

FETI IO5 Podcast with Kenny Anderson Transcript

- HC Hello, today's podcast for the FETI project is with Kenny Anderson, Director of SWAPWest. Welcome, Kenny, and thank you for taking the time to be with us today.
- KA Not at all, Helen. I am delighted to be here. Delighted to be supporting the FETI project.
- HC Thank you. Now, you and I both know SWAPWest has got a long history of working with adults returning to education. Do you have any idea how many of them have come from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds?
- KA Yeah, it's something that we've always kept an eye on, Helen - all the way through our period of time within the programme. It very much depends of on where our programs are delivered. In the West of Scotland, we clearly delivered a lot of our access programmes within Glasgow, and Glasgow has got a high level of... of refugees within the city, which is great. So we are often, within our programmess, within the city, looking at refugee levels being particularly high especially in certain programmes - we find programmess such as nursing, access to medicine, for example. But also medical studies, and often actually our engineering programmes, we see higher levels of refugees, so there can be between 10 and 20% of refugees on those particular programmes. It's perhaps been interesting to start to see refugees in some other other areas across Scotland as well. West College Scotand, over in the inverclyde area we've started to see more and also in New College Lanarkshire, the Lanarkshirearea, we now start to see more more refugees in these areas as well. And even as far down south as Dumfries, we see a lot more diversity in terms of the student body than perhaps we would have seen 10 -15 years ago, Helen, when we were when we were first starting to work with refugees.
- HC Have you ever had any specific training with regard to refugees and settling them in?
- KA I haven't Helen. What we've obviously worked with is providing what we would regard as good guidance for all students who come through the programmes. We work very closely with our college partners. And we'd be very much reliant on their expertise in terms of working with a wide variety of the student body. And I know that they do a lot of work. Again, probably particularly the Glasgow colleges - Glasgow Clyde and Glasgow Kelvin, we principally work with in thinking through the diversity of the of the student body who they represent. And so we are always pretty conscious of that. I think when it comes to programmes. It was one of the really good aspects of the FETI project... that this was an area that we were going to be looking at, we had particular concerns at that stage of some of our students coming on where English was a second language, which I think is an area where we've learnt quite a lot over the last period of time. And again, I suppose our job is to facilitate where there's expertise, sometimes within the college within the student support areas, and then look to develop that amongst not just ourselves, but also the college tutors, we have who run SWAP Access programmess as well. And again, we've seen some interesting and good developments, particularly in Glasgow Kelvin College, where there's a considerable amount of support now for students where they are coming in with English as a second language. And I think that has been one of the really nice consequences of the FETI project is that it's allowed us to think about some of the broader aspects of how we support and guide our refugee and asylum communities.

- HC Yes, I think I think the project partners have all discovered really that the language issue is the single biggest common challenge. What about more rewarding aspects with with working with these refugees and migrants?
- KA Yes, the really interesting thing is often what they very much to bring to the programmes. I am often reminded that we often see students and that all of our students have difficulties with English, whether or not they were born in Scotland in the UK or not, that's ... that's the purpose of the programmes. But our refugee students bring an awful lot of diversity to our programmes, which is, which really is of benefit across all our programmes, not just in terms of their own aspirations, but, but what they can bring in terms of learning back to a lot of our students. It's always I think it's an interesting mix, in terms of different learning styles that they have had from their own education. And that is often a really, really good and beneficial aspect. Not just to fellow students, but often to some of our tutors on the programme who will say to us, well, we're really impressed with these particular students because of the work ethic that they're bringing from from from their previous experiences and studies so that that element I think, is always useful in terms of the academic development. But there's also that personal and social aspect, where I think there is a considerable benefit to our homegrown Scottish students, as well as the other students, which we have in the programme. And it's lovely to see that eh sharing of cultures on the programmes. I think it's really useful in terms of, you know, from if you hink of some of our more practically based programmess like access to nursing, where there's going to be considerable diversity, that diversity is a very full part of the nursing profession as well as in allied health. But it's also incredibly beneficial on things like Humanities and Social Science programmes, where people come in with a very different perspective, often in respect of history and literature, for example, that I think benefits everybody across... across the board. So it's, it's a very valuable part of our SWAP community.
- HC You mentioned earlier that the guidance programme that you have with SWAP is part of the kind of scooping them up and take care of them in the early days. Are there any specific tools that you target towards these groups?
- KA Yeah, very, very much part of the, of what we're looking at, in the programme, Helen, is students when they first start with us realizing that they are actually coming with a lot of skills and attributes that, that are of great benefit, actually, to our university partners, once they complete the programme. And, and part of our job is, is highlighting that they have these skills and attributes, particularly when they're maybe applying for a particularly competitive degree. We have in the past, used and asked students to look for example, at Skills Development Scotland My World of Work, and how they can look to consider their skills and attributes with particular careers. And there's a lot of.. a wealth of materials there, that we've asked students to consider. We also through our preparation for higher education in the very early stages of a programme, we used to call it Taking Stock One we've we've renamed it slightly over the last few years. But the Taking Stock One materials and resources very much asked people to consider their previous learning and skills development. And often the most difficult aspect is for them to recognize it. We often recognize it, our tutors will recognize it, at interview in respect of being appreciative of somebody's ambitions, but to get somebody themselves to recognize it, and then to be able to articulate that in a way which will strengthen their applications is very much part of those activities. And again, one of the aspects that we were particularly keen to work with the FETI project, were ways in which we can ensure that they can be customized to the refugee community because we, we

weren't sure that we were in what is quite a challenging already, we weren't sure that we were actually getting over those points that people did have a lot of skills and attributes that they could bring. Perhaps because of some of the cultural differences in respect of how education is viewed in other countries. So again, I think that the FETI project really allowed us to review, consider those materials, and think about how we can customize them for the future.

HC So you would think that it going forward that you'll still be using and accessing the FETI tools into the into future years with with this group and with other organizations that obviously I know you're working with?

KA Yeah, absolutely. Both really, Helen, I think the FETI workshop materials that yourself and Paula have developed in the project will be of real benefit to us. It's absolutely highlighted to our class tutors, elements of that skills development, which are required within the programme. And what's been a real benefit to us throughout FETI has been the way in which we've been able to reengage with a lot of community groups, volunteer organizations, partnership organizations, who are working with refugees and asylum seekers, and through this tool has been a great benefit too, so we we hope to continue to promote that. It's got a lot of advantages for SWAP, because we get great students out of it and students which are more prepared, are even better for us. But I think has been useful from a partnershipship perspective because it it does show to some of the organizations that we work with just that benefit of education to the potential students who they're working with as well.

HC That all seems very positive, Kenny. Thank you very much for your time and sharing your experiences using the FETI Project tools in your work with asylum seekers, and thanks again for taking part today.

KA Thanks, Helen