refugees transitioning out from higher education

There is a growing body of work that has examined the transitions that CALDM/R make into, through and out of settlement systems such as education and employment (for example, Baker and Irwin 2019; Beadle 2014; de Heer et al. 2016; McWilliams and Bonet 2016). This literature largely speaks to non-linearity in these transitions, largely resulting from linguistic and cultural difference, the impact of forced migration, and unfamiliarity with systems in their new contexts. As Baker and Irwin write,

When complexity is added into the mix – in the form of cultural and linguistic diversity; inexperience with systems, practices, conventions; family and financial responsibilities; legitimate competing demands on a student's resources – we can see how easily the illusion of linear transitions falls away (2019, 15).

In addition, transition processes and procedures may not meet the needs of CALDM/R students (de Heer et al. 2016), or students may be specifically excluded from transitioning from one institution to another – as in the case of asylum seekers and most higher education contexts.

However, despite the increased focus on transitions into education and employment, little is known about transitions *from* education and *into* employment. Our imperative

to increase understandings of what is known about CALDM/Rs' transitions out of tertiary studies developed from discussions between members of the Australian Refugee Education Special Interest Group² – specifically a workshop that Sally and Clemmie hosted in South Australia, Australia. This workshop aimed to explore current issues for CALDM/R concerning transitioning from higher education into employment, and canvas ideas for 'best practice' in supporting students into employment. The discussion from this workshop is summarised here.

A key issue highlighted through the workshop related to the dominant 'employability' agenda in higher education. Participants felt that given the increasing role taken by universities in making students 'job ready', ensuring this group of students were similarly 'job ready' falls within the remit of the university. This could include targeted equity programmes, career advice, and the development of discipline specific practices in applying for work (e.g. developing networks through work-integrated learning). Participants noted that programmes to develop these practices should be built into the curriculum such that they attract course credit and are run during standard teaching times. Similarly, workshop participants agreed that university support for transitioning to employment needs a whole-of-institution approach and should be operationally funded. Participants also agreed that tracking graduate outcomes for all students, including CALDM/R, is challenging but critical for policy development. Finally, participants discussed how language can act as a significant barrier to gaining access to employment opportunities, both in terms of racialised prejudice (including implicit bias), and structural constraints (such as language proficiency requirements for registration for professions such as nursing or teaching), and therefore recommended particular support in this area.

It became apparent as a result of this workshop that an important contribution to practice in the area of transitioning to education for CALDM/R would be a comprehensive review of the extant literature. Therefore, this paper provides an interpretive review of the scholarly and grey literature, examining how bringing together literature from the fields of CALDM/R *employment* and CALDM/R *education* can foster more developed understandings of the challenges and opportunity structures that exist, and to inform future research and advocacy with tertiary educational institutions to deliver better supports to facilitate post-education transitions into the labour market or into further study.

Methodology

An interpretive review of CALD migrants and refugees' experience of education and employment

Our intention in this article is to bring several fields of inquiry into dialogue, thus helping to scope what we know and what we need to know in order to better support CALDM/R students into education and out into meaningful employment. To this end, we have undertaken an interpretive review involving qualitative synthesis of selected literature which best addresses questions of transition, higher education, and employment. Unlike systematic reviews which are less suited to multidisciplinary research bodies (Jesson, Matheson, and Lacey 2011), this approach does not seek to quantify the available literature or evaluate the evidence base. Instead, the review is constructed as a creative inquiry (Montouri

2005): a dialogue with our colleagues in the fields of forced migration and displacement studies, education, demography, policy, and settlement. Consequently, the epistemological orientation of this article aligns closely with the interpretivist paradigm, rather than the more positivist leanings of a systematic review (Suri and Clarke 2009). Moreover, it is deliberately selective rather than exhaustive; as Montouri reminds us, the review ‘is a map of the terrain, not the terrain itself’ (2005, 376).

The literature included in this review has been sampled from a database that includes over 350 individual annotations of refugee-related research literature (curated by Baker 2019³). Papers included in this database have been identified on the basis of their focus on CALDM/R populations within a broad range of fields through a broad range of existing databases. In order to identify pertinent literature within this database, we set our search parameters to include articles and reports with the following words in the title or keywords:

- cultural* linguist* divers*
- refugee*
- migrant*
- *employ*
- education*

This search yielded 163 articles and reports from the academic and grey literature that speaks from three fields of inquiry: 38 items on employment, 44 items on migration/settlement and 81 items on higher education. Of these, 110 related to the Australian context, and form the basis of this review. Not all of these are included in the current article, since our goal is to provide a qualitative overview of salient points in the literature rather than to exhaustively collate previous findings.

Our aim in establishing a dialogue between the fields of literature included in this paper was to develop a research agenda to identify what support is needed for students who are ‘transitioning out’ of their studies and into meaningful employment. In order to clearly identify the gaps located within and between the fields of employment and education of CALDM/R, we asked these questions of the selected literature:

- 1) What do we know about CALD migrants and refugees’ employment patterns in Australia?
- 2) What do we know about CALD migrants and refugees’ transitions out of higher education/ transitions into employment?
- 3) What do we know about CALD migrants and refugees’ access to and participation in tertiary education in Australia?

We undertook this review collectively, with Sally and Megan involved in the initial readings and annotations of the literature, and Clemmie involved in the coordination and cross-reading of the selected key texts. This approach constitutes a collective and iterative dialogue with the selected literature, and resonates with Andrews’ (2005) advice that, regardless of the approach taken, literature reviews should be undertaken by more than one person so as to strengthen the authors’ interpretations and enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

Findings

What do we know about access to and participation in tertiary education in Australia for CALD migrants and refugees?

Access to education is a pressing issue in migration settings, particularly in forced migration contexts. For example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report that the number of refugee children who are not accessing primary school education has reached four million children, and less than a quarter of the world's refugee children are in secondary education (UNHCR 2017b). Moreover, only one percent of refugees have access to higher education (UNHCR 2017b). However, access to education generally improves upon resettlement, with countries such as Australia offering free public education to refugee and migrant children, and, as mentioned previously, frequently providing access to English language education for those over secondary school age (Australian Council of TESOL Associations 2018; Walker et al. 2005; Watkins, Lean, and Noble 2016). In addition to these initial forms of education, some CALDM/R – depending upon visa status – are eligible to access loan packages for tertiary education if they aspire for further education (and the literature clearly attests to this aspiration; for example Abada and Tenkorang 2009; Gately 2014; McWilliams and Bonet 2016; Nunn et al. 2017).

Once CALDM/R have accessed higher education, barriers exist with regard to engaging in and completing their studies, many of which are created by the structures and priorities of universities. For example, universities have been critiqued for their approaches to supporting refugees, particularly with regard to marketing that promotes the narrative of the 'hero' refugee – often using language relating to individual resilience and trial over adversity (Stevenson and Baker 2018) – in promotional material to champion the institution's diversity and equity credentials. While it is certainly true that many CALDM/R are resilient, such discourses function to conceal the many challenges they face in their tertiary studies, and for which they are often unsupported by higher education institutions (Baker et al. 2018). Indeed, the literature offers clear consensus that participating in higher education is often challenging for CALDM/R for a range of reasons, including lack of navigational knowledge of the education system (Bajwa et al. 2017; Fozdar and Hartley 2013b) and an absence of responsive supports (Baker et al. 2018; Gately 2014, 2015). Arguably, then students who do succeed in their tertiary education do so in spite of, rather than because of, institutional responses to cultural and linguistic diversity.

What do we know about CALD migrants and refugees' transitions out of higher education/ transitions into employment?

Although there is increased scholarly interest in access to and participation in tertiary education for CALDM/R in settlement contexts, there is a silence in the literature with regards to students' transitions out of education and into professional employment. However, a series of recent Australian studies suggest that the patterns of under- or unemployment, based on analysis of graduate destinations survey data, are higher than average for CALDM/R (Hugo 2011; Li et al. 2016; Mestan and Harvey 2014; Richardson, Bennett, and Roberts 2016). Hugo (2011) reported that refugees who attained university degrees were 12% less likely to be employed in professional roles (see also Correa-Velez, Spaaij,

and Upham 2012), while Mestan and Harvey's (2014) findings report that CALDM/R graduates were 67% more likely to be seeking full-time employment post-graduation. Some research also suggests that CALDM/R graduates are more likely to be receiving lower salaries than their English-speaking peers (Li et al. 2016; Mestan and Harvey 2014). Research suggests that these disparities may be the result of discrimination and 'hidden racism' Losoncz (2017a). However, given the dearth of empirical research on students' transitions out of higher education and into professional education, it is difficult to respond beyond conjecture. There is clearly a gap in knowledge about how CALDM/R make their transitions into the workplace following tertiary education, and what responsibility educational institutions should take with regard to facilitating better graduate and employment outcomes for these students.

What do we know about CALD migrants and refugees' transitions into employment in Australia?

There is strong consensus in the scholarly and grey literature that employment is prioritised by CALDM/R upon arrival in a resettlement country, and is considered critical to integration (Abdelkerim and Grace 2012; Ager and Strang 2008; Beadle 2014; Curry, Smedley, and Lenette 2018; Gately 2014) providing income, social status, independence and recognition (Fozdar and Hartley 2013a; Gately 2014; Losoncz 2017a), as well as a being used as a marker of self-sufficiency (Curry, Smedley, and Lenette 2018). Employment allows CALDM/R to provide for their families, facilitates social connections, and improves health and wellbeing (Fozdar and Hartley 2013b). A lack of engagement in employment or other meaningful occupation has been linked to social isolation and poor health among refugees (Crawford et al. 2016).

However, while finding meaningful work is known to be a fundamental component of 'successful' resettlement, it is widely known that CALDM/R often struggle to find employment in settlement countries (Crawford et al. 2016; Fozdar and Hartley 2013a, 2013b; Hugo 2011) – often despite greater proportions of higher education qualifications (although these may not be recognised; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2006). For example, the Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA) survey (a longitudinal Australian survey of over 2000 people on humanitarian visas) reported that in 2015, only 7% of participants had been employed in the previous seven days (Smart et al. 2017). Similarly, Losoncz (2017a) – also drawing upon BNLA data – found that South Sudanese refugees specifically were at least six times more likely to be unemployed than other Australians in research conducted in 2011. Further analysis of the BNLA has suggested unemployment rates dropping from 94% in Wave 1 (the early months of arrival in Australia) to 77% by Wave 3 (two years after arriving) among refugees; moreover, those who were employed were mostly working in unskilled occupations, such as labouring or trades (Smart et al. 2017). This suggests that the issue of 'underemployment', as identified in previous research (Fozdar and Hartley 2013b; McDonald-Wilmsen et al. 2009; Schech 2014), remains a persistent issue.

Despite the importance of employment, qualitative research has identified systemic challenges that CALDM/R face with regard to securing ongoing and meaningful work. Identified barriers in the literature include limited English language proficiency, a lack of Australian (or host country) employment experience and references, lack of

qualifications and/or difficulties with recognition of qualifications, skills and experience, as well as the impact of trauma and torture (Fozdar and Hartley 2013b; Humpage and Marston 2005; Pittaway, Muli, and Shteir 2009).

The importance of different forms of capital is a persistent theme in the employment literature. The literature invariably points to the richness of human (linguistic proficiency, qualifications, employment histories) and social (networks, bonds, familiarity) capital that many CALDM/R bring with them, and accrue over time after arrival. However, another common theme in the literature is how these forms of capital are poorly recognised or ignored by potential employers. For example, in their qualitative study with migrants from the Horn of Africa, Pittaway, Muli, and Shteir (2009, 138) reported that many participants found that the skills and experience they brought with them to Australia were not recognised or 'easily transferable to a modern, developed work environment such as Australia's which is vastly different to where they have come from', and many faced discrimination. In their UK study, Cheung and Phillimore (2013) surmise that the length of residency and associated development of language proficiency play key roles in extending the social networks of new refugees. Yet, the passing of time alone cannot help CALDM/R to develop and demonstrate the forms of capital that are appealing to employers; as Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006) note, in segmented labour markets, racially and culturally visible migrants are allocated less skilled tasks regardless of their 'human capital'.

Arguably, the form of human capital that 'counts' most is proficiency in the host language (Fozdar and Hartley 2013b; Hugo 2011; Losoncz 2017a, 2017b). For example, Hebbani and Preece's (2015) study of Sudanese refugees in Australia found that *speaking* English (as opposed to reading, writing and numeracy) was a statistically significant predictor of likelihood to be employed, suggesting that developing spoken proficiency can make a difference to employment prospects. This trend is reflected in studies of broader samples of the CALDM/R population, such as Colic-Peisker's (2011) comparative study of migrants from Sri Lanka, Singapore, South Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, South Africa, China, India and the UK, which found that migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds overall face worse employment outcomes compared to those from their English-speaking countries. Likewise, Hugo (2011) found that those in Australia who self-identified as speaking English either 'not at all' or 'not well' were significantly more likely to be unemployed. As such, English proficiency plays a crucial role in CALDM/Rs' capacity to find employment in Australia, not least because low levels of English proficiency do not help learners to meet the language requirements needed for many further study options (Hugo 2011).

However, despite widespread recognition of the fundamental importance of learning and developing language (and literacy) proficiency, 'the current provision and support for migrants to learn the language of their new country do not reflect this importance' (Losoncz 2017a, 59). CALDM/R are rarely given sufficient time or space to fully develop their language and literacy proficiency before needing to seek employment, or being required to do so in order to obtain welfare benefits (Baker and Irwin 2019; Losoncz 2017a, 2017b). Furthermore, linguistic disadvantage in gaining employment is not necessarily restricted to demonstrating proficiency (for example, via recognised qualifications), but also plays out in terms of 'acceptable' ethno-linguistic markers to an Anglo-dominant job market, such as accent and even name. As Hebbani and Colic-Peisker (2012) powerfully note, in primarily monolingual countries like Australia, being

visibly different and/or having an accent can create uncertainty, even when a candidate can demonstrate English proficiency. These authors conclude that racialised prejudice is 'deeply embedded in power relations based in the Australian hierarchy of ethno-classes' (p. 544), suggesting that groups who are markedly 'different' from 'normative' white Australian expectations are especially vulnerable to discrimination.

Another key issue is the location of settlement, which also significantly impacts on the employment of CALDM/R. Qualitative studies have pointed to how CALDM/R groupings who settle in regional locations experience barriers which are specific to their locale (Curry, Smedley, and Lenette 2018; McDonald-Wilmsen et al. 2009; Schech 2014). In particular, there is consensus that a lack of employment opportunities pushes CALDM/R into 'accepting exploitative and insecure employment in horticulture and food- and meat-processing industries' (Schech 2014, 613). Some resettled individuals did, however describe this as a 'trade off' for a quiet life and affordable housing (Hugo 2011). CALDM/R also reported underemployment or difficulties in obtaining ongoing employment due to the seasonal nature of regional work, and that sections of the community were moving to metro regions to seek employment (Curry, Smedley, and Lenette 2018; McDonald-Wilmsen et al. 2009). Furthermore, employment services in regional areas were reported to lack an understanding of the specific needs of these communities (Curry, Smedley, and Lenette 2018; McDonald-Wilmsen et al. 2009; Schech 2014).

The literature also points to a significant gender gap. Hugo (2011) reports that in general, refugees are the group most likely to be unemployed and also are most likely to earn the least, and that first generation CALDM/R women are most likely to experience challenges with entering the labour market. Khawaja and Hebbani (2018) echo this finding, reporting that women in their study were less likely to be actively seeking work compared with their male counterparts. Similar issues play out with access to higher education (for example, Harris, Spark, and Watts 2015). The reasons for these gendered differences are largely related to cultural norms regarding family roles, a lack of affordable childcare, and lower levels of language proficiency (Abdelkerim and Grace 2012; Gaillard and Hughes 2014).

Critiques of the employment patterns within resettlement countries for CALDM/R have pointed to how neoliberal logics, 'institutional ignorance' and under-resourcing of services have contributed to ongoing issues of un/underemployment amongst CALDM/R. In Australia, successive governments have engaged in efficiency-driven practices, such as a commitment to outsourcing public services through frequent competitive tendering processes – including the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), case management services and employment agencies – since 2000, which has 'threaten[ed] the security and identity' of the settlement sector (Sampson 2015, 103). The quick turnover of operations between tendering companies has consequently had a significant impact on the expertise, local knowledge and community connections and trust that service providers can draw on to provide meaningful advice and guidance (Curry, Smedley, and Lenette 2018; Losoncz 2017a, 2017b). Furthermore, the tendering process has destabilised 'previously cooperative relationships between similar services ... while the mandate for formalised partnerships has required new allegiances' (Sampson 2015, 103).

In Australia, these neoliberal practices are accompanied by a woeful absence of responsive policy attention to addressing the issues that are widely known to contribute to high levels of unemployment (language proficiency, lack of Australian work experience, lack of

recognition of prior learning or work). For example, while CALDM/R can access 510 h of free English tuition in the AMEP, this is considered to be ‘grossly inadequate’ for many new arrivals, particularly those with developing literacy in their dominant language (Losoncz 2017a).⁴ Moreover, ‘merit-based’ systems of employment within employment agencies fail to recognise and redress the critical and multiple disadvantages that CALDM/R face, with limited oversight provided to help counter systemic discrimination (Losoncz 2017a). This is exacerbated by the competitive logics of service contracts, which “‘reward” agencies for consulting with job seekers and not on the number of successful employment outcomes’ (Curry, Smedley, and Lenette 2018, 442). These efficiency-driven logics thus deny the kinds of long-term, sustainable and relationship-rich services that are sorely needed to support newly/recently arrived CALDM/R into meaningful employment.

Discussion

In sum, our review reiterates the lack of both academic research and broader evidence concerning pathways to employment from higher education for CALDM/R. The existing qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods literature highlights two key barriers: structural issues within the employment sector, and a lack of support within the university sector.

The literature strongly confirms that CALDM/R prioritise employment in terms of resettlement, but often end up in either un- or underemployment; this is particularly problematic when we consider how important gaining meaningful work is in relation to integration into the local community. Those with lower educational qualifications of language skills find it difficult to find work at all, while those with higher education qualifications find it difficult to find a position that utilises their skills due to limited English language proficiencies, and lack of recognised employment experience. In addition, highly qualified CALDM/R struggle to have their qualifications recognised by Australian employers or within accrediting bodies. It has been repeatedly highlighted in the literature that while English proficiency is essential to finding employment, current provisions in place to support the language development of CALDM/R are insufficient. In essence, the intersections of employer recruitment patterns and the outsourcing and under-resourcing of government services compound the experiences of un-/underemployment for CALDM/R.

Education is also highly desirable in CALDM/R communities. However, CALDM/R students who access Australian higher education face additional structural barriers. In particular, English language proficiency affects this grouping as well, with government-funded language tuition (via the AMEP) providing only ‘functional’ English skills, rather than developing the language proficiency and academic practices required for further study. Once enrolled, Australian universities provide limited support to their CALDM/R students in terms of language, navigational, administrative and pastoral supports, which are essential for ensuring students’ preparedness for their studies and the workforce. In addition to this, graduate destination surveys have found that unemployment is higher than average for CALDM/R students, which implies that these qualifications are not assisting in resolving the structural issues in the employment sector discussed above.

While the barriers facing CALDM/R have been well documented in the literature thus far, only a small amount of scholarly attention has been paid to the support provided by the university sector and the pathways between higher education and employment. Both of these issues require system-level change in order to ensure that these students do not face inequalities in finding employment following their studies. As such, both of these issues necessitate further research to develop robust bodies of evidence in order to effect broad policy change to support CALDM/R through higher education and into meaningful employment in their countries of resettlement.

Conclusion

While a commendable effort has been made to capture CALDM/Rs' experiences of employment, further research is still required. Overall, there are only a few studies that study a broad spectrum of cultural backgrounds, making it difficult to draw conclusions as to the role that culture, ethnicity, skin colour, religion or language may play on experiences of education and employment. Furthermore, studies tend to highlight the exclusion felt by CALDM/R without accounting for why this exclusion occurs, nor the potential for multiple, intersecting forms of exclusion. While studies of particular gender groups of CALDM/R are present in the field, further intersectional exploration is needed into how cultural norms of home countries inform gendered performances in these groupings as well as the role that gender may play on accessing education and transitions to employment in resettlement countries. Overall, there is also a heavy focus on the experiences of CALDM/R with regards to their perceptions of the social relations unfolding between them, employers, educators and communities. Capturing the perceptions of the 'other side' of these experiences would allow us to triangulate and understand in greater depth the validity of these experiences and how and why they occur. Finally, these studies tend to focus on broader structural categories (e.g. degree of unemployment, length of unemployment, language ability, class) rather than unpack in detail the life experiences that underpin CALDM/Rs' satisfaction or lack of satisfaction with their employment, or support needs when transitioning into employment in the first place. Taken together, if we are to promote positive integration and settlement outcomes, we need greater and more nuanced understandings of intersecting nature of identities in spaces of education and employment.

Notes

1. This number has been increased to 18,750 from 2018 to 2019 (RCOA 2018a).
2. The Refugee Education Special Interest Group is an Australian-wide collective of students, educators and advocates who are interested in working for better educational opportunities and outcomes for students from refugee and asylum seeking backgrounds (<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/educationsig/>).
3. The *People from Refugee and Asylum Seeking Backgrounds: An Open Access Annotated Bibliography* can be found here <https://apo.org.au/node/251191>.
4. For an overview of the AMEP, see Department of Education (n.d): <https://www.education.gov.au/adult-migrant-english-program-0>.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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