The TOBP Transcultural Competence Profile

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Version 3.0
Date 31 January 2021

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Based on TOBP original application, concept and design, created by Regina Klein

Please, refer to the document accordingly: Jentsch, Birgit; Klein, Regina; Paulus, Mareike; Sandner, Eva & Bignami, Filippo. 2021. The TOBP Transcultural Competence Profile. NZFH, SUPSI, CUAS.

1. Foreword

The Project "Transcultural Open Badge Platform for Migrants' Transition Mentoring in Early Life Family Care" (TOBP)[1] connects strategic partners by establishing new standards in the field of

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[1] Transition mentoring comprises a professional profile for Early Life Family Care in bordercrossing situations, as developed by Klein (2018a) for the TOBP project. In general, transition mentoring aims to guide and assist people in their various transitions from one stage of life to the other throughout their entire life-cycle. (Klein 2018b). The 'double transition' from life as a couple to parenthood, and from a settled life in one country to a new life elsewhere are at the centre of the TOBP project (Klein 2018a, 2020). The term "Mentor" comes from the Greek mythology and refers to Odysseus´ friend Mentor, to whom his son and mansion was entrusted during his long absence. In the international context, and in the English original

Transcultural Early Life Family Care (TELFC). TOBP is managed by the Carinthia University of Applied Sciences in Austria and implemented in coordination with partners from Finland, Germany, Kosovo and Switzerland:

- Cacttus, Pristina, Kosovo
- DJI German Youth Institute, Munich, Germany
- ENSIS European Network for Social Innonvation and Solidarity, Luneburg, Germany
- Gloria Multicultural Center, Jyväskylä, Finland
- JAMK University of Applied Sciences, School of Health and Social Studies, Jyväskylä, Finland
- Kolegji Heimerer, Pristina in Kosovo
- NZFH National Centre for Early Prevention (NZFH) in the BZgA Federal Center for Health Education, Cologne, Germany
- SUPSI Scuola universitaria professionale della Svizzera italiana, Manno, Switzerland

The DJI is a cooperation partner of the NZFH. In this project the DJI assumes the role of an associated partner together with SUPSI. The two associated partners have developed the transcultural competence profile together with the Carinthia University of Applied Sciences (CUAS)[2].

2. Introduction

With the growing rate of global migration, the number of pregnant women arriving in Europe has increased and their heightened vulnerability is becoming more visible. Such vulnerability is reflected, for example, in relatively high perinatal and neonatal mortality rates for this group of women (Klein, 2020, forthcoming; Heslehurst et al. 2018; Malebranche et al. 2017; Trovato et al., 2016,).

In regards to children, it is clear that the phase of early childhood is particularly important in shaping their cognitive, emotional and physical development. The youngest refugee children require special attention, but they and their families remain often neglected (UN, 2016), not least because professionals currently lack the transcultural knowledge required to gain access to them and address their specific needs.

Migrants also experience challenges to social inclusion in other societal domains, including the labour market. The key barrier to employment consists of a lack of recognition of prior learning and qualifications attained in the countries of origin. This non-recognition of abilities is regarded as a key migration issue in all post-industrial societies (UN General Assembly, 2016; Wanner 2001, 417). In the European Union (EU), it affects particularly migrants from non-EU-countries. The problem is partly rooted in a deficit model of cultural difference, in which knowledge, especially of people from less economically developed countries, is considered inferior and perhaps even invalid. Certified skill-sets, for which it is difficult to find clear equivalents in the system of the country of arrival, are often

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of the transcultural competence profile the term "Early Life Family Care" is used; in order to make the topic compatible for the German-speaking area, "early help" is used in the German translation.

[2] We would like to thank our partners in Austria, Finland and Kosovo for supporting the authors by conducting interviews, providing case studies and feedback.

lumped together in an 'other' unspecified category and are thereby devalued or rendered invisible. Overall, the recognition of knowledge is highly racialized and gendered, and this constitutes a main barrier to migrants' access to the labour market.

At the same time, there are skills mismatches and skills shortages in the social, health and education sectors of Early Life Family Care (ELFC) in destination countries. ELFC refers to integrated health promotion, parental support and child protection services, which cover families from the point of pregnancy to the time of the child's school entry. The lack of professionals in this sector is a cause for concern since investing in children from early on results in significant benefits for wellbeing at the individual as well as the societal level. Such investment can lead to better outcomes in education, lower spending for social assistance, medical treatment and welfare, as well as to reduced crime rates, which in turn enhances social and cultural cohesion (European Commission, undated).

The EU-funded TOBP Project begins with these developments as a starting point. TOBP contributes to migrant employability as well as to skilled migrant mentors who can support migrant family effectively. The project thus pursues three goals:

- Firstly, it aims to promote the employability of migrants by offering them easily accessible training to become transcultural mentors in the area of transcultural Early Life Family Care (ELFC). This training can build upon and thereby recognize mostly devaluated knowledge, competences and prior learning. The contents and format of this training is based on a transcultural competence profile developed by the project. Through this training, participants acquire key competences relevant for supporting migrant families through the different transition phases they experience in a new country. Once the training has been completed, and the resulting competences have been certified through Open Badges,[3] participants can take on the role of an ELFC transcultural transition mentor.
- Secondly, the project aims to contribute to the provision of high quality ELFC for migrant families through transition mentors, who distinguish themselves by their *transcultural abilities* related to ELFC, and their approach of working with parents *in partnership* towards shared ELFC goals (Urban, Vandenbroeck, Lazzari et al., 2012).
- Thirdly, in this process, TOBP aims to promote the recognition (i.e., the acknowledgement and validation) of both
  - prior learning (formal, non-formal and informal knowledge achievements) to boost the employability of migrants and
  - *other/ foreign* cultural concepts, values and images of human life and human development (family structures, parenting roles, childhood concepts etc.) to foster social cohesion in post-industrial societies.

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[3] Open Badges are portable digital badges with embedded metadata, which displays the badge holder's competences, skills and achievements. Please consult the following website for further information on Open Badges: https://openbadges.org/, and on the development process of Open Badges as it relates specifically to the TOBP project: https://www.tobp.eu.

Recognition as a vital human need and anthropological constant strengthens mutuality, equality and the emancipatory idea of adequate, respectful, appreciative regard of the other in all inter-personnel situations (Honneth, 2018).

2.1 Development of the competence profile (10/2018 – 10/2019)

The development of the framework of the competence profile was implemented upon the recommendations of core competences in ELFC published by the National Centre for Early Prevention in Germany (NZFH, 2014). The contents of the competence profile is based on a review of international literature as well as on empirical research (in-depth interviews conducted in Austria, Finland, Germany, Kosovo and Switzerland) with ELFC professionals and migrant parents of young children. Through open questions during the interview process, migrant parents were asked to consider their experiences in the receiving country, and the support that helped or would have helped them to progress in the prolonged arrival phase. The information which these families provided helped the TOBP project team to focus on particular transitions, for example, the phase when the parents' predominant concern is meeting practical and material needs. Interviews with professionals and voluntary workers reflected on their experiences of providing care and support for migrant families, in particular, the challenges and facilitating factors they encountered in this process.

In the interviews with the migrant parents, the focus was on their experiences in the arrival process in the host country, and on the support that helped them to facilitate or enable the 'arrival', or that they would have wished for.

In the data analysis, the TOBP project team elaborated four significant transition phases to which particular transcultural competencies were assigned.

3. Structure of the competence profile

The competence profile consists of three framing categories (see tables below). The first category concerns the particular transition phases migrant families undergo after they have arrived in the receiving country. These transition phases are associated with specific challenges that need to be managed. The second category refers to transcultural action competences – that is, the distinctive ability which transition mentors require to cooperate with families in a particular transition phase. Third, there are assessment criteria which represent the three domains of action competences – knowledge, skills and attitude – which together constitute the core competence 'ability'. Figure 1 – which is based on a review of national and international qualifications frameworks (Jentsch et al., 2019) - shows that 'ability' can be defined as the intersection between knowledge, skills and attitudes. The domain 'knowledge' refers to theoretical and factual knowledge about an area of concern, i.e. knowing what needs to be done. The domain 'skills' relates to the use of knowledge, i.e., knowing how to perform a required activity. Finally, the domain 'attitude' refers to the values, beliefs and emotions underpinning personal habits and dispositions, i.e., knowing why particular activities are to be undertaken. The model is dynamic as 'ability' requires a flexible and open process of reflexively considering, reconsidering and exploring the scope of action as appropriate to different cases (Baartman/de Bruijn, 2011). As such 'ability' reflects not only certain knowledge, skills and attitudes, but also the demonstrated ability to reflexively apply the three domains, so that ability equates with action competence.

Figure 1: Competence domains (Authors' work)

4. Transcultural competence profile

The competence profile outlines four different transition phases (displayed in the four tables below), each associated with particular action competences and corresponding assessment criteria. In addition, there is a set of action competences (and relevant assessment criteria) which transcends all transition phases (represented in the fifth table below), i.e., the competences which transition mentors should be able to draw upon throughout their work. It is worthwhile noting that although the four transition phases seem to be clearly defined and separate from each other, there can be significant overlaps. At the same time, each phase comprises a number of distinguishing features, which allow for demarcation.

4.1 Transcultural competence profile, Administrative management

Transition phase	Transcultural action competences	Assessment criteria
Arriving in the receiving country: meeting material and practical needs	Transition Mentors are equipped with the ability to cooperatively monitor and address the material and practical needs and requirements of the family.	The Transition Mentor - knows basic administrative and bureaucratic steps to be taken concerning the dual transition phases of arrival in the host country *and* becoming parents - has skills to conjointly with parents assess the families' needs and resources, as well as the level of their ability to act autonomously - has skills to maintain an overview of tasks families have to complete; to structure and prioritize those tasks in collaboration with the families - is able to monitor progress in partnership with the families - has skills to directly provide or organize more direct support in cooperation with families and relevant professionals as required - has an open attitude to migrant families and is keen to accept and to (directly or indirectly) address the entirety of parents' concerns and difficulties (also beyond conventional ELFC concerns)

In the transition phase of families' arrival in the new country, meeting material and practical needs becomes a priority. This requires *administrative management* by parents and transition mentors. In the particular context of ELFC, this may include addressing together specific issues such as registering mothers-to-be at a maternity hospital and applying for a birth certificate for the newborn. Concerning the assessment criteria listed, it is worthwhile emphasizing that here and in subsequent assessment criteria sections, the distinction between attitudinal, skills-related and knowledge-related criteria may be blurred. This reflects the overlaps of the competence fields shown in Figure 1 above.

4.2 Transcultural competence profile, Interface management

Transition phase	Transcultural action competence	Assessment criteria

Arriving at social and health care services	Transition Mentors are equipped with the ability to support families in accessing social and health care in cooperation with the families and with professionals.	The Transition Mentor
		- knows how to promote parental understanding of social and health care in the receiving country
		- has skills to cooperatively facilitate families' access to social and health care services and promote parents' orientation and autonomous navigation of these provisions
		- has skills to cooperate with professionals to address the effects of trauma and perceptions of stigma
		- has an overview of all the (potential) actors who are already/should be involved in the case. This includes:
		    o Knowledge of relevant services and professionals
		    o Skills to conjointly coordinate support, i.e., to establish what actors are already involved in the case; who still needs to be involved
		    o Identifying and involving individuals who can take over particular tasks (e.g., because own (language, ELFC) competences or time resources are insufficient)
		    o Awareness of steps to be taken so that all involved actors can collaborate effectively (e.g. accommodate sensibilities of parents; preparing actors to be involved, such as interpreters, for their task)

In the transition phase of families' arrival at social and health care provisions, transition mentors and parents are particularly concerned with *interface management*: transition mentors, families and professionals cooperate with the view of making health and social services available to the family. In the ELFC context, this means that the involved partners co-identify relevant ELFC services, such as extra support for families through baby and parent groups.

4.3 Transcultural competence profile, Relationship management

Transition phase	Transcultural action competence	Assessment criteria
Arriving as a family in society: Becoming and being a parent	Transition Mentors are equipped with the ability to co-create stability and orientation during pregnancy and over the early family phase in an unstable and unfamiliar context.	The Transition Mentor - has knowledge of the significance of the family and the roles of different family members in various cultural and migration contexts - has skills to co-support the parents-child-relationship and provides support (family-based, professional or community network-based) as required - adopts an attitude which helps to refrain from critically assessing parents' wishes, and which promotes addressing parents empathetically - has skills to mediate when parents' social and cultural norms are not easily reconcilable with those held by the majority society - can recognize and convey tensions between cultural diversity and universal human rights - has a recognitional attitude towards indigenous parenting approaches and is able to explore and understand families' motivation for their parental practice

The transition phase of arriving as a family in society requires *relationship management* by families and transition mentors. Becoming and being a parent in a society, which may have different norms of `good parenthood' and different attitudes towards 'appropriate infant care' when compared to the families' own cultural background, can place a significant strain on families. The situation is exacerbated for families who live in an unstable context, for example, with only temporary/unsuitable accommodation or uncertain prospects of being able to remain in the country. Under these difficult circumstances, transition mentors are equipped to co-create some measure of stability and orientation. With regard to ELFC, one focus of parents and transition mentors in this transition phase may be on the special significance of parent-child bonding.

4.4 Transcultural competence profile, Participation management

Transition phase	Transcultural action competence	Assessment criteria
Arriving at active citizenship	Transition Mentors are equipped with the ability to co-develop participation in and active engagement with the collectivity	The Transition Mentor - knows how to co-creatively promote and support participation in social, cultural, political, sport or volunteering initiatives in a co-creative approach. - has skills to recognize prior learning (qualifications, competences and knowledge) and to guide parents to appropriate services to promote employability - can use methods to co-create compromises and/or consensus - can encourage parents to learn the official language(s) of the host country - is able to support migrant families in building social networks with the minority and majority society - is able to refer to civic literacy through the development of critical inquiry, political knowledge and engagement, media literacy, respect for diversity, collaborative decision-making and consensus building, as well as personal, reflective and social responsibility - knows how to co-create and use public spaces (e.g., available spaces in the city) as meeting and interaction points for migrants to support migrant families in building social networks with the minority and majority society.

The transition phase when migrant families can become active citizens requires parents *and* transition mentors to *manage participation*. In the context of ELFC, families' and transition mentors' co-development of a community-based social network may be of great significance here: civic participation is likely to presuppose some time off from the most intense parenting phase. In the absence of a family network, members of a social network may bridge the gap of support for parents. Moreover, participation specifically in ELFC includes the active involvement of migrant parents in the development, day-to-day running and management of ELFC services. In other words, parents are not only recipients of services, but can also adopt roles which shape these services.

4.5 Transcultural competence profile, Boundary management[4]

Transition phase	Transcultural action competence	Assessment criteria
All of the transition phases	Transition Mentors are equipped with the ability to communicate when there is no shared language	The Transition Mentor - appreciates the importance for migrants to be able to communicate in their native language(s) - has skills to listen empathetically - has knowledge about different communication styles and cultural differences in communication - has skills to understand differences in non-verbal communication and to reflect on own body-language - has skills to mediate a conversation with an interpreter (a trialogue)
	Transition Mentors are equipped with the ability to embrace cultural differences	The Transition Mentor - knows key elements of transcultural competence and key aspects of the theory of transculturality - appreciates cultural differences in values and norms regarding, for example, authority, gender roles, the concept of time - is aware of his or her own cultural background and his or her position in society and how this shapes his or her values, beliefs and stereotypes
	Transition Mentors consider in all their actions the power imbalance	The Transition Mentor - adopts attitudes and habits of always working with migrant families in mutual recognition on an equal footing and in partnership - has skills to critically analyse inequalities and discrimination based, for example, on gender, race, politics, socio-economic status, culture, religion, age and sexual orientation. - accepts families as experts of their own life; co-cares for families by building on their parents' strengths instead of focusing on vulnerabilities - is able to take care of personal boundaries of self and others

In all the transition phases outlined above, parents and transition mentors will face *boundary management* vis-à-vis the use of different languages by the partners, different cultural norms and unequal status. Concerning the importance of these issues specifically for ELFC, the challenge here is for parents and transition mentors to progress jointly when differences in cultural norms emerge in the sensitive area of infant care and in the context of a power imbalance.

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[4] Based on Keupp (2007), who speaks of delimitation and boundary management; as a way to deal with "meta-challenge in fluid societies".

5. Summary

Transition Mentor is a newly created profile for transcultural professionals who guide people from one transition phase to another. It is dedicated specifically to support migrant families in double transitions, but could be transferred to a variety of settings, empowering different target groups (individuals, groups) who are facing and coping with new situations. Therefore, to ensure successful "transitions" processes is the main purpose (Klein 2018a).

The competence profile has four distinctive competence areas plus one competence field transcending all areas. Transition mentors are equipped with the ability to recognize the material and practical needs and requirements of the family and to meet them in a cooperative manner.

Transition mentors

- are equipped with the ability to support families in accessing social and health care in cooperation with the families and with professionals.
- are equipped with the ability to co-create stability and orientation during pregnancy and over the early family phase in an unstable and unfamiliar context.
- are equipped with the ability to co-develop participation in and active engagement with the collectivity.
- are equipped with the ability to communicate when there is no shared language.
- are equipped with the ability to embrace cultural differences.
- consider in all their actions the power imbalance.

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Funded by:

Nationales Zentrum
Frühe Hilfen

movetia

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

*The TOBP project was supported by Erasmus+ higher education program in years 2018-2021 with the **Grant Agreement nr.** 2018-1-AT01-KA203-039332*