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DESIGNING A CONCEPT OF A CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR BUILDING SCALABLE CATERING BUSINESS FOR REFUGEES

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to increase knowledge of designing a concept of a capability development program for building scalable catering business for refugees. Refugees and their social inclusion and employment in a new country are an example of a wicked problem. The earlier research includes very little knowledge of developing systematic capability development programs for refugees in the area of entrepreneurship in catering business. There is a clear need to increase knowledge of this area. This empirical research is based on a service design project applying in-depth qualitative interviews and focus groups. As a result, this research contributes by introducing a concept model for a capability development program for building scalable catering business for refugees. The concept is developed for an organization involved in enhancing refugee employment. The case organization operates by creating a network of partners including government officials, companies, non-governmental organizations, congregations, communities, universities, and individuals who support newcomers to get started with their business ideas or finding new jobs where they can use their skills instead of being idle in reception centres. This research is an example of university-industry collaboration and social innovation.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship training, Capability building, Wicked problems, Social inclusion, University-industry cooperation, Higher education, Co-creation, Service design, Social innovation.

1 INTRODUCTION

This research stems from a practical need to address a wicked problem of refugees employment in a new country. A significant amount of potential in the labour market is wasted when asylum seekers are required to spend long periods waiting at reception centres. The case organization of this research aims at enhancing the employment of refugees by initiated targeted programs; one of which is a restaurant and catering business. People may participate in the program as individual entrepreneurs or as a business team working together to build up a company. In this report, they both are called as “business teams” or “teams”. Many people are interested in catering business, but a systematic concept are lacking for this purpose. There is a clear need to increase the knowledge of this area. The present research addresses this need.

The structure of this report is following. First, it reviews the literature of wicked problems (Rittel and Webber, 1973) [1], which is the theoretical domain of this research. Then, it explains the empirical method. The research is based on qualitative methodology (Taylor et al. 2015, Glaser 1978) [2, 3] using in-depth interviews and focus group workshops during a service design project. After that, it introduces a concept model for a capability development program for building scalable catering business for refugees.

2 WICKED PROBLEMS

2.1 Societal problems are wicked.

In general, “a problem” refers to a situation where there is a difference or discrepancy between what is actually happening or will be happening and what should be happening (Kubr, 2002, p. 12-13) [4], in other words it is a perceived gap between the existing state and a desired state, or a deviation from a norm, standard, or status quo (BusinessDictionary, 2018) [5]. The traditional and early approaches to problem solving and decision making had a rational-technical nature, and assumed that efficient and effective achievement of objectives can follow from adequate information, carefully specified goals and targets, and choice of appropriate methods (Head and Alford, 2015) [6].

Operations research (OR) has been interested in problem solving since 1960's and developed and used individual problem structuring methods, such as formulate-model-test-solve-implement. They were suitable for solving well-defined problems typical in science and engineering, but not optimal for confronting more complex and social and societal problems (Rosenhead, 1996) [7]. Rational-technical problem solving was found to have the following weaknesses (Head and Alford, 2015) [6]: (1) Social and economic problems cannot be understood and addressed in isolation, because every problem interacts with other problems and is therefore part of a system of interrelated problems, a system of problems—a mess, which can seldom be obtained by independently solving each of the problems of which it is composed (Ackoff, 1974) [8]; (2) Gathering more information for scientific analysis is insufficient to understand the values of the stakeholders and resolve major problems (Rein, 1976) [9]. Technical rationality cannot understand in-depth with the professional norms and practical knowledge of those who provide valued services to individual clients experiencing real problems. Nor can it comprehend the experiences of diverse citizens who are supposed to be helped by these interventions and the values underlying their needs and desires (Schon, 1987; Schon and Rein, 1994) [10, 11]; (3) Major problems in society cannot be solved through an “engineering” approach. Modern society is pluralistic rather than homogeneous, and not amenable to top-down general solutions. Social groups increasingly exhibit important differences in aspirations, values, and perspectives that confound the possibility of clear and agreed solutions (Rittel and Webber, 1973; Head and Alford, 2015) [1,6].

The concept of “wicked problem” which was referred by Churchman (1967) [12], and conceptualised in detail by Rittel and Webber (1973) [1] address complex societal problems. Wicked problems always occur in a social context (Horn and Weber 2007; Batie, 2008) [13, 14]. Rittel and Webber (1973) [1] argued that societal problems are wicked and cannot be solved in the ways scientists and engineers can solve their sorts of problems.

“The kinds of problems that planners deal with—societal problems—are inherently different from the problems that scientists and perhaps some classes of engineers deal with. Planning problems are inherently wicked.” (Rittel and Webber, 1973, p. 160) [1].

Similar to wicked problems, the concepts of “mess” (Ackoff, 1981) [15] and “swamp” (Schon, 1987) [10] have also been used to describe complex societal problems. Wicked problems are sometimes called social messes or untamed problems, as they are dynamically complex, ill-structured, public problems (Batie, 2008) [14].

The complexity of the problem and its context explain the wickedness of the problems. Wicked problems are complex (Kreuter et al., 2004) [16]. A complex system has the following properties (Snowden and Boone, 2007, p.3) [17]. It entails large numbers of interacting elements. The interactions are nonlinear, and minor changes can produce disproportionately major consequences. The system is dynamic, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and solutions cannot be imposed; but rather, they arise from the circumstances—solutions “emerge”. The system’s past is integrated with the present; the elements evolve with one another and with the environment; and evolution is irreversible. A system may, in retrospect, appear to be ordered and predictable, but hindsight does not lead to foresight because the external conditions and systems constantly change. Because the stakeholders and the system constrain one another, especially over time, it is not possible to forecast or predict what will happen in the future (ibid.) [17].

Examples of wicked problems include terrorism, global climate change, nuclear energy, healthcare, poverty, crime, ecological health, pandemics, genetically modified food, water resource management, trade liberalization, the use of stem cells, biofuel production, nanotechnology, gun control, air quality, sustainable development, biodiversity, environmental restoration, forest fire management, and animal welfare (Batie, 2008) [14]. Immigration and refugees are also an example of a complex societal problem, a wicked problem. In contrast, problems in mathematics, engineering, and chemistry while being technically complicated and demanding are tame, because they can be clearly delineated (and solved) by experts who produce clear, workable solutions using analytical approaches of their disciplines (Kreuter et al., 2004) [16].

2.2 Characteristics of wicked problems

A wicked problem is illusive, difficult to pin down, and influenced by a constellation of complex social and political factors, some of which change during the process of solving the problem (Kreuter et al., 2004; Rittel and Webber, 1973) [16,1]. Moreover, with wicked problems, the nature of the problem is likely to be viewed differently depending on the perspectives and biases of those with a stake in the problem (ibid.) [16,1].

Rittel and Webber, (1973) [1] categorized problems into wicked and tame, and described 10 distinctive characteristics of wicked problems. The characteristics were further explained by Camillus (2008) [18].

- *There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem.* It is not possible to write a well-defined statement of the problem, as can be done with a tamed problem.
- *Wicked problems have no stopping rule.* It is possible to tell when a solution is reached with a tame problem. With a wicked problem, the search for solutions never stops.
- *Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad.* Tame problems have solutions that can be objectively evaluated as right or wrong. Choosing a solution to a wicked problem is largely a matter of judgment.
- *There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem.* It is possible to easily determine if a solution to an ordinary problem is working. However, solutions to wicked problems generate unexpected consequences over time, making it difficult to measure their effectiveness.
- *Every solution to a wicked problem is a "one-shot operation"; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial-and-error, every attempt counts significantly.* Solutions to tame problems can be easily tried and abandoned. In opposite, with wicked problems, every implemented solution has consequences that cannot be undone.
- *Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or an exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan.* By contrast, ordinary problems come with a limited set of potential solutions.
- *Every wicked problem is essentially unique.* A tame problem belongs to a class of similar problems that are all solved in the same way. In contrast, a wicked problem is substantially without precedent; experience does not help to address it.
- *Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.* While a tame ordinary problem is self-contained, a wicked problem is entwined with other problems. Those problems do not have one root cause.
- *The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution.* A wicked problem involves many stakeholders, and they all have different ideas about what the problem really is and what its causes are.
- *The planner has no right to be wrong.* Problem solvers dealing with a wicked problems are held liable for the consequences of any actions they take, because those actions will have such a large impact and are hard to justify (Rittel and Webber, 1973; Camillus, 2008) [1,18].

Kreuter et al. (2004) [16] and Batie, (2008) [14] compared tame and wicked problems in terms of four characteristics. 1) *Disagreement about problem definition.* With tame problems, the clear definition of the problem also unveils the solution. With wicked problems, in contrast, no agreement exists about what the problem is. Moreover, each attempt to create a solution changes the problem. In the case of tame problems, the outcome is true or false, successful or unsuccessful. On the other hand, with wicked problems, the solution is not true or false—the end is assessed as “better”, worse” or “good enough”. Tame problems do not change over time, while wicked problems change. 2) *Involvement of multiple stakeholders.* In the case of tame problems, primarily experts using scientific data determine the causes of a problem. In opposite, with wicked problems, many stakeholders are likely to have differing ideas about what the “real” problem is and what its causes are. 3) *Lack “stopping rule”.* With tame problems, the task is completed when the problem is solved. In contrast with wicked problems, stakeholders, political forces, and resource availability accompany the end. Moreover, there is no definitive solution to a wicked problem. 4) *Unique nature of wicked problems.* With tame problems, scientific based protocols guide the choice of solution(s), while with wicked problems solution(s) to problem is (are) based on “judgments” of multiple stakeholders. In the case of tame problems, the problem is associated with low uncertainty as to system components and outcomes. In contrast with wicked problems, the problem is associated with high uncertainty as to system components and outcomes. With tame problems, there are shared values as to the desirability of the outcomes. On the other hand, with wicked problems there are not shared values with respect to societal goals (ibid.) [16,14].

Table 1. How to deal with wicked problems?

Approach	Methods and considerations	Author
Stakeholder engagement and co-creation	Interactive group methods: hypergame analysis, interactive planning, metagame analysis, robustness analysis, soft systems methodology, strategic assumption surfacing and testing, strategic choice approach, and strategic options development and analysis.	Rosenhead, 1996 [7]
	Enhancing external and internal interconnections via communication and technology. Instilling rapid feedback loops for self-reference and self-control. Cultivating diversity, specialization, differentiation, and integration. Making explicit a few but essential structural and behavioral boundaries.	Dooley, 1997 [19]
	Engaging multiple stakeholders. Grounding the process on meaningful consensus. Creating a mindset, that change is normal part of the process. Enabling transparent communication between stakeholders. Creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust for communication.	Kreuter et al. 2004 [16]
	Probing, sensing, and responding. Creating environments and experiments that allow patterns to emerge. Increasing levels of interaction and communication. Using methods that can help generate ideas: Opening up discussion (as through large group methods); setting barriers; stimulating attractors; encouraging dissent and diversity; managing starting conditions and monitoring for emergence.	Snowden and Boone, 2007 [17]
	Discourse with computer added tools [14]	Batie, 2008
	Involving stakeholders, documenting opinions, and communication [18]	Camillus, 2008
	Collaborative capacity building with the following commitments: governance with government, govern with the rules yet think creatively, networks as mutual-aid partnerships with society, an acceptance that a collaborative capacity builder can be someone without an official government portfolio, understanding of the intrinsic inseparability of performance and accountability in wicked problem setting, and persistent commitment to collaborative process.	Weber and Khademian, 2008 [20]
	Cooperative networks to facilitate in-depth problem understanding, provisional solutions, better implementable solution, expert and situational knowledge, and communication [6]	Head and Alford, 2015
Experimentation	Cultivating inquiry, learning, experimentation, and divergent thinking. [19]	Dooley, 1997
	Acting, sensing, and responding. Looking for what works instead of seeking right answers. [17]	Snowden and Boone, 2007
	Experimenting/piloting of policy alternatives with adaptive management [14]	Batie, 2008
Design thinking	Design approach with the following activities. Formulating the mess; this happens, not by listening independently formulated threats and opportunities, but by projecting the future that the system would have if it, and its environment, were to continue unchanged. Ends planning; this involves selecting the ideals, objectives, and goals to be pursued by preparing an idealized redesign of the system planned for, a design with which the relevant stakeholders would replace the existing system today if they were free to do so; i.e. defining the gaps to filled. Means planning; The ways of filling the gap are selected; they can be policies, programs, projects, procedures, practices, or individual courses of action.	Ackoff, 1981 [15]
	Discovering and inventing the particular (case-specific) circumstances and methods. Humanistic approach.	Buchanan, 1992 [21]
	Phenomenological and poststructuralist design thinking [22]	Coyne, 2005
Defining shared values and identity	Creating shared values and principles of action [19]	Dooley, 1997
	Defining shared identity with values, competencies, and aspirations [18]	Camillus, 2008
Policies	Lock-in; making a change durable so that if it occurs it is hard to reverse. Self-reinforce; making cost of reversal increase over time. Increasing returns; making benefits of change, once introduced, increase over time. Positive feedback; reinforcing the change within the initial population and expanding it into new populations.	Levin et al. 2012 [23]

Levin et al. (2012) [23] refer to “super wicked” problems, such as climate change, and explain their characteristics. The following characteristics make a wicked problem to be super wicked.

- *Time is running out.* Significant impacts will occur; with each passing year they become more acute; without any action, a nonlinear change and catastrophic events take place.
- *Those seeking to end the problem are also causing it.* Individuals who participate in coalitions trying to solve the problem also cause the problem.
- *No central authority.* Decision makers within public authorities do not control all the choices required to alleviate the problem. The collective attempts to solve the problem are characterized by anarchy.
- *Policies discount the future irrationality.* The public and decision makers, even in the face of overwhelming evidence of the risks of significant or even catastrophic impacts from inaction, make decisions that disregard this information and reflect very short time horizons.
- *A tragedy.* Political preferences are fixed and they focus on short-term strategic self-interest causing a “tragedy”. The need to act now to avoid future catastrophic impacts is recognized, but the immediate implications of required behavioral changes overwhelm the ability of the political and policy systems at multiple levels to respond. (ibid.) [23]

2.3 Dealing with wicked problems

According to Ackoff (1981) [15], problems can be resolved, solved, or dissolved. To *resolve* a problem means selecting a course of action that yields an outcome that is good enough, that satisfies, and suffices. This approach can also be called clinical; it is qualitatively oriented, rooted in common sense, earlier experience, and subjective judgements. Most managers are problem solvers. To *solve* a problem refers to selecting a course of action that is believed to yield the best possible outcome that optimizes the situation. This can also be called research approach, since it is largely based on scientific methods, techniques and tools. It is quantitatively oriented, and uses qualitative treatment only when quantitative is not possible. To *dissolve* a problem means changing the nature or the environment of the entity in which the problem is embedded. Problem dissolvers aim to idealize rather than satisfy or optimize. Their objective is ultimately to achieve a state in which the problem cannot occur any more. They use design approach and its various methods and combine qualitative and quantitative techniques. Instead of survival or growth, their objective is to increase one’s ability to increase one’s quality of life and that of others (ibid.) [#]. This article chooses to use the neutral and general expression “dealing with” rather than resolving, solving, or dissolving. Different potential ways how to deal with wicked problems are summarized in Table 1.

3 METHOD

This report emerges from an empirical research using different qualitative methods for collecting data and developing a service concept (Koski, 2018) [24]. The research follows the qualitative methodology, and thus the findings and results are based on subjective interpretation of the qualitative data collected (Taylor et al. 2015, Glaser 1978) [2,3]. The data of this study were collected in interviews (Portugal, S. 2013) [25] as well as in focus groups (Patton, 2015) [26] using service design methods (Stickdorn et al. 2018) [27] for concept development. The project was conducted 2018 in Finland, and it included 10 interactive data collection occasions during a half-year period.

A total of four (4) interviews were conducted, of which one was a group interview. All interviews were recorded using a phone with interviewees’ consent. Because of the language barrier, interpreter was used in one of the interviews. Before that interview, a fast brief of the topic and general guidelines about ethnographic interview techniques, were provided to the interpreter. After each interview, a quick draft of the most important insights was written down. Later, a more thorough analysis was conducted with the support of recording.

Focus group was used as another a qualitative research method. According to Patton (2015) [#], a focus group offers an opportunity to brainstorm ideas and insights from the interviews and other methods and project phases with area experts. Focus group of this study also acted as a project steering group of the current research and development project. The focus group meetings were organized as development workshops applying different service design methods, such as customer profile, customer journey map (Stickdorn et al. 2018) [27], and value proposition canvas (Osterwalder et al., 2014) [28]. The focus group of this study included three employees of the focal organization enhancing and facilitating the

employment of refugees, including the Business Program Manager, Head of Business and Producer. Business Program manager works with the business teams and the case organization's network partners with a hands-on approach. She/he organizes events, participates in drafting offers for business teams and makes sure day-to-day work in the programs runs smoothly. Producer also works with the business teams and helps them from the office premises, takes care of social media and other material and media related production. Head of Business Programs is responsible for the overall success and metrics of the business programs.

Later, after the concept development, three (3) more interviews were conducted with area experts for small-scale validation. The concept model presented in this paper is the version developed before the area expert interviews.

This research was conducted in and for an organization enhancing employment of refugees in Finland. The case organization's network connects asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants with Finnish society by offering work from the labour market, creating educational opportunities, and providing mentoring and training. They also offer support with a hands-on approach to learning new skills and provide useful information about the Finnish job market and what kind of information and mindset is needed to become an entrepreneur.

4 EMPIRICAL RESULTS: CONCEPT MODEL FOR DEVELOPING SCALABLE CATERING BUSINESS

Next, we describe the concept model for developing scalable catering business, which results from the empirical work explained earlier. The model aims at enhancing employment of refugees and building up their lives in a new country. The concept is developed for an organization involved in hands-on enhancement of employment of refugees in their new country. This organization is here called as *facilitating organization*. The concept model consists of three main phases: 1) learning the basics, 2) training in a controlled environment, and 3) for established business (Figure 1). This takes place through collaborative activity with the facilitating organization as well as teams consisting refugees participating in the program. The teams consist of refugees aiming at building up a catering business to themselves and they are here called as *business teams*. The process also involves a number of *external partners* that offer facilities to the program and arrange events. Each of the phases of the program includes activity and measures that are explained in the following. The skills of teams are advanced with various services offered to them during the three phases of the program. These services are offered to them by the facilitating organization that runs the development program.

Concept model for scaling

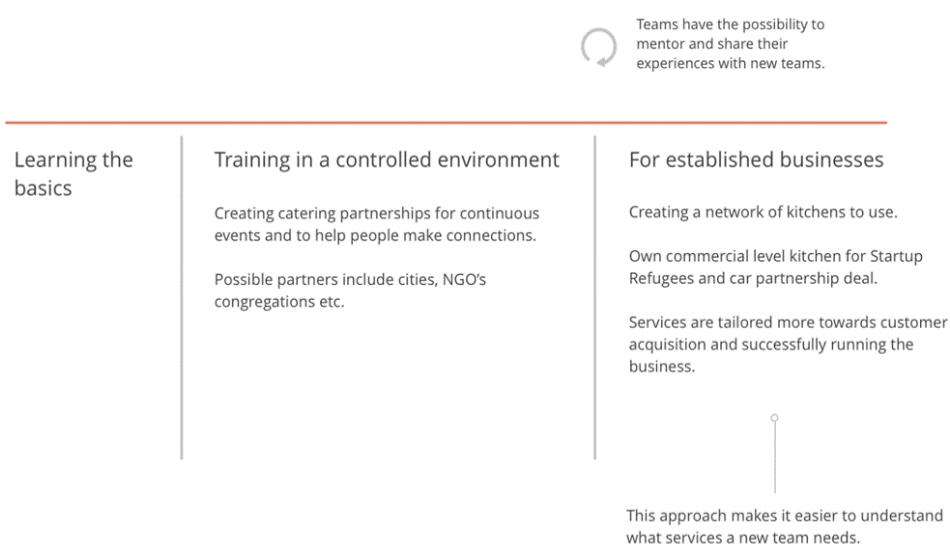


Figure 1. Concept model for developing scalable catering business [24]

4.1 Learning the basics

In the first phase, the business teams join the business development program. The teams consist of refugees aiming at building a business of their for themselves in the catering industry. Most of the activity during this stage is suited for every participant and business team regardless of how advanced they are in managing business and catering. Many of the topics of the development and training are general for anyone managing a business organization, such as local revenue law, business regulations and funding concepts. Thus, each participant and business team regardless of their specific field, experience, and level of expertise shares them. In this phase, it is important that the idea of the program is introduced to the participants, and they become committed by receiving the first positive and encouraging experiences. The activity and service offered to participants in this phase includes:

- Visiting restaurant and catering businesses
- Connecting with mentors
- Organizing specific business workshops
- Organizing universal business and regulations workshops
- Issuing hygienic passes.

4.2 Training in a controlled environment.

In the second phase, the business teams test their expertise in a real environment with real clients. This happens in kitchens and in event venues of external partners who organize events including catering. These partners may include non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, congregations, cities and small to medium-sized enterprises, which wish to increase their workplace's social responsibility and image.

The idea is to find partners who have their own kitchen and cold storage facilities. In an ideal case, the partner organizes their own events where they need catering at least a few times per year. This provides a steady stream of catering events for business teams of the program without having the facilitating organization to continuously search for new external partners.

This current concept model is based on co-creation and the notion that everybody wins. This creates an encouraging experience, because the facilities and venues are already familiar to the facilitating organization, and mentors have easier time to teach new entrepreneurs and cooks. With a steady stream of catering events, business teams of the program would also receive continuous opportunities to network and meet new people.

One of the biggest empirically identified problems was finding kitchens with an easy transportation from wholesale markets to the kitchens and event venues. This co-creation model answers the biggest pain point of finding a kitchen every time for each catering event. With fixed locations, organizing deliveries from wholesale markets becomes easier. This also makes menu and ingredient lists easier to standardise, if needed.

Partner organizations are able to network with the refugee catering and restaurant business teams. Moreover, cooking in a controlled environment creates a safer space for the business teams to meet the clients.

Services offered by the facilitating organization to business teams include:

- Preparing wholesale contracts and delivery
- Car rental or sponsorship services for delivering catering to a venue
- On-site mentoring when preparing for the event
- Helping and facilitating networking and positive experiences (translation services)
- Opening bank accounts and using banking services
- Making contracts and offers.

4.3 For established businesses

Third and the final phase is designed for established businesses. This phase involves business teams which have their business up and running. Moreover, these businesses have likely already done catering events with the partners from controlled environment phase.

At this stage, according to the empirical data, teams are still far from owning their own kitchens or restaurants. The need for using a kitchen has not changed, and the same co-creation model for the partner network can be used here too. Any organization with a suitable kitchen would be of great help for teams, which already can manage their own operation.

In return for using the facilities of external partners, the facilitating organization and/or the business teams pay provision per event or rent monthly. The organizations, which provide the facilities, also get to contribute positively and participate in organizational or corporate social responsibility movement.

Having a network of kitchens distributed over a metropolitan area helps business teams to choose the kitchen, which is close to a specific venue. The facilitating organization can negotiate fixed-price contracts with companies and institutions, which are a part of this network.

According to the empirical material, the acquired expertise will enhance teams' understanding of business and marketing in addition to improvement of their cooking and catering management skills.

In this phase, services offered by the facilitating organization to business teams include:

- Teaching of basics of marketing and branding
- Using social media channels
- Networking and finding leads
- Teaching about profitability and sustainability
- Creating a handbook of the best practices for the business teams
- Advising teams on menu creation, pricing and translations
- Creating a website for business teams, where a customer can send information about their event and ask for an offer
- Later, building a commercial level kitchen for the case organization and introducing car rental services for the teams for easier transportation.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to increase knowledge of designing a concept of a capability development program for building scalable catering business for refugees. A significant amount of potential in the labour market is wasted when asylum seekers are required to spend long periods waiting at reception centres. The concept was developed for an organization involved in enhancing refugee employment. The case organization aims at enhancing the employment of refugees by initiated targeted programs; one of which is a restaurant and catering business. Refugees, their social inclusion and employment in a new country are a classic example of wicked problems. The earlier research includes very little knowledge of developing systematic capability development programs for refugees in the area of entrepreneurship in catering business. There is a clear need to increase knowledge of this area. This research was based on a service design project applying in-depth qualitative interviews and focus groups. As a result, this research contributed by introducing a concept model for a capability development program for building scalable catering business for refugees. The model consists of three main phases, which are learning the basics, training in a controlled environment, and for established business. The following opportunities for further research emerge from this research. Firstly, the opportunities of digital tools could be examined in the context of enhancing the employment of refugees. Secondly, an empirical follow-up study could be conducted of the efficiency and effectiveness of an implemented concept model. Thirdly, the nature of wicked problems as attracted most of the interest of the researchers so far. However, very little knowledge exists on the ways how to deal with them. Clearly, more knowledge is required in this area.

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