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Foreign Credential Recognition Reconnaissance des titres de compétence acquis à l'étranger

Guest editor / Directrice invitée
Leslyanne Hawthorne,
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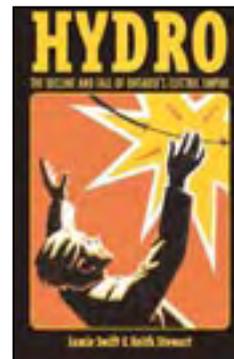
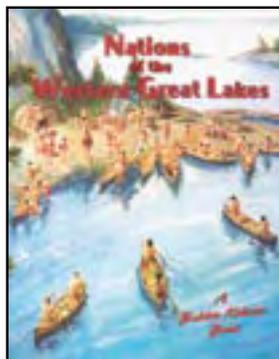
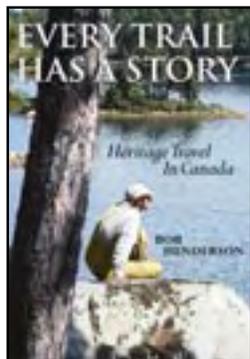
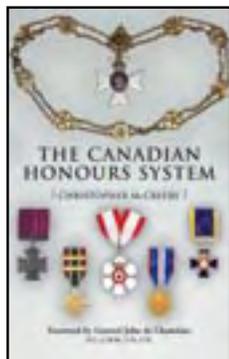


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CITC/ACS STREET ADDRESS / ADRESSE CIVIQUE CITC/AEC

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CANADIAN ISSUES / THÈMES CANADIENS (CITC) – ISSN 0318-8442

CONVENTION POSTE PUBLICATION, 41006541

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CITC acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canadian Studies Programme of the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Magazine Fund for this project.

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CITC bénéficie de l'appui financier du Gouvernement du Canada par le biais du Programme d'études canadiennes du ministère du Patrimoine canadien et Le Fonds du Canada pour les magazines pour ce projet.

FOREIGN CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION AND ASSESSMENT: AN INTRODUCTION

The scale of recent skilled migration to Canada¹

By 2005, 19.2% of the Canadian population was foreign-born, the world's highest proportion following Australia (24.6%). As early as the 2001 Census, the nation included 3,374,057 degree-qualified² immigrants and 3,801,118 with post-secondary diplomas or certificates (see Table 1). Between 1996 and 2001, newly arriving immigrants were more than twice as likely as the Canadian-born to be degree-qualified (37% compared to 15%). While male immigrants to Canada were much more highly educated than females (41% with degrees compared to 33%), both far exceeded the credential norm for the domestic workforce (15% of males and 16% of females respectively). As Kustec et al. show in this volume, credential recognition matters disproportionately to such skilled immigrants. Within the past decade, 1.2 million immigrants have reached Canada with the intention to work. Of the one-third who hold professional qualifications, at least 50% target fields requiring some type of training or formal credential. While just 15% of Canadians work in regulated occupations, this proportion rises to 34% when we look at the landed immigrants who arrived by 1996 and 2005 and for whom "intended occupation is known."

Table 1: Canada-born and foreign-born persons holding degree- and diploma-level qualifications, immigrants grouped by time of arrival in Canada, 2001.

Origin	Arrival	Degree or higher	Post-sec. diploma or certificate	Post-sec., no diploma or certificate	High school or less	Number
Canada-born		15.0	19.0	20.1	46.0	16,009,426
Foreign-born	Pre-1991	20.8	19.9	18.7	40.7	2,657,064
	1991-1996	22.1	17.1	18.5	42.3	719,443
	1996-2001	36.6	14.9	14.2	34.3	726,880
Foreign-born	Total	23.8	18.5	17.9	39.8	4,103,387
Total						20,112,813

Editor's note: These data are drawn from a sample of immigrants who entered Canada under the provisions of the former Immigration Act.

Source: 2001 Census (Canada), prepared for *Labour Market Outcomes for Migrant Professionals: Canada and Australia Compared*, L. Hawthorne, Statistics Canada, 2007 (forthcoming).

In 2004, Canada selected 133,746 people in the economic migration category and, in particular, substantial numbers of points-tested degree-qualified principal applicants (PAs). Skilled immigrants constituted 59.6% of the total planned intake at this time (224,346 people), greatly exceeding the targets set for the family (51,500-56,800) and refugee and humanitarian (30,800-33,800) categories, which also include workers with skills. By 2005, economic flows had risen to 156,310; this included skilled workers, business immigrants and provincial and territorial nominees (Cardozo and Guilfoyle, this volume).

Unprecedented numbers of these incoming immigrants held professional credentials. As early as 2001, immigrants constituted some half of all degree-qualified workers in the fields of engineering (50%), information technology (51%), and architecture and building (49%) (see Table 2). For example, between 1991 and 2003, there were 85,363 engineers who entered Canada as PAs in the economic category (CIC 2005),³ and they were subjected to a degree of pre-migration screening for job-related attributes, including host country language facility and qualification level. Of the total 95,285 engineers in all categories accepted at this time, just 10% (9,922) had arrived through the non-economic family or humanitarian programs. Comparable trends applied in IT, with 91% of degree-qualified arrivals selected through the economic categories.

By contrast, it is important to note that teachers, nurses and doctors typically reached Canada through non-economic intakes, with minimal pre-migration screening occurring from 1991 to 2003:

LESLEYANNE HAWTHORNE
 Professor Lesleyanne Hawthorne is Associate Dean International at the University of Melbourne, and has 20 years experience researching skilled migration and credential recognition issues. In 2005-2006 she was one of an Expert Panel of three commissioned by Federal Cabinet to conduct the most detailed evaluation of Australia's economic migration program in 20 years; in 2004-2006 she conducted a contrastive analysis of factors influencing labour market outcomes for migrant professionals in Canada and Australia; and in 2005-2006 she completed a major study of credential and employment barriers for international medical graduates in Australia.

- Teachers: 37% migrating in economic categories, compared to 63% in the family or humanitarian categories;
- Nurses: 38% in economic categories, compared to 62% in the family or humanitarian categories;
- Doctors: 58% in economic categories, compared to 42% in the family or humanitarian categories (See Table 3).

It seems reasonable to assume that such arrivals would experience greater difficulty securing appropriate Canadian work, given their lack of pre-migration “filtering” by points-based criteria.

The transforming source countries of skilled immigrants

The proportion of very recent (1996-2001) landed immigrants arriving in select professional fields is particularly striking. By 2001, 22% of the total Canadian IT workforce had arrived in the previous five years, in addition to 20% of all engineers, and 16% of architects and builders (16%). The suddenness of these inflows posed a clear risk of “flooding the market,” had their professional credentials allowed them to be immediately absorbed.

Principal applicants’ regions of origin however ensured that this would not be the case. From 2001 to 2003, China (22%), India (12%), Pakistan (6%) and the Philippines (5%) dominated economic category flows, compared to just 2% of economic principal applicants selected from the United Kingdom and Ireland (see Table 4). When major regions of origin are also considered, the top eight source countries and regions for economic immigrants to Canada between 2001 and 2003 were:

1. China: 21.7%;
2. North West Europe: 17.8%;
3. Other Africa⁴ and Middle East: 16.7%;
4. India: 12.2%;
5. Other South and Central America: 6.5%;

6. Other Asia and Pacific: 6.3%;
7. Pakistan: 6.1%;
8. The Philippines: 4.6%.

The latest available data show an even higher dependence on Asia, with primary source countries for economic principal applicants in 2004 being China (18%), India (11%), the Philippines (7%), Pakistan and Romania (4% each) (Hiebert 2006).

As demonstrated in a forthcoming study (Hawthorne 2007), markedly different groups were likely to achieve ready transition to professional employment in the first five years post-migration. These include, most notably, those from South Africa (with over 60% working in their own or another professional field), Australia and New Zealand (close to 60%), United Kingdom and Ireland (over 50%), North West Europe (over 50%) and the United States (close to 50%). Put simply, employers favoured immigrants derived from English-speaking background (ESB) or western countries, characterized by training systems directly comparable to those in Canada. Despite this, from 1996 to 2001 ESB migration to Canada was reduced to negligible levels. For example, just 6% of all medically qualified arrivals, 4% of nurses, 2% of engineers and 2% of IT professionals were immigrants derived from English-speaking background countries (compared to 30%, 43%, 22% and 18% respectively to Australia).

In terms of this economic migration, Canada selected a large number of country of origin groups that are at risk of experiencing unemployment levels three to five times the national norm, including immigrants from China and India (respectively 18% and 12% unemployed in the first five years post-migration). Increasingly, economic immigrants have also possessed first languages other than English or French. According to Hiebert (2006), this is now the prime determinant of differential employment outcomes in a knowledge economy (see also Ferrer et al.). Compounding these problems, unprecedented numbers of new economic immigrants had secured their qualifications in radically

Table 2: Canadian professional workforce (2001) by qualification level and field, birthplace and year of arrival, percentages.

Degree or higher, arrivals by field	Canadian -born	All foreign-born	Foreign-born			Number
			By year of arrival			
			Pre-1991	1991-1996	1996-2001	
Information technology	49.1	50.9	19.4	9.4	22.1	109,292
Engineering	49.6	50.4	21.9	8.7	19.8	287,723
Architecture and building	51.3	48.7	23.7	9.2	15.9	76,749
Medical studies	64.7	35.3	20.9	5.5	8.8	208,140
Nursing	76.6	23.4	15.3	3.5	4.6	91,337
Teacher education	84.8	15.2	11.4	1.8	2.1	515,503
Accounting	64.7	35.3	19.0	6.8	9.6	152,245
Rest of management/commerce	72.7	27.3	14.7	5.0	7.6	384,653
Society and culture, creative arts	75.7	24.3	15.5	3.6	5.2	1,106,842
Natural and physical sciences	64.5	35.5	19.9	5.8	9.8	312,154
Other	77.8	22.2	11.9	3.8	6.5	129,420
Total	71.0	29.0	16.4	4.7	7.9	3,374,057

Editor’s note: These data are drawn from a sample of immigrants who entered Canada under the provisions of the former Immigration Act.

Source: Hawthorne 2007 (forthcoming).

Table 3: Canada landed degree-qualified immigrants by category and occupation, 1991-2003 arrivals.

Category	Occupation	Arrival years			Total
		1991-1996	1996-2001	2001-2003	
Economic immigrants, p.a. [*]	Information technology	6,909	15,940	8,788	31,635
Economic immigrants, p.a.	Engineering	13,224	42,883	29,258	85,363
Economic immigrants, p.a.	Architecture and building	4,446	10,832	6,693	21,970
Economic immigrants, p.a.	Medical studies	3,219	3,625	2,671	9,513
Economic immigrants, p.a.	Nursing	2,417	126	293	2,834
Economic immigrants, p.a.	Teacher education	3,019	2,304	2,360	7,682
Economic immigrants, p.a.	Accounting	3,560	7,113	3,473	14,145
Economic immigrants, p.a.	Rest of management/commerce	10,331	14,908	9,917	35,154
Economic immigrants, p.a.	Society and culture, creative arts	4,261	7,135	4,334	15,728
Economic immigrants, p.a.	Natural and physical sciences	5,125	13,179	6317	24,619
Economic immigrants, p.a.	Other and no occupation code	132,113	107,088	54,149	293,349
Subtotal		188,619	225,127	128,247	541,992
All other immigrants with an identified occupation	Information technology	989	1,227	632	2,847
All other immigrants with an identified occupation	Engineering	4,127	4,010	1,785	9,922
All other immigrants with an identified occupation	Architecture and building	2,111	1,519	697	4,326
All other immigrants with an identified occupation	Medical studies	3,090	2,349	1,345	6,783
All other immigrants with an identified occupation	Nursing	2,330	1,475	874	4,678
All other immigrants with an identified occupation	Teacher education	6,637	4,169	2,189	12,994
All other immigrants with an identified occupation	Accounting	2,048	2,233	1,236	5,516
All other immigrants with an identified occupation	Rest of management/commerce	7,053	4,773	2,356	14,181
All other immigrants with an identified occupation	Society and culture, creative arts	3,279	2,587	1,331	7,197
All other immigrants with an identified occupation	Natural and physical sciences	1,792	1,633	561	3,985
All other immigrants with an identified occupation	Other and no occupation code	1,072,537	794,902	434,445	2,301,883
Subtotal		1,105,989	820,875	447,449	2,374,312
TOTAL		1,294,607	1,046,001	575,696	2,916,304

^{*} p.a. refers to Principal Applicants.
Editor's note: These data are drawn from a sample of immigrants who entered Canada under the provisions of the former Immigration Act.

Source: Compiled from landed immigrant arrivals data provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005, Hawthorne 2007 (forthcoming).

different and often under-resourced training systems (as noted by Lemay in this volume, many of those defined as “engineers” would be deemed to be technologists in terms of the educational equivalence to Canada). Initial training differences were exacerbated by what I have previously termed “technological fit” or the degree to which immigrants’ post-graduation experience was rooted in comparably advanced systems. Examples of this would be mechanical engineers with hands-on computer-aided design expertise or doctors and nurses experienced in western pharmacology and high-tech medical systems (Hawthorne 2005).

The human capital model of economic migrant selection

It is important to note that the human capital model has dominated Canada’s recent selection of economic

immigrants, allowing them to arrive prior to having their credentials screened, which is in marked contrast to the system now operating in Australia. As described in a recent report:

While education level matters for Principal Applicants, field and place of qualification do not, in a context where labour market demand is seen as hard to predict and ‘individuals can expect to have several careers over their working lives’. According to Hiebert (2006) the prevailing Canadian view is that ‘well-trained flexible individuals... who have experience in the labour force’ should be able to ‘adapt to rapidly changing labour market circumstances’. In consequence ‘general’ rather than ‘specific’ competence is

sought – Canadian selection criteria admitting Principal Applicants with limited host country language skills, non-recognised qualifications, and in fields of minimal labour market demand on an equal basis to those with more immediately sought after attributes. (Birrell, Hawthorne and Richardson 2006, 130-131)

In Australia, by contrast, perceived “employability” has determined economic applicants’ eligibility to proceed with migration since 1999. Employability is determined, in part, on the basis of a credential assessment, and principal applicants qualified in regulated fields have been required to apply for pre-migration screening by the relevant national or provincial/territorial licensing body. This is a strategy designed to avoid years of forced labour market displacement or skill discounting due to non-recognition of qualifications. Reflecting the existence of niche economies, 20 bonus points are allocated to applicants qualified in fields in demand, which is a measure associated with highly beneficial outcomes. Given the importance of host country language ability, candidates have been required to achieve “vocational” or higher level scores on the independently administered International English Language Testing System (or approved equivalent), which is administered globally by the British Council for a modest fee. Within two years of Australia’s abandonment of the human capital model of selection, 81% of economic immigrants were securing work within six months of arrival (compared to 60% in Canada), a figure rising to 83% by 2006.⁵ Far greater proportions of economic immigrants in Australia than in Canada now use their credentials immediately to secure employment, access professional or managerial status, and earn high salaries. Vastly improved outcomes have been achieved by principal applicants from visible minorities or otherwise disadvantaged groups, including older immigrants and females (Hawthorne 2007 forthcoming).

Differential training systems

Fair assessment of foreign credentials is a difficult and expensive task, which is the reason competency-based bridging programs are often a highly effective solution (Hawthorne 2002). In medicine, for instance, the latest available data show courses to have proliferated globally in

the past 30 years, principally in Asia (India, China and the Philippines) and Africa. By March 2005, the International Medical Education Directory listed 1,981 such schools across 170 nations. However, to date, minimal information is available on the calibre of curricula, clinical training, student selection, or the length of training across many Asian and African courses (Boulet et al. 2005).

The human capital model has dominated Canada’s recent selection of economic immigrants, allowing them to arrive prior to having their credentials screened, which is in marked contrast to the system now operating in Australia.... Within two years of Australia’s abandonment of the human capital model of selection, 81% of economic immigrants were securing work within six months of arrival (compared to 60% in Canada), a figure rising to 83% by 2006.

Such informational barriers affect many regulated fields, as is illustrated in the following case study of nurse education in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, which has in the past decade been the source of substantial internationally trained nurses for the West. For one single geopolitical nation, the credential research process required correspondence and documentation in six languages across 13 states within the newly constructed nation. Wholesale educational change had occurred between 1991 and the present, when the country began to be increasingly influenced by the European Union. Within this decade, nurse training had been transformed by war, partition and urgent health service shortages, which in some periods led to a serious abbreviation of study, followed by reversion to training norms after peace. Despite the researchers’ best efforts, in-country nursing bodies had been difficult to locate, with attempts to secure credential information eliciting minimal or no response. A further complication concerned the division between “elite” and baseline nurse training institutions (both awarding “registered nurse” credentials in the Former Yugoslavia Republic in the past), as well as the relative calibre of the university compared to college and hospital systems. Within a context such as this, it could be impossible for credential recognition bodies to secure details about the calibre of curricula, clinical training, subject range, level of supervision, or immigrants’ expertise at specific points in time. Unless a Canada-based competency-based protocol is to be adopted (Hawthorne 2002), these data are essential for assessing the registerability of individual nurses (Henry 2005).

The latest available global rankings confirm a substantial gulf between the stature of tertiary institutions in “developed” and “developing” nations, correlated with length of academic tradition and, more importantly, the availability of financial resources. In August 2006, the highly regarded Shanghai Jiao Tong University ranking system, which is viewed as relatively unbiased, categorized the top 500 world institutions as follows:

- 206 in Europe (overwhelmingly located in North West Europe), including 43 in the United Kingdom, and 40 in Germany;
- 197 in the Americas (167 in the United States, 22 in Canada, and just 7 in all of Central and South America [including 1 in the top 150]);
- 92 in the Asia-Pacific (32 in Japan, 16 in Australia, 14 in China [none ranked in the top 150, and with 2 of the top 4 ranked institutions in Hong Kong], 9 in South Korea, 7 in Israel, 5 in New Zealand, 4 in Taiwan, 2 in Singapore, and just 2 in India [neither ranked in the top 300]); and
- 5 in the Africas (4 in South Africa, 1 in Egypt, with no other African or Middle Eastern country listed). (Shanghai Jiao Tong University 2006)

Very comparable patterns were evident in The Times Higher Education Supplement Top 200 (2006) and the Top 100 Asia Pacific Universities rankings (Shanghai Jiao Tong University 2005). Such data suggest the quality of education to be highly variable in terms of major economic migrant source countries to Canada, despite the intellectual calibre and adaptive capacity of incoming immigrants (Sweetman 2005). As Adams affirms in this volume:

As the number of foreign-trained professionals in Canada increases, professional bodies are faced with an eclectic array of practitioners with training that may differ substantially from our own. There is no guarantee that they possess the skills, background and approach deemed essential by practitioners in Canada. Standards remain a concern.

Faced with this, regulatory bodies and employers typically adopt “risk-adverse” and at times prejudicial strategies (Adey, this volume). According to Kustec et al. (this volume):

The extent to which various factors are related to credential recognition problems is not well understood. Factors may include: newcomers’ lack of knowledge about how to have skills recognized, employers’ lack of knowledge about foreign credentials themselves, and a lower quality of foreign credentials relative to domestic qualifications versus market barriers caused by professional association protectionism and broader societal discrimination.

The increasing significance of foreign credential recognition to Canada

In the light of recent research findings, growing debate exists in Canada on the effectiveness of the human capital selection system (Sweetman 2005 and 2006, Sweetman and McBride 2004, Ferrer et al. 2004). A substantial literature now documents skilled immigrants’ deteriorating employment outcomes, including their level of economic marginalization,

differential wage rates, unemployment and risk of “skills discounting” (e.g. Thompson and Worswick 2004, Picot and Hou 2003, Picot 2004, Reitz 2005). As demonstrated by Kustec et al. in this volume, low income rates for recently arrived immigrants soared from 24.6% in 1980 to 35.8% in 2000. Immigrants may take 20-28 years to reach wage parity with comparably qualified Canadians (if ever), with little value generally ascribed by employers to non-western experience. Severe disparities are evident in select locations; for example “a staggering 52% of recent immigrants...[are] living in poverty” in Hamilton Ontario (Orme, this volume). The latest available data confirm the shocking finding that economic immigrants are now “more likely to enter low-income and be in chronic low-income than their family class counterparts,” at a time when the face of the “chronically poor immigrant” has profoundly changed to “one-half... in the skilled economic class, and 41% with degrees... up from 13% in the early 1990s.” (Picot et al. 2007).

Within the knowledge economy, evidence suggests that Canadian employers are placing increased rather than diminished emphasis on the recruitment of professionals perceived to be “job-ready.” The risk of de-skilling is greatest for visible minority groups, in a context where 73% of immigrants arriving in Canada in the 1990s now fall into this category (in this volume, see Esses et al.; Grant). Without question, the failure to screen credentials pre-migration is a major contributor to negative outcomes. As demonstrated by the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, in the first two years of arrival, lack of Canadian experience (27%) and foreign credential recognition (19%) are perceived by new immigrants to be their most serious labour market barriers, with skilled principal applicants reporting these to be particularly serious (respectively 27% and 24%) (Kustec et al., this volume).

The impact of demographic transition

Canadian concern for immigrants’ credential recognition has been galvanized recently by the strength of labour market demand. Equally importantly, it has been spurred by demographic contraction in the context of a “looming war for skills” where there is likely to be unprecedented global competition for workers.

As demonstrated by Sohail Khan (this volume), Canada’s fertility rate has dropped to 1.5, and “when the median age in Canada hits 42.5 in 2020, in Europe it will be 52.” The consequences of this demographic shift are already being felt across Canada. According to Aleksanian (this volume), for example, between 2002 and 2006, Quebec required 640,000 new workers, “over half of which were to replace retirees.” The province aims to increase its annual immigrant intake to 48,000 per year, beginning in 2007, which represents a vital labour force component. In Hamilton, 82% of current labour force growth is dependent on immigrants (Orme, this volume). In Newfoundland and Labrador, almost half of all physicians and almost one third of all specialists are now internationally educated, with their presence being essential to the maintenance of adequate health service provision (Baldacchino et al.).

Table 4: Canada annual flows of permanent economic immigrants by select country and region of birth, 1991-1996, 1996-2001, 2002-2003 (by rank order).

Category	Country of birth	Arrival years			Total
		1991-1996	1996-2001	2001-2003	
Economic immigrants,	China	16,215	42,739	25,711	84,664
principal applicants	India	5,723	18,159	12,680	36,561
	Philippines	16,199	5,606	3,928	25,732
	Pakistan	2,432	12,666	5,956	21,054
	Hong Kong	9,537	4,653	351	14,541
	UK and Ireland	6,042	3,833	1,995	11,870
	Taiwan	2,510	6,256	999	9,764
	Lebanon	4,409	1,683	1,608	7,700
	USA	3,370	2,395	875	6,639
	South Africa	1,556	1,560	698	3,814
	Malaysia/Singapore	1,069	698	450	2,216
	Australia	551	415	220	1,185
	Iraq	428	783	481	1,692
	Indonesia	133	581	423	1,136
	New Zealand	283	159	131	572
	Vietnam	252	189	115	555
	Other Europe	32,531	38,555	21,274	92,360
	Other Africa and Middle East	15,541	24,429	18,910	58,879
	Other South and Central America	12,498	9,588	7,249	29,334
	Other Asia and Pacific	5,937	10,874	6,718	23,528
	Not stated	264	192	42	497
Subtotal		137,476	186,009	110,809	434,293
All other immigrants with	Hong Kong	11,477	5,961	304	17,741
an identified occupation	China	3,812	4,578	2,120	10,509
	India	3,594	4,969	2,969	11,531
	Philippines	4,246	3,489	1,936	9,670
	Pakistan	1,092	3,166	1,878	6,135
	UK and Ireland	1,933	1,067	386	3,385
	Taiwan	1,030	2,012	249	3,290
	Lebanon	1,582	467	389	2,437
	Vietnam	1,263	150	22	1,434
	South Africa	528	510	158	1,195
	Malaysia/Singapore	523	245	128	896
	Iraq	309	368	160	837
	USA	194	101	16	310
	Australia	34	23	2	58
	New Zealand	15	8	8	30
	Indonesia	94	109	63	265
	Other Europe	8,054	3,186	1,571	12,810
	Other Africa and Middle East	3,826	4,196	2,532	10,554
	Other South and Central America	4,609	2,079	1,142	7,830
	Other Asia and Pacific	2,738	2,335	1,405	6,478
	Not stated	195	103	6	304
Subtotal		51,143	39,118	17,438	107,699
TOTAL		1,294,607	1,046,001	575,696	2,916,304

Editor's note: These data are drawn from a sample of immigrants who entered Canada under the provisions of the former Immigration Act.

Source: Compiled from landed immigrant arrivals data provided by Citizenship and Immigration, Canada, 2005, Hawthorne 2007 (forthcoming).

According to Ikura,

...by 2011, immigration will account for 100% of Canada's net labour force growth and all net population growth in the next 25 years... Attracting and retaining the best talent, including those with foreign education, training, and work experience, and ensuring that they are able to reach their full potential, is critical to the country's long-term economic success and prosperity... The pressing need to improve the quality, quantity and efficiency of the Canadian labour force is further intensified by the shrinking pool of labour that has resulted from an ageing population... To ensure that Canada has the labour resources that it needs to compete in the international marketplace we will need to look to other sources of labour, including internationally trained professionals.

Effective use of immigrant skills has become a high stakes issue that is critical to Canada's economic competitiveness and efficiency, as well as a social justice imperative. As Donaldson (this volume) notes, solutions to the under-utilization of migrant skills must be found, in a context where "immigration and integration have become mainstream policy concerns in public and private jurisdictions alike" and Canada faces "an emerging challenge with respect to power sharing between native-born and immigrant professionals." This volume is designed to make a timely and catalytic contribution to this solution-finding process. At the same time, the "transferability gap" is inevitably a challenge to anyone who moves globally:

(T)ransferability depends on the similarity between a migrant's country of origin and (the host nation) as regards labour market requirements, social and cultural conditions, and language... The low value attached to pre-migration work experience does not necessarily imply discrimination. The skills some immigrants bring... may (genuinely) not be as useful to employers as similar skills acquired in (the host country). Some skills are firm-specific, and for that reason lost with change of job. Others, such as knowledge of professional practices and regulations, can be country-specific and therefore lost through migration... Employers might find it hard to evaluate the job record of a migrant with little or no local experience. In addition, immigrants may not have sufficient knowledge either about the labour market or the range of contacts to

fully utilise the opportunities that arise (Bureau of Labour Market Research 1986, 7, 115).

Credential recognition challenges and solutions

The 34 papers contained in this volume highlight a number of debates on credential recognition, while presenting a range of Canadian strategies intended to provide solutions.

The history of regulatory body requirements

It is first essential to acknowledge the uniqueness of the Canadian credential recognition context. According to Adams (this volume), "Canada differs from many nations... in the extent of its legislation, the number of occupations covered, and the number of professions granted self-regulation." Historically, Canadian legislators have been "more likely to embrace professional regulation than their counterparts in England and the United States," with regulation "generally a provincial concern." For example, the field of engineering is tightly regulated in Canada, yet only semi-regulated in the United Kingdom and Australia⁶ (Walker, this volume, provides an overview of different international recognition processes).

The legacy of this Canadian history is a credential assessment maze involving an extraordinary array of stakeholders. Ikura's excellent article (this volume) maps the rights and responsibilities of the Government of Canada compared to provincial and territorial governments, in a context where the nation also includes five provincial assessment authorities, 400+ regulatory bodies, 200+ accredited post-secondary institutions, industry sector councils, NGOs, and a "myriad of employers each of which has a distinct role in foreign credential recognition and assessment" (with the power to recognize credentials *not* being vested in governments). Immigrants are often unaware of this complexity, including the extent to which jurisdictional differences will determine "their ability to secure licensure or approval to work in a particular profession."

The "legitimacy" of credential assessment

Sharp division remains among Canadians on the legitimacy of the credential assessment process, including the extent of any desirable reform. In the view of regulatory bodies (particularly those governing access to public safety fields such as medicine, nursing and engineering), detailed scrutiny of the status of past training is legally essential as well as fair (e.g. Dauphinee; McLennan; Lemay). For example, medical qualification document verification is deemed a vital first step, rather than discriminatory:

Canadian concern for immigrants' credential recognition has been galvanized recently by the strength of labour market demand. Equally importantly, it has been spurred by demographic contraction in the context of a "looming war for skills" where there is likely to be unprecedented global competition for workers.

(T)he need to valid(ate) the documents presented is not to challenge them, but to verify two issues from the granting medical school. First, is this person a valid graduate of the school and, second, is this an authentic document? Quality assurance and continuous quality improvement are not barriers. They are constructive processes to improve outcomes for the public (Dauphinee, this volume).

The prevalence of prejudice and professional protectionism

At the same time, as a range of articles in this volume affirm, Canadian assessment of foreign credentials has frequently flouted notions of equity, including the entitlement of immigrants to expect fair and consistent judgments, to mount appeals, and to secure adequate assessment of specialist as well as baseline qualifications. “Equivalence” to Canadian standards may *not* necessarily mean top calibre training.

Guo (this volume) contests the prevailing “deficit model of difference” in Canada, including the pervasiveness of a “democratic racism” he views as designed to absolve Canadian governments of their obligation to liberalize assessment processes. Esses et al. (this volume) view prejudice against visible minorities as the primary issue, although this does not take into account the relatively good outcomes achieved by select recent Commonwealth Asian groups (e.g. from Hong Kong and Singapore).⁷ Candy Khan (this volume) highlights the significance of conflict theory, the existence of segmented labour markets and, most importantly, the potential impact of professional protectionism in relation to immigrant outcomes; she suggests it would be disingenuous to believe that regulatory bodies are simply disinterested partners in the screening of international competitors or outsiders.

As noted by Freidson, professional groups have traditionally been “the creators and proponents of particular bodies of knowledge,” in a societal context where “knowledge becomes power, and (the) profession stands as the human link between the two.” In utilizing such power, regulatory bodies may come to exert “a pervasive social control” masked by “benevolence” – separating knowledge into credentialed and uncredentialed forms, and endorsing the norms it has become appropriate to value. In Friedson’s view, the professions’ goal in this is invariably self-serving, despite claims to protect the public and serve its interests. In fact, it is to gain a “secure and privileged place in the economy” of host countries through the formation of an “exclusionary shelter in the market in which (members once) had to compete with rival occupations.” In line with this strategy, associations typically laud their members’ attitudes and skills, promoting them “as honoured servants of public

need’, dedicated to occupations “especially distinguished from others... through the schooled application of their unusually... complex knowledge” (Freidson 1986, x, 1, 6, 33, 28). A notion of skills hierarchy is integral to the process: the assignment of superior or inferior status to different qualifications, whether acquired in-country or from overseas.

Goldberg goes so far as to refute the need for public discourse about “standards, accountability and measurement.” Challenging the notion that skilled immigrants’ “transferability gap” should be addressed, she argues that “the focus on immigrant professionals as ‘foreign trained’ devalues their skills and experience as unknown and not ‘up to Canadian standards’”, creating a “binary mentality” designed to distort reality while “justify(ing) racism against the other and unify(ing) the dominant group.” Within this framework,

credential bridging courses may be viewed as “assimilatory” in that they become an undue burden on participants to succeed. Additional research is clearly needed on such issues (see, for example, in this volume, Grant; Janzen and Buhel). The legislative reality, however, is that Canadian regulatory bodies control recognition, and employers cannot be forced to recruit unrecognized immigrants to work. Within this context, as multiple authors attest, employment bridging programs play a vital role in identifying and overcoming the labour market barriers that immigrants face, with many facilitating the achievement of excellent outcomes.

Foreign credential recognition strategies

Human Resources and Social Development Canada’s Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) program has spurred experimentation with diverse credential assessment and bridging models since 2003, and many are documented in this volume. The FCR program’s mandate is to provide “an integrated, comprehensive strategy in which over 14 federal departments work together to address

the barriers to working in Canada that internationally trained workers face,” as a key component of the government’s “broader Internationally Trained Workers Initiative” (Bourgeault, this volume). Through this program, \$68 million has been allocated over six years for various initiatives, which has been boosted by significant provincial and territorial funding (most notably in Ontario). Bodies likely to “achieve systemic improvements” have been targeted, focused first on areas of labour market shortage (doctors, nurses and engineers, since expanded to physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical laboratory technologists, medical radiation technologists, pharmacists, cardiology technologists and midwives, as well as select non-regulated fields).

In the view of regulatory bodies (particularly those governing access to public safety fields such as medicine, nursing and engineering), detailed scrutiny of the status of past training is legally essential as well as fair... medical qualification document verification is deemed a vital first step, rather than discriminatory.

According to Ikura, key FCR measures include credential verification, skills and language assessment “to determine any gaps,” résumé writing support, Canadian workplace orientation, and experimentation with new information provision modes (e.g. the Going to Canada Immigration Portal). Multiple experiments are underway, responding to unprecedented immigrant and institutional demand for unemployment solutions. It is critical to note that this occurs in the context of high labour market demand. Diverse stakeholders have been engaged, including federal departments (including Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Health Canada, and Canadian Heritage), provincial governments, regulatory bodies, language industry sector councils, educational institutions, employers, NGOs, and language testing providers. Funding investment by field is considerable, with examples including:

- \$75 million allocated by Health Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada for a five-year plan designed to integrate “up to 1,000 physicians, 800 nurses and 500 other health care professionals into the Canadian workforce”;
- \$5.8 million over three years by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities “to support 15 bridge training programs,” with “the Ontario government and the federal government... jointly investing \$3.4 million over two years to support 13 projects under the Enhanced Language Training Initiative” (Crutcher and Mann; Bourgeault; McLennan; Goldberg);
- \$341,050 allocated by Human Resources and Social Development Canada to the Medical Council of Canada for self-assessment exams and delivery systems, \$545,145 for the diagnostic assessment of nurses, \$300,000 for the National Midwifery Assessment Strategy and \$599,915 for a two-year orientation program for nurses and allied health professionals to the Canadian health care system.

Examination, re-training and bridging course trends

According to Janzen and Buhel (this volume), a 2006 scan conducted by Capacity Canada and the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services showed the operation of 55 initiatives Canada-wide, 16 at the national level and others in six select provinces. Such interventions fell into 10 types, all represented in this volume:

1. Credential assessment;
2. Licensing and regulation;
3. Partnership development (including comprehensive community initiatives);
4. Employer engagement;
5. Internships/mentorship programs;
6. Research, planning and design;
7. Language training;
8. Funding;

9. Information development and sharing;
10. Other labour market support (e.g. bridging programs).

Different occupations use different FCR means, ranging from examinations to competency-based assessment and the provision of industry-specific training. A series of case studies are provided in this volume, defining procedures and select outcomes across national or provincial and territorial jurisdictions for medicine (Dauphinee; Crutcher and Mann; Bourgeault), nursing and allied health (Baldacchino et al.; Bourgeault), the medical laboratory field (McLennan), pharmacy (Mohr and Crandall), engineering (Lemay), the construction trades (Desnoyers; Mitchell), and environmental employment (Moss and Trump).

Lively debate concerning future strategic focus is evident, with successive authors raising:

- Whether credential assessment and advice should commence pre- or post-migration, including the extent to which e-solutions should be used (Murray);
- Whether credential screening is best conducted by the “neutral” private sector (Owen), professional and trade associations (Lemay; Savard; Dauphinee; Mohr and Crandall; McLennan; Desnoyers; Mitchell), or public sector bodies and, if the latter, whether these should be developed at the federal (Dauphinee; Moss and Trump) or provincial and territorial levels (Kelly-Freake; Adams; Ikura; Crutcher and Mann; Aleksanian);
- Whether specific types of providers are best placed to offer credential-related interventions, including the university or college sector (Alboim and Cohl; Murray), regulatory bodies (see above), industry sector councils (Cardozo and Guilfoyle) or regional NGOs, including those capable of incorporating employers (Crawford; Adey; Kelly-Freake; Career Edge);
- Whether re-training and exam preparation represent important and timely strategies (e.g. Lemay; Crutcher and Mann; Bourgeault; Desnoyers; Mohr and Crandall), or unfair demands for immigrants to satisfy the host society’s “homogeneity” norms (Goldberg);
- Whether bridging course interventions should be funded as pilot projects or as ongoing educational offerings, and if the latter, who should pay: the migrant, the province, or the employer? (For example, Mohr and Crandall point out that fees in the range of \$7,500-\$13,000 are required to cover the costs of the University of British Columbia’s excellent pharmacy bridging course model);
- Whether employers should be embedded within the process, with mentoring as well as new technologies engaged (e.g. screened net-based databases designed for outreach to employers) (Crawford; Career Edge; Sohail Khan);
- Whether legal reform represents the best solution, such as the *Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act*, which was passed in Ontario in December 2006 (Janzen and Buhel⁸ are positive about this, while Donaldson is less sanguine);

- Whether quality assurance standards should be formalised and, if so, whether these should be based on national, international (e.g. UNESCO) or regional Canadian standards (Morrow).

The most common strategy identified was “information development and sharing” with the major benefits being the heightened visibility of the issues and that national or regional initiatives appeared “less siloed than in the past.” Despite this, it is important to note that few partnerships have yet been developed across provinces, great variation remains, “a depth of policy response” is still lacking, and there remains uncertainty of ongoing funding, which is critical to immigrants’ forward planning to participate in bridging courses. Multiple authors affirm the necessity of engaging employers and industry sector councils in the FCR process, variably through internship, mentoring, and web-based human resource outreach schemes. As Esses et al. note, credential assessment remains complex relative to local workers, with immigrants often left in an invidious situation long after credential recognition has been achieved:

The evaluation of foreign credentials differs in several ways from that of domestic credentials. First, often those who make hiring decisions need to invest more effort in evaluating foreign credentials. Second, even with additional effort, the evaluation of foreign credentials is associated with greater ambiguity than the evaluation of Canadian credentials. Decision-makers may believe they do not have, or they may actually not have, sufficient information... to make informed decisions, leading them to feel that they have to make judgment calls. Third, even if they have sufficient information, decision-makers may still feel less confident in their decisions about foreign-trained employees than about Canadian-trained employees.

The imperative for further reform

In conclusion, it is worth noting that a range of macro issues emerge in this volume.

First, the current strength of Canadian labour market demand appears the primary spur to credential recognition reform, raising the question of FCR’s sustainability should an economic downturn occur (see Crutcher and Mann; Cardozo and Guilfoyle; Mitchell; Moss and Trump).

Second, minimal consideration has yet been given to global mutual recognition trends, despite important

contemporary developments, in the European Union in particular. For example, no mention is made of the Canadian and Australian Medical Councils’ current pooling of Multiple Choice Question examination items for pre-migration administration to medical immigrants, a strategy with clear potential to be administered in a range of additional occupations. More analysis of this option seems required.

Third, decentralized settlement represents a persistent barrier to immigrants’ capacity to access expert credential assessment, reliable information, or bridging courses in the cities or towns where they lack critical mass (Baldacchino et al.; Moss and Trump). There is scope for further exploration of the merits of e-information and e-assessment strategies which could be used.

Fourth, many FCR initiatives have been resourced as pilot rather than ongoing programs (a critical issue for individual immigrants and workforce planning). Moreover few resources have yet been invested in assessing FCR program outcomes, with many papers lacking hard evaluation data, despite the authors’ conviction that they have developed nationally relevant and reproducible solutions (McLennan).

Fifth, as noted above, credential recognition is just one among many barriers confronted by skilled immigrants. Even where recognition has been gained “the results... are often treated very skeptically by academic institutions and employers,” compounded by views on the presumed value of past professional experience (Moss and Trump). As noted by Orme, greater consciousness-raising among employers is an imperative, in a context where “Research indicates that... employers generally have a very poor understanding of the nature and magnitude of the worker shortages that will threaten their very existence in the near future.”

Finally, while the number and range of initiatives defined in the current volume should be lauded, Canadian stakeholders continue to pull in different directions (Bourgeault

notes that “governments do one thing, educational institutions do another, and regulatory bodies do a third”). The challenge in the period ahead will be to sustain the momentum of the national as well as provincial and territorial FCR reform process, which must be supported by adequate funding. This will not be an easy task, in a context where participants call for “integrated actions and policies” while championing the appropriateness of their own best practice.

The legislative reality is that Canadian regulatory bodies control recognition, and employers cannot be forced to recruit unrecognized immigrants to work. Within this context, employment bridging programs play a vital role in identifying and overcoming the labour market barriers that immigrants face, with many facilitating the achievement of excellent outcomes.

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Notes

- ¹ The information in this section is derived from *Labour Market Outcomes for Migrant Professionals – Canada and Australia Compared*, Lesleyanne Hawthorne, Statistics Canada, 2007 (forthcoming), a study commissioned by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Statistics Canada and Human Resources and Social Development Canada.
- ² "Degree-qualified" refers to all immigrants who hold university degree level qualifications, as recorded by the Census or Citizenship and Immigration Canada's landings data.
- ³ All information on Canadian immigration flows is derived from the author's analysis of data provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in 2005. *Editor's note: Landings data referred to in this article are drawn from a sample of immigrants who entered Canada under the provisions of the former Immigration Act. New legislation, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, came into force in 2002; it includes a stronger focus on "human capital" attributes rather than occupation-based criteria.*
- ⁴ "Other Africa" excludes data from South Africa in the Census analysis.
- ⁵ In the mid-1990s, before Australia's policy change, new immigrants to Canada had achieved slightly better outcomes than those in Australia: respectively 64% compared to 57% in work six months post-arrival in the main economic category.
- ⁶ In Australia, as early as a decade ago, some 80% of migrant engineers were awarded immediate "professional engineer" status (Hawthorne 1994).
- ⁷ See *Labour Market Outcomes for Migrant Professionals – Canada and Australia Compared*, Lesleyanne Hawthorne, Statistics Canada, 2007 (forthcoming).
- ⁸ According to Janzen and Buhel, Ontario's Bill 124 "will require Ontario's 34 regulated professions to adopt registration practices that are fair, transparent and expeditious. This legislation will standardize licensure requirements of Occupational Regulatory Bodies. This includes appropriate and timely information supply about requirements, improved communication practices and appeals processes. A Fairness Commissioner will also be appointed for oversight and auditing, and an Access Centre for Internationally Trained individuals will be established as central clearinghouse of information". However Donaldson describes likely limitations to the Bill with some critics calling it a "lost opportunity" for more radical reform, "fall(ing) short of creating a mechanism to recognize foreign work experience," and "fail(ing) to address concerns in the immigrant community over systemic discrimination against credential recognition applicants from certain countries."

PROFESSIONAL REGULATION IN CANADA: PAST AND PRESENT

ABSTRACT

This paper briefly reviews the history of professional regulation in Canada. Regulation entails restricting access to professions to protect the public and ensure professional competence. The challenge facing professions today is to maintain restrictions to exclude the untrained, while improving the ability of those trained outside of Canada to enter professional practice.

Professional regulation in Canada: past and present

In 1797, the Government of Upper Canada passed “An act for better regulating the practice of law” (the *Law Society Act*). The purpose of this legislation was to establish a legal profession and a mechanism for training and creating lawyers in the province. It was one of the first key pieces of legislation regulating professions in Canada and was notable (and largely unique in the English-speaking world) for the extensive rights and privileges that it granted to the nascent legal profession in what was to become Ontario (Moore 1997). Lawyers themselves, represented by their most prominent members, serving as “Benchers,” were to set standards for entry into and for the practice of law and to ensure that these standards were met. The legal profession was given the right to pass by-laws and regulate access, education, and practice conduct. Through the legislation, the government seems to have sought to create a legal profession somewhat similar to that existing in England, yet it encoded into law, rights and privileges that were not so formally specified elsewhere. The government had to adapt English, custom-rooted in its traditional social hierarchy, to a colony with a vastly different population, topography and social relations.

The profession of law was not the only profession regulated in the Canadas before Confederation. Early on, colonial governments in Upper and Lower Canada sought to regulate specific occupations, such as medicine and land surveying, which were viewed as being key to the functioning of government and the well-being of the populace. Legislation regulating these occupations typically aimed to improve competency by requiring new practitioners to pass an examination. Here, however, regulation rested firmly in the hands of the government and its appointees. Envious of their lawyer counterparts, prominent medical doctors and land surveyors lobbied for decades for legislation granting them the right to regulate their own practice. Both occupations were eventually successful in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The regulation of law, medicine, and other occupations, including dentistry and pharmacy, in the years following Confederation in 1867 established a precedent for the regulation of many occupations in Canada. Regulation is defined as legislation limiting the practice of certain jobs to those with specific training, education, and credentials, and governing the practice of these jobs to protect public safety as well as to ensure that work is done ethically. Some professions (like law, medicine, dentistry, and many others) are self-regulating, meaning that a regulatory college or board made up of practitioners (and, in modern times, representatives from outside the profession as well) has been established to set entry standards and oversee professional conduct. Some are regulated by government representatives from outside of the profession (like teaching, historically). Canada is not alone in regulating occupations and professions; most countries in the world regulate at least some occupations and thus limit access to them. Canada differs from many nations, however, in the extent of its legislation, the number of occupations covered, and the number of professions granted self-regulation.

In this paper, I review the nature of past and current professional regulation in Canada and how historical practices have shaped access to professions. Professional regulation is designed to limit access to practice. Limiting access is deemed essential to protect the public and ensure competence. Nevertheless, regulation creates barriers. In Canada, because professional regulation is generally a provincial concern, and because certain occupations are regulated differently here than elsewhere, these barriers are sometimes particularly acute, especially for the foreign-trained. The challenge facing

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professions is to improve access, without undermining the very real gains brought about through regulation and restricted access to professional employment in Canada.

Traditions of regulation in Canada

One might ask why governments regulate occupations at all. Why do we need laws governing certain kinds of activities and restricting access to some jobs? The simple answer is that certain jobs are seen as so important to the public and to social well-being that they cannot be left unregulated. Historically, having a legal profession was seen as crucial to defining and maintaining law and order in the country. Regulating medicine was useful to ensure that those providing health services would do more good than harm. Regulation in these professions and others helps consumers separate the competent from the incompetent, by granting credentials and licenses to the qualified. More broadly, sociologists have argued that the regulation of occupations and professions was an important component in the rise of nation-states, and establishing social order (Johnson 1993). Establishing expertise in key areas of social life (law, land, health) facilitates governments' ability to govern. Regulation may have been particularly important in early Canada, with its small and geographically dispersed population (Adams 2005). Establishing professions enabled governments to foster social and economic development (through law, land surveying, and eventually engineering), and improve the well-being of citizens (through health professions, educational reform, and so on).

Historically, Canadian legislators have been more likely to embrace professional regulation than their counterparts in United Kingdom and the United States. Despite some early attempts at regulation in the US, regulation of professions like law and medicine was generally short-term, piecemeal, and only standardized in the early 20th century. The regulation of occupations such as medicine, law, and dentistry was more sweeping in Canada than in the UK. Some occupations, such as engineering, are highly regulated in Canada, while they are only partially or loosely regulated in the UK and the US. Historically, Canadian provincial governments, with their largely decentralized, and non-bureaucratic structures, as well as their ideological commitment to order and hierarchy, appear to have been far more willing to regulate professions than were others. This established a pattern and acceptance of regulation that has carried into the present day.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the impetus for regulating professions often does not originate with legislators, but rather with workers themselves. As noted above, legislation granting medicine and land surveying self-regulation was the product of an intense lobby by leading practitioners and their professional organizations. Legislation regulating dentistry, veterinary surgery, accounting, architecture and many others similarly resulted from campaigns led by practitioners. Why did these workers and others – from nurses and chiropractors, to naturopaths, acupuncturists and information technology workers – seek regulation? Traditionally, workers have had a great deal to gain. Many professional groups seek regulation when faced with intense competition from lesser-trained workers who purport to provide similar services at a much cheaper price.

This is particularly evident in the health care field. Historically, traditional medical doctors faced competition

from homeopathic doctors, botanical healers, midwives, apothecaries, and a wide range of other specialists who advertised miracle cures and medicine for all ailments. As a result, it was difficult for esteemed and educated doctors to make a living, earn public respect, and maintain themselves and their families in the style to which they aspired (Gidney and Millar 1994). Through legislation, they sought a monopoly over medical practice to reduce their competition, protect their livelihoods, autonomy and social status, and to protect their claims to expertise. While they were not initially successful in excluding all other health providers, medical doctors obtained legislation that restricted access into medicine, and granted them the right to set admission and education standards and examinations. Today's diverse health care providers face similar competition and seek similar gains through regulation. Through regulation (and restricted access), practitioners can control the supply of workers and thereby improve their working conditions and rewards. At the same time, however, they can also ensure that all practitioners have gone through extensive training, improving the quality of services being offered to the public. Traditionally, provincial governments have seen this as a win-win situation: regulating professions, and restricting access into professions, creates competent workers who can provide important services to a (potentially) vulnerable public who might otherwise not be able to distinguish the skilled provider from the unskilled. If these workers are in turn rewarded for their services with satisfying, well-paying work, then surely everyone benefits.

In the past, as in the present, educational and training credentials were the primary means through which entry into professions was limited. Only those with the appropriate credentials were given permission to practice. Access to professions was historically also restricted by gender, race, ethnicity, and religion. The ideal professional practitioner in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was an Anglo-Saxon, White, middle or upper class, Protestant male, and those who did not fit into this category often faced many explicit and implicit barriers. From the very beginning, access was also restricted by country of birth and region of training. Early legislation regulating dentistry in Ontario was typical: entry into the profession was restricted to British citizens of "integrity and good morals" who had passed the matriculation, education and examination requirements set by the Ontario dentists' regulatory college, the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (Adams 2000). Thus, anyone born outside of the British Empire who had not passed the exams set by Ontario dentists was not eligible. Such regulations became increasingly problematic.

For instance, consider Louis Gagne, a medical doctor trained in Quebec who wanted to practice in Ontario around the turn of the twentieth century. Gagne obtained a medical degree from Victoria College in Montreal in 1890. After practicing in Quebec for nine years, he established a practice in a francophone Ontario community. Because he was trained out of province, Gagne's practice was, technically, illegal. Gagne, supported by members of his community, petitioned Parliament for legislation that would grant him the right to practise. The legislation, which was passed early in 1902, permitted Gagne to practise until the fall of 1902 when he was required to pass the

final exams of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to obtain a license. Owen Van Epp, an American-trained doctor, pursued a similar path in 1904 when he sought to practise on Pelee Island, with similar results. Van Epp and Gagne were fortunate: many professionals trained out of province had their requests for similar legislation denied (Adams 2005). Clearly, a system that required a separate act of the legislature or the repetition of lengthy training every time someone wanted to practise in a province other than the one in which they were trained, was far from ideal.

In response, many professions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries undertook a process, not dissimilar to that occurring today, to ease the ability of those trained in the US, or in a different province, to practice in the Canadian region of their choice. Within Canada, reciprocity agreements and nation-wide education standards and accreditation practices were designed to ensure that no matter where they were trained, professionals had the required skills. Those trained abroad often had to go through a retraining process. Greater harmonization of training and education practices in Canada and the US has facilitated acceptance of the American-trained, but it has proved difficult to harmonize standards worldwide.

Broadening access, maintaining competence

Expanding access to professions is not easy because regulation, by its very nature, entails restricting access. Regulation is intended to ensure that professional practitioners are skilled, knowledgeable, and competent, as well as ethical. Ideally, they should be interchangeable; you should get the same excellent service, no matter which doctor, lawyer, or chartered accountant you patronize. As sociologist Magali Sarfatti Larson (1977) has argued, homogeneity is at the heart of professionalism. The goal of professional education is to create workers who are essentially similar in every meaningful way. This was easier to achieve when all practitioners attended the same schools and followed the same training regimen, which historically was frequently the case. With the movement of practitioners across borders, it becomes harder to ensure that all practitioners share the same knowledge, skills and values. The challenge facing professions today is to expand access, while ensuring that all practitioners are equally qualified, equally trained and possess the same professional values and vision.

As the number of foreign-trained professionals in Canada increases, professional bodies are faced with an eclectic array of practitioners with training that may differ substantially from their own. There is no guarantee that foreign-trained professionals possess the skills, background and approach deemed essential by practitioners in Canada. Standards remain a concern. Most professional schools in Canada have high admissions standards, only admitting the best and the brightest. Moreover, professional programs

often look for other qualities from their students seeking, for instance, not only good scholars, but people with a wide range of interests, experience, good interpersonal skills and so forth. Professional bodies have given considerable thought to the qualities that are most desirable in practitioners. The qualities sought in Canada may not be those emphasized elsewhere. Furthermore, it must be recognized that some of the foreign-trained are Canadians who seek professional training abroad, sometimes because they cannot meet the standards set by Canadian programs. Professional bodies need to make sure that all of the foreign-trained possess the same competence as the Canadian-trained and that there is no alteration of accepted standards and practices. This is both to their benefit and to ours as a society. Retraining seems the most practical way to ensure that all practitioners possess the same knowledge, skills, outlooks and approaches. Nevertheless, finding a way to do this in a manner that is both cost-effective and not overly time-consuming has been a challenge.

Conclusion

Regulation inherently restricts access to professional practice, but it does so to ensure competence and public well-being. The goal is to ensure that the barriers in place are fair ones that keep out the unskilled and incompetent and do not limit entry to practice based on place of birth, location of training, class background, ethnicity or other factors. The challenge facing professions today is to maintain their control over entry to practice and to maintain their standards, while providing opportunities for the foreign-trained to utilize their skills. Their efforts to ease the entry of the foreign-trained provide an opportunity to revisit the kinds of characteristics

and values practitioners need to have and recognize the value of the skills and cultures these workers bring with them from abroad. In the end, the professionals serving Canadians will be more diverse in terms of their backgrounds and the perspectives they bring to their work, and this can only improve the service provided to Canada's increasingly diverse population.

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Many professional groups seek regulation when faced with intense competition from lesser-trained workers who purport to provide similar services at a much cheaper price.

FOREIGN CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION AND HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CANADA

ABSTRACT

Foreign credential recognition has been identified as a major contributor to the employment outcomes of internationally trained professionals in Canada. This article discusses the Government of Canada's approach, and progress, to ensuring that internationally trained professionals have access to credential assessment and recognition processes that are fair, accessible, coherent, transparent and rigorous.

Canada's ability to sustain the capacity required to compete in an increasingly knowledge-based, global economy is dependent on the skills of its people. Globalization and the shift towards knowledge-based economies have placed increasing importance on ensuring the Canadian labour force is equipped with the skills and education needed to secure Canada's global competitiveness. The pressing need to improve the quality, quantity and efficiency of the Canadian labour force is further intensified by the shrinking pool of labour that has resulted from an ageing population. To partially offset pressures created by increasing global requirements and a diminishing pool of labour, the Government of Canada has placed a focus on increasing the quantity of available labour resources, while strengthening the quality of Canada's domestic labour force. While Canadian graduates will continue to account for the majority of our domestic labour force, their volumes will soon be surpassed by those exiting the labour market. To ensure that Canada has the labour resources that it needs to compete in the international marketplace, we will need to look to other sources of labour, including internationally trained professionals.

Data from Statistics Canada reveal that by 2011 immigration will account for 100% of Canada's net labour force growth and all net population growth in the next 25 years. However, outcomes for new immigrants have been decreasing for some years. Several factors have contributed to this decline, including lack of recognition of foreign credentials, lack of Canadian work experience, language abilities, timely and specific labour market information, and literacy and essential skills requirements among others. As a result, the income of skilled worker immigrants has been deteriorating since the early 1990s. A report undertaken by Statistics Canada found that in 2002, low-income rates among immigrants during their first full year in Canada were 3.5 times higher than those of Canadian-born people. By 2004, they had edged down to 3.2 times higher. These rates were however higher than at any time during the 1990s, when they were around three times higher than rates for Canadian-born people (Picot, Hou and Coulombe, 2007). These findings are particularly troubling considering that of the approximately 235,000 immigrants who came to Canada annually during the past several years, 20,000 (8.5%) self-identify as having the intention to work in a regulated profession in Canada for which their credentials would have to be recognized.

Attracting and retaining the best talent, including those with foreign education, training, and work experience, and ensuring that they are able to reach their full potential, is critical to the country's long-term economic success and prosperity. There is a large and growing population of newcomers whose labour market potential is under-utilized, despite possessing higher levels of education. For example, in 2002, 46% of all recent immigrant workers had a university degree and a further 13% held some other form of post-secondary credential such as a non-university diploma or trade certificate. However, approximately 60% of employed immigrants do not work at the same level of occupation they were employed in prior to coming to Canada, regardless of the education level.

Foreign credential recognition in Canada

Significant attention and cooperation from a multitude of players is required to effectively contend with labour market inefficiencies resulting from issues related to foreign credential assessment and

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recognition. Each of these players has a distinct role to play in assessing or recognizing the credentials of internationally trained professionals. The government role is a shared responsibility of the federal, provincial and territorial governments and is defined by the *Constitution Act*. Provincial and territorial governments have jurisdiction over the regulation of skilled trades and most professions, and have delegated authority to regulate most professions, including determining licensing and certification requirements, to provincial regulatory bodies. The Government of Canada's role is situated within its responsibilities for the immigration system, national labour market policies, and providing leadership and national tools to strengthen the economic union. In addition to this broad-level involvement, the Government of Canada is also responsible for maintaining occupational competency standards for certain regulated occupations in Canada, such as some professions in the transportation sector.

In addition to the roles played by the federal, provincial and territorial governments, there are several other players involved in the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials in Canada. More specifically, there are currently five provincial assessment agencies, more than 400 regulatory bodies, over 200 accredited post-secondary institutions and a myriad of employers, each of which have a distinct role in foreign credential assessment and recognition. The responsibilities of these different bodies vary according to the purpose of the assessment or recognition. In the most general sense, universities, colleges, regulatory bodies, and provincial assessment agencies tend to be concerned with formal recognition related to educational credentials while the remaining groups are more involved in informal recognition from training and work experience. Institutions that conduct formal assessments typically do so to meet their organizational needs. In the majority of cases, post-secondary institutions conduct their own assessments of foreign credentials and grant recognition for academic placement in their institutions, while regulatory bodies may conduct assessments of foreign credentials for licensure or certification. In the case of the regulatory bodies, foreign credentials are only a part of the licensure process, and organizations may therefore lack the capacity to undertake assessment. In these instances, regulating authorities may rely on other organizations, such as provincial assessment agencies, to interpret foreign education. Employers, sector councils, and NGOs are typically concerned with whether applicants with foreign credentials have the skills necessary to meet the criteria of the position for which they are being considered. These bodies often use the results of an informal recognition or assessment as a proxy for competence. For employers,

methods of assessment are done very practically in that they hire internationally trained workers and determine the results based on their performance.

There can however be overlap in the work of these distinct bodies which is why some choose to work in collaboration with one another. For example, the provincial assessment agency in the province of Alberta, the International Qualifications Assessment Services (IQAS), undertakes three types of assessments, one of which is for entrance into post-secondary institutions in Alberta or Saskatchewan. By working with IQAS, provincial post-secondary institutions are able to speed up the admittance process while maintaining the reputation of their institutions.

The large number of organizations involved in the process adds a level of complexity to the way in which foreign credentials are assessed or recognized. Internationally trained professionals are often unaware of how and by which body to have their credentials assessed or recognized. For example, immigrants wishing to obtain licensure to practice in one particular province would typically approach the provincial regulatory body responsible for granting licenses for that profession to attain approval to work in that occupation. In contrast, immigrants wishing to obtain a Canadian interpretation of their credentials would typically approach a provincial assessment agency. Many immigrants arrive in Canada only to find they need to have assessments completed. They are not aware of Canada's complex labour market and the impact jurisdictional differences may have on their ability to secure licensure or approval to work in a particular profession.

Distinct jurisdictional roles and responsibilities have created a clear need to ensure that each of these bodies works in cooperation to make systemic improvements to foreign credential systems and processes. The Government of Canada has committed to working with partners and stakeholders to ensure that the roles and responsibilities stemming from jurisdictional obligations are respected and that the safety and security of Canadians is maintained. Its overarching role is therefore to support improvements to the systems and processes of assessment and recognition to ensure that they are fair, accessible, coherent, transparent and rigorous across the country.

Barriers

Despite nation-wide efforts to improve FCR systems and processes, barriers still remain. One of the most difficult challenges that must be addressed is providing up-to-date information to immigrants before they arrive in Canada. The lack of specific information available to prospective and new immigrants on Canada's foreign credential systems

The Government of Canada has committed to working with partners and stakeholders to ensure that the roles and responsibilities stemming from jurisdictional obligations are respected and that the safety and security of Canadians is maintained.

and processes is a barrier to their successful integration into the Canadian labour market. Most immigrants are under the impression that they will be able to resume employment immediately in their profession or field once they arrive in Canada, regardless of their educational qualifications or language abilities. In many cases, these immigrants will need to have their credentials assessed to become licensed to practice in Canada. Furthermore, in some cases, the issue may be further complicated when the education of immigrants is not equitable with that of their Canadian counterparts. To contend with the issues resulting from unrealistic expectations, the Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program has made investments to help prepare immigrants in their country of origin. The program is working with post-secondary education institutions to pilot the development and delivery of overseas integration services. These services include credential verification, skills and language assessment to determine any gaps, résumé writing and Canadian workplace orientation. The objective of these activities is to allow immigrants to begin to address some of these gaps before coming to Canada and to ultimately speed up their integration into the labour market.

The Government of Canada is also working to reduce barriers created by a lack of information on credential recognition through the Going to Canada immigration portal, which is a collaborative project between Human Resources and Social Development Canada and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The Portal is an online tool for prospective immigrants, new Canadians, and those who interact with them, to learn about integration into the Canadian labour market. With the assistance of this tool, immigrants can learn about job search and preparation, foreign credential recognition, online skills assessments, information, services, and tools supporting learning opportunities towards attaining Canadian credentials and other topics related to integration into the labour market.

Another barrier that has been identified as having an impact on the way in which international credentials are assessed or recognized is the lack of capacity that some Canadian institutions have to analyze the qualifications of immigrants. A number of institutions have limited organizational financial or human resources dedicated to this function. Furthermore, similar to educational institutions, regulators in the same occupation, but in different provinces or territories, may arrive at different assessments of the same degree or diploma. Requirements and procedures vary by jurisdiction, and few professional bodies or employers have a coherent or systematic approach to the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. Within each jurisdiction, many organizations provide assessments for a wide variety of purposes and often follow very different procedures for assessment of foreign qualifications. Inconsistent processes mean qualified

immigrants can undergo multiple assessments unnecessarily and, in turn, remain underemployed or unemployed for long periods of time.

To effectively address this barrier, the federal government has committed to continue working with provinces, partners and stakeholders to improve the consistency of assessments and the capacity to do assessments. Activities to facilitate the harmonization of foreign credential recognition and assessment practices across the country have been primarily implemented through the FCR Program. Through projects supported by the program, the Government of Canada has been able to make improvements to the way organizations across Canada assess the credentials of internationally trained professionals.

Foreign Credential Recognition Program

In recognition of these factors, the Government of Canada has developed and implemented targeted programming to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials. Through Human Resources and Social Development Canada's FCR Program, the government has made improvements to

the systems and processes that underlie the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials in Canada. The FCR Program has been allocated \$68 Million over six years to implement the program and to engage organizations in activities that will achieve systemic improvements in the way in which their professions assess or recognize foreign credentials.

Progress to date

The FCR Program has worked with a multitude of national regulating authorities from across Canada. In collaboration with these groups, the FCR Program has worked to make the systems and processes that govern these professions fairer, more transparent, and consistent in assessing the international credentials and experience of immigrants. Making amendments to these systems and processes does take time as rigorous standards need to be maintained to protect the health and safety of the Canadian public and the integrity of professions. The FCR Program is also working with the provinces and territories to share the best practices emanating from these projects and strengthen FCR capacity across the country.

Early work of the FCR Program was aimed at doctors, nurses and engineers because of shortages in the healthcare field and an oversupply of engineers. The FCR Program has since expanded its focus to other health occupations including: physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical laboratory technologists, medical radiation technologists, pharmacists, cardiology technologists, and midwives. The FCR Program has also directed efforts towards non-regulated occupations. Given that 85% of Canada's labour force works in non-regulated occupations, the FCR Program has supported a number of initiatives aimed at increasing employer awareness of the value of

The Portal is an online tool for prospective immigrants, new Canadians, and those who interact with them, to learn about integration into the Canadian labour market.

the skills and experience that internationally trained professionals bring to the workplace.

The FCR Program works with employers primarily through the National Sector Council Program. The relationship that sector councils have created with employers, labour, and educational institutions positions them to serve as an initial point of contact in the program's work in credential assessment and recognition for non-regulated occupations. The FCR Program has already negotiated agreements with close to one-third of all the sector councils in Canada.

Future work of the FCR Program

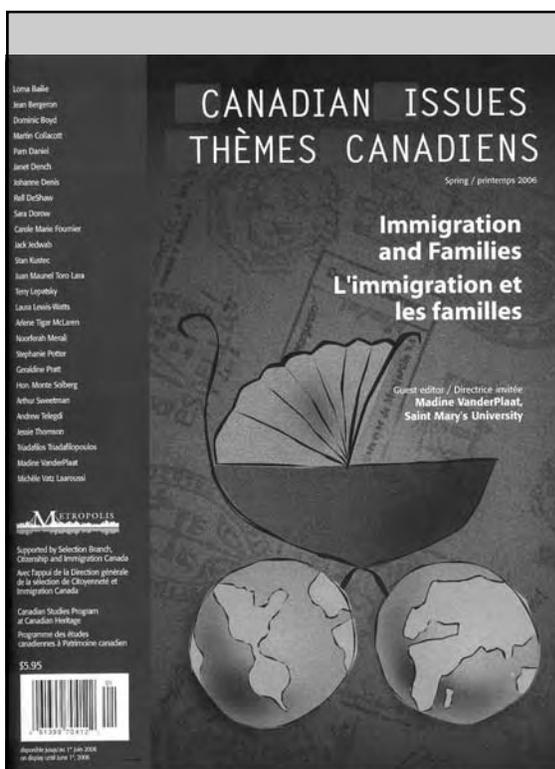
The FCR Program continues to tabulate labour market demand statistics and explore the capacity of certain

industries to absorb employees to determine the next occupations it will target for process improvements. The Government of Canada is currently working with provinces and stakeholders to augment the capacity of foreign credential recognition systems and processes.

This article is also available in French. Please contact Justin Ikura at Justin.ikura@hrsdcc.gc.ca or 819-934-5610 to obtain a copy.

Note

¹ The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Human Resources and Social Development Canada or of the federal government.



Immigration and Families L'immigration et les familles

Special Issue of / Édition spéciale de *Canadian Issues / Thèmes canadiens*

Metropolis has continued its successful partnership with the Association for Canadian Studies to produce special issues of the magazine *Canadian Issues / Thèmes canadiens* on immigration and diversity topics. This issue (Spring 2006) focuses on immigration and the family. It features an introduction by Madine VanderPlaats of Saint Mary's University, an interview with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and twenty articles by knowledgeable policy-makers, researchers and non-governmental organizations. Like earlier issues, it has been assigned as course readings in many disciplines at several universities.

Le partenariat entre Metropolis et l'Association des études canadiennes continue de porter fruit, avec la production de numéros spéciaux de la revue *Thèmes canadiens / Canadian Issues*, portant sur l'immigration et divers thèmes connexes. Ce numéro (printemps 2006) met l'accent sur l'immigration et la famille. Il comporte une introduction signée Madine VanderPlaats (Saint Mary's University), une entrevue avec le ministre de Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada, ainsi qu'une vingtaine d'articles rédigés par des responsables des politiques publiques, des chercheurs et des organisations non gouvernementales spécialisés dans le domaine en question. Ce numéro de la revue, comme les numéros précédents, compte parmi les lectures obligatoires de nombreux cours universitaires de disciplines variées.

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INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES TO CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT

ABSTRACT

The approaches taken to assess and recognize foreign credentials vary from country to country, with each country experiencing varying degrees of success in terms of the integration of recent immigrants into the labour market. As Canada increases its efforts to improve these processes, it is helpful to learn from the experiences of other countries. Based on research conducted by the Policy Research Analysis Division of Human Resources and Social Development Canada, this paper explores the approaches to Foreign Credential Recognition taken by Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

Like Canada, many industrialized countries are facing a demographic shift with aging populations and declining birth rates, and they are looking to attract highly skilled immigrants to help meet labour market shortages and foster economic growth. It has been reported that one of the main barriers immigrants face in integrating into the economy of their adopted country is a lack of recognition of their foreign-earned qualifications (Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, 2003). In response, several immigrant-receiving countries have increased their efforts to develop and improve their approaches to foreign credential assessment and recognition. Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), which is responsible for the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) program, has conducted reviews of the approaches to foreign credential recognition in several countries around the world. Three countries that provide an interesting comparison to Canada's approach to FCR are Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. These countries are some of Canada's main competitors for immigrants and have similar immigration systems. There are lessons that can be learned from the experiences of these countries because all have taken different approaches to the assessment of international qualifications. This article will examine the mandate, organizational structure, and FCR activities in these selected countries and determine how Canada can benefit from this information.

With respect to FCR specifically, there are a number of similarities between these countries and Canada. Each uses referral and web-based information services that are mostly organized through national government departments (Immigration, Labour and Education, for example). In most cases, the assessment of foreign credentials focuses on academic equivalency, and all three countries are bound by the 1997 Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning higher education in the European Region (UNESCO/Council of Europe). Additionally, the recognition of credentials for occupations that require special licensing or regulation is primarily done by professional associations.

Australia

In Australia, foreign credential assessment and recognition is required for permanent immigrants prior to immigrating. The overall objective of this policy is to ensure that those who are selected are able to integrate rapidly into the Australian workforce.

Under the *Australian General Skilled Migration Program* (GSM), a prospective immigrant to Australia is required to identify one occupation from the Skilled Occupation List (SOL) in which they intend to practice and will subsequently be assessed to determine if they meet Australian standards for their chosen occupation. The SOL is composed of 410 occupations.

Immigration policy in Australia is the responsibility of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. In some cases, where countries have been designated as having high immigration potential, Australia provides direct service to prospective immigrants through migration agents overseas. However, there is no single government authority that assesses or recognizes international qualifications.

Referral and information services

There are three national organizations in Australia that provide referral services to prospective immigrants. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) is responsible for an online service known as Australian Skills Recognition Information. Trades Recognition Australia is an online referral service provided by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) is responsible for the

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National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition. In this case, all three government departments (DIMA, DEWR and DEST) have recognition issues as a focus for internationally trained workers. These three referral services work in cooperation, linking with one another to direct potential immigrants to the most appropriate information.

Australian Skills Recognition and Information (ASRI) is a service that provides information on assessments, licensing and registration authorities, including regulatory bodies to those with international credentials. Trades Recognition Australia (TRA) provides occupational skills assessment services for people intending to migrate to Australia as well as domestic skills assessments for Australian residents. TRA operates an online referral service and phone line to provide prospective immigrants with free information and directions for having their trade skills assessed. The TRA provides a fee-based assessment service for 101 trades and associated professional occupations.

The National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR), a branch of the Department of Education, Science and Training, provides services to internationally trained individuals to help them work and study in Australia. AEI-NOOSR belongs to international recognition of qualifications and mobility networks including the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) network and the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC). AEI-NOOSR operates two divisions, the Professional and International Recognition Unit and the Overseas Qualification Recognition Unit. They offer several services to prospective immigrants including an information and referral service through the internet and a telephone hotline. Information, such as descriptions of the country's education system and assessment guidelines, and recommendations on how overseas qualifications might be compared to Australian qualifications, are all available through this organization. AEI-NOOSR is involved in some capacity development and monitoring with universities, state and territory agencies and organizations that assess and/or recognize overseas qualifications. The two divisions will also provide written and oral advice to applicants concerning the assessment process.

Assessment

In Australia, the responsibility for conducting assessments of foreign credentials is delegated to a variety of assessment bodies at the federal and state or territorial level. There are six independently governed states and two territories in Australia's federal system, and the legislation governing the recognition of credentials varies between each state and territory. It is the immigrant's responsibility to

contact the assessing authority for their occupation to obtain a skills assessment. In some professions, registration or licensing is required at the state and territory level, and each state and territory has its own rules for certain occupations. Generally, each occupation has its own distinct pathway to recognition and each assessing authority has its own assessment procedures. However, the *Mutual Recognition Act*, which was introduced in 1993, facilitates the recognition of qualifications for licensing and registration purposes across state/territorial jurisdictions. An initial assessment of this Act suggests that it has enhanced the mobility of people in registered occupations, enabling them to freely enter equivalent occupations in other jurisdictions as well as having increased the cooperation between regulatory agencies in harmonizing regulatory requirements (Australia Office of Regulation Review, 1997).

In addition to providing referral services, AEI-NOOSR, functions as the national expert and coordinating body for the assessment of skills and credentials obtained overseas. They are responsible for explaining the process in which individuals intending to immigrate to Australia apply to the appropriate assessing authority to have their skills assessed in their chosen occupation. Some educational assessments may also be performed by AEI-NOOSR. In order to conduct assessments, AEI-NOOSR researches education systems to establish a comparison to Australian standards. In this sense, the assessment of a qualification may be regarded as an indication of general education level, not a subject-specific formal recognition of the credential. Their assessments cover degree-level and sub-degree level educational qualifications, assessments for teaching occupations, technical and vocational qualifications and qualifications awarded by professional bodies. An AEI-NOOSR assessment is a helpful tool for immigrants, but it is still up to the discretion of professional

and regulatory bodies to determine a qualification's professional standing. An assessment with AEI-NOOSR does not entitle a prospective immigrant to migrate to Australia, work, study, gain membership to a professional body, or obtain registration or licensing.

Australia has received a considerable amount of attention for improving the labour market integration of recent immigrants, particularly when most immigrant-receiving countries have experienced declining rates of success in this area (Richardson, Lester 2004). Much of Australia's success in this regard has been attributed to a more demanding selection policy for immigrants and the requirement to have qualifications assessed before entry to the country (Richardson, Lester 2004). Despite the success of Australia's system, it has received criticism.

Several immigrant receiving countries have increased their efforts to develop and improve their approaches to foreign credential assessment and recognition.... Three countries that provide an interesting comparison to Canada's approach are Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

The rigid standards, for example, prohibit many people from applying based on their qualifications, age or other characteristics, and this may be perceived as unfair.

Comparison to Canada

Many similarities exist between the foreign credential recognition processes in Canada and Australia. In particular, the authority to recognize foreign credentials rests primarily with employers, professional and regulatory bodies, and educational institutions. However, the introduction of the *Mutual Recognition Act* has moved Australia towards a national approach to the regulation of registered occupations, enhancing the mobility of people in these occupations. Australia also has a strong referral system for immigrants prior to arrival through their three national referral services, ASRI, TRA, and AEI-NOOSR. The most notable difference between the processes in Australia and Canada is the linkage between credential recognition and the immigration process, which exists in Australia, but not in Canada. Individuals intending to immigrate to Australia are required to have their credentials assessed by the appropriate assessing authority for their specified occupation before gaining entry to the country as a demonstrable indication of their ability to succeed in the labour market.

New Zealand

Unlike Australia, Canada, and the United States, New Zealand is not a federal state and does not have all the complexities that are associated with multiple provincial and state jurisdictions. In New Zealand, the authority to assess international qualifications lies with Qualifications Recognition Service (QRS) as delegated through legislation by the New Zealand government's Qualification Authority (NZQA). The NZQA is responsible for providing national and international leadership in the assessment of qualifications.

As in Canada, the assessment of foreign credentials is not a mandatory step in New Zealand's immigration process. However, through the Skilled Migrant Category points system, immigrants are awarded points for qualifications that are recognized prior to arrival. The authority to recognize foreign credentials in New Zealand lies with the Qualifications Recognition Service (QRS).

Referral and information services

New Zealand's Department of Labour operates Immigration New Zealand, an internet-based service providing prospective immigrants with information on a variety of topics from life in New Zealand, the skills that they require, a list of recognized qualifications for selected countries and links to registration authorities for occupations that require licensure. Also, the QRS branch of the NZQA operates a web service that provides prospective immigrants with all the information they need to have their qualifications assessed.

Assessment

Assessments through the QRS are based on comparisons between overseas educational institutions and current New Zealand qualifications. The QRS only assesses credentials from overseas educational institutions that are

officially recognized by the NZQA. The NZQA was recently formalized as a Crown Agent and is headed by a board appointed by the Minister of Education. This organization is responsible for coordinating, administering, and quality assurance of all national qualifications in New Zealand and functions as a central credential assessment agency for the country.

The QRS conducts two different types of assessments. Individuals who are seeking residence, employment, professional registration or opportunities to study in New Zealand require a full assessment. In addition, there is a pre-assessment process in place for applicants who wish to immigrate to New Zealand under the Skilled Migrant Category. A pre-assessment may help advance the recognition of the prospective immigrant's qualifications, but the results are non-binding and do not guarantee future assessment results of the qualification.

Those who are intending to practice a regulated occupation, such as accountancy, medicine, nursing and teaching, still need to apply for registration or membership with the appropriate professional body. In many cases, applicants must have their qualifications assessed by NZQA and the appropriate professional body for their occupation as each professional body and registration authority has its own requirements. An assessment by NZQA is not binding on any institution or registration body.

Comparison to Canada

The credential assessment process in New Zealand is not as complex as Canada's, primarily due to the lack of jurisdictional issues. While New Zealand does not require a credential assessment to facilitate immigration to the country, extra points are awarded to skilled migrants if their credentials are assessed prior to arrival. Another notable difference is New Zealand's use of a central credential assessment agency. This contributes to their relatively simple assessment process. Through the Department of Labour, New Zealand offers substantive pre-arrival information for prospective immigrants and on-line services.

United States

As in Canada, the evaluation of foreign credentials in the United States is not performed or regulated by the federal government with the exception of some occupations that require professional licensure. Instead, the federal government relies on the evaluation of foreign credentials by the appropriate competent authority for the occupation in which the foreign-trained individual wishes to enter. In regulated occupations, the authority to recognize foreign credentials is the licensing body at the state level that is responsible for overseeing the occupation in question. For unregulated occupations, this responsibility lies with the hiring employer.

Referral and information services

Information and referral services about recognition of foreign credentials are primarily provided through the United States Network for Education Information (USNEI). This internet portal provides links to credential evaluation services, information on authorities who can

legally evaluate credentials, including information on the licensing authorities for regulated occupations. More detailed information is provided for regulated occupations regarding the licensure process for regulated occupations.

Assessment

In the United States, there are no national government standards for assessing international qualifications. However, the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials has developed national guidelines for the assessment of foreign educational credentials. While this is not a government agency, its guidelines are widely accepted by institutions and agencies in the U.S. However, despite widespread use, many individual evaluation agencies, colleges and universities have developed their own procedures for assessing foreign credentials. Assessments may also be performed by private credential evaluation agencies. These agencies must be registered with the U.S. Department of Education. The Secretary of Education determines whether the agency is a reliable authority in regards to assessing the quality of education or training provided by educational institutions. If the agency is determined to be reliable, it will be registered and published on the Department of Education's list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies. The Accrediting Agency Evaluation Unit, within the Department of Education, is responsible for conducting a continuous review of the standards, policies, and procedures implemented by private evaluation agencies.

There are three main organizations for credential assessment and evaluation services. The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO), through its Office of International Education Services, provides credential assessment services based on a course-by-course evaluation of educational credentials or a basic evaluation of the general educational level of an individual's credentials. The Association of International Credential Evaluators, Inc. (AICE) is a membership organization of credential evaluation service agencies. The AICE is a profit-based organization and is also a member of the AACRAO. Finally, the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) is the main association of private credential evaluation services in the United States.

Comparison with Canada

The foreign credential recognition system in the United States shares many similarities with Canada. In Canada, licensure for regulated occupations is the responsibility of provinces and territories and, in most cases, this responsibility is delegated to professional regulatory

bodies. Similarly, in the U.S., licensure is the responsibility of the individual states. The licensure process is complicated by the large number of states, as immigrants may be required to redo certification requirements if they move from one state to another. In the U.S., the responsibility to evaluate credentials is delegated to private sector evaluation services, which also means there is a lack of consistency and capacity between these services in each state and between the states.

Conclusion

Many countries around the world are bolstering their immigration programs to attract talented and skilled immigrants and meet emerging labour market shortages. Unfortunately, many immigrants arrive in their new home country to find that they are unable to access employment

commensurate with their qualifications. While there are several contributing factors, the lack of recognition of foreign credentials is one that has been particularly problematic. As a result, these countries, including Canada, are putting significant efforts into improving the processes through which foreign credentials are assessed and recognized. The Government of Canada has been actively reviewing some of the approaches that other countries have taken to address this problem in order to learn from their experiences. The majority of these countries are using substantive information and referral services online to help prospective immigrants prepare prior to arrival. We have seen novel approaches to credential assessment such as Australia's requirement to have credentials recognized prior to immigration or the awarding of extra points to those who have their qualifications assessed prior to arrival in New Zealand. This gives immigrants a clear understanding of their employment potential before immigrating.

In the United States, we have seen the use of several private assessment organizations which can mean faster assessments with clear service standards, while New Zealand uses a central agency for all assessments, which makes for consistent assessment processes.

As Canada continues to strengthen its approach to credential assessment, there is an opportunity to learn from other immigrant-receiving countries and adopt components of their processes that work well and align with Canada's immigration system and humanitarian goals. This will require continued cooperation between jurisdictions to not only improve FCR processes but also to facilitate domestic mobility. How the differing approaches affect the labour market outcomes of immigrants entering these countries over the next few years will also continue to be monitored to further improve FCR in Canada. Improving FCR processes is

The Government of Canada has been actively reviewing some of the approaches that other countries have taken... The majority of these countries are using substantive information and referral services online to help prospective immigrants prepare prior to arrival.

not only an issue of meeting labour market demands and contributing to the economic growth of the country, it is also a matter of improving the quality of life of those who choose Canada as their new home.

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Richardson, S. and Lester, L. (2004). “A Comparison of Australian and Canadian Immigration Policies and Labour Market Outcomes.” http://www.immi.gov.au/research/publications/comparison_immigration_policies.pdf

Tabet, Jean-Philippe (2006). “International Experience of National Credential Assessment Organizations: Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Policy Research Analysis Division, Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

Web Resources

GSM

Australian Government Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs <http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/general-skilled-migration/index.htm>

ASRI

Australian Skills Recognition Information <http://www.immi.gov.au/asri/>

TRA

Trades Recognition Australia <http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Category/SchemesInitiatives/TRA/>

DEWR

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations <http://www.dewr.gov.au/>

DEST

Department of Education, Science and Training <http://www.dest.gov.au/>

AEI-NOOSR

Australian Education International <http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/QualificationsRecognition/Default.htm>

NARIC

National Academic Recognition Information Centres <http://www.naric.org.uk/>

ENIC

European Network of Information Centres <http://www.enic-naric.net/>

PIRU

Professional and International Recognition Unit <http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/AboutAEI/AEICContacts/InternationalPolicy/Default.htm>

OQRU

Overseas Qualification Recognition Unit <http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/AboutAEI/AEICContacts/InternationalPolicy/Default.htm>

NZQA

New Zealand Qualification Authority <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/>

QRA

Qualifications Recognition Service <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-international/qual-eval/index.html>

USNEI

United States Network of Education Information <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/edlite-index.html>

CEC

National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-natcouncil-about.html>

U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml>

AACRAO-OIES

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, Office of International Education Services <http://www.aacrao.org/international/individual.cfm>

AICE

Association of International Credential Evaluators, Inc <http://www.aacrao.org/international/individual.cfm>

NACES

National Association of Credential Evaluation Services <http://www.naces.org/>

Unesco.org

http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13522&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Note

¹ The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Human Resources and Social Development Canada or of the federal government.

FOREIGN CREDENTIALS: THE TOOLS FOR RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

This article looks at recent flows of immigrants to Canada and the challenges associated with foreign credential recognition (FCR). It then reviews the national data sources used to examine the issues related to FCR, highlighting the way in which the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada will provide new insights.

Over the past decade, roughly 1.2 million immigrants arrived in Canada intending to work. In fact, approximately 50% of immigrants who arrive in Canada each year are destined to enter the labour market in a wide range of occupations with various educational and credential requirements. In the past ten years, of immigrants who have arrived with the intention to work, one-third had professional qualifications (31%), primarily in engineering and computing, while an additional 4% were aiming for managerial work. Approximately 22% intended to pursue other occupations, concentrated in technical skilled trades and other sales and services. The remainder (43%) had unknown intended occupations as this information is not required for their admission to Canada.

Despite their credentials and labour market intentions, recent immigrants to Canada are not performing as well as previous arrivals. Traditionally, immigrants outperformed Canadians in the labour market, but patterns have changed. Incidence of low-income among recent immigrants rose from 24.6% in 1980, to 35.8% in 2000, with a peak of 47% in 1995. By contrast, low-income rates among the Canadian-born population fell from 17.2% in 1980 to 14.3% in 2000 (Picot and Hou 2003, based on Census data).

Poor labour market conditions affected entry-level earnings of immigrants and new Canadian-born entrants during the early- to mid-1990s, but additional factors are behind the continued inferior results for immigrants. Research to date suggests that a *low return to foreign credentials is one of several challenges to the economic integration of immigrants*. In addition, other difficulties faced by new cohorts of immigrants may include lack of Canadian work experience, lack of skills or lower quality of education, lack of informal networks, language challenges and discrimination.

Difficulties related to the recognition of foreign credentials are largely based on two confounding issues. First, employers may have limited information on many immigrant source countries, especially when it comes to the quality of educational institutions, the curriculum of their academic programs, and the relevance to the Canadian labour market of the skills imparted to the students by these institutions. In reaction to this, employers may adopt a risk-averse attitude by giving preference to domestically educated workers in their hiring decisions. Second, foreign education credentials may differ from Canadian credentials in terms of quality. For instance, foreign credentials may be of lower quality due to inferior instruction relative to Canadian institutions. In this case, the title of an educational degree is the same, but the worth in Canada is lower for foreign-earned credentials.

Complicating the issue is that employers' associations, sector councils, or provincially organized occupational groups are key players in the credential recognition process. Regulation is a provincial jurisdiction: governments regulate professions and trades to mitigate risks to public health and consumer protection. Workers cannot practice their profession or trade without licensure from the provincial regulatory authority, even if they have already been deemed qualified to practice and licensed in another country (or Canadian province).

Analysis of occupational data shows that immigrants have been overrepresented relative to the Canadian workforce in many regulated occupations (such as engineering occupations). According to the 2001 Census, 85% of Canadians work in non-regulated occupations (e.g., without licensing requirements), while workers in regulated professions and trades make up 15% of the Canadian labour market. In contrast, among the immigrants who landed in Canada in the ten-year period between 1996 and 2005 and whose intended occupation is known, the proportions were 66% in non-regulated occupations and 34% in regulated occupations.

The extent to which various factors are related to credential recognition problems is not well understood. Factors may include: newcomers' lack of knowledge about how to have skills recognized,

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Table 1: Immigration by labour market intention

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Number										
Managerial (Skill level O)*	3,626	3,305	2,592	2,865	3,915	4,873	4,142	3,923	5,793	8,455
Professionals (Skill level A)	28,569	31,224	26,010	32,780	42,345	46,705	41,775	37,967	37,422	37,597
Skilled and technical (Skill level B)	24,102	23,214	16,255	14,497	16,710	18,248	16,526	13,391	13,823	15,150
Intermediate and clerical (Skill level C)	7,828	7,096	5,234	5,065	6,622	6,931	5,862	5,682	5,751	6,178
Elemental and labourers (Skill level D)	1,109	1,037	759	880	1,118	1,152	905	772	648	804
Occupational skill level identified	65,234	65,876	50,850	56,087	70,710	77,909	69,210	61,735	63,437	68,184
New workers: - 15 years of age or older	50,130	42,587	37,964	42,757	48,262	51,849	47,522	54,444	59,811	67,979
Industrial codes: - 15 years of age or older**	3,283	2,864	1,794	1,709	1,698	1,631	1,229	1,142	1,156	1,415
Intending to work	118,647	111,327	90,608	100,553	120,670	131,389	117,961	117,321	124,404	137,578
Not intending to work***	107,425	104,711	83,590	89,408	106,793	119,251	111,086	104,031	111,420	124,658
Total	226,072	216,038	174,198	189,961	227,463	250,640	229,047	221,352	235,824	262,236

* Occupational skill level based on National Occupational Classification (NOC).
 ** This category includes economic immigrants in the business immigrant category who have declared their industry of activity, in lieu of their intended occupation.
 *** This category includes children under 15 years of age, students 15 years of age or older, retirees and other non-workers.

Source: Administrative data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Permanent Resident Data System, PRDS)

employers' lack of knowledge about foreign credentials themselves, and a lower quality of foreign credentials relative to domestic qualifications versus market barriers caused by professional association protectionism and broader societal discrimination.

Tools for understanding the foreign credential recognition issue

To fully understand the immigrant integration process and challenges associated with foreign credential recognition, we need to be able to piece together an immigrant's pre-migration information (e.g., intended occupation, occupation prior to coming to Canada, education prior to landing, certifications) with their

post-arrival information (e.g., actual occupation, education obtained since landing) and their labour market outcomes (e.g., earnings, participation, employment, unemployment). Information on the place in which one received their highest level of education is seen as essential for research examining the labour market integration of immigrants to determine if immigrants who obtain their credentials in other countries are able to apply these skill sets in Canada.

A variety of national data sources administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and Statistics Canada are used by researchers to examine the foreign credential recognition trajectory. While the data sources identified in the diagram below are not an exhaustive list,

Figure 1: National data sources and the foreign credential recognition trajectory

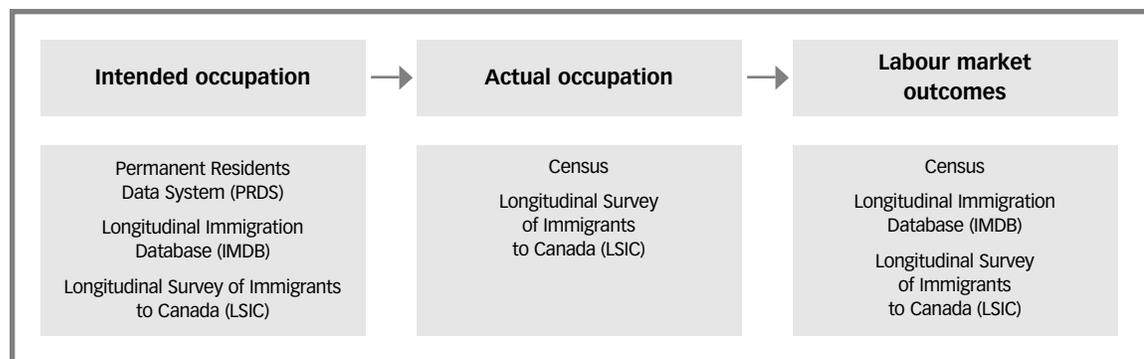


Table 2: Immigration by labour market intention

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Percentage distribution										
Managerial (Skill level O)*	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.8	2.5	3.2
Professionals (Skill level A)	12.6	14.5	14.9	17.3	18.6	18.6	18.2	17.2	15.9	14.3
Skilled and technical (Skill level B)	10.7	10.7	9.3	7.6	7.3	7.3	7.2	6.0	5.9	5.8
Intermediate and clerical (Skill level C)	3.5	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.4
Elemental and labourers (Skill level D)	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3
Occupational skill level identified	28.9	30.5	29.2	29.5	31.1	31.1	30.2	27.9	26.9	26.0
New workers: - 15 years of age or older	22.2	19.7	21.8	22.5	21.2	20.7	20.7	24.6	25.4	25.9
Industrial codes: - 15 years of age or older**	1.5	1.3	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Intending to work	52.5	51.5	52.0	52.9	53.1	52.4	51.5	53.0	52.8	52.5
Not intending to work***	47.5	48.5	48.0	47.1	46.9	47.6	48.5	47.0	47.2	47.5
Total	100.0									

* Occupational skill level based on National Occupational Classification (NOC).

** This category includes economic immigrants in the business immigrant category who have declared their industry of activity, in lieu of their intended occupation.

*** This category includes children under 15 years of age, students 15 years of age or older, retirees and other non-workers.

Source: Administrative data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Permanent Resident Data System, PRDS)

they have been instrumental in developing the current evidence base surrounding foreign credentials.

Administrative data collected by CIC at time of landing – the Permanent Resident Data System (PRDS) – includes pre-migration information such as intended occupation, years of schooling, level of education, self-assessed knowledge of an official language, employment status (e.g., arranged employment), category of admission, and other demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, country of origin). The Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) combines the information from the administrative landing records (PRDS) with an immigrant’s subsequent annual tax records, thereby covering labour market outcomes information such as employment earnings, earnings from self-employment, Employment Insurance benefits, and government transfer income.

The Census is the data source most commonly used in research on immigrants, and it provides a snapshot of the current characteristics of the Canadian population every five years, including actual occupation, current education level, field of study, labour market outcomes (e.g., earnings, participation, employment, unemployment), and low-income status. Statistics Canada will begin release of 2006 Census results in March 2007, and for the first time the survey will include information on where (country/province/territory) an individual obtained his or her highest level of education.

The three data sources described above provide a snapshot of a limited range of information on the immigrant settlement experiences, with no one source

following the full foreign credential recognition trajectory and how the associated integration experiences influence each other. An exception to this is the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC).

Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada

The LSIC was designed to study the process by which new immigrants adapt to or integrate into Canadian society, including the timing of stages of the integration process, as well as the factors that influence integration. By examining a newcomers’ progress over time toward the fulfilment of a wide range of integration goals, the LSIC allows researchers and policy-makers to go beyond existing descriptions of immigrant integration outcomes to an examination of the means by which newcomers achieve these outcomes, and some explanation of these outcomes – in essence, the “how” and “why” dimensions. LSIC is based on interviews with newcomers at specific intervals after arrival. Wave 3 was based on interviews four years after landing, and Statistics Canada is expected to release this final wave of LSIC data in Spring 2007. Wave 2 was conducted two years after landing, and Wave 1 was conducted six months after landing; these data are already available.

The LSIC permits examination of the “how” and “why” behind the credentials recognition process by providing pre-migration information such as the immigrant’s occupation prior to coming to Canada, intended occupation, education and credentials received prior to arriving in Canada, plans for assessment of credentials, detailed information on

Table 3: Employment difficulties, by immigration category – Wave 1

	Immigration category					
	Family Class	Skilled workers Principal Applicants (PA)	Skilled workers Spouses and Dependants (S&D)	Refugees	Others	All immigrants
Immigrants who tried to find employment	27,069	51,877	27,352	4,661	5,045	116,695
Immigrants reporting difficulties finding a job						
Number	15,209	39,613	20,625	3,139	2,668	81,518
Percentage of immigrants who tried to find a job	56%	76%	75%	67%	53%	70%
Most serious difficulty (selected types)						
Not enough job experience in Canada	21%	28%	27%	19%	17%	26%
Qualifications or work experience outside Canada not accepted	15%	28%	24%	12%	12%	24%
Language problems	33%	13%	24%	44%	35%	22%

Source: Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada – Wave 1 (2001).

Table 4: Employment difficulties, by immigration category – Wave 2

	Immigration category					
	Family Class	Skilled workers Principal Applicants (PA)	Skilled workers Spouses and Dependants (S&D)	Refugees	Others	All immigrants
Immigrants who tried to find employment	20,523	38,237	23,769	5,890	4,871	93,290
Immigrants reporting difficulties finding a job						
Number	12,248	28,051	16,605	4,169	2,788	63,860
Percentage of immigrants who tried to find a job	60%	73%	70%	71%	57%	68%
Most serious difficulty (selected types)						
Not enough job experience in Canada	25%	27%	28%	26%	23%	27%
Qualifications or work experience outside Canada not accepted	11%	24%	20%	10%	15%	19%
Language problems	21%	9%	18%	30%	16%	15%

Source: Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada – Wave 2 (2003).

the credentials received outside Canada, and plans for studying in Canada. The survey collects post-arrival information such as the immigrant's actual occupation, the education or training taken after arrival, the impact of receiving further education or training, problems obtaining education or training, and sources and types of help the immigrant received. The trajectory is completed with the inclusion of information on their labour market outcomes, such as earnings, participation, employment (all jobs since arrival), and unemployment. The LSIC allows for the examination of the credentials recognition process by gender and immigrant category of admission (e.g., skilled worker principal applicants, skilled worker spouses and dependants, family class, refugees, etc.), by place of schooling, by profession, and the extent to which labour market integration approaches change over time.

Results from the first two waves of the LSIC indicate that foreign credential and skill recognition is the major hurdle for newcomers in the Canadian labour market. The LSIC shows that two years after landing, more immigrants

had secured employment and more immigrants had made steps towards working in their intended fields and higher-skilled employment than had been the case six months after landing. However, the results indicate that immigrants face challenges finding employment in a new labour market, and they identify the types of difficulties immigrants face in finding a job. Consistent with Wave 1 results (Table 3), Wave 2 interviews (Table 4) found that foreign experience and qualifications, as well as limited job experience in Canada posed difficulties for immigrants. Among all immigrants, 27% said that "not enough job experience in Canada" was the most serious difficulty faced in finding employment, with 19% saying that the fact that their "qualifications or work experience [from] outside Canada [were] not accepted" was the most serious difficulty. This was especially the case for skilled worker principal applicants, with 27% claiming "not enough job experience" and 24% claiming that the fact that their "qualifications or work experience [from] outside Canada [were] not accepted" were the most serious difficulties in finding employment in Canada.

The full three waves of LSIC data will provide information needed to understand the factors that help or hinder immigrants as they navigate the foreign credential recognition landscape in Canada, including the timing and type of help sought and received by the immigrant with regards to training or finding employment in Canada.

Conclusion

Foreign credential recognition is a complex issue. As such, developing the evidence base upon which policy can be developed requires detailed information on the scope of the problem and on the affected population. Precise occupational and labour market data on recent immigrants is crucial. In particular, information that links an immigrant's intended occupation to their actual occupation after arrival is needed to help explain labour market outcomes and the steps that are taken to verify credentials. This type of information is essential if we are to understand how foreign credentials compare with Canadian credentials in terms of labour market outcomes.

It is important that the data sources available to research the issue not be looked at in isolation, but rather be seen as a complementary body of information. A variety of

national data sources administered by CIC and Statistics Canada are used by researchers to examine the issues surrounding foreign credential recognition, including the PRDS, IMDB, and the Census. The LSIC is expected to provide new insights into a wide range of issues surrounding foreign credential recognition when information becomes available from all three waves of interviews, as the survey uniquely provides information on the full trajectory of the settlement process among new arrivals.

Recent modifications have also been made to Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS), which will add to the evidence base relevant for understanding the issues surrounding foreign credential recognition. In the future, the survey will include an immigrant identifier that will allow for timely reporting on labour market characteristics for the immigrant population. Statistics Canada is expecting to release this important immigrant-related enhancement to the Labour Force Survey in May 2007.

Note

¹ The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect those of Citizenship and Immigration Canada or the Government of Canada.

Journal of International Migration and Integration

Metropolis Research and Policy Review

Revue de l'intégration et de la migration internationale

Compte rendu de Metropolis sur la recherche et les politiques

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HOW CURRENT GLOBALIZATION DISCOURSES SHAPE ACCESS

Professions and Trades Policy in Ontario

ABSTRACT

This article explores the impact of current neo-liberal and globalization discourses with respect to Ontario's Access to Professions and Trades (APT) policy. It reveals how framing APT as a solution to the skills shortage crisis, while facilitating training and assessment policies and programs, inhibits the development of other policies. This research shows how discourses circulate in a web centering on skills shortages, which limits immigrants' access to their professions, as well as the ability of policy developers to implement programs that remove systemic barriers.

Around the world we see the widespread circulation of globalization and neo-liberal discourses. No discipline is exempt. In the field of immigration, this discursive context links immigration to national economic interests and market-driven forces and business values, and reaffirms it as a 'public good' for all citizens. Discourses that reflect the competition for the "best" immigrants to provide the country with a competitive advantage in global markets are evident. The Conference Board of Canada issued a report in 1995 that showed that "competing to win in the global economy will require an ability to attract, retain, motivate and develop high-potential employees from a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds" (Taylor, 1995, p. iv). The federal government endorsed this position when it asserted that:

Canada will require a highly-skilled workforce to sustain our economic growth and competitiveness...The funding announced today [Internationally Trained Worker Initiative] will help us reach that goal by enlarging the pool of talent in Canada. Ultimately, efforts like these will benefit all Canadians as it will help ensure our competitiveness in the knowledge-based global economy (Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, 2004).

Immigration policy reforms that took effect in 2002 are further evidence of this conceptual shift. The immigration framework changed from "absorptive capacity" to "human capital," a restructuring that emphasized the selection of highly skilled immigrants based on their individual value to the economy. Changes to settlement programs also shifted the focus to immigrants who can settle/integrate more quickly and with less need for government support. In sum, immigration and integration policy in Canada are now firmly linked to the limited individualistic framework of integration for economic purposes (Li, 2003).

In my work, I use the Ontario's Access to Professions and Trades (APT) policy as a case study for investigating how discourses circulate in a complex web of relationships that influence policy reality. Uncovering the way discourses are embedded in a context of globalization and neo-liberalism, and exploring their strategic connections with other discourses, is important to recognizing their impact on the policy process.

APT policy in Ontario is closely linked to national and international discourses on immigration, which are couched in a globalization discourse and neo-liberal ideology.¹ This discursive context – in combination with demographic challenges such as declining fertility rates, aging populations, increased diversity and immigration flows – constructs immigration as a policy lever to be used to solve the skill shortage dilemma. In 2002, the Minister for Human Resources and Skills Development Canada "repeatedly raised the issue of a shortage of a wide range of skills in Canada, with immigration as one of the solutions" (Crane, 2002). In 2004, "Canada's labour minister [said] the country may need to consider doubling immigration levels to help fill enormous gaps in its skilled workforce" (Cordon, 2004). This phenomenon is not unique to Canada as many countries around the world have been liberalizing immigration policies in an effort to fill labour and skill gaps (World Trade Organization, 1998).

At a primary level, the federal government lent authority to the "skill shortage" discourse when it announced its Internationally Trained Worker Initiative, promoting it as a way to "help address shortages of health-care professionals" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005). This discourse was further validated by many reports and committees (e.g., the Romanow Commission, 2002; the

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Kirby Committee Report, 2002; the McKendry Report, 1999; The George Panel Report, 2001).

At the provincial level, the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU) explicitly asserts that APT is “part of the government’s plan to address critical skills shortages” (MTCU, 2002a). The Ontario government firmly positions APT in this discourse:

Attracting the world’s brightest and best is part of the government’s plan to manage skill shortages and keep Ontario competitive... These bridging programs will assist these talented immigrants in pursuing their careers and making full use of their skills and knowledge, contributing to economic growth and job creation (MTCU, 2002b).

Occupational associations have also added their voices, further disseminating and legitimizing the ‘skill shortage’ discourse. A national survey of family physicians revealed that 57.6% believe that family doctor shortages are the cause of significant access-to-care problems for their patients (College of Family Physicians of Canada, 1999). These associations also released their share of reports and press releases. In 1999, the College of Family Physicians of Canada issued a press release entitled, “Shortfall of family physicians threatens Canada’s ability to meet health care needs” (College of Family Physicians of Canada, 1999).

The media were major players in disseminating the “skill shortage” message, exposing it to the public and elevating it to a crisis. Media have reported that medical care is in a state of emergency as “bed closures loom” (Canadian Press, 2004a), “provinces grapple with warnings that staffing shortages in emergency rooms and wards are a growing health risk,” and “patients risk fractures and bedsores in hospital stays because there are no nurses to assist them” (Immen, 2004).

This context sets the foundation for a discursive web with “skill shortages” at its hub. I explore these discourses and their relationships to show how, taken together, they influence the types of local policies that are endorsed, as well as their impact on immigrant professionals.² Elsewhere, I have discussed this web, the methodology, and theory (see Goldberg, 2006b; Goldberg, 2005; Goldberg, in progress). In this paper, I focus on how the current discursive context facilitates specific policy solutions, such as assessment or training, while constraining others that focus on systemic change. Specifically, I examine the unintended impact of framing APT as a solution to the skill shortage crisis. The results reveal how multiple discourses operate to influence policy processes.

Assessment and training discourses in the APT Web

Training discourse

This discourse focuses on how the training of immigrant professionals comprises a major component of their identity (for example, immigrants are always referred to as “foreign-” or “internationally-” trained). Focusing on immigrant professionals as “foreign-trained” devalues their skills and experience as unknown and not “up to Canadian standards.” It signals that if we admit immigrants, we will be lowering our “Canadian” standards: “we want to continue to reduce barriers to the recruitment, registration, training and education of doctors in this province. But...that does not mean the college would tolerate a **watering down of its stringent standards** (Dr. Barry Adams, an Ottawa pediatrician and president of the College of Physicians and Surgeons; as cited in Canadian Press, 2004b, my emphasis).

Social construction of the ‘other’

This discourse perpetuates the perception that Canadian-born professionals should have the first choice in the labour market and that the foreign-trained should only get what is “left-over.”

The training discourse is used to separate Canadians into two groups, with immigrants depicted as the “other.” In this discourse, a racialised dichotomy is constructed and an “us vs. them” mentality is promoted. The purpose of this social categorization is to portray the majority as a homogeneous ethnic group and the minority as the other (Erjavec, 2001). In the APT policy web, we clearly see the division between “foreign-trained” professionals on one side and everyone else on the other. “The whole country benefits when immigrants **and** internationally educated Canadians are able to make full use of their knowledge and experience” (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2005, my emphasis).

On one side, “foreign-trained professionals” are defined narrowly as racialised minorities, while on the other we have a broad group that includes: “foreign-trained Canadians,” defined as individuals who are Canadian citizens first and then went abroad to train; “foreign-trained Ontarians,” who trained in the United States, Western Europe, Australia, or South Africa “with first-class medical systems” (Francis, 2002); and Ontarians who studied in other Canadian provinces. As can be seen, the binary construct ignores incongruities, portraying the group that is distinct from “foreign-trained professionals” as unified and similar. It constructs unity in an imagined community by excluding “others” (Erjavec, 2001).

The promotion of this scenario constructs a version of reality that limits what is thinkable (Davies, 2005). It is used to distort and rearrange reality in order to justify racism against the other and unify the dominant group: “we should make it easier for doctors from the United States or Western European countries, where training is **similar** to Canada’s, to practice medicine here” (Gannon, 2005). Furthermore, it is a ridiculous example “[when]

an American who went to Harvard medical school and is a fully qualified pediatric anesthesiologist [cannot practice] despite a huge shortage in his specialty without taking courses and sitting four expensive exams next year.... [It is also a] horror story... [when] a Canadian who obtains a medical education outside Canada cannot practice medicine here either, even if that education is in the United States or Western Europe, Australia or other countries with first-class medical systems. They are lumped in with those educated in India, Africa or Eastern Europe as foreign-trained doctors” (Francis, 2002).

This constructed binary perpetuates the fear that helping immigrants takes away jobs from the Canadian-born as it facilitates competition between groups and depicts equity as a zero-sum game. A Canadian Press article reports on one University of Ottawa medical student who expressed misgivings about foreign doctors being streamed into an already competitive system... “[he claimed] if the foreign doctors are competing with us certainly it will be more difficult for us.” On the other hand, Hong noted, once the specialties are filled there are still family doctor positions that are open and he saw a place for foreign doctors there (Canadian Press, 2004b).

This discourse perpetuates the perception that Canadian-born professionals should have the first choice in the labour market and that the foreign-trained should only get what is “left-over.” As confirmed by the federal Health Minister: “enrollment in nursing and medical schools has increased in recent years, but if there aren’t enough Canadian graduates, foreign-trained doctors and nurses can fill the gap” (Bueckert, 2005).

Training policy

Neo-liberal discourses of “accountability,” “reporting” and “evaluation” in the “skill shortage” web work together to facilitate training programs as the solution to APT. Bridge-training projects to upgrade individuals’ gaps in training and job-specific language training are major initiatives of current governments. The Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) has dedicated \$5.8 million over the next three years to support 15 bridge-training projects (MTCU, 2005a) and the Ontario government and the federal government are jointly investing \$3.4 million over two years to support 13 projects under the Enhanced Language Training Initiative (MTCU, 2005b). Data on the success of training programs report on easy-to-measure and report-upon statistics, such as how much funding is allocated, the number of courses offered, and how many immigrants took training or ultimately received a job.

While there are benefits reaped through training programs, the main difficulty in endorsing training as a

key solution to the APT issue is that it implies that if immigrants arrive in Ontario, and take courses, they will succeed. Research suggests that it takes immigrants more than 20 years to catch up to the Canadian-born population in the labour market (Statistics Canada, 2003). When immigrants do not succeed after the course, the blame is laid on them personally and attributed to cultural deficiencies. In a liberal way, this discourse assumes that all people are equal and, thus, should be treated the same. Hence, if they are all treated the same they will have similar outcomes. This discourse advances an ideology of equal opportunity rather than of equal outcomes, and obscures the reality of systemic racism and discrimination. The impact of the discourse is that training is perceived as the means for solving the inequities in the labour market and that the policies of licensing bodies do not need to be

changed. Furthermore, it justifies the lack of progress on the APT issue by limiting the need for social programs that could assist immigrants, “since the individual is responsible for taking care of him or herself and not dependent on society” (Davies, 2005, p. 9).

These courses also are assimilatory in that they encourage immigrants to abandon or “unlearn” their original knowledge and skills, including their language and culture, and adopt “Canadian” culture, values and language in order to integrate into the labour market and society. Immigrants themselves have come to realize that “becoming proficient in Canada’s official languages and adapting to Canadian cultural norms are required ingredients for success” (Conference Board of Canada, 2004).

Another major problem with training courses is their variability in quality and outcomes (Lum & Nestel, 2005). Owen (1999) highlights how settlement and training courses are increasingly being framed in a discourse about standards, accountability and measurement. This increased focus

on accountability mechanisms for the use of funds in settlement has diverted resources to monitoring and budgets, as well as measuring outputs of service instead of on service provision (Owen, 1999, see also Richmond and Shields, 2004). This mentality creates increased competition among service-providers, where the lowest cost is the desired outcome, but which may not produce the best product (Owen, 1999).

This training discourse also legitimizes government spending on training and policies for Ontarians. APT policies are constructed as training policies established to fill gaps left by skill shortages. For example, “we will build the world’s best workforce by creating more opportunities in communities across the province **for all people, including the internationally trained**, to get the training and education they need to succeed [and APT will] create opportunity

[The] training discourse creates a deficit mentality where the identities of immigrant professionals are constructed as deficient, “in need of training,” and “not up to Canadian standards.” Their skills and experience are portrayed as unknown, suspicious and inferior.

for all” (MTCU, 2004). As such, the policy ends up benefitting Ontario citizens instead of immigrants. In this way, resources are redirected back to the dominant group serving to reinforce their privileged position.

In sum, this training discourse creates a deficit mentality where the identities of immigrant professionals are constructed as deficient, “in need of training,” and “not up to Canadian standards.” Their skills and experience are portrayed as unknown, suspicious and inferior. When distinct groups are labeled as different, it is difficult to argue that they deserve equality in the labour market. This ethnocentric position helps maintain group privilege in the Ontario labour market and hinders immigrant professionals as they attempt to gain access to licensure and employment.

Assessment discourse and policies

Other neo-liberal discourses such as “credentials and competency assessment,” “standards,” and “merit,” which promote evaluation, accountability, testing, assessment and equivalency, are present in the web and led Ontario to develop policies such as the Academic Credential Assessment Service (ACAS). Under this “skill shortage” web, immigrants are defined solely in terms of skills, and assessment is advocated as the predominant means to solve the APT issue. Furthermore, under this discursive web, skills are constructed as something measurable, and skills are defined as equal to certified credentials. Value becomes defined by what is quantifiable and measurable. Anything that cannot be measured or quantified is not valued. Policies that attempt to measure and quantify immigrant skills and experiences against Ontario standards are endorsed. While ACAS is valuable for some professions, its development (in 2000) was the culmination of five time consuming years where the majority of provincial government resources in the APT Unit were dedicated to this process, thereby sacrificing time from other policies. As the New Zealand economist Hazledine, points out: “monitoring directly diverts resources from productive activities and, more insidiously, it fosters the sort of behaviour that it is supposed to prevent (Hazledine, 1998, p. 216; as cited in Codd, 2005, p. 203).

Assessment was the Ontario Ministry of Health’s focus in solving the internationally-trained physician dilemma. The Ministry dedicated most of its APT focus to developing IMG Ontario, “a one-stop entry point for foreign-trained doctors to apply for assessment and training” (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2004). IMG Ontario is essentially an assessment service for International Medical Graduates (IMGs). It includes a series of exams that an IMG must pass (after passing the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Exam and Test of English as a Foreign Language or Test of Spoken English), such as the equivalency exam (MCQ) and the Objective Structured Clinical Exam. The focus on assessment utilizes all resources, with little left for other types of policies or changes to the College of Physicians and Surgeon’s licensing processes.

Summary of policy implications

The interaction of discourses in the “skill shortage” web has specific influences on local APT policy in

Ontario. Policies that focus on training and assessment for all Ontarians (instead of immigrants) and that endorse short-term solutions are enabled, while those focusing on removing systemic barriers are constrained. These types of assessment and training programs individualize the APT problem and focus resources on monitoring and assessment, which deflects attention from policies that attempt to address the whole system. Furthermore, within this web, governments are blamed for the problem and labeled ineffective, thereby justifying a market mentality that includes smaller governments and requires less policy intervention or legislation to address the issue. “We have thousands of well-educated professionals who are underused due to the inability in our governments to properly deal with the issue” (Piatti, 2004).

I conclude that while situating APT as a solution to the “skill shortage” dilemma can increase public support and legitimize government action, we need to examine the unintended impact of framing policies in this way. It is important to problematize the taken-for-granted conceptions of the world and expose how this “truth” has been constructed through ideologically infused discourses.

Conclusion

Through my work, I have attempted to make sense of the messy reality of policy by using a new metaphor – the discursive web. The APT policy example provides a concrete and specific policy study through which to demonstrate how discourses interact. This is central to understanding the way in which discourse influences the policy process, which in turn influences social reality. The metaphor thus also:

- provides a way to understand the context in which the policy process takes place by highlighting the way in which policy is shaped by the historical, cultural, institutional and political factors, in which it is situated;
- demonstrates how the discursive context is made up of multiple and conflicting discourses that exist in complex relationships with each other;
- shows that while the state is a major discursive player in the policy process, it is not the only one;
- illustrates how multiple and often conflicting voices participate in the discursive web to influence the policy context;
- indicates that policies cannot simply be imposed from other jurisdictions, but that they enter into previously existing contexts that influence how they are addressed locally.

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Notes

¹ Globalization and neo-liberalism are widely used and contested concepts. Due to space limitations, I do not explore this entanglement here. See Tickell and Peck (2003) who understand globalization as a discourse or economic narrative and neo-liberalism as a political project. See also Goldberg (2006a) for a more complete discussion of globalization and neo-liberalism as the context for Ontario's APT policy.

² I limit this discussion to health professionals. Nurses and doctors fall within the top 10 occupations of immigrant arrivals (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003), they are occupations highly publicized as experiencing skill shortages (Bueckert, 2005), and furthermore, according to the Statistics Canada 1996 Census, immigrants arriving with medical degrees are the least likely to be employed.

TRACING THE ROOTS OF NON-RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN CREDENTIALS

ABSTRACT

This article traces the roots of non-recognition of foreign credentials. First, epistemological misperceptions of difference and knowledge lead to a belief that the knowledge of immigrant professionals is deficient, inferior, and hence invalid. Second, an ontological commitment to positivistic and universal measurement exacerbates the complexity of this process. The juxtaposition of the misconceptions of difference and knowledge with positivism and liberal universalism forms a new head tax to exclude the 'undesirable' and to perpetuate oppression in Canada.

Despite Canada's preference for highly skilled immigrants, and despite the fact that immigrant professionals bring significant human capital resources to the Canadian labour force, a number of studies have shown that many highly educated immigrant professionals experience deskilling and devaluation of their prior learning and work experience after immigrating to Canada (Basran & Zong, 1998; Krahn et al., 2000; Li, 2001; Mojab, 1999; Reitz, 2001). In the time since the issue was first brought to light, the situation has not improved, even though some studies have pointed to causes leading to the denigration of foreign credentials. Drawing on perspectives from critical theory and postmodernism, this article attempts to trace the roots of this issue. First, it begins with an examination of current studies pertaining to devaluation of foreign credentials and prior work experience.

Foreign credentials and prior work experience: deskilling and discounting

In a study with 404 Indo- and Chinese-Canadian immigrant professionals in Vancouver, Basran and Zong (1998) report that only 18.8% of their respondents worked as professionals (doctors, engineers, school/university teachers, and other professionals) after immigrating to Canada. Respondents indicated that the non-recognition or devaluation of their foreign credentials was the most important factor in their inability to access to professional occupations and the downward social mobility that may result. Highly educated refugees also encounter similar barriers in Canada. In a study with 525 refugees, Krahn, Derwing, Mulder, and Wilkinson (2000) demonstrate that refugees with high educational and occupational qualifications experienced downward occupational mobility after arriving in Canada. Compared to Canadian-born individuals, refugee professionals are more likely to experience unemployment and underemployment (such as part-time and temporary employment). A lack of recognition of prior learning and work experience was identified as the top contributing factor to this downward mobility. The situation for immigrant women is even worse. In her research on immigrant women, Mojab (1999) finds that skilled immigrant women faced de-skilling in Canada. She maintains that advanced capitalism simultaneously creates and destroys jobs and requires both skilling and deskilling of the labour force. Highly skilled immigrant women are usually seen as a potential source of manual labour. They face unemployment or are pressured into non-skilled jobs. As a result, immigrants and Canadian society suffer severe economic impacts (Li, 2001; Reitz, 2001).

Tracing the roots: epistemological and ontological misperceptions

While some of the studies have suggested causes leading to the denigration of foreign credentials, many have failed to further question the root of this issue. At this stage, two critical questions remain:

- Why do such inequities occur in a society such as Canada's where democratic principles are upheld and where immigrants are 'welcome'?
- What prevents Canada from moving forward?

Drawing on perspectives from critical theory and postmodernism, this article traces the roots of this issue to the epistemological misperceptions of difference and knowledge and ontological commitment to positivistic and universal measurement.

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Epistemological misperceptions of difference and knowledge

First, non-recognition of foreign credentials and prior work experience can be attributed to a deficit model of difference. One of the basic tenets of Canadian society is its commitment to cultural pluralism. Nonetheless, a number of commentators argue that Canada endorses pluralism only in superficial ways (Dei, 1996; Fleras & Elliott, 2002; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). In reality, Canada tends to prefer “pretend pluralism,” which means that we “tolerate rather than embrace differences” (Fleras & Elliott, 2002, p.2). In practice, differences have been exoticized and trivialized. While minor differences may be gently affirmed in depoliticized and decontextualized forms such as food, dance, and festivities, substantive differences that challenge hegemony and resist being co-opted are usually perceived by many Canadians as deficient, deviant, pathological, or otherwise divisive. Indeed, one of the hurdles that prevents the full recognition of immigrants’ educational qualifications and professional experiences is the prevailing attitude toward difference. Negative attitudes and behaviours toward immigrants co-exist with Canada’s commitments to democratic principles such as justice, equality, and fairness. The co-existence of these two conflicting ideologies can be referred to as “democratic racism” (Henry et al., 2006). Democratic racism prevents the government from fully embracing differences or making any changes in the existing social, economic, and political order. It also prevents the government from supporting policies and practices that might ameliorate the low status of immigrants because these policies are perceived to be in conflict with – and a threat to – liberal democracy.

Furthermore, knowledge is used as power to keep out the undesirable. Critical theorists and postmodern scholars maintain that knowledge is power, that it is socially constructed, culturally mediated, and historically situated, and that it is never neutral or objective (Foucault, 1980; McLaren, 2003). The nature of knowledge as social relations prompts us to ask the following questions: What counts as legitimate knowledge? How and why is knowledge constructed? Whose knowledge is considered valuable? Whose knowledge is silenced? Is knowledge racialized? The studies cited here suggest that while immigrants from Third World countries have encountered difficulties with their foreign credentials and work experience, those from developed countries (such as the United States, Australia, Britain, or New Zealand) have relatively successful experiences (Mojab, 1999; Reitz, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2003). It can be argued that knowledge has been racialized in Canada. The knowledge possessed by immigrants is deemed inferior because their real and alleged differences are claimed to be incompatible with the cultural and social fabric of the ‘traditional’ Canada. It seems clear that the power relations are embedded in social relations of difference (Dei, 1996). In fact, this hierarchy of

The knowledge possessed by immigrants is deemed inferior because their real and alleged differences are claimed to be incompatible with the cultural and social fabric of the ‘traditional’ Canada.

knowledge and power is rooted in Canada’s ethnocentric past, where immigrants from Europe and the United States were viewed as most desirable and those from the Third World countries as undesirable. Although Canada’s commitment to the point system as immigration policy does not permit the recruitment of immigrants on the basis of racial and national origins, it is insufficient for moving Canadian society beyond diffuse racial and national preferences.

It can be concluded that the devaluation and denigration of immigrants’ knowledge and experience becomes the new head tax to keep ‘undesirables’ out. Just as the head tax was raised every time the criteria were met, so too the obstacles to professional accreditation multiply. As such, the accreditation issue is used as the new strategy to maintain the subordination of immigrants and to reinforce the extant power relations in Canada.

Ontological foundations: positivism and liberal universalism

Foreign credentials assessment and recognition in Canada suffers from positivistic measuring. Positivists believe that an objective world exists ‘out there,’ external to the individual (Boshier, 1994). Positivists also believe that if something exists, it can be measured (Young & Arrigo, 1999). The studies cited here argue that this objectivist ontology has been the driving force behind the current practice in foreign credentials assessment and recognition (Krahn et al., 2000; Ng, 1999). The existing scheme searches for an absolute truth regarding knowledge and experience. It adopts a set of ‘value-free’ criteria, which discount the social, political, historical, and cultural context within which such knowledge is produced. Moreover, the measuring criteria and homogenizing rules have not only been those of the receiving society, but are also androcentric and man-made. The claimed neutral assessment and measuring usually disguises itself under the cloak of professional standard, quality, and excellence, without questioning whose standard is put in place, and whose interests the standard represents. Although immigrants are allowed into the country, professional standards deny them access to employment in their professions. Let us not be fooled: the real purpose of such standards is to restrict competition and to sustain the interests of the dominant groups (Krahn et al., 2000).

Similarly, in assessing foreign credentials, positivism is juxtaposed with liberal universalism and this, in turn, exacerbates the complexity of foreign credentials recognition. As Young (1995) notes, liberal universalism posits that universality transcends particularity and difference. She also maintains that universality promotes assimilation while a politics of difference makes space for multiple voices and perspectives. In applying a one-size-fits-all criterion to measure immigrants’ credentials and experience, liberal universalism fails to answer the following questions: Who

establishes the criteria? Whose interests are represented and served by these standards? What constitutes valid prior learning? What should we do with knowledge that is valid but different? What forms of knowledge become the Canadian 'equivalent'? Sometimes the rejection of immigrants' qualifications may simply be seen by practitioners as an effort to reduce risk arising from ignorance of the credential in question (Reitz, 2001). It also serves to control access to a profession so as to preserve hegemony and its lucrative nature. Thus, by refusing to recognize immigrants' qualifications and experience as legitimate knowledge, liberal universalism privileges a regime of truth that perpetuates oppression and disadvantage of immigrants.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article argues that the recognition of prior learning is a political act. The analysis reveals that many immigrant professionals in Canada have experienced devaluation and denigration of their prior learning and work experience once they arrive in Canada. As a result, they have experienced significant, demoralizing and disempowering downward social mobility, unemployment and underemployment, vulnerability and commodification, and reduced earnings. There is a lack of recognition of the prior learning and credentials of immigrant professionals, and this can be traced to a number of causes. First and foremost, our epistemological misperceptions of difference and knowledge can be blamed. The deficit model of difference led us to believe that differences are deficiency, that the knowledge of immigrant professionals, particularly of those from the Third World countries, is incompatible and inferior, and hence invalid. Thus, knowledge has been racialized and materialized on the basis of ethnic and national origins. Furthermore, a fundamental ontological commitment to positivism and liberal universalism exacerbates the complexity of this process. By applying a one-size-fits-all criterion to measure immigrants' credentials and experience, liberal universalism denies immigrants opportunities to be successful in a new society. Moreover, professional standards and excellence have been used as a cloak to restrict competition and legitimize existing power relations. The juxtaposition of the misperceptions of difference and knowledge with positivism and liberal universalism forms a new, more subtle – but powerful – head tax to exclude the undesirable, and to perpetuate oppression in Canada.

The current approach to recognition of prior learning for immigrant professionals has been shown to be a serious barrier rather than a facilitator of integration and participation in Canadian society. It is morally and economically urgent for government organizations, professional associations, educational institutions, and prior learning assessment agencies to dismantle barriers and to adopt an inclusive framework that fully embraces all human knowledge and experiences, no matter their ethnic and cultural origin. Otherwise, immigrants will be further alienated from becoming full-fledged and productive members of receiving societies.

To achieve that goal in policy and practice, first and foremost, a strong political will must be in place. It is the responsibility of federal and provincial governments to promote legislation that will make regulatory bodies accountable for their treatment of immigrants and ensure

that admission procedures are transparent and equitable. It is also imperative for government agencies to work with employers to create additional internship or co-op opportunities to help immigrants acquire Canadian work experience. Furthermore, it is important to provide immigrants with adequate information about the accreditation process, not after, but prior to immigrants' landing in Canada. More importantly, it is time to launch a campaign to educate the Canadian public about the politics of difference and knowledge and about the contributions of immigrants to Canadian society, the reciprocal respect they deserve from Canadian society, and the rights they are entitled to as new citizens to this country.

Notes

¹ The author wishes to acknowledge funding from the Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration (PCERII) for this study.

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INTERNATIONAL CREDENTIAL EVALUATION AND THE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS

ABSTRACT

There is increasing public awareness about issues related to the recognition of international credentials. Research shows a current and growing labour shortage and that labour force growth will be nil or negative without immigration, but few employers are aware of the value of international credentials. This article discusses the nature and role of credential evaluation and the steps that World Education Services, one of major credential evaluation services in Canada, has been taken to broaden the understanding of this service, and to offer innovative solutions to encourage its use.

There is increasing public awareness about the need to better facilitate the labour market integration of immigrants, especially those with post-secondary education. Three of the most significant barriers to finding appropriate employment are credentials not being recognized, inadequate language (or communication) skills, and lack of Canadian experience. Determining the equivalency of international credentials can be relatively straightforward, as there have been reliable credential evaluation services in Canada for more than thirty years.

Research, including that done by employer associations such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business,¹ shows a current and growing labour shortage in critical skill areas; labour force growth will be nil or negative without immigration, and while employers see the need to better recognize the skills of immigrants, few know how or where to have credentials evaluated. Many highly trained individuals arriving in Canada continue to be underemployed.

World Education Services (WES) is the official credential evaluation service of the province of Ontario. For the past six years, it has been working with a wide spectrum of stakeholders across Canada to broaden the recognition and use of credential evaluation. Recently, it has developed new tools that make it faster and simpler for individuals, institutions, and employers to make use of their service and facilitate the recognition of international credentials. These include a Preliminary On-line Equivalency tool that provides an immediate indication of a credential's Canadian equivalency and a document "bank" or "clearinghouse" for verified documents that WES has received directly from issuing institutions.

Background to issue

Over the past decade, the level of education that immigrants bring to Canada has been increasing. In 2005, 70% of the 204,000 immigrants of age 15 years or more who arrived in Canada had more than a high school education. The demographic shift that is taking place in Canada (aging population, low birth rates) makes it crucial that the education of immigrants is recognized appropriately and that they contribute early and effectively in the labour market.

The 2003 Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants reported that immigrants considered a lack of Canadian work experience and the non-transferability of their credentials as the most critical hurdles they faced in getting work in Canada.² Among respondents, 76% had earned at least one credential overseas, 61% had not yet started the process of having their credentials evaluated, and 6 in 10 were working in different occupation fields in Canada than they had been in their home country.

Over the past decade, governments and non-government organizations across Canada, as well as post-secondary education institutions and regulatory bodies, have collaborated to develop, fund and offer programs specifically designed to assist highly educated professionals find work best suited to their expertise.

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Among the services that have been developed are credential evaluation services, which assess the comparable value of academic credentials earned abroad and provide reports that can be used by immigrants when they are applying for jobs, as well as to post-secondary institutions or licensing bodies.

WES has been offering credential evaluation services in Canada since 2000, when it was contracted by the Government of Ontario to be its official credential evaluation service.

WES is an international not-for-profit organization, whose mission is to facilitate the integration of immigrants into the employment and academic settings of their new country by providing credential evaluation services. The service was established in 1974 by a group of individuals at New York University and is the largest credential evaluation service in North America. It now has a staff of 19 people in Toronto. Along with the provincially recognized services in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Quebec, WES is a member of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC).

The establishment of WES as Ontario's official credential evaluation service was one of the steps taken by the Ontario government to address a number of issues arising from the inadequate recognition of education earned overseas. In 2006, WES prepared evaluation reports for approximately 7,600 individuals and sent out nearly 12,000 reports to individuals and the employers and institutions to which they were applying.

The lack of appropriate recognition of international credentials continues, despite the 30-year history of independent credential evaluation services in North America. This, along with a number of other barriers faced by recent immigrants, has coincided with their high rates of unemployment and under-employment and persistent low-income levels.

Credential evaluation

Credential evaluation is a tool to compare formal educational credentials earned in one jurisdiction to that which would have been earned in another. Standard methodologies for developing consistent "equivalencies" and facilitating appropriate recognition have been in place for many years. While no two credentials, even those earned at the same institution, can be described accurately as identical, there is a high level of comparability that allows for them to be recognized across jurisdictions.

The European experience in moving beyond a narrowly defined idea of equivalence provides a useful comparison.³ The purpose of credential evaluation within the European context has developed from being primarily geared toward academic mobility to now supporting labour mobility, and this experience has provided useful lessons to Canada.

In the period leading up to the early 1970's, the practice of comparing credentials focused on trying to find identical equivalence between international and domestic curricula. Not surprisingly, this practice did not lead to much success and, as international mobility increased, the equivalence approach became impractical. Attention shifted from requiring absolute "equivalence" to recognition. Recognition was possible if the level, the function and the rights granted

by the international credential were comparable to those of the domestic credential. It was possible to allow small differences as long as the general purpose and rights of the qualification were comparable. More recently, in the 1990s, another shift occurred. There is now an assumption that there will always be differences in curricula, but that these should not always be seen as problems; sometimes they are enrichments and should be accepted, so long as the differences are not too great.

All of the provincially mandated credential evaluation services in Canada adhere to a common set of guidelines and principles that were agreed to in 1998,⁴ and which are consistent with those articulated by UNESCO and the Council of Europe's Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region⁵ (for the purposes of UNESCO, Canada participates in activities as part of the European Region).

These services prepare reports for individuals who apply to have their credentials evaluated, reports that contain key information about the credentials (admission requirements, length of program, year awarded, and so on), as well as a statement of comparability, or equivalency, to Canadian credentials. In some cases, the reports also contain converted grade averages and course credit information. Individuals receive a copy of the report, and, if requested, so do the institutions to which they are applying.

The evaluation reports are multi-purpose. They can be used to apply for employment, for admission to a regulated profession, or for admission (sometimes with advanced standing) to higher education. Individuals can use their evaluation reports at any time in the future and so do not have to pay more than once to have their credentials evaluated.

Since these credential evaluation services operate independently of a regulatory body or academic institution, their reports constitute neutral, third-party opinions.

Increasingly, regulatory bodies and academic institutions use or recognize the evaluation reports prepared by third-party services, such as WES, although many continue to assess international credentials themselves. More than 100 regulatory bodies and professional associations, nearly 150 post-secondary institutions, and thousands of employers use one or more of the provincially mandated services in Canada. In total, these services assist nearly 30,000 individuals a year.

Due to the availability of high-quality credential evaluation services, the real issue in credential recognition is not in determining the Canadian equivalency of international credentials, but rather how Canadian institutions and employers recognize these credentials, and the evaluation reports produced by these services. If the work of the provincially mandated credential evaluation services were more broadly understood and recognized, some of the barriers faced by skilled immigrants could be overcome immediately.⁶

Non-recognition

Surveys of employers done by the Public Policy Forum in 2004,⁷ the Canadian Labour Business Centre in 2003,⁸ and Pricewaterhouse in 1998,⁹ paint a common picture: employers' opinions, while generally positive towards immigrants, are not always well informed.

In 1998, Pricewaterhouse undertook a survey to establish the business case for the establishment of a centralized credential evaluation service in Ontario. This survey looked at the needs of employers, post-secondary institutions, and occupational regulatory bodies. At that time, employers indicated that educational attainment was a mandatory requirement for employment in at least 60% of their organizations and in more than one job category, yet approximately 40% of employers indicated that they would screen out internationally educated applicants because they did not know how to assess their education. Only 15% of employers had heard of a credential evaluation service, and most did not think that such a service could meet their needs.

In 2003, a study done by the Canadian Labour and Business Centre found that the biggest issues for employers in recruiting immigrants were understanding foreign credentials and determining language skills. Almost half thought more emphasis should be given to improving the recognition of foreign credentials, but at the same time only 10% saw hiring immigrants as a solution to pending skilled labour shortages.

A 2004 survey, undertaken by Environics for the Public Policy Forum, showed that only 18% of the 2,000 employers surveyed could name an organization that evaluated foreign credentials. Sixty percent thought that the education level of their immigrant employees was high school or less, yet 46% had never verified this. Employers in this survey also did not believe that hiring skilled immigrants was a solution to future labour shortages.

The 1998 Pricewaterhouse report also surveyed occupational regulatory bodies and post-secondary institutions about their credential recognition needs. They expressed similar opinions about the ability of independent evaluation services to fully meet their needs. They required specific details on education, including course content information, and information on clinical or practical learning, which they believed was not available from existing credential evaluation services. Many were developing in-house expertise to do their own assessments, but financial constraints and lack of up-to-date and comprehensive information on other education systems were leading others to consider the use of alternatives. Some indicated that they might request some information from an external provider (e.g. verification of documents, or equivalency of degree), but continue to assess the course content themselves.

In short, the major stakeholders in the recognition of international credentials (employers, occupational regulatory bodies, and post-secondary institutions) have struggled with developing the means to consistently, efficiently, and effectively assess and recognize the qualifications of immigrants. Many have taken steps to build relationships and partnerships to assist in this work, but

many others have either not been aware – or are reluctant or unsure – of how to utilize the available expertise of independent credential evaluation services.

Focus groups with employers held by WES in 2000, its first year of Canadian operation, confirmed that employers had little idea of how an evaluation service could help them, but when they were informed about the nature of a service such as WES, they expressed great interest in its potential use. As a result, WES hired a Business Development Manager to focus on building relations with employers, employer associations, and staffing services, to broaden their understanding of credential evaluation, and to develop ways in which WES could better meet their needs. This work has involved increasing awareness about the nature of credential evaluation, suggesting how a credential evaluation can fit into the recruitment cycle, developing referral systems, providing one-on-one advice, and building credibility and trust.

At the same time, we have taken a number of steps to build and participate in partnerships with all stakeholders, including regulatory bodies and post-secondary institutions, and to adapt our services to their needs. This has resulted in an increase in the recognition and use of our services over the past six years.

Some positive signs

In Ontario, government and community-led initiatives to assist skilled immigrants find appropriate employment have been flourishing. The government has funded many “Bridge Training Programs” which are designed to bridge the gap between the skills that newcomers have already acquired and those required to practice in their profession. These have resulted in many successful pilot projects that have assisted internationally trained professionals in becoming licensed in their field. Recently, the province

passed legislation that aims at ensuring fair access to regulated professions for those trained abroad.

The federal governments’ Foreign Credential Recognition program has funded projects across the country with regulatory bodies, employer groups, post-secondary institutions and credential assessment services and is examining the potential for a national body that can provide services to immigrants to help them get their credentials assessed and gain access to their profession. They have also provided funding to help the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada work together to increase the portability and recognition of credential evaluation.

The Maytree Foundation and the Toronto City Summit Alliance created the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), a multi-stakeholder partnership of linking employers, regulatory bodies, community groups, post-secondary institutions, and credential assessment services, which has generated an enormous number of activities to assist skilled immigrants

Labour force growth will be nil or negative without immigration, and while employers see the need to better recognize the skills of immigrants, few know how or where to have credentials evaluated.

in finding appropriate employment. The model is being adapted and replicated across Canada. One of their initiatives is to actively engage and inform employers in developing the tools and knowledge to recruit and retain skilled immigrants.

The Ontario Community College sector is in the midst of a series of projects that are aimed at improving immigrants' access through the college system and into employment; the university system is beginning a similar process. And the Association of Community Colleges of Canada, with federal support, is piloting an overseas project that aims to start the process of assessment and training while people are still in their country of origin (see the article by Katrina Murray in this edition of *Canadian Issues*).

New services from WES

WES realizes that the traditional way of providing a credential evaluation report may not serve the needs of all potential users. WES has pioneered the use of on-line services in the field of credential evaluation with on-line applications, joint on-line applications with language assessment and translation services, the ability to check one's application status on-line, and the ability to transmit evaluation reports electronically to institutions, if preferred. Wanting to keep pace with changing needs and the growing number of partnerships and initiatives underway, we have developed new ways for individuals and institutions to access our services.

The most recent service WES has introduced is the Preliminary On-Line Equivalency (POE). Many individuals want to know immediately what their credentials are worth in relation to a Canadian degree or diploma, even before undertaking a formal assessment. Since official documents need to be sent from the issuing institution, and this may take a few weeks, individuals want to get started on applying for work or further studies right away. At the same time, some universities or licensing bodies in Canada may already have received official documents from abroad, and do not need or want to go through the steps of getting a formal evaluation report from an independent service. They just want to know what the degree or diploma is worth. Employers, too, may only want to know whether an individual has the minimum qualifications to be screened into their own formal recruitment process. They can do a more formal check with their short list.

The POE allows users to look up the Canadian equivalency of university degrees issued outside of Canada. Through a series of pull down menus, one can select the university(ies) attended, and the degree(s) earned. The equivalency that WES would normally give for each credential is displayed. The nominal fee for this service (\$30) becomes a credit if one proceeds to an official evaluation. It is possible to print out the statement of equivalency, but there is a disclaimer saying that this preliminary equivalency has no official status, because no actual documents have been reviewed.

This service is also available for institutions and employers through subscription. Credentials from over 35 countries are accessible with 150 in progress.

We have also “unbundled” the determination of document authenticity as a stand-alone service. Many universities and regulatory bodies do not have the expertise, or do not want to take the time, to arrange for the receipt of official documents from an overseas institution. They would prefer that an independent evaluation service confirm the authenticity of documents and the status of the institution. They can then focus on determining the Canadian equivalency of the credential.

WES maintains an electronic database of all the scanned documents it has received directly from the institutions that issued them, which is the most reliable way to authenticate documents. Electronic copies of these verified documents can either be attached to credential evaluation reports, or sent on their own to institutions at the request or with the permission of the individual who earned them. This service serves two purposes. For individuals, it allows them to store official, validated copies of their transcripts with WES, who can send them to institutions in Canada upon request, saving individuals time and fees. For institutions, it gives them the choice to determine the equivalency of international credentials themselves, while ensuring that they are basing their decision on authenticated documents.

WES provides other on-line tools for institutions, which can assist them in determining grade point averages, course credit conversion, and doing research. WES' own research reports are also available through our website.

For information on WES, visit www.wes.org/ca.

Notes

- ¹ Bourgeois, Andreea (2006). *Help Wanted*. Canadian Federation of Independent Business.
- ² Chui, Tina (2003). *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, Progress and Prospects*. Statistics Canada. <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-611-XIE/index.htm>
- ³ Scholten and Teuwsen (2001). <http://www.nuffic.nl/ice-plar/pdf/adviesevcidw-en.pdf>
- ⁴ Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada, (1998). <http://www.canalliance.org/PDFs/GuidingPrinciples.pdf>
- ⁵ UNESCO-CEPES (2001). <http://www.cepes.ro/hed/recogn/groups/criteria.htm>
- ⁶ It should be noted that the problems of credential recognition and mobility also apply across Canadian jurisdictions. Degrees or credits earned in one post-secondary institution in Canada are not consistently recognized elsewhere, and professionals who are licensed to practice in one province, are not necessarily able to practice in another province. This impacts immigrants and non-immigrants alike.
- ⁷ Lopes, Sandra (2004). *Bringing Employers into the Immigration Debate*. Public Policy Forum.
- ⁸ Lochhead, C. (2003). *Perspectives on Immigration: Findings from the Canadian Labour and Business Centre's Survey of Canadian Business, Labour and Public Sector Leaders*. Canadian Labour and Business Centre.
- ⁹ Pricewaterhouse (1998). *Foreign Academic Credential Assessment Services Business Assessment Final Report*. Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EVALUATION AND RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN CREDENTIALS

ABSTRACT

Provincially mandated credential assessment services within Canada have collaborated to develop quality assurance principles and mechanisms for recognizing foreign educational credentials. The quality assurance framework specifies the standards and criteria for good practice in the assessment of foreign credentials. Provincially mandated assessment services that adhere to these quality assurance criteria are eligible for membership in The Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (the Alliance). This quality assurance framework has the potential to be refined and expanded to include a broad range of organizations involved in foreign credential recognition.

Provincially mandated credential assessment services within Canada have collaborated to develop quality assurance principles and mechanisms for recognizing foreign educational credentials. This quality assurance framework specifies the standards and criteria for good practice in the assessment of foreign credentials. Provincially mandated assessment services that adhere to these quality assurance criteria are eligible for membership in The Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (the Alliance).

There are currently five provincially mandated assessment services that are members of the Alliance: The International Qualifications Assessment Service (Alberta, Saskatchewan and the North West Territories), the International Credential Evaluation Service (British Columbia), the Service des évaluations comparatives (Quebec), World Education Services (Ontario) and Academic Credentials Assessment Service (Manitoba). The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials acts as Secretariat to the Alliance, supporting and facilitating the work of the Alliance and the collaboration of these member services.

The Alliance was developed in recognition of the fundamental importance of promoting – within and across Canada – transparent, fair and credible foreign credential assessment practices. The main policy objectives of the Alliance are to:

- Give assurance to clients and organizations that use credential assessments (e.g., employers, professional licensing bodies, regulatory bodies, immigration officers, and educational institutions) that assessment services that are members of the Alliance follow quality criteria and standards;
- Ensure fair and equitable treatment for all clients;
- Improve the portability of credential assessments and facilitate the recognition of quality services across Canada;
- Promote the consistent application of fair and credible assessment standards across Canada; and
- Provide guidance in the establishment of new services within Canada.

On an international level, the Alliance quality assurance framework is consistent with, and reinforces, international norms of good practice that have been developed in other jurisdictions. Most notably, the Alliance assessment standards are closely aligned with the “Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications,” which was developed by the European Network of Information Centres (ENICs) and adopted as a Recommendation by the Committee of the UNESCO/COE Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region.

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Several key principles guide the Alliance's assessment standards, including:

- Assessment should be performed without any form of racial, religious, political, or sexual discrimination.
- Holders of foreign qualifications should have adequate access, upon request, to an assessment of their foreign qualifications.
- The procedures and criteria used in the assessment of foreign credentials should be clear, rational, and reliable. The recommended methodology aims to make assessment procedures consistent and clear and to ensure all applicants receive a fair consideration of their application.
- Procedures for the evaluation of foreign credentials should be periodically reviewed with a view to increasing clarity and eliminating, when possible, requirements leading to undue complications in the procedure.
- The general approach to foreign credentials and how they are compared to a particular system should take into account the diversity of educational traditions in the world.
- The same basic methodology should apply whether the statement is for:
 - general employment purposes
 - entry into secondary and postsecondary institutions
 - entry into a regulated occupation.
- Assessment criteria for the evaluation of foreign credentials have been elaborated with a view to increasing consistency and with the objective of treating similar cases in a reasonably similar manner across Canada. It is recognized nevertheless that a margin of flexibility in making decisions is essential and that decisions may vary according to the provincial/territorial system of education.

In addition to these principles, the Alliance abides by several guidelines related to assessment procedures and criteria.

General procedures

The evaluation of a foreign credential should:

- a. situate the credential within the framework of the education system to which it belongs, taking into account its relative place and function compared to other credentials in the same system;
- b. identify the level and type of credential that is most comparable to the foreign credential in the system of the country where recognition is sought, while taking into account the purpose for which recognition is sought;
- c. determine whether similarities between foreign and domestic credentials are sufficient for recognition.

The evaluation should take into account past practices in similar cases in order to ensure consistency in recognition practice. Past practice should be recorded in an inventory and used as a guideline for making consistent decisions. Substantial changes of practice should be justified and recorded. It is important to note that assessment decisions are based on the information available to the assessment service at the time the assessment is performed. Further information may result in the modification of the assessment decision.

Processing time and delay

The Alliance's guidelines recommend that the time normally required to process evaluations be specified. The total time is determined once all relevant information has been provided by applicants and/or educational institutions. In cases of substantial delay, the assessment service should inform applicants of the reasons for the delay and, if possible, the time required to review the credential.

Information requirements

The assessment process should provide standardized information on the procedures and criteria for the evaluation of foreign credentials. This information should automatically be given to all applicants and to persons making preliminary inquiries about the evaluation of credentials, including the following:

- a. the required documentation and requirements related to the authentication and translation of documents
- b. the role of professional associations and educational institutions in the recognition process
- c. the status of the assessment statement
- d. the approximate time needed to process an application
- e. the fees charged
- f. the process for appealing decisions

The responsibility for providing information is shared by the assessment service, the applicant, and the educational institutions where the qualifications in question were earned. The assessment service is responsible for providing the applicant with complete information regarding its requirements for credential assessment, as well as for maintaining a system of information on educational systems. The applicant is responsible for providing documents and information required for the assessment, while educational institutions are responsible for providing information about credentials earned at the institutions and other relevant information, such as course content, program structure, etc.

Fees

The Alliance's guidelines note that the fee for the evaluation of foreign credentials should be kept as low as possible. When possible, special measures for persons with limited income and other disadvantaged groups should be considered so that no applicant is prevented from seeking assessment or recognition of his or her foreign credentials because of the cost involved.

Translation

The guidelines recommend that translation be limited to key documents, and that original documents, including the titles of foreign qualifications, should be provided in the original language.

Document requirements

Original and official documents or certified copies of documents are normally required for evaluation. If photocopies are accepted, this should be clearly indicated on the assessment certificate. Moreover, the evaluation requires documents that clearly indicate successful completion of an academic year; educational documents that indicate failed or unsuccessful completion of an academic year or program should not be considered.

Provision has been made for some exceptional cases, such as for refugees and others who are unable to document their qualifications for good reasons. In these cases, sworn statements before a legal authority may be accepted in lieu of full documentation.

The guidelines recommend that all submitted documents be examined for evidence of tampering or misrepresentation and that original documents and certified proofs of academic achievements be examined by evaluation officers to verify their authenticity. The presence of fraudulent or altered documents are grounds for refusal to issue an evaluation report. A verification by the issuing institution or authority in the country of origin should be conducted if it is suspected that documents have been altered or falsified. If it is found that documents have been falsified, it is recommended that no further evaluation be carried out.

Status of institutions and programs

In view of the wide diversity of educational institutions, the assessment guidelines recommend that the status of a credential not be established without taking into account the status of the program and institution where the credential was earned. Moreover, credit should only be considered for education attained through recognized institutions. A recognized institution is one that has been formally recognized by a country's competent authorities and/or that is widely accepted by other institutions and agencies inside or outside a country. Finally, a credential should be recognized only if the related program is also recognized by a competent authority. Recognition of an educational institution does not guarantee the recognition of all credentials issued by that institution.

Purpose and outcome of assessment

The assessment guidelines note that a credential earned from an educational institution should have an evaluation outcome consistent with the same credential earned at the same educational institutions at the same point in time.

Moreover, credential evaluation should take into account the purpose for which recognition is sought, and the evaluation statement should clearly indicate the purpose for which the statement is valid. Depending on practice, the outcome of the evaluation of a foreign credential may take the form of a statement to the applicant that will provide:

- a. advice for general employment purposes
- b. advice to an educational institution for admission into its programs
- c. advice to a regulatory body for entry into a trade or a profession

Level of study

The assessment of a given credential should be based entirely on the normal entry and completion requirements for that credential. In addition, the assessment of a given credential should be based on the entry and completion requirements in place when that credential was completed. The evaluation outcome should not vary because of any previous studies taken by the individual whose credential is being evaluated, and each credential presented by an individual should be assessed separately. Moreover, credentials at the same level in different programs should not be "added" together to equate a credential at a higher level of study. Finally, the evaluation should be based on the credentials presented for evaluation and should not cite the completion of prerequisite credentials if those prerequisite credentials are not presented for the evaluation.

Assessment criteria

With respect to assessment criteria, the guidelines suggest that a variety of criteria be applied to determine the level and type of educational programs, including:

- a. entrance requirements (e.g. What are the normal admission requirements for entrance to the program? What is the level of studies in the home country?)
- b. full-time duration of study program (e.g. What is the normal full-time duration of the program?)
- c. structure of program (e.g. How is the program structured? What type of program is it, such as vocational, academic, etc.?)
- d. contents of the program (e.g. In what discipline of studies? What courses? How many hours of studies?)
- e. purpose of degree (e.g. For what purpose was the program completed? Was it for a professional qualification or prerequisites to further studies?)
- f. bridges to traditional degree (e.g. What access does the program give to other programs in the home country?)

The Alliance was developed in recognition of the fundamental importance of promoting within and across Canada transparent, fair and credible foreign credential assessment practices.

Duration of study program

The guidelines also cover the assessment of a program's duration. In general, each academic year of study, as recognized by the official designated authority in the country of origin, should not be granted more than one academic year of recognition. However, this year-to-year comparison may be overruled by other factors, such as education outcomes, or the structure and content of the educational program.

Appeal

Upon request, the assessment service should inform the applicant of the basis for the decision reached, the possibilities for him or her to appeal the decision if applicable, and the time limits that should be observed.

In addition to following these principles of good practice, Alliance members must also adhere to specific administrative and operational quality assurance criteria. Under these criteria, a credential assessment service must have a:

- Documentation Centre that gives access to a broad range of historical and up-to-date information on educational systems and credentials in other countries;
- File Management System that permits easy access to information while ensuring the protection of client's confidential information;
- Human Resource Model that ensures that the assessment staff conducting the foreign credential evaluation are properly trained and participate in on-going professional development opportunities.

Taken together, these principles and criteria are designed to ensure the highest level of quality and transparency in the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. All provincially mandated assessment services in Canada have demonstrated their compliance with these principles and are members of the Alliance. Although this is certainly a major step forward in promoting foreign credential recognition in Canada, there is still much to be done.

Alliance members recognize that this quality assurance framework is a 'work in progress' and has the potential to be refined and expanded to include a much more inclusive and diverse range of organizations. More specifically, employers, regulatory bodies and educational institutions are all involved in the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. Many of these groups either implicitly or explicitly follow some or all of the principles of good practice identified in the Alliance quality assurance framework.

The ultimate value of the quality assurance framework lies in the interpretation and application of best practice principles among all the bodies involved in foreign credential recognition. There needs to be increased transparency, dialogue and collaboration on quality assurance principles and practices. Indeed, to have a tangible and real impact on immigrants, quality assurance principles need to be inclusive and relevant to all parties involved in foreign credential recognition, including immigrants, employers, regulatory bodies and educational institutions.

Over the next few years, Alliance members will be undertaking a number of initiatives to promote quality assurance principles at a pan-Canadian level across a range of organizations involved in foreign credential recognition. With the support of Human Resources and Social Development Canada and the assistance of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, the Alliance plans to establish strategic partnerships with other organizations conducting credential evaluations; to promote awareness of quality assurance criteria; and to collaborate with organizations across Canada to facilitate the further development and acceptance of good practice principles in the recognition of foreign credentials.

Further information about the Alliance and the quality assurance framework can be obtained from the Alliance website at www.canalliance.org.

Notes

- * Portions of this article are based on information on the website of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC). CICIC's permission to reproduce this material is appreciated.

CANADIAN IMMIGRATION INTEGRATION PROJECT: A STITCH IN TIME

ABSTRACT

The Canadian Immigration Integration Project is a new pilot initiative funded by the Government of Canada and implemented by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. Its purpose is to help skilled workers from China, India and the Philippines integrate more effectively into the Canadian labour market by helping them prepare while still in their country of origin.

Canada takes pride in its reputation as a nation built by immigrants and a society that is renewed and enriched by the influx of newcomers from an ever-more diverse range of countries. Canadians point to prominent figures such as Governor General, Michaëlle Jean, and her predecessor, Adrienne Clarkson, as proof that there are no limits to what newcomers can achieve in their adopted homeland.

Certainly, Canada's annual immigration targets suggest that it is a country receptive to immigration and to immigrants. Moreover, Canada's 30-year history of official multiculturalism and of government-funded settlement and integration programs are indicative of a commitment to embrace newcomers and value their contribution to cultural diversity, community development and economic prosperity.

This openness reflects the reality that Canada needs immigrants. Canada's birth-rate falls consistently below the replacement threshold and, as the population ages, labour shortages and skill gaps are likely to increase. Thus, in recent years, economic forecasters, academics, political analysts and others have turned their attention to the effectiveness of immigration as a mechanism for labour market replenishment. A number of studies suggest that there is a significant shortfall between the economic potential of newcomers and their labour market outcomes, particularly among those in the Skilled Worker category.

This conclusion resonates with those in the settlement sector, who have long been lobbying for a new approach to labour market integration that would facilitate accelerated recognition of foreign credentials and a more streamlined and simplified process for entry into regulated occupations. They have also advocated for enhancements to government-funded language training that would reflect occupational requirements and offer bridging into the workplace,¹ as well as increased employer recognition of work experience gained outside Canada. Many have pointed to the importance of effective preparation in the country of origin, so that newcomers may arrive in their new homeland better equipped to enter the labour force, to do so more quickly and to obtain jobs that appropriately reflect their academic background and work experience.

It was against this backdrop that Human Resources and Social Development Canada's (HRSDC) Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) program approved a proposal from the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) for a project that would assist prospective immigrants in the Skilled Worker category prepare to integrate into the Canadian labour market while still in their country of origin.

That initiative – the Canadian Immigration Integration Project (CIIP) – is currently being piloted in three countries. This article provides an introduction to the CIIP and highlights its inherent opportunities and challenges. It will address the following questions:

1. Should the Government of Canada invest in immigrant integration overseas?
2. What form(s) of overseas interventions might be most effective?
3. What are the critical success factors for such an initiative?
4. How might results be measured and impact assessed?
5. What role should colleges and institutes of technology play both overseas and in Canada to improve immigrant integration?

KATRINA MURRAY
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The case for government-funded intervention overseas

Statistics Canada has estimated that immigration will account for all net labour growth within the next 10 to 15 years and for all net population growth within the next 30 years. While immigrants are arriving with higher levels of post-secondary education than in the past, they nonetheless encounter difficulties in finding employment that equates to the knowledge, skills and experience gained prior to coming to Canada. As a result, research suggests that it is taking longer for immigrants' earnings to "catch-up" with the earnings of the Canadian-born, and there is some evidence of poverty. This conundrum suggests not only that newcomers are failing to realize their economic potential, but also that employers are failing to benefit from the available supply of immigrant skills, and indeed that Canada is failing both to harness the wealth of experience that immigrants offer and to fulfill its promise to provide them with an environment in which they and their families can live and prosper.

The Government of Canada has moved to improve immigrant integration. The view of the Prime Minister is that, "The goal for all of us will be to get those who are trained and ready to work in their fields of expertise into the workforce more quickly,"² and this was reflected in the 2006 Federal Budget and the proposed creation of a new government agency to improve foreign credential recognition. The mutual commitment of the Ministers for HRSDC and for Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has been reiterated time and again, and the fact that they have recently swapped portfolios should consolidate that commitment even further.

In spite of these commitments, much of the federal government's settlement-related funding supports programs within Canada.³ Indeed, program eligibility is based on permanent resident status. Newcomers often land with a very limited (and sometimes distorted) understanding of the realities of life in Canada, and this can create unrealistic expectations and disillusionment, which may prompt immigrants to leave Canada or return to their countries of origin. Even those with more solid information are frequently unsure of how and where to seek support and may spend valuable time waiting for their credentials and language to be assessed or figuring out – often the "hard way" – how best to execute their job search.

CIIP will test the premise that early intervention with Skilled Workers is a cost-effective way to support labour market integration in the long-term. CIIP received \$4.5 million in funding and is supporting Field Offices in three pilot locations: a China office in Guangzhou, an India office just outside New Delhi, and a Philippines

office in Manila. Each office is headed by a Canadian Field Manager and a four-person team of locally engaged staff. The Field Offices work in close collaboration with CIC staff in the local missions.

How to intervene effectively

After extensive consultations with CIC and HRSDC, a decision was made to target CIIP interventions at federal Skilled Worker Principal Applicants and their spouses who have reached the penultimate stage in the immigration process; this is the admissibility stage when health and security checks are to be carried out. Applicants at this stage receive a letter from CIC, which includes a description of the CIIP and a registration form. Prospective clients are advised that services are free and that participation, which is entirely voluntary, will not influence the immigration process or application decisions.

Those who do register are offered three inter-related services:

- information to help build a solid knowledge-base and shape more realistic expectations;
- customized guidance and support with planning to facilitate better-informed decision-making; and
- direct referrals to Canadian organizations that can provide practical assistance to enable clients to become better equipped for labour market integration.

The labour market information sessions are offered to groups of up to 20 clients and are organized according to expected province of destination. Each one-day session aims to expose clients to information and resources (largely web-based) that can assist in pre-arrival integration. This includes a general overview of trends in the Canadian economy, as well as a focus on labour market prospects in the province of destination. CIIP staff also provide a case study of two or

more occupations to demonstrate licensing and entrance requirements for both regulated and non-regulated fields of employment. Presentations on opportunities are balanced by an examination of labour market and settlement challenges, and options for addressing these challenges are discussed. The day concludes with a session on job-searching in the Canadian environment.

Participants are invited to return the following day for one-on-one counselling interviews at which they can develop an Individual Integration Plan (IIP). The IIP records agreed-upon actions in the areas of credential assessment and licensing, language assessment and upgrading, skills testing and enhancement, settlement-related activities, and job search strategies. The CIIP is intended to guide newcomers through the integration process while still in the country of origin and then

Many have pointed to the importance of effective preparation in the country of origin, so that newcomers may arrive in their new homeland better equipped to enter the labour force, to do so more quickly and to obtain jobs that appropriately reflect their academic background and work experience.

following arrival in Canada. At the client's request, CIIP counsellors make referrals to appropriate sources of ongoing assistance provided either through Canadian organizations operating locally or on-line, or to agencies based in Canada.

Critical success factors

Key to the success of the CIIP is the availability of adequate resources – financial, physical, human and time – for the delivery of services and the tracking and evaluation of results. Beyond that, success depends on clients accessing the services, finding them useful, and taking appropriate action as a result.

Given the voluntary nature of the services and the fact that they are delivered out of a centralized country office, a significant number of eligible clients may choose not to participate. CIC staff have however undertaken to encourage participation, and efforts are also underway to increase awareness of CIIP among immigration officers. Field Managers will consider the possibility of travelling to other parts of the country to deliver services, if justified by demand.

Quality of service depends on ensuring that local staff have comprehensive and accurate information and that their counselling skills are well honed. To that end, they have undergone a three- to four-month training period in-country, including participation in a customized counselling skills course, which was supplemented by a study tour in Canada. They are also being coached on-site over a one-month period by an experienced Canadian counsellor. Clients will be encouraged to use the CIIP website (<http://ciip.acc.ca>), which contains links to relevant sites. They will also be provided with a Newcomer Day Planner (www.cfeedayplanner.com),⁴ and with access to a licensed web-based tool, Career Cruising (<http://careertravelling.com>), to enhance their knowledge-base.

Timely access to Canadian services is also a vital part of the project's success. On-line occupation-specific language and skills assessment and tuition will be required. It will also be essential to initiate credential recognition and licensing processes while still abroad. Locally-focused, settlement-related advice must be available to immigrants before landing. The willingness of employers to accept qualifications and experience gained outside Canada and to admit applications from overseas may however be the most critical success factor of all. Sector Councils, industry associations and corporate leaders are working with employers to reduce some of the barriers that newcomers face. Provincial governments are taking decisive steps to ease regulatory processes and speed up credential recognition. CIIP hopes to capitalize on and advance these efforts further.

Measurement of results and impact

The extension and expansion of the current pilot project will of course depend on the extent to which results can be demonstrated and impact substantiated. This presents a huge challenge for the ACCC. Interim measures, such as client assessment, will be collected onsite in the Field Offices, but what is ultimately required is evidence of the CIIP's impact on labour market outcomes. This information will take time to collect and, in the absence

of a control group or baseline data, comparative analysis will be difficult.

However, Field Offices are encouraging clients to provide updates on their progress, and a web-based tool is currently being explored to provide an additional incentive to maintain contact. Links are being established with a range of organizations in the major immigrant-receiving provinces with the intention of developing partnerships for referrals and tracking. Discussions are also planned with Statistics Canada to explore the potential of using the LSIC or other survey tools to provide data on the labour market outcomes of CIIP clients.

The role of colleges and institutes of technology

Community colleges and institutes of technology can play a significant role in the labour market integration of immigrants and are present in more than 900 communities across the country. They offer language training for new immigrants (often focusing on language skills for specific workplaces), transitional programs, as well as education and training. Moreover, colleges and institutes have developed particular expertise in facilitating links to local business, industry and civil society groups. With an increasing focus on the internationalization of their campuses, colleges and institutes of technology are well-placed to bridge the gaps felt by new immigrants in terms of direction, credentials, language and career assistance and, thus, an increasing number are offering services overseas.

As the national and international voice of Canada's colleges and institutes and with its proven track record in international project management, the ACCC is well-placed to implement a tri-lateral project, such as the CIIP.

Conclusion

As Canada's Ambassador to the Philippines, Peter Sutherland, has noted, "CIIP fills a gap in our program to attract and facilitate the movement of qualified immigrants to Canada. By helping skilled workers prepare themselves for the Canadian workplace before leaving their country of origin, it accelerates the adjustment process and eases their integration into their new home."⁵ As we begin to welcome clients to the Field Offices, we are keenly aware of CIIP's enormous potential not only to ease and accelerate the process for newcomers, but also to help Canadian employers meet labour shortages, fill skill gaps and contribute to Canada's economic prosperity. The pilot is small in scope, yet we hope that it will demonstrate the value of overseas interventions and that it will provide a model for an expanded program in years to come.

Notes

¹ Such programs are offered through the Enhanced Language Training (ELT) initiative, which is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

² Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Speech, May 12 2006.

³ The Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) program is delivered overseas to 12,000-15,000 newcomers – largely refugees and those in the Family Class — at an annual cost of approximately \$1 million.

⁴ The Newcomer Day Planner is supplied by the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education with funding from HRSDC's FCR program.

⁵ Ambassador Peter Sutherland, January 8 2007.

CENTRES OF EXPERTISE: AN EXPANDED ROLE FOR COLLEGES AND INSTITUTES IN IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

ABSTRACT

Canadian colleges and institutes play a vital role in preparing students to enter the labour market. Internationally educated immigrants comprise a growing element of the student population. This paper proposes centres of expertise to enhance the capacity of colleges and institutes to help immigrants on their pathway to employment.

Canadian colleges and institutes have long been in the business of preparing students for labour market entry. Many have also seen dramatic changes in the composition of their student body, including an increase in internationally educated immigrants seeking access to their occupation in Canada. Individual colleges and institutes have introduced innovative measures to respond to the needs of this growing population. Collaboration across the system is needed, however, to make the best use of limited resources and to ensure sustainability. This paper proposes the concept of Centres of Expertise to meet this pressing need.

I. THE NEED FOR ACTION

Context

Changing student population

The population of community colleges and institutes is changing, particularly in major urban centres. Students are increasingly older and more diverse. In almost all Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), recent immigrants aged 18-24 year are more likely to attend school than their Canadian counterparts. According to a Statistics Canada study of 2001 census data, this difference was 23 percentage points in Victoria.¹

The same study found that more than 25% of full- and part-time students in Vancouver and Toronto between the ages of 18 and 24 immigrated to Canada less than 10 years earlier, and this figure was 10-13% among the student populations in seven other CMAs. The study also shows that recent immigrants aged 25-54 were at least twice as likely as Canadian-born persons in this age group to be enrolled in post-secondary education.

The study further found that recent immigrants who had already obtained a post-secondary credential were more likely than those with high school or less to attend post-secondary education in Canada. This group accounts for a significant share of adult students in many CMAs: 25% in Toronto and Vancouver, 10-14% in several others.

Immigrants who could benefit from college programs are a diverse group with differing needs and varying levels of skills and experience. They include recent arrivals and people who have been in Canada for a significant period of time. They also include international students who may, ultimately, apply to stay in Canada as immigrants. Colleges and Institutes need new and innovative programs to support this diverse and growing element of the student population.

Under-utilization of immigrant skills

It is well-documented that immigrants' education and skills are often not fully utilized in Canada. A recent paper² describes the significant discounting of education and work experience obtained abroad (discounted by 30% and 70%, respectively) but also shows evidence that this discounting can be recouped quite readily with some top-up of Canadian education and work experience.

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KAREN COHL

Karen Cohl has worked as an Assistant Deputy Minister in the Ontario Public Service and as a public policy consultant providing advice to governments, agencies and non-profit organizations. A lawyer by training, Karen is currently serving as executive director of Ontario's Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

The role of colleges

Canadian colleges and institutes are ideally placed to improve labour market access for immigrants in a variety of areas. Colleges and institutes:

- are in the assessment, training and labour market preparation business; applied learning is their *raison d'être*;
- are in the forefront of implementing prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR);
- have been offering English and French as second language programs (ESL/FSL) for years;
- have connections and working relationships with employers and regulatory bodies;
- have collaborated with community-based organizations on bridging programs that help immigrants fill gaps in skills, credentials or work experience;
- have the expert staff, infrastructure and credibility in their communities to design tools and programs that could be of real benefit to the immigrant client group; and
- have a national association and an established record of cross-Canadian collaboration.

Recent developments

Public awareness and engagement

Public awareness and stakeholder engagement in improving labour market access for immigrants have increased dramatically in recent years. This is reflected in government policies, priorities and funding, as well as in stakeholder innovations and partnerships involving community organizations, sector councils, employer associations, regulatory bodies and post-secondary institutions.

Initiatives in Canada

Many colleges and institutes have introduced new ways to serve internationally educated immigrants. This was documented in a diagnostic survey and report by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (now Human Resources and Social Development Canada, HRSDC)³ as well as subsequent ACCC symposia and roundtables. The report also identified barriers that colleges and institutes faced in delivering services, barriers immigrants faced in trying to access them, and lessons learned.

Initiatives in place or underway by Canadian colleges and institutes include:

- Mentorship, buddy and peer helper programs;
- Bursaries for immigrants;
- Career training and worksite experience with tailored language instruction;
- Multicultural counsellors and diversity offices;

- Employment resource centre for immigrant professionals;
- Competency-based assessment of skills for particular occupations;
- Occupation-specific language training;
- Occupational bridging and 'fast track' programs for immigrants in specified professions and trades;
- Training on workplace culture and communications combined with work placements;
- Customized, modular programs leading to employment and licensing in specified professions;
- Exam preparation courses to write provincial licensing exams in regulated professions; and
- A pilot project on immigrant attraction and retention to meet the unique needs of small and rural communities.

All these initiatives represent important progress. We do not know, however, the extent to which they have been documented or evaluated, nor is there a mechanism for assessing whether they are sustainable or transferable. There is also a real danger that institutions are duplicating efforts and resources to 'reinvent the wheel.'

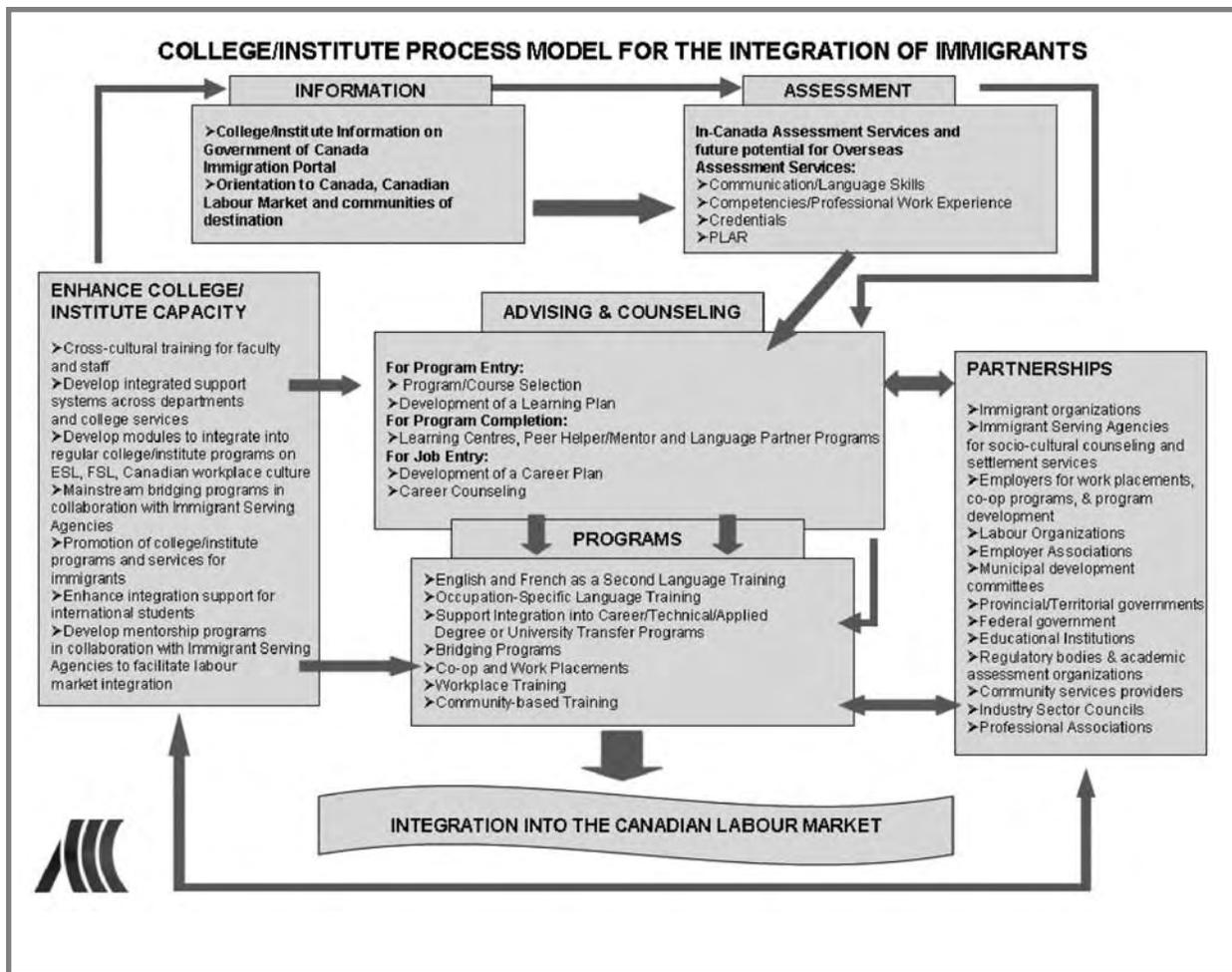
Emergence of frameworks

There is a growing recognition of the need for a unifying vision and systemic approach to serve as a framework for action, to assist immigrants from the time they begin seeking information on labour market access, until they enter the workplace in their desired occupation.

In *Fulfilling the Promise*,⁴ Naomi Alboim and the Maytree Foundation advocated the following framework for integrating immigrant skills:

- Incentives and supports for stakeholders to provide services and for immigrants to access them;
- Access for immigrants to:
 - Information and expert advice to support immigration decisions and labour market entry;
 - Assessment of education and experience acquired overseas;
 - Educational and work experience programs to fill identified gaps between an individuals' technical assets and the Canadian requirements to enter the occupation;
- A leadership council to foster collaboration, identify priorities and linkages, and communicate results.

Building on *Fulfilling the Promise*, the ACCC developed a Process Model, which was published in its March 2004 diagnostic report. This model includes the provision of information, assessment services, advising and counselling and other programs. It also emphasizes the importance of partnerships and increased college capacity.⁵



Decision to explore centres of expertise

Despite promising developments in the post-secondary and other sectors, many challenges remain. How can progress be achieved in a systematic and integrated way? How can learning and capacity be shared across the college system? How can new ideas be tested without “reinventing the wheel”? How can sustainability be ensured for promising new initiatives? How can colleges respond to the changing needs of immigrants from different world locations and with different educational and occupational backgrounds? How can colleges be encouraged to collaborate when they compete for prospective students and funding?

At the November 2005 ACCC symposium, Naomi Alboim, an associate of the Maytree Foundation, challenged participants to consider the development of a series of “Centres of Excellence for Immigrant Integration” across the country in order to address these challenges. Subsequently, ACCC obtained funding from HRSDC to flesh out the centres of expertise concept and to engage in discussions on potential models. Accordingly, the ACCC retained Ms. Alboim and Karen Cohl to help develop the “centres of expertise” concept, which is set out below.

II. CENTRES OF EXPERTISE CONCEPT

Vision

The centres of expertise concept flows from the following vision and is built on the ACCC process model outlined above:

Services to immigrants

Colleges and institutes in high immigrant-receiving areas will provide one-window access to services and programs for immigrants, whether delivered directly or through referral to external experts.

College and institute capacity

All colleges and institutes will have access to tools and expertise to provide services and programs for immigrants.

Collaboration

Colleges and institutes will collaborate with each other and stakeholders to ensure that immigrants seeking labour market entry are well-served.

Under this vision, immigrants would have access to the following services and programs:

- Information: college information and orientation to Canada and its labour market mechanisms;

- Assessment: language skills, academic credentials, and occupational competency;
- Advising and Counselling: learning plans, mentorship, and career counselling;
- Programs: employment-oriented language training, gap-filling career/technical courses, bridging programs, and work placements.

In addition, the capacity of colleges and institutes to provide these services would be enhanced through: coordinated policy development; cross-cultural training; improved funding models; and the sharing of promising programs, services and tools.

Further, colleges and institutes would collaborate to design and deliver programs with settlement organizations, employers, other educational institutions, regulatory bodies, governments and local leadership councils.

Principles

The challenge is to create centres of expertise that would help to achieve the vision through sustainable innovations, sharing of expertise, and community partnerships. The following principles are proposed to guide the development of centres of expertise.

Added value

Centres of expertise should be created only where they can provide clear benefits in improving labour market access for immigrants.

The creation of centres of expertise will be resource- and time-intensive. Before establishing a centre, it is essential to show, in concrete terms, how immigrants will benefit in preparing for the labour market.

The benefits would be enhanced if centres offer to provide certain services to external parties in keeping with the community development mandate of colleges and institutes. For example, their PLAR service could be offered to regulatory bodies, employers and non-student immigrants on a fee-for-service basis.⁶ Similarly, career counselling, mentoring, and work experience opportunities could be offered to immigrants who do not require additional education or credentials.

Building on existing expertise

Centres of expertise should build on existing expertise in Canadian colleges and institutes while also taking advantage of external expertise.

Certain colleges and institutes already have extensive expertise in service to immigrants. In developing the centres of expertise model, it is essential to learn from and build upon this expertise.

Considerable expertise also exists externally. While centres of expertise ideally will provide one-window access, they should not be expected to develop or directly deliver all services to immigrants. In some cases they could refer students to, or contract with, outside experts.

For example, the Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks (CCLB) is expert in the development of language benchmarks and assessment tools, including

tools for assessing occupation-specific language skills. Moreover, there are several recognized organizations expert in international academic credential assessment across Canada. In addition, many community agencies provide settlement counselling. Rather than trying to duplicate that expertise, colleges and institutes could make arrangements with selected external bodies to obtain the support required.

Similarly, other colleges and institutes could arrange for a centre of expertise to provide programs and services for their immigrant student population.

Sharing expertise

Innovations should be shared.

While there is great value in centres of expertise serving their own immigrant student population, the model is more attractive if the expertise can be shared more broadly. Where a centre uses public funds to develop, test, deliver and evaluate new tools, services or programs, they should make them available for adoption or adaptation by other interested colleges and institutes.

Voluntary access

Colleges and institutes should decide, on a voluntary basis, whether they wish to use or adapt a Centre's products or services.

While centres of expertise should be willing to share expertise with and offer services to other colleges and institutes, it should be entirely up to the individual institutions to decide whether and the extent to which they may wish to utilize the centre's expertise and services.

Fair process

Any college or institute should have an opportunity to become a centre of expertise in immigrant programs and services.

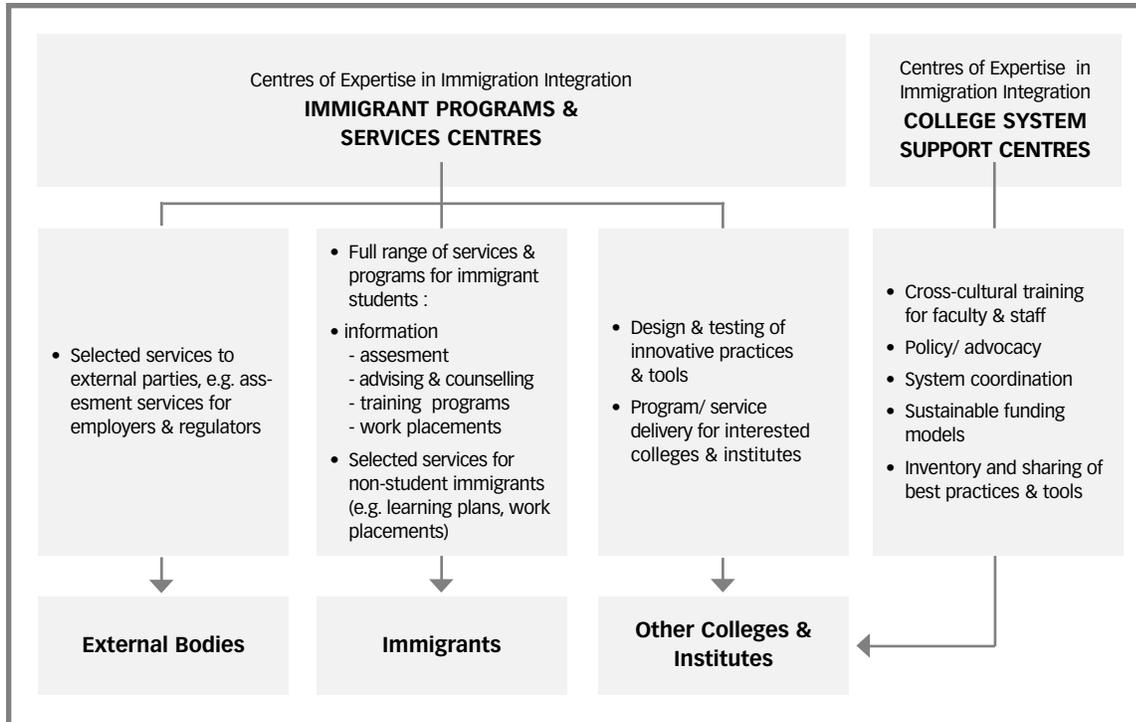
Every Canadian college and institute need not become a centre of expertise in immigrant integration. However, in order to maximize college capacity, all that are interested should have the opportunity to develop into such centres. If funding or incentives become available to develop centres of expertise, a fair process should be developed to determine college and institute access and eligibility.

Two types of centres

We propose two types of centres of expertise. The first would be expert in the delivery of programs and services for immigrants. The second would provide support to enhance the capacity of colleges and institutes across the system to respond to immigrant needs.

Centres of Expertise in Immigrant Programs and Services

Centres of Expertise in Immigrant Programs and Services would ensure that immigrants receive the full range of information services, assessment services, advising and counselling services, and educational programs, whether through direct delivery or referral to other organizations.



Some such centres would be *all-purpose centres of expertise*. That is, their expertise would encompass immigrants in all occupations for which the institution offers educational programs.

Other centres could be sector or *occupation-specific centres of expertise*. That is, their expertise would focus on one or more specific occupations (e.g. nursing) or sectors (e.g. health), or functions in an occupation or sector (e.g. PLAR for nurses). Ideally, expertise would be geared to occupations or sectors in which a large number of immigrants have had training or experience before immigrating to Canada, and those that have existing or projected skills shortages.

A major benefit of the sectoral approach is the focused use of resources and hence not reinventing the wheel. For example, one good virtual simulation to assess and demonstrate competency (PLAR) or language skills in a particular occupation should be sufficient, rather than having multiple institutions devoting time and resources to produce duplicate models.

Centres of expertise in college system support

Colleges and institutes - including those that are centres of expertise in immigrant services - may need access to more generic expertise. Individual colleges, for example, may need access to intercultural training for faculty and staff, or to an inventory of best practices and tools (e.g. how to adapt mainstream education programs into modular programs). In addition, the college system as a whole would benefit from strategic and concentrated policy and advocacy activities (e.g. for sustainable funding models) or for coordination (e.g. information portals).

Therefore, *Centres of Expertise in College System Support* would be created to provide support and the sharing of promising practices to enhance the capacity of

colleges and institutes across the system. This would include policy development, coordination, sharing of best practices and training.

III. CONCLUSION

Canadian colleges and institutes play a critically important role in producing a well-trained labour supply for our ever-changing labour market. Internationally educated immigrants comprise a growing population who are turning to the community college system in their pathway to employment. Centres of expertise are a way to enhance the capacity of colleges and institutes to help integrate immigrant skills into the Canadian labour market.

Notes

- ¹ Grant Schellenberg, *Trends and Conditions in Census Metropolitan Areas – Immigrants in Canada’s Census Metropolitan Areas*, Statistics Canada, 2004.
- ² Naomi Alboim, Ross Finnie and Ronald Meng, *The Discounting of Immigrants’ Skills in Canada: Evidence and Policy Recommendations*, IRPP Choices, Vol 11, no. 2, February 2005.
- ³ ACCC / HRSDC Report on “Responding to the needs of Immigrants: Results of the Diagnostic Survey of College and Institute Programs and Services for Immigrants and Conclusions of the College and Institute Immigration Roundtable” (March 2004).
- ⁴ Naomi Alboim and the Maytree Foundation, *Fulfilling the Promise: Integrating Immigrant Skills Into the Canadian Economy*, Caledon Institute, 2002.
- ⁵ In Ontario, the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (“CIITE”) project also took a framework approach. The CIITE framework focused on four components: information and advisement, assessment, program delivery, and employment preparation. See Phase 1 Final Report, December 2004. Implementation of some components is now underway.
- ⁶ Fees might not be necessary if Centres of Expertise receive ongoing funding to provide such services.

ENHANCING POLICY CAPACITY ON THE ISSUE OF FOREIGN CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION

ABSTRACT

This article outlines the role that the Department of Canadian Heritage has played in addressing challenges related to the recognition of foreign credentials. It suggests that problems related to foreign credential recognition are not simply labour market issues, but rather can serve as an indicator of Canada's "institutional openness" and acceptance of newcomers. The author presents several community-based projects aimed at facilitating the recognition of foreign credentials.

Arguably, of all the immigrant integration issues that we face, the recognition of foreign credentials has emerged as the most indicative of the acceptance of newcomers as equal partners in the continuing evolution of Canada. This is perhaps because no other issue so clearly reflects the pressure that economic globalization is imposing upon Canadian professional standards. For Canada to benefit from the opportunities of globalization, professional standards must become more open and adapt to changing domestic and global labour market needs and conditions. The barriers to change are systemic, however. A recent study comparing credentials recognition processes in Canada and Sweden concludes that, in both countries, processes tend to rely on a "difference-blind", or liberal-universalist approach which assesses differences from the domestic norm as deficient, incompatible, and inferior, thus invalidating the knowledge of immigrant professionals, particularly from Third World countries. The study suggests that if these systems fail to become more inclusive in accommodating knowledge and experience from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, then "immigrants will continue to be alienated and barred from exercising the full range of their skills, citizenship and potential in their receiving societies" (Guo & Andersson 2006; see also Guo in this volume).

Given the systemic nature of this challenge and its implications for a society that strives to be as inclusive as possible, it is vital that the Department of Canadian Heritage begin to make sense of foreign credential recognition beyond its narrow status as a labour market issue. In his analysis of Canada's discourse on immigrant integration, Peter Li finds a consistent and unsettling trend in critical discussions, policy statements, and academic writings. Li observes that each of these spheres of the discourse tends to yield the same implicit endorsement with respect to the relationship between immigrant "diversity" and "integration." He asserts that, although cultural diversity, or multiculturalism, is of nominal significance, what is of much greater concern is that immigrants make adjustments to conform to Canadian values and traditions. With respect to the official rhetoric of a two-way street of integration in Canada, Li concludes that the country "has only succeeded in insisting upon a report card to show how immigrants have been changing or not changing in Canada, and not a similar report card to indicate the degree of institutional openness with which Canadian society is accepting newcomers as equal partners in nation building" (Li 2003, 11).

The Department of Canadian Heritage

The conclusions that Li draws from his research on the integration discourse in Canada provide us with a broader set of terms for considering foreign credential recognition federally as a cross-departmental policy issue. Li's characterization of our "two-way street of integration" speaks directly to the concerns of the Department of Canadian Heritage. One of Canadian Heritage's key goals is to build an inclusive society on the basis of intercultural understanding and citizen participation. This requires that policy and program development that aims to break down barriers to integration, barriers that may represent systemic challenges to Canada's multicultural population well-beyond the scope of immigrant settlement issues as they are often narrowly conceived. Indeed, one of the ongoing challenges in the Department is to support policy development at the crossroads of socio-economic integration and cultural diversity.

This is of particular concern for the Multiculturalism Program within the Department of Canadian Heritage. This program's legislative mandate requires that government foster the recognition and

appreciation of diverse cultures in society and encourage social and economic institutions to be respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character. In short, if one of the key problems with respect to foreign credential recognition, according to recent research, is the failure on the part of Canadian institutions to accommodate the knowledge and experience of people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, then the Department of Canadian Heritage has a role to play on this issue. Furthermore, if the systemic nature of barriers to integration on key issues, like foreign credential recognition, suggests the possibility of discriminatory practices, then the Multiculturalism Program in particular has a job to do in supporting forward-looking policy development in that area.

In an effort to illustrate the kind of government leadership and support that is required to initiate innovative policy development in the area of foreign credential recognition, it may be helpful to highlight the outcomes that are unfolding from a series of community-based projects recently funded through the Multiculturalism Program at the Department of Canadian Heritage.² These projects have helped immigrant groups develop the means necessary to articulate to Canadians the credentials recognition barriers they face and to develop policy tools and new organizational structures to influence the development of government policy and legislation on this important issue, now in Ontario and across Canada in the near future. These projects represent an important step toward establishing the kind of "report card" mechanisms that Li demands with respect to the degree of institutional openness with which Canadian society accepts newcomers. In doing so, these projects provide a new and exciting example of how to pursue innovative policy development at the community level in the area of foreign credential recognition.

Establishing PROMPT

In 2001, the federal government's Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) organized funding for sectoral involvement in departmental policy development. As a partner in the VSI, the Department of Canadian Heritage offered to participate by encouraging the effective involvement of ethnocultural communities in policy development on the recognition of foreign credentials across a range of professions and trades in Canada. In 2002, two VSI projects were approved and administered through Canadian Heritage's Multiculturalism Program.³ The first project was with the British Columbia Internationally Trained Professionals Network (BCITP Net).⁴ This network was formed out of a partnership between three immigrant-serving services in British Columbia: Immigrant Services Society of BC; MOSAIC; and Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society. The second project was with the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) in Toronto.⁵

Project funding for the BCITP Net was provided to help develop associations and networks among internationally trained professionals in the region, as well as to encourage constructive dialogue between immigrant professionals, regulatory bodies, industry and government. The objectives for the CASSA project were similar but with the added goal of forming a specific roundtable mechanism for policy development on the integration of internationally trade professionals and tradespeople. To this end, project funding helped CASSA, under the leadership of executive director Uzma Shakir, establish the Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades (PROMPT) in 2003.

PROMPT has emerged as an important collective voice for Internationally Educated and Trained Persons (IETPs). The roundtable is made up of groups, associations and initiatives that are led by immigrants. In this way, PROMPT's model provides immigrant professionals and tradespeople with the opportunity to influence the policy agenda from an immigrant perspective. This is a key factor in developing a "report card" for assessing the institutional openness with which Canadian society is

It is vital that the Department of Canadian Heritage begin to make sense of foreign credential recognition beyond its narrow status as a labour market issue.

accepting newcomers on an equal footing. Indeed, since its inception, PROMPT has produced five policy research papers that address the goals of facilitating equitable access to professions and trades for IETPs, establishing transparent and fair licensing and registration processes, and creating a system that would result in skills-commensurate employment for all.⁶ These papers have been extensively quoted in the media and widely used by municipal, provincial, and federal regulators and governments to address foreign credential recognition issues. What PROMPT research tells us is that individual and systemic barriers that prevent immigrants from gaining

access to their professions remain a serious problem across Canada.

In a 2004 paper, "In the Public Interest: Immigrant Access to Regulated Professions", PROMPT identified six critical issues facing professional regulation in Ontario specifically:

- 1) lack of clarity and consistency in legislation;
- 2) lack of public accountability;
- 3) lack of coordination and coherence on access to professions and trades policy and foreign credential assessment;
- 4) lack of government leadership;
- 5) competing interests within regulation; and
- 6) unclear assumptions underlying the registration process (PROMPT, June 2004).

It is worth noting that this paper in particular made recommendations, which were adopted in Ontario's Bill 124,

Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, which was passed into law on December 20, 2006.⁷ Bill 124 was developed as part of the Ontario government's "breaking down barriers" strategy, which also includes a recent federal-provincial agreement to increase funding to help immigrants achieve success. The key accomplishments of Bill 124 are:

- 1) to ensure that the processes for licensing and registration that regulatory bodies have are fair, transparent, accountable, and applicant-friendly;
- 2) to establish a resource and access centre to offer counseling support to the internationally trained to assist in navigating the complex licensing system; and
- 3) to establish the office of a fairness commissioner, to oversee the province's 34 regulatory bodies and review registration practices to ensure that they are fair, transparent, and impartial.

It is also worth noting, however, that Bill 124 remains controversial and that its critics have viewed it as failing to answer the crucial barrier of "Canadian work experience" that IETPs continue to face in accessing the labour market in their chosen professions and trades. Critics suggest that Bill 124 goes some way toward making the credentials recognition process more equitable, but falls short of creating a mechanism to recognize foreign work experience. Foreign work experience, like foreign credentials, is therefore subject to the same barrier of "Canadian standards." Bill 124 does not address this crucial element of the immigrant integration process.⁸

Another issue that critics of the Bill have raised is that it fails to address concerns in the immigrant community over systemic discrimination that applicants from certain countries face in the credential recognition process. These criticisms were re-asserted by opposition members in Ontario's legislature during the final reading of Bill 124 and PROMPT's recommendations that credentials assessment workers be required to undergo anti-discrimination and cultural competency training were cited specifically.⁹ Indeed, as recently as December 5, 2006, PROMPT provided a written submission to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills that was overseeing Bill 124 to propose certain amendments, the most important perhaps being that the Bill ensure that registration processes are carried out in compliance with the regulatory bodies' legal obligation not to discriminate against applicants on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, citizenship, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disability. In this way, PROMPT has played a significant role in influencing this important piece of legislation in Ontario as well as the critical debate

concerning its scope and effectiveness, which will surely continue in the months and years ahead.

Forming Capacity Canada

In addition to the remarkable policy work that CASSA's PROMPT initiative continues to undertake, CASSA and the BCITP Net received funding for a second project in 2004 through the Multiculturalism Program in the Department of Canadian Heritage. This project was designed to build provincial networks of immigrant professionals and bring these networks together within one overarching policy roundtable to create a national voice for IETPs on the issue of foreign credential recognition. From 2004-2006, PROMPT partnered with the BCITP Net in the West and began outreach work with internationally trained professionals in all provinces to form a national umbrella roundtable known as Capacity Canada.¹⁰ Capacity Canada aims to help internationally trained professionals organizations in other provinces to work together, first within their provinces and then with other

organizations throughout Canada. The goal is to build provincial capacity and to work with provinces where there are existing networks of immigrant professionals or where there is potential to build those networks. In terms of a first initiative, a two-phase national review of Access to Professions and Trades processes (APT processes) for immigrants was commissioned to clarify the future role of Capacity Canada. The final report of this national review, produced by the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, was released on November 30, 2006 and is available on the Capacity Canada website (see also Janzen and Buhel in this volume).

In terms of Capacity Canada's evolving role in particular, the review recommends that the organization focus on a more strategic and effective

Meeting the larger policy challenge means developing a better "report card" method of assessing the degree of institutional openness with which Canadian society accepts newcomers.

approach to developing policy tools in the area of foreign credential recognition and APT processes. This recommendation is made specifically in light of the fact that Capacity Canada is not in a position to create or propose national standards. Rather, it is uniquely positioned to equip provincial partners to address priority areas and propose strategic directions at the national level that would best facilitate solution building at a provincial and local level. The review concludes, therefore, that Capacity Canada may be most effective in the following areas:

1. **Licensing**, or the call for more accountable relationships with regulatory bodies and trades,
2. **Employer engagement**, or bringing employers to the table to discuss access to professions and trades issues,
3. **Language training**, or helping to secure funding for additional training, and

4. **Local coordination**, or creating a national strategy that builds provincial and local capacity to find solutions to access barriers.¹¹

Conclusion

Due to current and anticipated demographic and labour market realities, immigration and integration have become mainstream policy concerns in public and private sector jurisdictions alike. We face an emerging challenge with respect to power sharing between native-born and immigrant professionals across our professions and trades. This is a new challenge in which Canadian standards must become more open to the notion of adapting to accommodate global standards as efficiently and equitably as possible to allow for the recognition, appreciation and use of the disparate educational and labour market experiences that newcomers bring to Canada (PROMPT, October 2004). Meeting new global challenges with respect to the equitable integration of IETPs in the Canadian context will require better leadership across government and society, but will also require innovative strategies for policy development.

Government leadership must continue to build on the interdepartmental and intergovernmental momentum that has been created on the foreign credential recognition issue thus far. Meeting the larger policy challenge, however, means developing a better “report card” method of assessing the degree of institutional openness with which Canadian society accepts newcomers. To this end, the achievements of PROMPT, BCITP Net, and Capacity Canada, through the support of the Department of Canadian Heritage, set an impressive standard for emerging best practices in the area of foreign credential recognition at the community level. The unique policy capacity that has been established through these projects helps build an inclusive society on the basis of intercultural understanding and citizen participation and breaks down the systemic barriers to integration that Canada’s multicultural population continues to face; these are both key goals of the Department of Canadian Heritage. Therefore, the remaining challenges for government in this context will be, first and foremost, to acknowledge the success of this type of community-based policy work and, secondly, to find strategic ways of building on this important policy development capacity to maintain and enhance its relevance and effectiveness.

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Notes

- ¹ The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Canadian Heritage.
- ² The Multiculturalism Program has funded over 30 projects on foreign credential recognition issues since the early 1990s. The Program has participated in meetings on this issue at the request of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) since 2000.
- ³ Marcelle Gibson, senior program and policy officer in the Multiculturalism Program, was responsible for the successful management of these important projects. I would like to thank Marcelle for her help in providing information for this article.
- ⁴ <http://www.bcitp.net/index.cfm?wp=en&page=25>
- ⁵ <http://www.cassa.on.ca/mainpageOrange.html>
- ⁶ <http://www.promptinfo.ca/>
- ⁷ <http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/about/bill124/b124.pdf>
- ⁸ This commentary is meant to outline some of the facts, issues, and critical discussion that have arisen in the public domain surrounding Bill 124.
- ⁹ http://www.ontla.on.ca/hansard/house_debates/38_parl/session2/pdfL135A.pdf
- ¹⁰ <http://www.capacitycanada.ca/>
- ¹¹ See “A National Review of Access to Professions and Trades Processes for Immigrants”, Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, Final Report, November 30, 2006: 4-18. <http://www.capacitycanada.ca/APT%20Review%20final%20report.pdf>. Please refer to the report itself to learn more about the research methodologies employed in phases I & II of the review.

A NATIONAL REVIEW OF IMMIGRANT ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES INITIATIVES

ABSTRACT

This article features a national review of immigrant Access to Professions and Trades (APT) initiatives conducted by Capacity Canada in 2006. The article provides an overview of its key findings, and concludes by offering future directions to better facilitate the participation of immigrants in the labour market.

This article features a national review of immigrant Access to Professions and Trades (APT) initiatives. Conducted by Capacity Canada in 2006, the review provides a scan of existing APT initiatives across Canada. The article provides an overview of the review and its key findings, with specific attention given to credential recognition and licensing initiatives. It concludes by offering suggestions for future directions to better facilitate the participation of immigrants into the labour market.

Capacity Canada is an emerging collective voice for internationally educated and trained professionals (IETPs) across Canada. This roundtable provides national policy recommendations to facilitate the more effective and equitable participation of IETPs in the labour market. Capacity Canada was created by developing and supporting the capacity of provincial networks, associations and organizations of immigrant professionals across Canada. After more than a year of development, the national policy roundtable held its first full meeting in Halifax in September of 2006.

The national review

One of Capacity Canada's first endeavours was to conduct a national review of initiatives related to access to professions and trades (commonly referred to as APT processes). The purpose of this review was to help Capacity Canada better understand APT processes and to determine the next steps needed to improve APT processes across Canada. Capacity Canada understands APT processes to be any initiative (government-led or otherwise) that addresses systemic barriers for IETPs with respect to access to their profession or trade. The Centre for Research and Education in Human Services (CREHS) was contracted to complete this review.

The review was conducted in two phases between July and November 2006. Phase I was an environmental scan of national and provincial APT processes. Data was gathered primarily through a document review (more than 40 documents including academic articles, policy documents and community reports), an internet search (more than 100 websites) and a focus group with Capacity Canada Roundtable members from across Canada (n=33).

Phase II explored the next steps in improving APT processes both nationally and within selected provinces, including possible future directions for Capacity Canada. Methods in phase II included a second focus group discussion with Capacity Canada Roundtable members (n=33) and telephone interviews with 9 key informants from across Canada.

The final report provides an overview – in tabular form – of the government departments and non-governmental organizations working on immigrant employment issues. For each organization and department, information is provided about its overall mandate, its APT policy rationale, type of APT category, selected APT programs, and partnerships with others. More than 400 hyperlinks are included in the tables to provide access to in-depth information on a wide range of related topics.

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RICH JANZEN
Rich Janzen has been involved in more than 50 participatory action research projects locally, provincially and nationally, many related to immigrant employment. Rich has supported a number of communities to develop local responses to immigrant employment, including establishing the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (www.wriem.com) of which he is now a lead evaluator.

The scope of the review was limited by three predetermined parameters. These are:

- geography (the review focuses on British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and the national level);
- professions (the review focuses primarily on cross-profession initiatives and not on trades or profession-specific initiatives); and
- level of intervention (the review focuses only on systems-level initiatives that address systemic barriers for IETPs and not on those directly helping individual IETPs find work).

The report should be read as a living document, given that new initiatives emerge in a rapidly changing environment. The complete report is accessible online at www.capacitycanada.ca.

Overview of findings on APT initiatives

Overall, the national review revealed a country that has begun to develop policy and seek initiatives that would more effectively facilitate the participation of immigrants in the labour market. Nonetheless, while progress is evident in recent years, the review also stressed that there is much to be done to facilitate immigrant employment through comprehensive processes and measures.

The review identified 55 key APT initiatives across the country. Sixteen were national-level initiatives, while the others were found in the six selected provinces. These initiatives were categorized into 10 types of interventions:

- Credential assessment,
- Licensing and regulation,
- Partnership development (including comprehensive community initiatives),
- Employer engagement,
- Internships/mentorship programs,
- Research, planning and design,
- Language training,
- Funding,
- Information development and sharing, and
- Other labour market training support (e.g., Bridging programs).

This list demonstrates the wide-ranging interventions that have been pursued in response to immigrant under-employment and unemployment. In addition, although

credential assessment and licensing receive considerable attention in public and media discourse, they in fact represent only a portion of the policy tools currently being utilized.

When reflecting on the current APT response in Canada, a number of additional overarching observations were made:

- APT initiatives are now emerging across Canada. The number and breadth of **APT initiatives has grown** considerably since a similar scan was completed by CREHS for the Ontario-based Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades (PROMPT) in 2003.
- Qualitatively, there is recognition that progress has been made with respect to the **visibility of APT issues** in many parts of the country. In most provinces, a significant amount of research has been done, thereby pushing the APT agenda to the forefront. In addition, provinces have seen more resources allocated to address the issue.

Overall, the national review revealed a country that has begun to develop policy and seek initiatives that would more effectively facilitate the participation of immigrants in the labour market.

National – and some provincial – APT initiatives have been created to be **less “siloed”** than in the past. Nationally, there is an emphasis on comprehensiveness and inter-departmental collaboration. For example, 15 departments contribute to the federal Internationally Trained Workers Initiative, with two different departments taking the lead on various components of the initiative. At the provincial level, British Columbia, has decided to take a “systems approach” to APT.

By far the most common APT category was **information development and sharing**. Other common categories, in order of frequency, included: funding; partnership development; credential assessment; research, planning and design; and employer engagement.

The number and type of APT initiatives **varies greatly across provinces**. The provinces of Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia have a relatively long history in attempting to address APT issues and are now working to consolidate and coordinate their efforts. Government-led APT initiatives are just beginning to emerge in other provinces. This gap has been traditionally filled by civil society, which has active non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to systemic change, often in a collaborative role with the provinces’ direct service providers.

Relatively **few partnerships** exist directly between provinces. Cross-jurisdictional partnerships tend to be created within provinces, or between the federal government and individual provincial governments. Generally, the few inter-provincial partnerships that do exist are brokered by the federal government or national NGOs.

A **depth in the policy response** is still lacking. In some provinces, the public policy on immigrant employment appeared only as a subcomponent of broader policy

directives (population recruitment, for example). Even in provinces specifically addressing immigrant employment, rhetoric and intentions did not exceed action. Notable were the lack of meaningful participation by all key stakeholders in developing workable solutions, the lack of efforts to communicate ongoing progress across jurisdictions and to stakeholders, and the lack of an equity lens in policy development (policy development was driven more by labour market needs than by principles of equitable labour market participation).

Spotlight on credential recognition and licensing initiatives

Given that the focus of this edition of *Canadian Issues* is credential recognition and assessment, we will now look at the broader immigrant employment response. First, we provide examples of some of the initiatives that are being undertaken to address credential recognition across Canada. This is followed by a look at licensing and professional regulation initiatives. Licensing and regulation initiatives are related to foreign credential recognition initiatives, but are narrower in that they address only provincially mandated regulated professions. It should be noted that the review did not assess the effectiveness of any single initiative and, therefore, does not claim to identify “promising practices.” However, taken together, the initiatives below do provide an indication of the present status and of the progress that is being made.

Credential recognition

Foreign Credential Recognition: FCR is one component of the federal government’s Internationally Trained Workers Initiative. Led by Human Resources and Social Development Canada, FCR is designed to facilitate the recognition of international qualifications to enable internationally trained workers to better contribute to Canada’s economic and social development.

Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada: The Alliance is an organization of provincially mandated credential assessment services from across Canada that provide assistance and quality assurance in assessing the credentials of prospective applicants to employers, professional regulatory bodies and educational institutions. Alliance members include: International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES – British Columbia); International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS – Alberta, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories); World Education Services (Ontario); and Service des évaluations comparatives d’études (Québec).

Alberta International Medical Graduate Program: This program provides access into post graduate residency training in Family Medicine or Specialty disciplines for graduates of medical schools outside Canada or the United States. The AIMG program uses a merit based selection and assessment process which is

designed to identify candidates for successful residency training. AIMG applicants are assessed on standard criteria utilizing tools including the OSCE exam, interviews and a summative review (see the article by Crutcher and Mann in this publication).

Manitoba Labour and Immigration: The Immigration and Multiculturalism Division of this provincial ministry houses the Settlement and Labour Market Services Branch. This Branch has a number of programs that assist foreign trained professionals or trades persons in having their credentials recognized in Manitoba. Main programs include: the Academic Credentials Assessment Service, the Credentials Recognition Program, the Access to Professions and Trades brochures, and Occupational Fact Sheets.

Licensing and regulation

Ontario Bill 124: Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act: This legislation, which was passed in December 2006, will require Ontario’s 34 regulated professions to adopt registration practices that are fair, transparent and expeditious. The legislation will standardize licensure requirements of Occupational Regulatory Bodies. This includes appropriate and timely information supply about requirements, improved communication practices, and appeals processes. A Fairness Commissioner will also be appointed for oversight and auditing, and an Access Centre for Internationally Trained individuals will be established as a central clearinghouse of information.

Ontario Regulators for Access: ORA is a group of Ontario regulators who acknowledged the need for skilled immigrants and the continued enhancement and preservation of standards to ensure public safety for the benefit of all Ontarians. In 2003-04, ORA pursued a series of activities that included compiling a compendium of promising regulatory practices and developing a regulator’s guide.

Quebec: An Act to amend the Professional Code as it regards to the issue of permits: This legislation was enacted in June 2006 and amends the Professional Code to allow for an expansion of permit criteria to allow foreign trained professionals to work in their professions. The legislation provides, in part, that a professional order must determine a procedure for recognizing an equivalence of standards established by regulation. It also determined that the procedure must have its decisions reviewed by persons other than those who mandated it.

Needed next steps

The review detailed future actions that would improve immigrant access to professions and trades across Canada. Generally, these next steps stressed the need to build on the solution-oriented momentum of the

These next steps stressed the need to build on the solution-oriented momentum of the past few years and to expand the progress made in large urban centres to other smaller centres across the country.

past few years and to expand the progress made in large urban centres to other smaller centres across the country.

The future actions were summarized into four main categories of activity. These categories are necessary to the pursuit of a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to systemic change initiatives.¹ The four categories of activity are:

- Education (raising awareness of APT issues among the various constituents),
- Policy influence (proposing new legislation, monitoring its implementation, and increasing horizontal and vertical collaboration),
- Planning and collaboration (increasing efforts for knowledge exchange and cross-sector collaborations, improving immigrant employment interventions, and creating better accountability mechanisms), and
- Action research (gathering information needed to support activities in the other areas).

A voice for IETP

Capacity Canada believes it has an important role to play in improving immigrant access to professions and trades by providing a voice to IETPs. Below, you will find an enumeration of some of Capacity Canada's intended next steps, which relate specifically to credential assessment and licensing, as well as more generally to immigrant employment.

- *Develop meaningful collaborations with key stakeholders for workable solutions:* The involvement of key stakeholders is essential for success. In developing meaningful collaborations with key stakeholders, Capacity Canada strategically positions itself relative to these groups and tactically engages with them. This is accomplished by articulating positions in a manner that resonates with and motivates partners. This ensures that the value of immigrant involvement is evident, that involvement does not duplicate existing efforts and that the successes and learnings of these collaborations are shared. Capacity Canada will continue to maintain its role as a national link between provinces.
- *Offer fresh, progressive ideas on APT issues within the overall framework of immigrant employment:* As additional voices speak out about immigrant employment increase, Capacity Canada will continue to carve out its unique niche and offer fresh ideas and solutions. To succeed, Capacity Canada will constantly consider the value that a national voice of immigrant professionals brings to the table. We recognize that each APT process has distinct considerations. At the same time, these processes are components within the larger framework of immigrant employment. Awareness of this overall framework will guide the work of Capacity Canada to ensure that comprehensive and workable solutions are offered.
- *Support provincial associations:* The majority of APT processes are under provincial jurisdiction and need to be addressed from a provincial level. At the same

time, effective responses must be locally determined and encouraged within each province. Capacity Canada, in its national role, can encourage the federal government to adequately support and equip provinces and local initiatives. In fact, all federal policy related to immigrant employment should be analyzed from the perspective of how it can benefit provincial and local initiatives. In itself, Capacity Canada can also support provinces by offering training, providing information and coordinating communications in promoting the APT agenda.

- *Increase the visibility of APT processes, progress and best practices:* Capacity Canada has a promising role to play in coordinating communications across the provinces and acting as a national information clearinghouse. Information will be presented in a manner appropriate to each stakeholder group and will address unique considerations. On a related theme, the credibility of disseminated information will be enhanced through strengthened links with academic researchers and by ensuring that the research is accessible.

Conclusion

Credential recognition and licensing are two components within a larger access to professions and trades (APT) framework. Focused improvements in these two areas must be coordinated with improvements in the other eight APT categories identified in the review. Such coordination will maximize the potential of reaching the end goal – access to employment for immigrants.

To ensure that such a comprehensive approach becomes our guide, it is important to assess the effectiveness of existing APT processes and the interplay among them. These processes will differ by province and by profession. An overarching evaluative assessment will help to map how changes in one APT process impacts on others, and how they collectively co-exist to affect overall access to employment. A strong analytical focus is necessary for success.

A comprehensive response to immigrant employment also implies collaboration among key stakeholders. Effective collaboration would provide access to and dissemination of relevant information, and ensure that proposed solutions are reflective and responsive to varying contexts. A key component of collaboration is to consider the voice of IETPs, a primary stakeholder group. Here, Capacity Canada is well-positioned to play a national coordinating role by gathering and disseminating information, sharing best practices and assessing how changes to individual APT processes will impact the overall APT framework.

Note

¹ For a fuller discussion of these categories and how they relate to systemic change, see R. Janzen, G. Nelson, N. Hausfather and J. Ochocka (in press). "Capturing system level activities and impacts of consumer-run organizations." *American Journal of Community Psychology*. Special issue on systems change evaluation.

THE CLOSED DOOR: CREDENTIALIZED SOCIETY AND IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCES

ABSTRACT

This article looks at the role that credentials play in immigrants' experiences in Canada. The article discusses the theoretical basis of the non-recognition of foreign credentials and provides practical examples of the impact of non-recognition.

A typical scenario

An immigrant from Nepal arrives in Canada as a permanent resident in the Economic Class. In his country of origin, he earned several degrees, including a Bachelor of Commerce, Master of Commerce, Bachelor of Education and Master of Education. He taught commerce and accounting courses in a senior high school, and he hopes to continue a career as a teacher in Canada. However, he spends the first six weeks going through the settlement phase, in which he attempts to find housing, a school for his children, apply for an Alberta health card, Social Insurance card and other necessities. Once in a position to actually look for work, he books an appointment with an employment counselor at a local immigrant-serving agency. The counselor realizes that the client speaks English poorly and suggests that the client undergo a language assessment. The client patiently waits for yet another agency (Agency B) to call him about his English test; he is advised to start Level 1 English at a local community college in two months.

Six months later, the client comes back to the employment counselor with hopes of exercising his passion to work as a teacher. However, the employment counselor discovers that the client lacks job search skills, occupational research skills and knowledge of the Canadian labour market. Furthermore, the client's certificates and other supporting documents from post-secondary institutions need to be translated into English. The counselor suggests that the client enroll in a four-week employment readiness class and refers him to Agency C for document interpretation and then on to International Qualifications Assessment Services (IQAS) for an assessment of his credentials. He is also referred to the Teacher Certification Branch and the Alberta Teachers' Association. Twelve weeks later, IQAS notifies the newcomer that his combined twelve years of post-secondary education compares to the completion of grade twelve and one year of a Bachelor's degree in Canada. The immigrant's credentials are deemed to be below those required of a teacher in Canada, and he therefore cannot currently work as a teacher.

The client quickly books an appointment with the career advisor at the immigrant-serving agency. The career advisor informs him that he cannot teach in Canada unless he has the requisite number of years of education (or course hours) and will probably have to go back to university and complete (or perhaps redo) several years. Understandably, the young man from Nepal is angry, baffled, confused and panicky, unsure of where to turn for employment. The money he has brought from overseas is running out, and the road to becoming a successful teacher appears out of reach. His wife, a social worker in Nepal, is also unable to work in Canada because her skills have not been recognized and she, too, requires English training. The gentleman informs the employment counselor that he is in desperate need of employment. He is referred to a local employer willing to hire him as a cashier working 40 hours per week for \$10.00 an hour.

Background and theoretical discussion

Canada's workforce is aging, birthrates are declining, and there are labour market shortages in many occupations (Herzog, 2004; Reitz, 2005). Although immigration policies reflect an increasing demand for immigrants to alleviate labour market shortages, immigrants face great difficulties

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integrating into the labour market, and many professional positions remain unfilled. The non-recognition of the credentials of Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs)¹ is an important piece of the puzzle and is the focus of this article.

Several factors are at play. First, immigrants are increasingly arriving from non-traditional source countries (Statistics Canada, 2005), and this poses greater integration challenges than in the past. Second, they may have – or be perceived as having – values that are different from those of established Canadians. Third, they may lack social and economic capital, which are important for labour market integration. Finally, regulatory licensing bodies control access to professions and trades through licensing and registration requirements. These policies also steer the requirements of educational institutions and hiring and promotion guidelines in occupations where credential assessment must be carried out prior to registration and licensing. I would argue that employers' emphasis on Canadian credentials and experience is a means of preventing IEPs from entering into their professional field once in Canada. Regulatory licensing bodies and their members – who often reflect Eurocentric ideals – possess high status, prestige, and access to rights, positions and rewards. Recent immigrants, mostly from Asia, Africa and South America, are largely absent from these elite bureaucracies and organizations.

One way to interpret this phenomenon is through Weber's theoretical concept of closure. Closure is a form of social inequality resulting in class formation and stratification. Contemporary writers, including Collins (1998) and Murphy (1994), have expanded the concept of closure to include credentialism. They suggest that credentials are an instrument used by the dominant class to restrict access, privileges and opportunities for the subordinate classes. Although many immigrants have credentials that are regarded as sufficient in their country of origin, Canadian policies value these credentials differently, and immigrants often work in positions other than those for which they were formally trained.

This is related to conflict theory, which is grounded in the premise that some members of society are endowed with greater power than others. This leads to a continual struggle or conflict between these two positions. Individuals and groups who benefit from a particular structure will strive to see it maintained, while those who are disadvantaged struggle against it. Credential assessment is a tool that was designed by societal groups with power and has placed restrictions on IEPs entering regulated professions. Educational institutions, regulatory and licensing bodies, corporations and industries have the

means and authority to benchmark credentials and enforce standards for membership and entrance requirements. In addition, they can “inflate” (to use Collins' term) entrance and licensing requirement at their discretion, and IEPs must comply. Often, these policies serve to further benefit the existing elite. This is a form of closure because it is a process that allows privileged social groups to maximize advantages by limiting access to privileges and “life chances” (Koch, 2003). While power and rewards are intrinsic to all social structures, a better awareness of these social tendencies can allow us to work towards providing an equitable environment for immigrants.

Newcomers are constantly in conflict with bureaucracy at all levels, including the immigration office, settlement agency, educational institutions, and credential assessment and licensing bodies. Weber argues that bureaucracies stand in opposition to our notion of democracy; he uses the metaphor of the “iron cage” to describe bureaucracies. To compound matters, employers are reluctant – or unable – to hire professionals who are not already licensed in Canada, and newcomers are thus caught in a cyclical dilemma that prevents them from working in their field and acquiring Canadian experience.

Credentials and the role of the labour market

Collins (1988) encourages us to move beyond the aesthetic value of credentials (whereby merely having titles such as M.Ed. or Ph.D. does not guarantee that a person is skilled or knowledgeable) and look at the role the labour market plays in determining the value of education and credentials. He suggests that “an individual's occupational attainment depends to a considerable degree on what degree level is achieved and also on the value that such a degree has in relation to all the other degrees existing in the competitive market for status” (Collins, 1988, p.180). He adds that

“expanding the educational credential system to take up the slack and create new jobs...is the form that the economic class struggle takes in a credentialized society” (Collins, 1988, p.182). Removing existing barriers for IEPs may cause a surplus in the labour market, which would result in deflated wages for certain occupational groups. The non-recognition of foreign credentials is, in other words, instrumental in maintaining and supporting the status quo.

For example, Employment Readiness Workshops² encourage newcomers to either upgrade their skills and or obtain Canadian experience. However, I have worked in an immigrant-serving agency for over ten years, and it has been my experience that, in spite of extensive education and re-training, immigrants still face systemic, personal and institutional barriers when entering their professions.

While awarding points for applicants' education and experience, the selection criteria will not necessarily translate into professional placements in their fields. Indeed, the application to immigrate includes a statement recognizing that immigrants may not find a position in their profession.

What are employers looking for? In my opinion, they are looking for employees with the Canadian values, culture and the “rituals” that Weber, Collins and Murphy emphasize. While regulatory bodies, employers and others may wish to close off options to immigrants, those armed with a knowledge of the dominant class’s rituals, habits and practice are more likely to attain economic equality.

Collins (1988) suggests that “competition, decentralized democracy and a market for status credentials has made education a kind of business, selling opportunities of educational degree” (Collins, 1988, p. 178). For an immigrant, retraining may be a necessity, but for the Canadian counterpart, it gives them further status and “cultural money.” Consequently, training centers and educational institutions are welcoming foreign-trained students. There are, however no employment assurances.

Proponents of degree assessment and meritocracy provide a technocratic explanation for the need for such credentialing. They assert that individuals require advanced technical skills, which are increasingly seen as essential by employers. Collins argues that there is no clear evidence that skill requirements have changed over the years, but rather that the technocratic explanation for credential inflation is largely a result of “organizational politics” (Collins, 1988, p.175). It is problematic that while Canada emphasizes the need to attract highly skilled workers (Human Resources Development Canada, 2002), immigrants with these skills continue to have difficulty integrating into the labour market.

There is also a strong expectation that immigrants should accept Canada’s prevailing practices and standards (Li, 2003, p.11). Hence, some may argue that policy-makers are aware – or even expect – that not all immigrants’ credentials will be recognized, and IEPs will thus take up the non-skilled labour positions often turned down by their Canadian counterparts. Murphy (1994) suggests that, in this way, education acts in a manner similar to ethnicity, race and class origin in that it can be a basis for exclusion. The systemic racism and discrimination faced by immigrants is well-documented (Razack, 2002; Dei, 1996; Bannerji 1995) and is essential to fully understanding the current position of those that are marginalized and underutilized. This issue, however, lies beyond the scope of this paper.

In spite of the integration challenges faced by immigrants, Canada continues to accept immigrants whose credentials may or may not be recognized. Nearly half of all immigrants who come to Canada arrive through the Skilled Worker Class, which includes the Principal Applicant and his or her spouse and dependents. Principal Applicants are assessed against a grid that awards points on the basis of work experience, level of education, official language proficiency, age and adaptability. While awarding points for applicants’ education and experience, the selection criteria will not necessarily translate into professional placements in their fields. Indeed, the application to immigrate includes a statement recognizing that immigrants may not find a position in their profession. In the absence of prior learning assessment (and recognition of formal and non-formal learning), competency-based assessment, and other strategies that reduce the

barriers of credentialism, immigrants may be relegated to low paying labour jobs.

Conclusion

Tackling the larger systemic issues will require time, effort and collaboration from all parties including government, non-governmental officials, regulatory bodies, and businesses. Although there are a few bridging program that reflect this collaboration, such as the Engineers and Technologists Integration Program (ETIP)³, more programs need to be developed. The latest round of bridging programs constitute a patchwork which, although largely effective, is a temporary measure. Incentives for businesses to hire foreign-trained professionals are absent, and creative work is needed on this front. We must also look critically at existing policies and practices to build a seamless framework and collaborative partnership between stakeholders. Unless such measures are taken seriously by policy-makers, labour market integration issues will persist.

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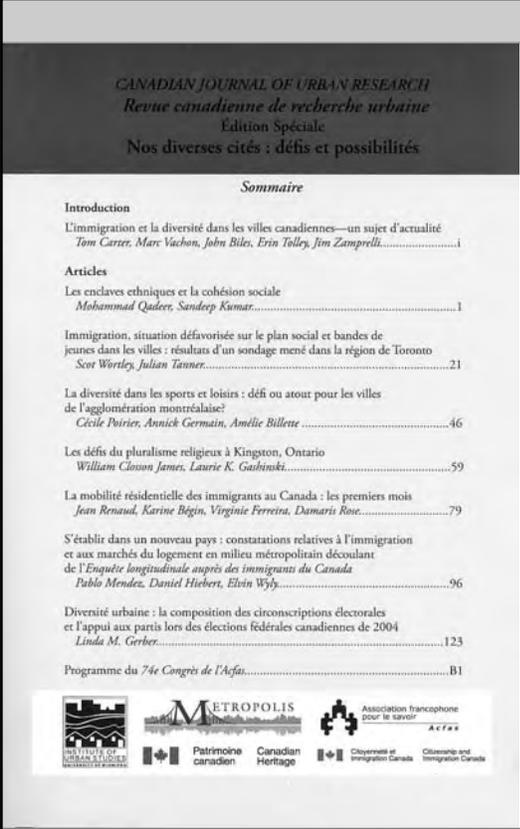
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Notes

¹ The terms Internationally Trained Professionals and Foreign Trained Professionals are often used interchangeably, but the latter has a negative connotation for many professional immigrants.

² Employment Readiness Workshops are designed to assist newcomers with their job search strategies – generally funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

³ The Engineers and Technologists Integration Program (ETIP) is a nine-month engineering bridging program at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN). It is a collaborative effort between non-governmental organizations, regulatory bodies and educational institutions that assists internationally trained engineers to re-qualify as technologists.



Our Diverse Cities: Challenges and Opportunities

Nos diverses cités : défis et possibilités

**Special Issue of / Édition spéciale de
the *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* /
la *Revue canadienne de recherche urbaine***

A recent issue of the *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* (Vol. 15, No. 2, 2006) was guest edited by Tom Carter and Marc Vachon of the University of Winnipeg; John Biles and Erin Tolley of the Metropolis Project Team; and Jim Zamprelli of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It contains selected articles on politics, religion, housing, youth gang activity, sports and recreational services. These articles explore the challenges posed by the increasing concentration of religious, linguistic, ethnic and racial groups in Canadian cities as well as suggesting ways to facilitate the integration process.

La plus récente édition de la *Revue canadienne de recherche urbaine* / *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* (vol. 15, n° 2, 2006) est le fruit d'une collaboration entre les rédacteurs invités Tom Carter et Marc Vachon (Université de Winnipeg), John Biles et Erin Tolley (Équipe du projet Metropolis), et Jim Zamprelli (Société canadienne d'hypothèques et de logement). Cette revue présente une sélection d'articles portant sur la politique, la religion, le logement, les bandes de jeunes, les sports ainsi que les services récréatifs. On y aborde les défis que pose la concentration croissante de groupes religieux, linguistiques, ethniques et raciaux au sein des villes canadiennes, et on y propose des moyens de faciliter le processus d'intégration.

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CAREER BRIDGE COMES OF AGE

ABSTRACT

As Canadian companies struggle to attract talent from our shrinking pool of skilled workers, some are turning to international graduates and experienced workers seeking employment in Canada. Leading organizations like CIBC, General Motors, FedEx and Scotiabank are doing so successfully with the help of *Career Bridge*, an innovative internship program.

As Canada's demand for skilled labour increases, organizations must become increasingly forward-looking in their approach to human resource needs. Well-documented labour shortages are hitting companies hard and creating unexpected new pressures along the way.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, the rapidly emerging "war for talent" is expected to create a shortage of up to one million qualified workers. Significant skills shortages are hurting many industries already, and this trend will only intensify and spread over the next decade, says the Board's 10th annual *Performance and Potential* report for 2005-06. Indeed, the head of Canada's largest bank has warned that Canada must find the right solutions to the "global war for talent" or face an uphill battle just to maintain our current quality of life.

Moreover, the Vancouver-based Urban Futures Institute Society says Canada is facing a "perfect storm" of demographic labour force pressures based on a declining birthrate, an aging and retiring population and fewer Canadians entering the workforce as they reach working age. The reality today is that businesses of every type and size are facing serious new challenges in attracting and retaining skilled talent.

While part of the challenge for organizations is to retain homegrown talent, companies are also recognizing the need to attract top people from other markets, whether they are international graduates or experienced workers willing to relocate to Canada.

Some Canadian companies are tapping into a new talent base provided by *Career Bridge*, an innovative internship program designed to address the dilemma of "no Canadian experience, no job; no job, no Canadian experience," which prevents many skilled immigrants from contributing to Canada's economy.

Career Bridge is part of Career Edge Organization, a social enterprise that has been providing career-launching paid internships across Canada since 1996. It places highly qualified professionals new to Canada as well as recent graduates into skilled jobs at some of Canada's most-recognized and respected corporations.

By prescreening all *Career Bridge* candidates and administering the payroll of all placed interns, Career Edge Organization removes the risks associated with hiring people who are new to the workforce or to Canada. At the same time, Career Edge Organization lets companies tap into an entirely new pool of talented and motivated job candidates.

Career Edge Organization offers three programs: *Career Edge* for recent Canadian graduates; *Ability Edge* for recent Canadian graduates with self-declared disabilities; and its newest program, *Career Bridge*, for experienced and internationally qualified workers who are new to Canada.

Career Bridge was launched in 2003 with government support from the Province of Ontario. Today it is self-sustaining. The program allows employers to build their organizations by adding international skills and perspectives to their workforce, while giving trained professionals Canadian work experience in their chosen careers.

All *Career Bridge* candidates are screened to confirm that each has business-level English language skills, suitable academic qualifications and at least three years of international work experience. These steps help eliminate the misgivings many organizations have about hiring foreign professionals and placing them in positions of responsibility. To further reduce recruitment risk, employers can choose from paid internships lasting four, six, nine or 12 months - with no commitment to hire.

About half of all *Career Bridge* registrants have a Master's or Ph.D. degree; 33% have a degree in business; another third have engineering degrees, while much of the remainder come from the IT or health care disciplines.

CAREER EDGE ORGANIZATION
Career Edge Organization is a national, not-for-profit, social enterprise that has been in operation for 10 years administering paid internship programs across a variety of industries. There are three programs: *Career Edge* is designed for recent graduates, *Ability Edge* is for recent graduates with disabilities and *Career Bridge* is for foreign-trained professionals.

Since 2003, *Career Bridge* has placed more than 500 interns and has signed more than 160 organizations onto the program. More than 80 percent of *Career Bridge* interns have been hired for full-time positions within their chosen careers.

Organizations that have partnered with *Career Bridge* to date include: Bell Canada, CIBC, City of Hamilton, City of Toronto, FedEx, Government of Ontario, General Motors of Canada, Humber Institute of Technology, Hudson's Bay Company, Manulife Financial, Scotiabank and York University.

Career Bridge currently operates in cities across Ontario and will be launching its program in Vancouver in the spring of 2007.

Leading Canadian organizations are turning to *Career Bridge*

Consider the job market in British Columbia, which provides an example of how Canada's labour supply is tightening up dramatically. Programs like *Career Bridge* will no doubt alleviate some of the hiring pressures hitting B.C., says Vancouver Board of Trade chief economist Dave Park. "*Career Bridge* will certainly help employers as they look for solutions to the growing labour shortage," says Park. "*Career Bridge* can only be good for business, giving organizations access to the experienced and reliable people they are looking for today."

As skill shortages grow, employers are facing significant new challenges – and risks – in their efforts to screen inexperienced interns and recent immigrants, shortlist the best job applicants and fit the right person into the right job. For some employers in need of help, *Career Bridge* is delivering innovative ways to make recruiting less risky and more rewarding.

RBC Financial Group is one recent convert to *Career Bridge*'s offerings. "We are looking forward to the opportunities that *Career Bridge* will bring us in this intense and competitive hiring market," says Kim Kavanagh, manager, recruitment and training, RBC Financial Group in Vancouver. "We expect *Career Bridge* to help us reach candidates from other countries who will bring valuable skills and experience to our organization."

In Toronto, Dominion of Canada General Insurance Co. recruited three interns through *Career Bridge* for its IT department in 2005. It has since hired two of the candidates onto its full-time staff and the third will also be retained full-time after completion of the internship. Dominion of Canada recruiter Shelley Wan-Zehr cites several advantages that *Career Bridge* has brought to Dominion as it faces, like so many organizations, a much tighter job market.

"Hiring good candidates in the IT field has become much more difficult in the last few years, with the competition for good candidates getting more fierce," she

says. "Using *Career Bridge* has helped us to connect more quickly with the highly skilled people that we need. We see this as a best practice in terms of recruiting – as long as *Career Bridge* is there, we will be utilizing them as a recruitment resource." Wan-Zehr praises the quality of candidates *Career Bridge* provides, noting that she is impressed with all of the interns she has met and hired.

"It has been good for our business to tap into *Career Bridge* as a resource. The people we have hired bring a fresh perspective into the organization, they show a high level of drive and enthusiasm. They are very driven to succeed. They want to fit in and be successful and that very positive attitude is what seals the deal."

Daniel Salazar, 42, a senior IT programmer analyst hired by Dominion in 2005 as a permanent employee following a five-month internship, notes that *Career Bridge* opened doors for him to professional opportunities he might not have otherwise had. "*Career Bridge* gave me

the opportunity to put my training and my skills to work in the right job setting," he comments. "It opened doors to employers who might not have recognized or believed in my abilities otherwise."

The City of Mississauga hired *Career Bridge* intern Paul Liu, a 34-year-old computer sciences degree graduate from China, in December, 2006 following an internship lasting one year. Marlene Knight, Manager of Mississauga's Materiel Management department, admits that she was not entirely sold on the idea of hiring a foreign-trained intern who did not even speak fluent English. But with her busy department desperate for help on a big one-year project, she agreed to take on Liu. "At the time, we were very short-staffed and we accepted whatever help we could get, but we came into it with a lot of skepticism, even though we knew this

guy was a smart cookie," says Knight.

Any doubts she and her team had quickly vanished as Liu demonstrated solid skills, an aptitude for the work assignment and an enthusiastic work ethic that impressed everyone. "He turned out to be absolute dynamite. This was, in fact, one of the best experiences of my career," says Knight. "Beyond the skills and intelligence he demonstrated, Paul brought a work ethic, a positive attitude and a level of respect for others that was very impressive. He worked out wonderfully and really showed his stuff so well that he won the full-time job in an open competition for the position. It has been a great experience and I hope that we can carry on with *Career Bridge*."

Liu adds that *Career Bridge* was instrumental in giving him a chance to hit the ground running when he entered the Canadian job market, allowing him to put his skills to full use and to maximize his potential in the workforce. "I had completed many interviews with potential employers who did not want to take a chance by hiring me

By prescreening all *Career Bridge* candidates and administering the payroll of all placed interns, Career Edge Organization removes the risks associated with hiring people who are new to the workforce or to Canada.

- *Career Bridge* opened the door for me,” says Liu. “*Career Bridge* provided me with the best opportunity to put my experience to work right away. With this kind of program, there are none of the typical barriers to work that can exist between new immigrants and the Canadian workplace.”

City of Mississauga Staffing and Development Consultant Antonietta DiSalvo, who acts as coordinator for the city’s activities with the *Career Bridge* program, says the city has employed five interns to date and she expects to continue the relationship. “The experience has been very successful. We’ve had nothing but positive feedback on all of our *Career Bridge* interns,” says DiSalvo. “The City of Mississauga’s strategic focus is to build a talent-ready city for the future by putting the best people on the job, so our emphasis on hiring will be greater than ever, as will our focus on diversity in the workplace. *Career Bridge* is helping us to attract new talent and really great people who are motivated to do the work. It’s a win-win situation for the city and for the interns.”

Since the pilot launch of the *Career Bridge* program, TD Bank Financial Group has been an active supporter of the program, placing 30 *Career Bridge* interns in positions such as Business Analyst, Communications Coordinator and Branch Manager. Of the 30 interns recruited, TD has hired 17 to its full-time staff. For a leading financial services company like TD, having a team in place that reflects the communities it serves is important and *Career Bridge* has played a key role in connecting TD with the right people for the right job. “At TD Bank Financial Group, we want our employees to be representative of the communities in which we do business,” says Ken Pustai, Senior VP Human Resources for TD Bank Financial Group. “We are also interested in attracting the best and brightest talent. Programs like *Career Bridge* – and the experience and talent their interns bring to our organization – benefit everyone.”

Consumer products giant Procter & Gamble Inc. is yet another leading company that has been involved with *Career Bridge* from the outset, hiring 12 interns to date from the program. Positions filled include Assistant Brand Manager, Market Planning Manager and Public Relations intern. Of the 12 interns recruited, P&G has hired seven onto its full-time staff. For P&G, a key advantage is *Career Bridge*’s ability to deliver a diverse selection of candidates who broaden both the organization’s expertise and its world view. “Diversity in the workplace is key for

organizations seeking long-term success,” says P&G President Tim Penner, a past honorary chairman of the *Career Bridge* program. “At P&G, I’ve seen how *Career Bridge* interns bring international perspectives and leading practices into our operations. Companies that are serious about building their business and strengthening their communities should recruit talented professionals through *Career Bridge*.”

Beyond the labour shortage: Why businesses turn to *Career Bridge*

It is forecast that Canada will require one million or more skilled workers to fill gaps in the workforce, and *Career Bridge* is an obvious way for companies to tap into a new pool of skilled talent. But there are other reasons being cited by companies turning to *Career Bridge*, says Colleen Fleming, Career Edge Organization’s President & CEO.

“You could say the big five reasons for companies tapping into *Career Bridge* today are the unique new talent pool that we provide to employers who are facing new hiring pressures, the quality of our candidates, the low risk of hiring, the low cost, and the overall ‘HR support’ function we provide in terms of connecting companies quickly and reliably with skilled help.” Companies consistently have high praise for the quality of candidates that *Career Bridge* is providing, she adds. “Our interns are highly educated, with more than half now holding advanced degrees at the Master’s or Ph.D. level verified to Canadian standards. And nearly half of the candidates also possess eight or more years of international experience in a professional setting,” Fleming says.

For interns, meanwhile, *Career Bridge* is offering an exceptional opportunity to maximize their potential by moving quickly into jobs that can take advantage of their particular skills and training, she adds. “We see it as a win-win scenario, with employers obviously gaining an edge, while interns gain the chance to become highly productive members of the Canadian workforce. They are making the most of their abilities by pursuing the career they’ve trained for, instead of simply coming to Canada in search of a ‘paycheque’ that will makes ends meet.”

Career Bridge – in addition to helping individual immigrants and employers – is contributing to Canada’s stature as a country in which immigrants can thrive professionally, economically and socially.

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW

The Role of the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science

ABSTRACT

The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) is the national certifying body for medical laboratory technologists and medical laboratory assistants. CSMLS has had a prior learning assessment and review process (PLAR) in place since 1999. This article describes how the PLAR process has evolved, and highlights new initiatives to ensure that the process keeps pace with best practices and does not pose unnecessary barriers to internationally educated medical laboratory technologists.

Seungkuk Yoo loved his job as a medical laboratory technologist at the INHA University Hospital in South Korea, where he had worked for more than 10 years. But he and his wife, who was also a medical laboratory technologist, decided Canada offered better opportunities for their two young children, and they immigrated in mid-2003. Today the Yoo family lives in Vancouver, and Mr. Yoo is working at MDS Metro, having successfully passed the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science national certification exam.

It is a story that would be familiar to many internationally educated professionals, although not all arrive in Canada and immediately begin work in their chosen profession, regardless of their years of experience. Technology, practices and protocols vary from country to country, English language skills may be rudimentary, and a person's work experience may be so specialized that it is not easily transferable. The challenge is to determine where the gaps are, and how best to fill them.

That is where prior learning assessment and review (PLAR) comes in. The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) uses the PLAR process to evaluate the credentials of internationally trained medical laboratory technologists (MLTs) to determine if they are eligible to write the national certification examinations.

In Canada (and with the exception of Quebec), MLT regulatory bodies require CSMLS certification as a condition of registration. Internationally educated MLTs who want to become certified must apply to the CSMLS for prior learning assessment. The PLAR process evaluates academic credentials, language proficiency, experiential learning and work history to determine eligibility to write the national certification examination.

CSMLS established a formal PLAR process in 1999. Since that time, the CSMLS and the Council on National Certification have worked hard to ensure that the process does not create artificial barriers for internationally educated MLTs. In 2002, the residency requirement for the PLAR process was lifted, and internationally educated MLTs can, as a result, apply for PLAR in their country of origin.

Workflow and staffing have been realigned in the Certification Department to facilitate a timely turnaround of PLAR applications. In most cases, applications are processed within four weeks of receipt (assuming all of the documents are provided). Documents required for completion of the PLAR process are easily accessible on the CSMLS web site.

In 2005, the Government of Canada, through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), provided funding for an external review of the CSMLS prior learning assessment process to ensure it conforms to best practices and does not unwittingly put up roadblocks for internationally educated MLTs. The funding also supported the development of a training manual for PLAR assessors to ensure consistency in the assessment process. The review was conducted by a consultant from the Canadian Association of Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA). Feedback on the PLAR process was sought from employers, PLAR applicants, regulatory bodies, education programs and CSMLS staff, as part of the review.

A report was presented to the Council on National Certification and to the Board of Directors in 2006 (the executive summary is available at www.csmls.org, click on Certification). The report found that the PLAR process itself is sound and does not pose unnecessary restrictions or barriers. There were recommendations on ways to make the information that is provided to clients

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about the PLAR process more accessible and easier to understand.

Language proficiency requirements were also an area of concern. CSMLS uses TOEF-iBT (Test of English as a Foreign Language – Internet-based Test) to formally evaluate language proficiency. The minimum score requirement is high, but is consistent with other allied health professions in Canada and the United States.

Eager to move forward on the report's recommendations, Christine Nielsen, CSMLS Director of Certification, has applied for funding to investigate language assessment tools and language proficiency requirements for internationally educated MLTs. "Medical laboratory technologists require the ability to read and comprehend technical protocols and procedures, and to communicate clearly with patients and other members of the health care team," says Ms. Nielsen. "We believe that our language proficiency requirements are appropriate given the complexities of the profession. That being said, we want to ensure that our language proficiency requirements are reasonable and do not pose unnecessary barriers for internationally educated medical laboratory technologists."

Funding is also being sought to develop an online self-assessment tool for PLAR Readiness and PLAR Clear Communications Projects.

CSMLS is currently participating in an innovative project to help orient internationally educated nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical laboratory technologists and medical radiation technologists to the complexities of practicing in the Canadian health care

system. Health Canada is providing \$599,915 over two years for the project, which will be coordinated by the University of Toronto, Faculty of Pharmacy. Ms. Nielsen will represent CSMLS on the Internationally Educated Healthcare Professionals Orientation Working Group.

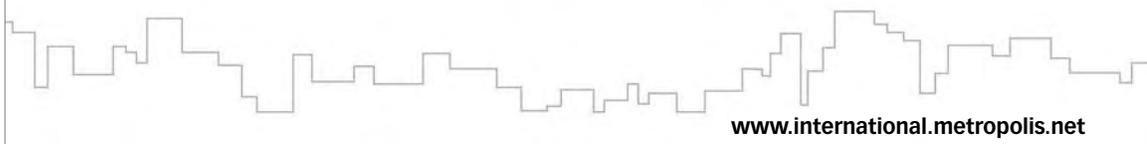
It is unlikely that the demand for PLAR will decrease in the near future. "The ageing population and the low birth rate will necessitate an aggressive campaign to attract immigrants to Canada," says Ms. Nielsen. "Medical laboratory technology is on the list of occupations that are in demand. There is pressure from federal and provincial governments, employers and regulatory bodies to speed up the process," she says. "It has been a big challenge for CSMLS to accommodate this need, since we do not receive any government funding to do it. We are, however, firmly committed to providing a PLAR process that is fair, efficient and upholds the integrity of national certification."

Medical laboratory technologists conduct laboratory tests on blood, body fluids and body tissue; they also interpret results. Test results provide critical information used by doctors to diagnose and treat illness and to maintain their patients' health. In fact, up to 85 per cent of decisions about diagnosis and treatment are based on laboratory test results. Medical laboratory technologists are graduates of accredited training programs at the college or university level. CSMLS certifies medical laboratory technologists in three disciplines: General Medical Laboratory Technology, Diagnostic Cytology and Clinical Genetics. CSMLS also certifies medical laboratory assistants.



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INTERNATIONAL PHARMACY GRADUATES IN CANADA

Issues and Challenges

ABSTRACT

International Pharmacy Graduates face numerous challenges in their quest to become licensed and practice in Canada. A collaborative of eight national pharmacy organizations has launched *Moving Forward: Pharmacy Human Resources for the Future* in an effort to understand and address these challenges.

International pharmacy graduates in Canada: issues and challenges

Pharmacists make up the third-largest segment of health professionals in Canada. But beginning in the late 1990s, Canada (and much of the industrialized world) started to experience shortages in the pharmacist workforce, which still persist today. Negative impacts of these shortages have included cut-backs of pharmacy services (particularly in hospitals); limited access to pharmacists (and thus medications) in many rural areas; and high levels of overwork, stress and burnout among practicing pharmacists.

Shortages in health human resources are being felt in so many health professions today that the federal government recently initiated a Pan-Canadian Health Human Resources Strategy aimed at increasing the recruitment and retention of health professionals. An integral part of this strategy is to reduce the barriers to practice for internationally educated health professionals to enable them to successfully integrate into the Canadian health workforce.

Pharmacy is no exception. International Pharmacy Graduates (IPGs) are defined as pharmacists who receive their pharmacy education in a country other than Canada. Increasing Canada's uptake of IPGs might seem like one obvious solution to help mitigate some of these workforce challenges. So what's the problem?

Canada currently has more than 29,000 licensed pharmacists. It is estimated that IPGs account for close to 30% of all newly licensed pharmacists. While this percentage varies by province, it is clear that IPGs make up a substantial, and significant, portion of the pharmacy workforce. Moreover, these numbers include only those IPGs who have successfully obtained a Canadian license. IPGs face many obstacles and challenges in their quest to become licensed, and for some these challenges are insurmountable.

All pharmacists, whether IPGs or trained in Canada, must have a license granted by the province in which they wish to practice. Each province has its own specific licensing requirements, which typically include a level of language proficiency, practical experience, and the completion of a provincial jurisprudence assessment. First, however, all provinces (with the exception of Québec) require candidates to possess a Certificate of Qualification from the Pharmaceutical Examining Board of Canada.

The Pharmaceutical Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) is the national certification body for the pharmacy profession. Its mandate is to assess the qualifications of both Canadian- and foreign-trained graduates to ensure that all pharmacists entering the profession have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to safely and effectively practice pharmacy. To successfully achieve their Certificate of Qualification, IPGs must complete the following steps:

- 1) First, IPG candidates undergo a Document Evaluation in which the PEBC verifies that the candidate has acquired a legitimate university degree from an acceptable program. Candidates may do this prior to immigrating.
- 2) If documents are favourably evaluated, the IPG candidate is then eligible to complete an Evaluating Examination to determine if their program of study is comparable to Canadian pharmacy programs. These exams are offered in Canada, as well as in the United Kingdom.
- 3) IPG candidates who successfully complete the Evaluating Examination, are then eligible to challenge the two-part PEBC Qualifying Examination, which assesses the core competencies required for safe and effective practice of pharmacy. (These competencies are defined by the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities' *Professional Competencies for Canadian Pharmacists at Entry to Practice*.) The first part of the exam is a written multiple choice session. The second part

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is an Objective Structured Clinical Examination where candidates are assessed on their performance in a series of situational practice simulations. The Qualifying Examination is held only in Canada.

Both IPGs and Canadian pharmacy graduates must complete the Qualifying Examination.

According to the PEBC, over the last 10 years, there have been significant increases in the number of IPGs attempting, and passing, the Qualifying Examinations. However, there is a substantial gap between the number of candidates who successfully pass the Evaluating Examination and those that pass the Qualifying Examination, suggesting that many IPGs have great difficulty with the latter. In particular, many IPGs find the Objective Structured Clinic Examination to be quite demanding.

The challenges faced by IPGs, both in the licensing process and in practice itself, can be summarized as follows. The first challenge is language fluency and communication, since many pharmacist candidates cannot pass the provincial fluency standards. When they do, they are expected to be able to function at a language level that allows both understanding of specific medical and pharmaceutical terminology and effectively communicating this information to their patients.

Another challenge relates to the candidate's understanding and experience of disease states or treatments that they might not have encountered in their country of origin. Consider the therapeutic knowledge of a pharmacist from a country where malaria and malnutrition are prevalent, compared to Canada where frequent disease states are the polar opposite – high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

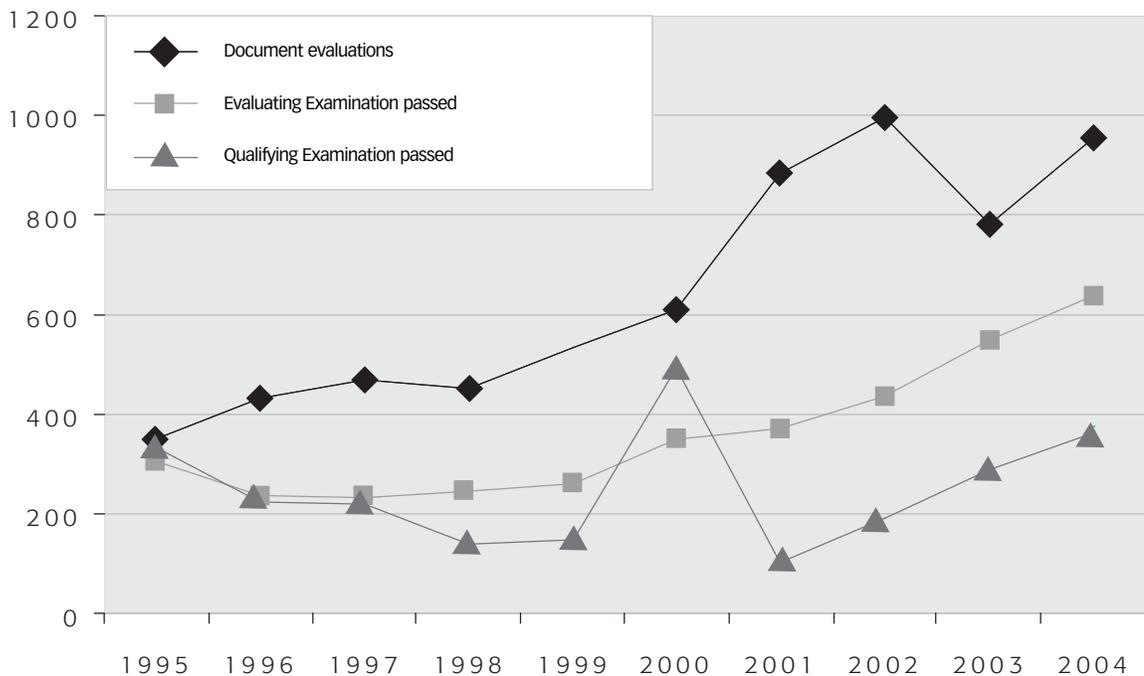
IPGs also face difficulties in “being” pharmacists in Canada; that is, in interacting with patients and other health care providers in settings where professional and cultural norms may be different from their own. Canadian health care reforms, including the move towards primary care, are also causing pharmacists to take on new and expanded medication management roles. These changes in practice present an extra level of complexity for IPGs, who are already trying to understand the existing system of Canadian pharmacy practice.

Underlying all of this are the candidate's expectations. Many IPGs report that they simply were not aware of the differences between their pharmacy experience and the standard of practice in Canada, or the length of time, effort and financial resources required to achieve their license and begin practicing. These realities can be disappointing, frustrating, and sometimes overwhelming.

It is clear that IPGs require support to successfully integrate into Canadian pharmacy practice and, in fact, a number of initiatives have been launched to provide this support.

Some Faculties of Pharmacy have developed structured “bridging” programs to assist pharmacists from other countries to gain the language, workplace and practice skills necessary for licensure and practice in Canada. One of the specific aims of these programs is to assist IPGs in preparing for the PEBC Examinations. The IPG program at the University of Toronto is the longest running pharmacy-bridging program in Canada, and its results are very positive with over 90% of participants passing the PEBC Qualifying Examinations. The University of British Columbia offers a similar bridging program, and a small number of private programs are also available. Fees for these programs range from \$7,500 to \$13,000.

Figure 1: Number of IPG candidates progressing through the PEBC assessment steps, 1995-2004



(source: PEBC)

The federal government also just recently announced funding to develop an orientation program to help internationally educated nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical laboratory technologists and medical radiation technologists to adapt to the demands of practicing in the Canadian health care system.

However, if the pharmacy workforce and IPGs themselves are to benefit equally, any efforts to facilitate the integration of IPGs into the pharmacy workforce need to be part of a coordinated, pan-Canadian, pharmacy human resources plan.

This is why *Moving Forward: Pharmacy Human Resources for the Future* was launched in 2005. *Moving Forward* is an in-depth examination of the factors contributing to pharmacy human resources challenges in Canada. It will offer recommendations to ensure a strong pharmacy workforce prepared to meet the future health care needs of Canadians. The project is a partnership between eight influential pharmacy organizations: the Canadian Pharmacists Association, which manages the project, the Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores, Canadian Association of Pharmacy Technicians, Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists, National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities, Association of Deans of Pharmacy of Canada, Association of Faculties of Pharmacy of Canada, and the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada.

Funded by the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition program, *Moving Forward* will focus, in particular, on the specific human resources issues and challenges faced by IPGs in the Canadian pharmacy workforce. Specific IPG research activities currently underway include:

- The development of a "roadmap" of necessary steps between immigration and successful licensure to practice;
- The creation of an inventory of available IPG support and bridging education programs;
- The collection of quantitative information to construct a demographic profile of IPGs in Canada; and
- The collection of qualitative information on the attitudes and experiences of IPGs seeking to practice in Canada.

Research activities to be completed in 2007 will examine the following questions:

1. How many IPGs are in Canada? What is their country of origin? What province or region are they

located in, and what influences this choice? How many are working as pharmacists, as pharmacy technicians, or are not working in pharmacy? If not working in pharmacy, why not?

2. What information is made available to IPGs regarding licensing and practice in Canada, prior to immigration? Is it satisfactory?
3. What positions are filled by IPGs? Are they equally represented in community and hospital pharmacies, and across Canada? Do IPGs favour certain types of practice sites?
4. What gaps exist between the numbers of IPGs who apply to immigrate, those who successfully immigrate, those who attempt to become licensed, those who successfully become licensed and those who actually enter practice? What specific challenges and barriers do each of these groups face? What happens to these individuals between these steps?
5. What are the experiences of IPGs regarding integration into the Canadian pharmacy workforce? What are their expectations? What are the experiences of employers of IPGs regarding their integration into the local practice environment?
6. What bridging and support programs are available? Where are they, what do they include, how much do they cost, how are they accessed? Are they available to all IPGs?
7. How well are existing bridging and other support programs preparing IPGs for licensing and integration into pharmacy practice in Canada? What issues and challenges exist?
8. What other support mechanisms could help IPGs become licensed and integrated into pharmacy practice (for example self-assessment tools, mentorship programs, preceptor supports, and language training)?

The results of this research phase will be a body of work that identifies, explores and describes the human resources challenges facing IPGs in the Canadian pharmacy workforce. It will also provide a foundation for analysis to offer strategies and solutions to help address these challenges.

For more information, please visit www.pharmacyhr.ca.

IMMIGRANT WORKFORCE INTEGRATION

The Hamilton Experience

ABSTRACT

This article describes the current labour market and immigration trends in Hamilton and sets the stage for the development of the Hamilton Immigrant Workforce Integration Network. It provides the structure, goals and activities for year one. Community initiatives in the area of credential recognition and immigrant workforce integration are highlighted.

Immigration and labour market trends in Hamilton

Situated in the western half of Ontario's Golden Horseshoe region, the City of Hamilton is located in the manufacturing heartland of Canada. Hamilton is an industrial city with a total population of 490,268 (Statistics Canada 2001). By population, Hamilton is the fourth largest city in Ontario and is in ninth place across Canada. However, Hamilton's population grew at a rate of only 4.8% during the 1996-2001 period, which is less than the provincial growth rate of 6.1% (Statistics Canada 2001). A recent study of the Hamilton labour market found the following:

- Hamilton's population growth is declining and its population is becoming much older;
- By 2013, the number of adults of pre-retirement age (55-64) in the labour force will exceed the number of youths of pre-entry age (15-24), and the gap will widen in future years;
- Shortly after 2016, Hamilton's labour force growth will cease altogether and the absolute size of the workforce will actually begin to decline; and
- Various sectors of the Hamilton economy are already beginning to experience skill shortage (eEconomics Consulting 2002).

Declining population is not unique to Hamilton; it is a national trend affecting many small- to medium-sized cities. It is estimated that by 2011 immigration will account for all of Canada's labour market growth and for all of Canada's population growth by 2026. Nearly half of recent immigrants are in the prime working age group of 25-44 years, in contrast to only 29.8% of the total of Hamilton's Canadian-born population (eEconomics Consulting 2002).

A comparative analysis of Hamilton's and Ontario's labour force population reveals that educational levels are lower in Hamilton than in Ontario, on average, especially when we look at the higher levels of educational attainment (eEconomics Consulting 2002). The report *Towards Prosperity: Researching Immigrant Skills in Hamilton* (Lomotey, Janzen and McKay 2005) notes that various sectors of the local economy are beginning to experience skill shortages, including: processing and manufacturing, retail trade, health care (physicians, nurses, pharmacists) and social services, education, trades and skilled labour (contractors, carpenters, electricians), elementary sales and service (security guards, nannies, cashiers), intermediate sales and service (sales representatives, hotel clerks, bartenders) and utilities. Immigrants already comprise 82% of the labour force growth in the city. The skills shortages identified in these different sectors could be bridged to some extent by skilled immigrants in Hamilton (eEconomics Consulting 2002).

Hamilton has an employer base of approximately 16,000 employers with the top three employment sectors being manufacturing (20.4%), retail trade (12.4%) and social services (11.9%) (Statistics Canada 2004). According to the *HR Matters* report (eEconomics Consulting 2002), manufacturing suffered a drop of almost 40% in employment between 1989 and 1993, and recovery has been very slow since then. Currently, Hamilton Health Sciences is the largest employer in the community. Over the past 10 years, labour market trends have resulted in the creation of a greater proportion of low-waged, part-time, temporary, or contract positions with few or no benefits (Fraser 2004).

LINDA ORME

Linda Orme is the Coordinator of the Hamilton Immigrant Workforce Integration Network (HIWIN) with the Hamilton Training Advisory Board. She has extensive experience working with the public and not-for-profit sectors, and operates a small consulting and training business. Her background includes the development of training programs for workforce re-entrants, as well as developing and delivering training in organizational and leadership development.

Historically, Hamilton has been a destination of choice for many immigrants to Canada. Similar to the rest of the country, early immigrants to Hamilton were traditionally from Western European countries, primarily Italy, Portugal, Spain, Germany and Poland. However, immigration patterns nationally have changed over the last two decades and this has influenced immigration into Hamilton. More than half of newcomers to Hamilton are from Asia with increased immigration from Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean. Visible minorities comprise 11% of Hamilton's population.

Immigrants now constitute almost one-quarter of the total population, which is slightly less than the proportion of immigrants in Ontario, but slightly higher than the national level. Hamilton also receives secondary migrants from other cities. During the 1960s, 8% of Ontario's immigrants and 4% of Canada's immigrants chose Hamilton as a port of destination. Today, however, Hamilton shares only 3.5% of recent immigrants to Ontario and 1.9% of the total recent immigrants to Canada (CIC and Informetrica 2005). Hamilton, nonetheless, continues to have one of the highest retention rates for immigrants in Canada because of the low cost of living and its proximity to Toronto, although its attraction as a destination point is declining with many skilled immigrants and investors choosing other destinations (Mukkath and Jaffray 2006).

Access to the labour market remains a crucial integration aspect for these newcomers. Although recent immigrants have higher educational levels than the Canadian-born, they are often unable to transfer these skills at appropriate levels in the local labour market. According to the 2001 Census, 31% of recent immigrants in Hamilton had university degrees compared to only 18% for the Canadian-born in the city. Given this, it is somewhat surprising that the unemployment rate among recent immigrants in Hamilton is higher than the national average. Moreover, a staggering 52% of recent immigrants are living in poverty (Fraser 2004). Among employed immigrants, many work in jobs that do not recognize the levels of education or work experience that they bring with them.

In 2005, the Hamilton Training Advisory Board (HTAB) conducted a survey of 200 small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The results revealed low employment rates for immigrants in the city. Data from the 50 respondents showed that among new employees hired in the previous 12 months, only 5% were recent immigrants. Over that 12 month period, the public sector was the major employer in the city, yet recent

immigrants comprised less than 1% of the total number of persons hired.

Immigrants planning to pursue further education, to apply for professional licensing and certification or to seek employment in professional fields must have their international credentials assessed. Although there are no credential assessment services in Hamilton, the two major immigrant serving organizations assist clients with credential assessment through the International Credential Assessment Service or World Education Services at a cost borne by the immigrant. For clients of Ontario Works (a provincial program that provides income and employment assistance to those in temporary financial need), a subsidy program in Hamilton can assist with the fees associated with licensing and accreditation.

[The] report found that foreign degrees, diplomas and other certificates were not adequately recognized and other training, skills and experience were often undervalued by employers. As a consequence, immigrants in Hamilton experienced unemployment, underemployment and poverty.

The creation of the Hamilton Immigrant Workforce Integration Network

In 2004, the Immigrant and Refugee Employment Services Committee (IRESC), a sub-committee of the HTAB, developed a focused strategy to address the issues outlined above. This multi-phase initiative sought to mobilize the community to make better use of immigrant skills. The release of *Towards Prosperity: A National and Provincial Perspective on the Need to Utilize Immigrant Skills* (Janzen, Hogarth and Hatzipantelis 2004) was the culmination of Phase I. This background paper provided an overview of the national and provincial literature on the importance that immigrants and their skills hold for communities in Canada. Phase II was marked by the release of the report *Towards Prosperity: Researching Immigrant Skills in Hamilton* (2005), which found that foreign degrees, diplomas and other certificates were not adequately recognized and other training, skills and experience were often undervalued by employers. As a consequence, immigrants in

Hamilton experienced unemployment, underemployment and poverty.

This report provided several recommendations for integrating immigrants into the labour force, including increased funding for immigrant employment support programs and the strengthening of language training programs in the community. It also called for the establishment of effective processes for assessing international credentials and for stakeholder groups, especially employers, to work collaboratively to find solutions to address the issue of immigrant workforce integration.

In June 2005, HTAB hosted an Immigration Summit to discuss the challenges and issues facing immigrants in Hamilton and to provide recommendations for action. At this summit, HTAB took the lead in highlighting existing

services for immigrants and to brainstorm ideas for improving and augmenting these services. The Summit attracted 135 participants from business, labour, government, education and immigrant service providers. Participants offered input into an immigration strategy for Hamilton, which would address issues such as accreditation and licensing, skills and language training, and accessing employment and workplace integration.

Participants noted the inadequacy of funding for additional training to adapt immigrant skills to the Canadian system and the lack of information provided to immigrants at the point of arrival in Canada regarding licensing and requirements of regulatory bodies to practice their professions in Canada. They discussed the closed-door policies of some professional associations and labour unions that deny immigrants fair access to those professions and trades, and the lack of a uniform prior learning assessment and recognition system across all educational institutions and employer and professional bodies. They noted as well the inadequate resources to help immigrants access upgrading and recertification training. However, some new initiatives to facilitate the accreditation of foreign-trained professionals were noted, such as the Care Centre for Internationally Trained Nurses program. Participants discussed barriers facing immigrant job seekers such as the requirement of Canadian experience, the lack of opportunities for immigrants to acquire such experience, the lack of workplace specific language programs, and inadequate funding for immigrant employment support programs.

Following the Summit, a community consultation was held on December 14, 2005, with stakeholders from the federal, provincial and the municipal governments, as well as employers, business organizations, educational institutions, immigrant service providers, community organizations, funders, labour union representatives, local politicians, immigrants, and representatives from the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) and Career Bridge. This community consultation provided information around the issues of poverty, unemployment and under-utilization of immigrant skills in Hamilton. Following presentations from TRIEC and WRIEN about the solutions developed by their respective communities to address immigrant integration, participants provided input into a community plan for Hamilton.

Building on the Immigration Summit and community consultation, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton then produced the *Report on the Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration Project: A Plan for Hamilton* (Mukkath and Jaffray 2006). This report recommended that an immigrant employment network be formed to bring together all relevant stakeholders to promote the

integration of immigrants into Hamilton's workforce. It identified the need for the commitment of high-level leaders from the business sector, government and other stakeholder groups engaged as champions to lead the network, and the need for outreach and engagement with employers in Hamilton.

HIWIN's structure and objectives

Working from the recommendations in this report, the Immigrant and Refugee Employment Services Committee implemented the community plan, including the mandate for the Hamilton Immigrant Workforce Integration Network (HIWIN). Key objectives for this initiative include the following:

- To develop partnerships and support employers in their efforts to hire immigrants and to integrate them into their workforce;
- To advocate for the recognition of immigrant credentials;
 - To help create conditions in the labour market that will attract new immigrants to settle in Hamilton;
 - To mobilize resources, both financial and human, from stakeholders in order to develop and implement the network's activities;
 - To create awareness on immigrant issues and to engage stakeholders in the activities of the network; and
 - To collaborate, network and integrate the work of HIWIN with community organizations and groups that have objectives related to those of HIWIN.

The membership of HIWIN includes all relevant stakeholders in the community, including educational institutions, immigrant service providers, community organizations, employers, business organizations, labour unions, funders, occupational regulatory bodies, immigrant groups, and all levels of government.

HTAB agreed to act as host to HIWIN and to provide the accountability framework for the initiative. The Hamilton Community Foundation and HTAB provided financial support, and a coordinator was hired in September 2006. IRESC continued to provide input to HIWIN until a Steering Committee was formed in November 2006. IRESC developed the framework for the delivery of the initiative, including structuring the steering committee and working groups to facilitate the process of moving the initiative forward. Four working groups were established to provide input and support for the key objectives during the first operational year. These are Stakeholder Outreach, Communications, Research, and Diversity Conference Planning.

Research indicates that Hamilton employers generally have a poor understanding of the nature and magnitude of the employee shortages that will threaten their very existence in the near future.

A strategic communications strategy is in the developmental stages, along with a broad-based strategy for engaging the key community stakeholders. One of the major challenges in this community has been the engagement of business champions to market the initiative as a key strategy for effective business management.

Contacts have been made with some critical organizations, such as the Immigrant Advisory Committee to the City of Hamilton, the Hamilton Poverty Roundtable and the Hamilton Civic Coalition, a community think-tank comprised of business and community leaders. HIWIN is well-positioned to address the business community, as HTAB has established respect and recognition of its labour market research in the broader business sector.

HIWIN has two major initiatives underway. First, it is sponsoring a diversity conference for local employers to be held on March 21, 2007. This event is being co-sponsored by the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, HTAB, the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion, and the City of Hamilton. The conference will promote the benefits of cultural diversity and will educate employers, particularly those from SMEs, about the critical implications of the aging workforce. SMEs are the main focus of the conference as these smaller employers often lack the resources for critical workforce planning and development. Research indicates that Hamilton employers generally have a poor understanding of the nature and magnitude of the employee shortages that will threaten their very existence in the near future (economics Consulting 2002). HIWIN will utilize this conference to engage local employers in investing in immigrants, promoting the practices of local employers who are already successfully engaging in diversity efforts, and link employers with community resources and tools to support them with the challenges that diversity in the workplace presents. This conference will also constitute the community launch for HIWIN.

Second, HIWIN has hired a researcher, Sarah Wayland, to review and evaluate the continuum of employment-related services to newcomers that exist in Hamilton and to make recommendations for improving this process. The research aims to develop a systems model that “connects the dots” between various aspects of settlement that relate to employment. An important component consists of interviews with Hamilton-area employers who have “success stories” of hiring immigrants and promoting workplace diversity. It is hoped that they can share their learning paths and help identify next steps for championing employment integration for newcomers. The report will be completed by February 2007.

HIWIN is not alone in promoting immigrant workforce integration in Hamilton. The Settlement and Integration Services Organization, Hamilton’s settlement

agency, the newly-formed Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion and the Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre all participated in the public hearings held in Hamilton on December 6, 2006, and presented official submissions to the Standing Committee reviewing Ontario’s Bill 124, the *Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act* (2006). Efforts such as these continue to ensure that immigrants have a fair chance to access skills-specific jobs through a fair and open process.

HIWIN awaits the release of an economic development strategy for 2007 from Hamilton City Council. HIWIN plans to address this strategy by emphasizing the need for the inclusion of a community-wide strategic focus on immigrant attraction and retention with a particular emphasis on immigrant employment issues.

A major challenge is getting Hamilton employers to recognize the need for immigrant workforce integration and to see that it is inextricably linked to the future prosperity of this community. If employers do not start to work quickly to address their future labour force needs, including specific strategies to incorporate skilled immigrants, we will lose out in the competition to attract skilled and talented immigrants to the local labour market. If Hamilton is to survive and thrive in the coming decades, stakeholders must focus on attracting and retaining well-trained and educated immigrants to this city.

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NOUVEAU PROJET D'INTÉGRATION POUR LES IMMIGRANTS FORMÉS À L'ÉTRANGER DANS LE DOMAINE DE LA CONSTRUCTION

Objectif : emploi grâce à l'Institut des métiers de La Cité collégiale

RÉSUMÉ

L'Ontario, voire l'ensemble du pays, connaît actuellement et ce, depuis plusieurs années déjà, une importante pénurie de main-d'œuvre qualifiée pouvant répondre aux besoins toujours croissants du secteur de la construction. La solution à cette pénurie se trouve, entre autres, au sein d'une catégorie particulière d'immigrants, ceux qui ont été formés à l'étranger et qui possèdent de l'expérience dans le domaine de la construction. Ces immigrants qualifiés se heurtent toutefois à deux problèmes spécifiques lorsqu'ils tentent d'intégrer le marché de l'emploi : la non-reconnaissance par les employeurs de leurs compétences acquises à l'étranger, et la nécessité d'acquérir les cartes de compétences requises pour pratiquer leur métier au Canada. C'est pour les aider à surmonter ces obstacles que l'Institut des métiers de La Cité collégiale a mis sur pied un programme spécifique adapté à leurs besoins, qui les rendra aptes à intégrer le marché de l'emploi.

Depuis l'automne 2006, avec l'appui financier du gouvernement de l'Ontario, l'Institut des métiers de La Cité collégiale, le plus important centre de formation francophone dans les métiers en Ontario, s'est donné pour mission de dispenser des programmes adaptés aux besoins spécifiques des immigrants francophones de la région d'Ottawa qui ont été formés à l'étranger et, qui souhaitent intégrer le marché de l'emploi dans le domaine de la construction. Soucieuse de s'adapter aux réalités vécues par les chercheurs d'emploi et aux besoins du milieu, l'Institut des métiers innove en étant la seule institution de formation à offrir ce programme particulier destiné à une clientèle cible désireuse de faire valoir ses compétences et, de surcroît, de contribuer à l'essor de l'économie canadienne et régionale.

Disposant d'une superficie de plus de 77 000 pieds carrés réservée à des ateliers et à des laboratoires munis des meilleurs et des plus récents équipements, l'Institut des métiers de La Cité collégiale recrée les milieux d'emploi et familiarise le futur travailleur à son environnement professionnel. Cela sans compter que ce secteur du Collège possède l'expertise de nombreux spécialistes d'expérience dispensant des cours de qualité et, les acquis nécessaires pour offrir, notamment, un enseignement sur mesure et adapté dans les différentes sphères d'activités liées au monde de la construction.

Un programme exclusif adapté aux besoins spécifiques de la clientèle

Les immigrants qualifiés nouvellement arrivés au Canada qui désirent intégrer le marché de l'emploi dans leur domaine de spécialisation se heurtent souvent aux défis particuliers que pose le milieu. L'Institut des métiers de La Cité collégiale tente donc, avec cette nouvelle initiative, d'aider le mieux possible cette catégorie de travailleurs à surmonter différents obstacles qu'ils pourraient rencontrer lors de leur démarche de recherche d'emploi. Mentionnons entre autres la méconnaissance des termes anglophones généralement utilisés sur les chantiers de construction, la difficulté d'acquérir une expérience en milieu de travail canadien, la méconnaissance des délais de reconnaissance pour les titres de compétences et le manque d'information sur les processus de délivrance des permis donnant le droit d'exercer, ainsi que l'ignorance de certains employeurs de la valeur réelle des compétences possédées par ceux-ci.

NICOLE DESNOYERS

Nicole Desnoyers possède plus de 25 ans d'expérience en développement de programmes de formation sur mesure répondant aux besoins spécifiques de la clientèle adulte. Diplômée de l'Université du Québec en Outaouais avec une maîtrise en gestion de projets, elle occupe actuellement le poste de directrice de l'Institut des métiers à La Cité collégiale.

Pour ce faire, l'Institut des métiers de La Cité collégiale a décidé de proposer à ces professionnels de la construction ayant reçu une certification et/ou ayant acquis de l'expérience à l'étranger, un plan individualisé favorisant leur intégration ou leur maintien en milieu de travail. La formation est axée sur la mise à niveau et a pour objectif de leur donner les moyens nécessaires pour répondre aux normes de qualification provinciales en vigueur dans les cinq métiers suivants : charpentier-menuisier, électricien, plombier, briqueteur-maçon et mécanicien en réfrigération et climatisation.

Le programme d'une durée de trente semaines offert par l'Institut des métiers met principalement l'accent sur la mise à niveau et l'enrichissement de l'expérience de travail. La formation débute par dix semaines passées en ateliers à La Cité collégiale lors desquelles un riche bagage de connaissances est transmis par des gens de métiers formés au Canada et possédant plusieurs années d'expérience dans le domaine. Elle se poursuit par des stages en milieu de travail au sein d'entreprises en construction de la région d'une durée de vingt semaines.

L'admission au programme

Chaque individu éligible à ce programme verra, au préalable, son dossier étudié par l'Institut des métiers. Une évaluation déterminera ses connaissances et ses compétences pour intégrer le marché canadien de l'emploi dans l'industrie de la construction. Ainsi, le candidat aura à effectuer un test d'équivalence des compétences qui lui permettra d'intégrer la salle de classe et les ateliers. Il suivra également un cours en santé et sécurité pour obtenir ses cartes de compétence et il aura la chance, en compagnie des spécialistes de l'Institut des métiers de La Cité collégiale, de procéder à la recherche et à l'identification d'employeurs potentiels. Enfin, il sera appuyé par le personnel de l'Institut des métiers tout au long du processus pour trouver un emploi, depuis la présentation d'une demande d'emploi à l'obtention d'un travail dans leur domaine de compétences.

L'approche privilégiée par l'Institut des métiers est donc axée sur l'évaluation individuelle, le ciblage des points faibles, l'apprentissage accompagné d'un suivi personnalisé et l'aiguillage afin de naviguer avec les outils nécessaires dans le monde de l'emploi. Elle permet donc aux immigrants spécialisés en construction une importante économie de temps quant à l'apprentissage nécessaire qu'ils doivent acquérir en vue de répondre aux normes de qualifications ontariennes et favorise leur contact direct avec le milieu donnant ainsi aux employeurs la possibilité d'augmenter leur confiance en leur expertise.

L'importance des partenaires du milieu

Les efforts déployés par l'Institut des métiers ne pourraient porter fruit sans une étroite collaboration des différentes organisations du secteur de la construction. En effet, ces ententes sont la clé même du succès quant à l'intégration sur le marché de l'emploi en Ontario du plus grand nombre possible d'immigrants qualifiés du domaine de la construction. Cette reconnaissance accrue des acquis et des aptitudes des immigrants par l'industrie est d'autant justifiée compte tenu de l'importante pénurie de main-d'œuvre spécialisée dans le domaine de la construction qui sévit autant dans la région, la province, que le pays.

Il va sans dire que le problème croissant de la pénurie de main-d'œuvre qualifiée au Canada, particulièrement dans le secteur de la construction, pourrait engendrer dans un futur rapproché une baisse considérable des activités, ainsi qu'un ralentissement économique non-négligeable. Toutes les statistiques le démontrent, la pénurie des gens de métiers que connaît le Canada depuis plusieurs années déjà, entraîne un délai d'attente considérable quant à l'accès aux services de différents professionnels de la construction, comme par exemple les plombiers et les électriciens.

Il est donc primordial que la collaboration entre les institutions de formation et l'industrie de la construction s'accroisse au cours des prochaines années, afin que ce secteur puisse bénéficier de tout le potentiel que peut offrir les travailleurs immigrants spécialisés en construction à l'économie canadienne.

L'Institut des métiers à La Cité collégiale, se réjouit d'offrir à cette catégorie de travailleurs d'intégrer le marché de l'emploi le plus rapidement possible et avec le plus d'outils en main. L'expertise qu'est en train de développer La Cité collégiale à ce niveau répond à un besoin réel du milieu et nous voulons faire de ces travailleurs des acteurs importants qui pourront contribuer à l'essor de la société et trouver une place de choix au sein du milieu effervescent et en perpétuelle expansion, qu'est le secteur de la construction. Le Canada a besoin de gens de métiers formés à l'étranger qui répondront aux normes en vigueur et qui seront aptes à œuvrer et à apporter leur riche contribution au domaine dès aujourd'hui.

Toute personne intéressée à obtenir de plus amples renseignements au sujet de ce programme est invitée à communiquer avec La Cité collégiale en composant le 613 742-2483 ou, sans frais, le 1 800 267-2483 ou en écrivant à : metier@lacitec.on.ca.

FROM CONSIDERATION TO INTEGRATION

Canadian Engineering and International Engineering Graduates

ABSTRACT

The engineering licensure process can be unclear to immigrants which is why the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE) and the provincial and territorial engineering licensing bodies created *From Consideration to Integration* (FC2I), a three-phase initiative designed to integrate international engineering graduates into the Canadian profession and workforce without compromising public safety or lowering professional standards.

Rakesh Shreewastav landed in Toronto on a grey, snowy day in March with high hopes for his future in Canada. With a Master of Science degree in civil engineering from Moscow State University of Environmental Engineering and a life-long desire to live in Canada, he was excited about his career prospects. “I was confident that I could be successful,” says Shreewastav. “I was expecting the challenges, the change and the competition.”

What he wasn’t expecting was the process to become recognized as an engineer. His academic qualifications and work experience were assessed by two committees and he underwent an intensive interview process about his skills and experience. In hindsight, he can appreciate the need for such scrutiny but at the time, it was difficult. “It was a bit disappointing,” he says, reflecting on the interviews and committee-driven assessments of his education and work experience. “I didn’t think it would take so long.”

Shreewastav’s frustrations with the engineering licensing system have been echoed by other international engineering graduates (IEGs). But the system is rigorous because it is designed to ensure public safety. Canadians can have confidence in the security of their bridges, flight systems, wastewater treatment plants and medicines because the engineers working on them have met a number of key criteria. While it may seem onerous, the goal is public safety and security.

Engineering in Canada is a self-regulated profession with licensure being a provincial or territorial responsibility. There are more than 160,000 Canadian professional engineers and each has followed the same process: they have met education and experience requirements, passed a law and ethics exam (called the Professional Practice Exam), demonstrated that they are of good character, provided engineering references and shown that they have appropriate language skills. With small variations, this is the process followed in every province and territory. Students who graduate from accredited¹ engineering programs receive their iron ring, but it is the P.Eng.² that signifies that the recipient is licensed and can call him or herself an engineer. IEGs can also receive an iron ring once they have been accepted by a licensing body as an Engineer in Training (EIT) or once they have their P.Eng., depending on the rules in their area.

The licensing system is very effective; witness the worldwide, excellent reputation of Canadian engineering and our high public safety standards. This doesn’t mean, however, that it is flawless. The process may not be easy to understand, and the rationale for some of the steps is not always clear to those trying to build a new life in Canada.

Building a new life – every year, thousands of immigrants come to this country to do just that and many identify themselves as engineers. In 2001, of the 44% of skilled workers who identified an intended occupation at the time of immigration, 63% indicated engineering. The criteria for the selection of skilled workers changed in 2002 with the implementation of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*; applicants are no longer evaluated on their occupation. Rather, they are assessed based on education, official language ability, experience, age, pre-arranged employment opportunities and adaptability.³ This means that many of those permitted to enter the country are well-educated, often with many years of work experience.

Those who self-identify as engineers may be seasoned engineering professionals, recent engineering graduates or working in jobs that would be technologist, technician, architect or scientist positions in Canada. Regardless of which group they fall into, they arrive in Canada

MARIE LEMAY

Marie Lemay, P.Eng., is Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE). In this capacity, she oversees the administration of the Council and directs CCPE’s staff. She maintains close working relationships with the 12 member associations/ordre, which represent Canada’s 160,000 professional engineers and acts as the organization’s primary spokesperson. She also represents CCPE internationally.

expecting to begin work as engineers but may be unable to find engineering employment. Many find themselves in the difficult cycle of needing work experience to get their engineering licence⁴ but needing their P.Eng./ing. before an employer will hire them. “I sent out dozens and dozens of résumés,” recalls Shreewastav, “and always followed up by phone and in person. I got a junior position three months later.”

IEGs without engineering employment are often portrayed in media reports as cab drivers, delivery people or fast food attendants. The engineering profession has always been disturbed by these reports because we recognize that anyone with the education and experience to be working as an engineer in Canada should be working to their full capacity. It was this situation that led to the creation of *From Consideration to Integration* (FC2I), a three-phase initiative⁵ designed to integrate IEGs into the Canadian profession and workforce without compromising public safety or lowering professional standards.

Although it is only licensing that is within the profession’s scope of responsibility, FC2I also examined the roles that culture, language, employment and communications play in the lives of IEGs. Led by the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE), the initiative’s Steering Committee had representation from federal and provincial governments, the engineering regulatory bodies, employers, immigrant-serving organizations, educators, engineers and IEGs themselves. This diversity of representation, the level of consultation, and the holistic approach with which the engineers tackled the project set it apart from other similar initiatives.

Phase I of FC2I looked at every aspect of the IEG experience, from taking the first steps to immigrate to Canada, to licensing, finding a job and all the elements of culture and language that accompany that journey. Phase II involved sorting, analyzing, validating and prioritizing that information so that the Steering Committee could draw conclusions. The 17 recommendations that came out of Phase II included the creation of a “Working in Canada” seminar, building a database of recognized engineering degrees and creating a comprehensive, single source Website. The Phase II report also recommended providing IEGs with a provisional licence once they have met all requirements for licensure except the one year of Canadian experience; developing a mentoring program; and determining which elements of the engineering licensing process can be done overseas, to speed up the process once IEGs arrive in Canada.

Phase III, currently underway, is focused on implementing the Phase II recommendations; work continues

in every region of Canada to assist IEGs with the integration process. Not only do the cases that follow offer concrete examples of how the engineering profession is helping IEGs, but they demonstrate a change in perspective on the part of the licensing bodies. In 2002, our national survey indicated that just over 12% of licensed engineers in Canada were foreign-trained, while our most recent member survey shows that this has increased to just over 17%. Our licensing bodies recognize that ensuring a fair licensing system for all applicants is crucial for the integrity of the process.

Working in Canada seminar and alternatives for academic assessment

As in every other province and territory in Canada, IEGs coming to Manitoba are assessed by the academic review committee of the provincial or territorial licensing body, in this case the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of the Province of Manitoba (APEGM). Together with APEGM, the applicant can determine how they can qualify for licensure and the P.Eng. designation. For many, the assessment will indicate that they must write technical exams, and all must gain a minimum of one year of Canadian work experience. The subsequent time and cost can be problematic for some of these immigrants but a program offered at the University of Manitoba, in conjunction with APEGM, is addressing some of these issues.

The one-year program, called the Internationally-Educated Engineers Qualification (IEEQ) Pilot Program, is offered through the University to IEGs who have been assigned five exams or fewer through the APEGM assessment. It provides an alternative route for immigrants with engineering credentials obtained outside of Canada to meet part of the licensing requirements for engineering practice in Manitoba. Participants take courses with University of Manitoba engineering students and attend a course

designed specifically for them, titled Practising Engineering in Manitoba. Through this course, they learn about work practices in Canada and have the opportunity to visit various industrial sites. After two semesters at the University, the participants have a four-month paid internship in industry. At the end of the program, graduates are considered academically qualified for licensure and have acquired four months of the one-year of Canadian experience required for licensure. The Practising Engineering in Manitoba curriculum is currently being developed, with the help of funding from HRSDC, into a Working in Canada seminar package that will be available for use by other organizations.

There are more than 160,000 Canadian professional engineers and each has followed the same process: they have met education and experience requirements, passed a law and ethics exam, demonstrated that they are of good character, provided engineering references and shown that they have appropriate language skills.

Language benchmarking

Another of the 17 FC2I recommendations was to establish a language benchmark for all engineers to meet before becoming licensed. The Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and Geophysicists of Alberta (APEGGA), the engineering licensing body in Alberta, in partnership with the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, is working to establish an engineering language benchmark so that the language requirement for licensing is clearly defined. Each province and territory currently has its own language standard; there is no set test and no existing language tests are specific to engineering. Once established, the language requirement for licensing will be clearly defined and all licensing bodies will be encouraged to adopt it.⁶ This will allow English as a second language courses to be tailored to IEGs' needs. Funding has been provided by the Government of Alberta and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Labour market studies

CCPE has recently received federal government funding to undertake a labour market study. The results of the study are expected to help the engineering and technology sectors gain a deeper understanding of their skills and of the employment situation nationally, regionally, by discipline, level of experience and by industry. On a yearly basis, there are many more engineers entering the Canadian marketplace today than there were a decade ago. While there are certain regions of the country looking for engineers, there are also areas where over-supply appears to be a problem. We simply don't have a clear picture of the labour market, and this project will correct that. This will help IEGs find engineering work since they will have access to specific labour market information.

Database of international engineering degrees

CCPE is also leading the creation of an International Institutions and Degrees Database. Once completed, we will have established an accurate, current database of recognized international engineering degrees and educational institutions to help verify the education of licensing applicants. The database, which represents one of the key recommendations coming out of FC2I, is important because it will provide the licensing bodies with a consistent set of information on the international institutions and degrees with a recommended academic assessment. This means that a graduate from a particular international program will have their academic credentials assessed in the same manner across the country. Whether applying for licensure in Alberta, Nova Scotia or Ontario, for example, the assessment would use the same database information and apply it to the individual's situation, recognizing

that it forms one component of the overall assessment for licensure.

The Association of Professional Engineers of Nova Scotia was selected as the inaugural winner of the Richard (Dick) Smyth Award, instituted by the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) to recognize and honour Nova Scotian individuals, businesses or organizations who have demonstrated exemplary efforts in assisting newcomers to successfully integrate into Canadian society. As stated in the award citation, APENS' "active involvement and leadership in helping ease the way for internationally trained engineers illustrates the spirit and ideals behind the award."

In Ontario, Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) has adjusted the process for assessing academic credentials. Approximately two-thirds of the IEGs are exempted from having to write technical exams largely thanks to a significant increase in Confirmatory Exam Program interviews conducted by PEO's Experience Review Committee. The committee treats the interview as a prior learning assessment tool and this has benefited many IEGs.

The above offers a sense of what is happening across the country. The engineering profession has recognized that making changes to the licensing system, or to how we communicate it, can take a long time but we are in this for the long-term. We are proud of our achievements, and we know that partnerships will help us reach new goals. Working cooperatively with governments, the provincial and territorial licensing bodies, and with IEGs themselves will result in a stronger, more transparent process.

Like so many other successful IEGs, Rakesh Shreewastav's story is one of hard work and accomplishment. He now works as a Senior Project Engineer for the Ministry of Transportation, Windsor Border Initiatives Implementation Group (Windsor BIIG) in the London office.

He sits on several committees of PEO, and is a member of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering, the Canadian Society of Value Analysis, and Value Society SAVE International. He has judged Canada First Robotics competitions and regional science fairs, served on the board of directors of the Rotary Club of Nipissing and continues to be actively involved in local Rotary clubs in London.

"I am a proud Canadian citizen," says Rakesh Shreewastav. "I am telling this story because I am proud that Canada is my home, and maybe my story will help others." He knew that his international background and his international degree meant that his skills and knowledge were transferable. Now, as an engineer he is able to contribute fully to Canadian society and to the economy, to the benefit of us all.

The engineering profession has recognized that making changes to the licensing system, or to how we communicate it, can take a long time but we are in this for the long-term. We are proud of our achievements, and we know that partnerships will help us reach new goals.

Notes

¹ The Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board evaluates Canadian engineering education programs to ensure that they meet or exceed the academic standards acceptable for licensure in Canada.

² The equivalent of the P.Eng. for francophones in Quebec and New Brunswick is the ing., while Eng. is used in Quebec for anglophones.

³ Citizenship and Immigration Canada requirements, *FC2I Final Report from Phase I*, p. 8.

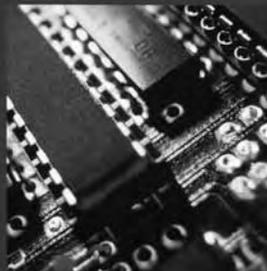
⁴ One year of Canadian work experience is required to obtain a P.Eng./ing.

⁵ FC2I was fully funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), which was Human Resources and Skills Development Canada at the time.

⁶ The exception to this is Quebec, where language standards are set by the provincial government.

From Consideration to Integration

FINAL REPORT FROM PHASE II



Recommendations to help integrate International
Engineering* Graduates into the Canadian engineering
profession and workforce



CANADIAN COUNCIL OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS
CONSEIL CANADIEN DES INGÉNIEURS

THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Linking Foreign Credential and Competency Recognition with the Environmental Profession – A Developing Model

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the evolving initiatives being taken within Canada's environmental sector to address the critical issue of providing foreign credential and foreign competency recognition to recent and potential immigrants. It examines the underlying problems in these areas and goes on to outline the work of the newly established Canadian Centre for Environmental Education (CCEE) to develop structures and procedures to harness existing, but disparate, resources and to provide one national centre for these activities.

The environment sector is one of Canada's more dynamic and fastest growing fields of employment. The *Environmental Labour Market (ELM) Report*, published by the Canadian Council for Human Resources in the Environment Industry (CCHREI) in 2004, indicated a workforce of 251 000, a figure that had increased by 13.7% over the four-year period since 2000. Of this workforce, 66% were identified as environmental practitioners, a figure that grew from 102 000 in 2000 to 166 000 in 2004 (CCHREI 2004). The *ELM Report* also identified serious problems in recruiting people to mid- and upper-level positions. In 2004, there were 12 000 environmental practitioner vacancies. This situation remains critical to the sector.

Given Canada's evolving demographic situation, the environmental sector, like virtually all other employment sectors, will confront serious and increasing labour shortages over the next decade. Immigration will be one means of satisfying this shortfall. Many immigrants have the knowledge and skills required to meet industry employment standards and yet, a major stumbling block in matching industry needs with the aspirations of both recent and potential immigrants is the fact that our procedures for recognizing their education and skills – their credentials and workplace competences – remain inadequate. It is a problem that governments, employers and the post-secondary educational sector must address. It is also an issue that must be addressed collectively by all the parties involved.

To address this problem for the environmental sector, the Canadian Centre for Environmental Education was established in 2006. The Centre is a partnership between Royal Roads University and Environmental Careers Organization of Canada (ECO Canada), which is Canada's national sector council for environmental employment. Funding and support for this initiative is provided by the federal government, through the Foreign Credential Recognition program of Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

Partners and procedures

Figure 1 outlines a model, currently in development at the Canadian Centre for Environmental Education (CCEE), which could satisfy the well-documented needs of immigrant practitioners in the environmental sector. It is based on a strategy that will rely on cooperation between the post-secondary education sector, the environmental industry sector, and governments to satisfy Canada's future needs for recognizing the credentials and competences of foreign-born and educated practitioners. It is a strategy that will bring together many existing, but so far disparate, agencies and procedures.

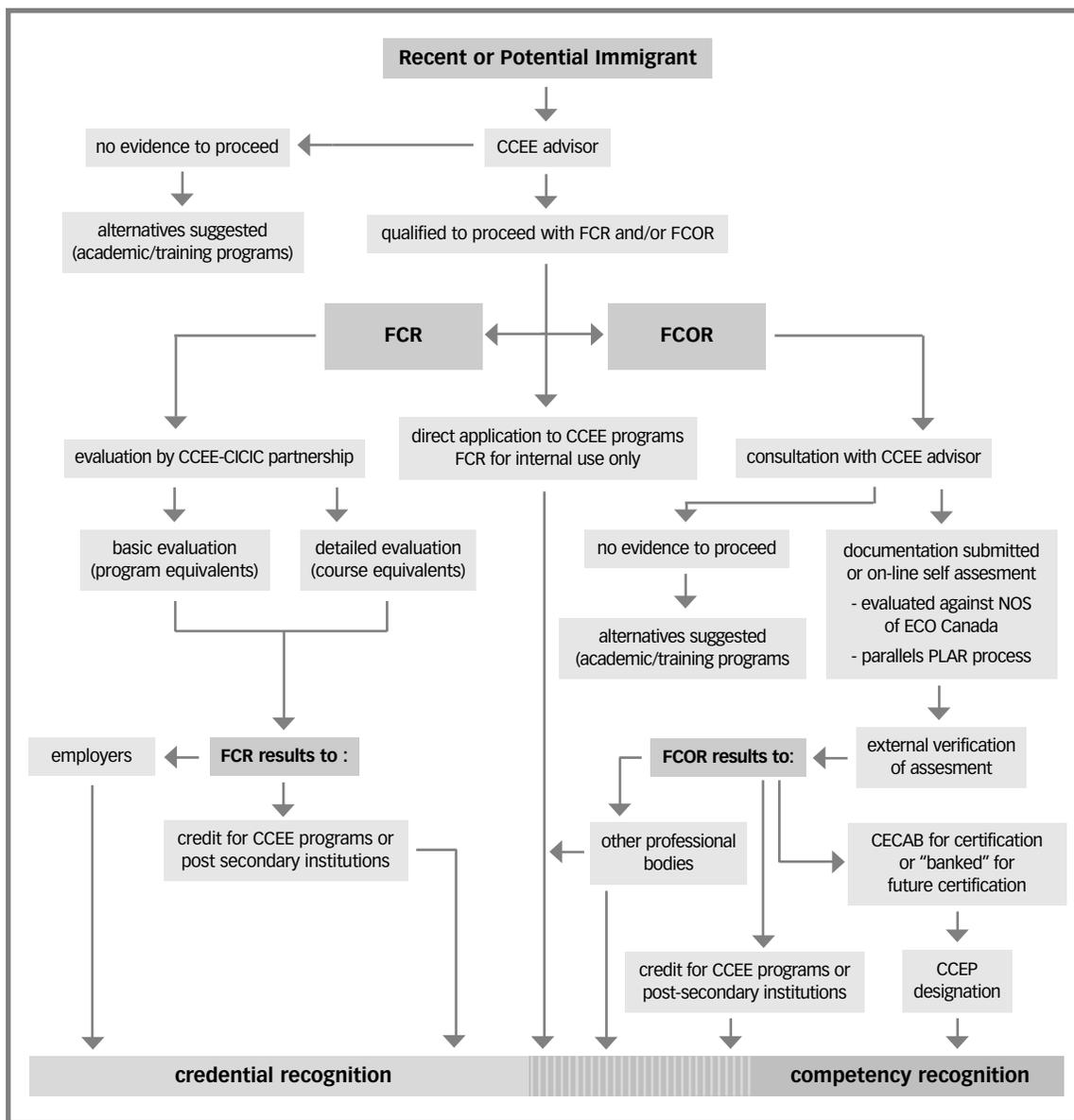
MICHAEL MOSS

Michael Moss is Director of the Canadian Centre for Environmental Education (CCEE) at Royal Roads University, in Victoria, British Columbia. The CCEE is a partnership between Royal Roads University and the Environmental Careers Organization of Canada (ECO Canada).

GRANT TRUMP

Grant Trump is President and CEO of Environmental Careers Organization of Canada (ECO Canada), which is Canada's national sector council for environmental employment. It was formerly known as the Canadian Council for Human Resources in the Environment Industry (CCHREI).

Figure 1: The links between the Canadian Centre for Environmental Education (CCEE) and the process for foreign credential recognition (FCR) and foreign competency recognition (FCOR) in the environmental sector.



The agencies involved are:

1. Royal Roads University, which is a provincially funded university mandated to provide applied and professional programs. Royal Roads University currently offers the Certificate Program in Environmental Practice through the Canadian Centre for Environmental Education. This program is built upon collaboration with the over 30 universities and colleges across Canada that provide access to their distance-based courses in the environmental field (www.royalroads.ca).
2. ECO Canada (formerly the Canadian Council for Human Resources in the Environmental Industry) was established by the federal government in 1990 under the Government of Canada's Sector Council

Program as one of 30 national sector councils to bring together governments, educators, employers and workers in the environmental field. It is an autonomous organization whose mission is "to ensure an adequate supply of people with demonstrated skills and knowledge to meet the environmental human resource needs of the public and private sectors" (www.eco.ca).

3. CCEE, which is a partnership between Royal Roads University and ECO Canada, was established in 2006 to provide education and training activities related to the professional development and certification of members of the environmental profession. The Canadian university and college sector supports the Centre by providing courses for inclusion in the programs of the Centre (www.ccee.ca).

4. Canadian Environmental Certification Approvals Board (CECAB), which was established in 1997 by the Canadian Council for Human Resources in the Environmental Industry (now ECO Canada), is responsible for the professional certification of environmental practitioners in Canada using the national occupational standards developed by ECO Canada. ECO Canada is accredited as an ISO 17024 body; it thus meets stringent international quality standards and is eligible to perform audits. Individuals with at least five years of on-the-job experience and demonstrate that they meet or exceed the national occupational standards can be certified as a Canadian Certified Environmental Practitioner (CCEP). The standards use specific, employment-related competences. Persons who do not yet meet the five-year period or the full range of competences may be designated Canadian Environmental Practitioner in Training (CEPIT) while acquiring the necessary additional knowledge and skills (www.cecab.org).
5. The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) collects, organizes, and distributes information related to credentials. It also acts as a national clearing-house and referral service supporting the recognition and portability of educational and occupational qualifications. Provincially mandated evaluation services actually undertake the process. These are: the Academic Credentials Assessment Service in Manitoba; the International Credential Evaluation Service in British Columbia; the International Qualifications Assessment Service of Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories; the Service d'évaluation comparative in Quebec; and World Education Services Ontario (www.cicic.ca).

The environmental sector, like virtually all other employment sectors, will confront serious and increasing labour shortages over the next decade.

The proposed model is based on several procedures, which could be adapted, but include:

1. Foreign credential recognition, or FCR, which is the process of evaluating the academic record of a non-Canadian against Canadian standards. This may be undertaken by a college or university, in which case the evaluation is recognized by that institution alone. More common, however, is for an individual to submit their transcribed credentials to a credential assessment agency, such as those listed above, to receive an evaluation at the program level rather than on a more detailed course-by-course basis.
2. Prior learning assessment and recognition, or PLAR, is the procedure used to award academic credit for the demonstrated skills and knowledge that a person has gained in their workplace through

experience, development, attending workshops, training courses, seminars, and so on.

3. The national occupational standards are the 250+ competency statements documented by the profession through ECO Canada against which individuals' competencies are assessed. Individuals must demonstrate that their competency meets or exceeds these standards, which are the basis of assessment for professional certification, such as a designation as a Canadian Certified Environmental Practitioner.
4. Foreign competency recognition, or FCOR, is a new term, which we introduce here to distinguish foreign *competency* recognition from foreign *credential* recognition. It is similar to prior learning assessment and recognition, but unlike PLAR, it recognizes that a person from overseas may have been unable to acquire certain Canadian-based workplace skills, such as those related to regulatory, legal and compliance issues. Furthermore, it is recognized in this process that the external evaluation or peer review process of non-Canadians' competences will require source-country input. Two key principles will, however, guide this process. The first is that the same standards that apply to PLAR will apply to FCOR, and the second is that the process must be transparent, verifiable, and unbiased.

The current situation

Although each of these components exist in other sectors and contexts, few cohesive models exist to guide the developments needed to resolve problems in this critical human resource field, whether on a national, provincial or industrial sector basis. Apart from being bedevilled by inter-provincial barriers, industry (both employers and employees), governments, and the post-secondary education sectors have very limited connections. This is particularly the case in non-regulated professions. In non-regulated professions, there are few connections between industry and the post-secondary sector, although this varies between colleges – where there are perhaps more links – and universities. Nonetheless, non-regulated industries generally have few defined occupational standards and, in practice, these industries remain disorganized. On the other hand, universities, in particular, are loath to surrender their individual “rights” to define their own curricula. Employers often have a great deal of difficulty, for example, in determining what an environmental science or an environmental studies graduate may have experienced in their undergraduate programs. There are quite stark, inter-provincial differences for college graduates wishing to “ladder to,” or obtain, degree status.

Problems become compounded for the immigrant. Despite having agencies that deal specifically with credential recognition, assessments produced for immigrants, while

valid, are often treated with skepticism by academic institutions and employers. Universities, for example, often prefer to undertake their own foreign credential assessments and, whereas these assessments have validity within the institution, they have little or no transferability. Furthermore, foreign credential assessment is more commonly only undertaken at the program level. It is often difficult for immigrants to obtain more detailed course-by-course evaluations, and this limits their ability to obtain specific course recognition. This often leads to a requirement to repeat a course.

However, the real difficulty arises for immigrants in seeking competency recognition for their acquired workplace skills and experience. Prior learning assessment and recognition opportunities are often in place within academic institutions but, with few exceptions, these are rarely used within universities, even by domestic students. There is little or no opportunity for foreign competency recognition. Procedures are not in place, there are few occupational standards to use as benchmarks, and where recognition is given, results are treated with a high degree of skepticism by employers. It would be rare indeed for a university to award credit for any foreign competences recognized under PLAR.

Consequently, if Canada is going to meet its future human resource needs through immigration, and if the education and experience of these immigrants is to be formally recognized even prior to arrival in Canada, then new and innovative procedures must be developed. Outlined below is a proposal to address these concerns within the environmental sector. Implicit in this proposal is the need for a single body, in this case the Canadian Centre for Environmental Education, to bring together government, employers, employees and the education fields.

It is not a proposal to generate another layer of administration, but one in which the various components, which for the most part already exist, can develop effective interrelationships. It will be able, as a single body, to develop the skills and expertise needed to provide a transparent and verifiable set of procedures that are relevant to the environmental sector. It could be the one point of contact for all components of the sector, hence simplifying – and making more visible – the procedures and related information.

Foreign credential recognition and foreign competency recognition in the Canadian Centre for Environmental Education

Foreign credential and foreign competency recognition must be treated with equal effectiveness. Currently there is little or no competency recognition for immigrants. This wastes time for the new immigrant, and it invariably results in the neglect of their skills, which

requires a “relearning” in a Canadian setting. Without documentation from an accrediting body, employers are left to make unsubstantiated judgments on immigrants’ skills and accomplishments.

The CCEE will shortly be appointing an advisor for PLAR, FCR and FCOR. This will be the first point of contact for immigrants who are seeking recognition of their credentials, competencies or prior learning (see Figure 1). The initial advice, based on a discussion of their available documentation and/or work experience, will outline the possibilities and options available. Where this evidence is not available, alternative routes will be suggested whereby the applicant can be informed of courses, programs and training opportunities available in Canada. This is an additional function of the CCEE as a national body.

The applicant may proceed to FCR by one of two routes. In the first case, an individual who is applying to the CCEE’s programs may request FCR through Royal Roads University. This is a simple process requiring submission of authenticated transcripts. The applicant may be accepted into the CCEE on this basis alone, but the recognition limits that person to using their foreign credentials within Royal Roads University.

In the second case, an individual may apply to one of the provincial bodies for FCR. They will be given a Canadian equivalent of their degree or diploma, and this documentation can be used fairly extensively for entry into Canadian institutions. The provincial bodies have extensive documentation and expertise on foreign credentials, so it is not necessary for the CCEE to attempt to duplicate their existing functions.

However, of more critical concern is the recognition of specific course levels. Such detailed assessments require extensive, in-depth knowledge of subject areas that are likely to be

beyond the capacity of the provincial bodies. To deliver the required course-level assessment, it is proposed that the CCEE make use of its national network of university and college partners to seek the recognition of foreign standards and content. The CCEE would, under this proposal, develop a partnership with one or more of these provincial assessment bodies, which as partners would become the focal point for all environmental foreign credit assessment. Through a partnership based at the CCEE and the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, applicants would receive documentation attesting to both the scope and the standards of their qualifications. This process would have the advantage of delivering documentation from a recognized source within the employment sector, and the Centre will become known to both employers and immigrants as *the* place to gain all relevant information on FCR. Comparative standards will become increasingly recognized and, by using an extensive network of academics in the detailed aspects of

Despite having agencies that deal specifically with credential recognition, assessments produced for immigrants, while valid, are often treated with skepticism by academic institutions and employers.

the process, the value of FCR should become even more widely accepted within the academic community. The results of this assessment process can then be widely used by the applicant for entry into programs and courses at post-secondary institutions across the country, as well as for employment purposes. Employers will have a documented standard, awarded by a national body, upon which to base their employment decisions involving immigrants.

The situation for competency recognition is more complex. This situation nevertheless presents a unique opportunity to build upon the synergies in the environmental field between the industry, as represented by ECO Canada through its professional certification functions, and the education sector. Applicants seeking competency recognition will initially be counseled by a CCEE advisor to determine whether they have reached the required level of work experience and related activity in the field, and CCEE will shortly have in place a PLAR process for domestic practitioners. This will be primarily an on-line self-assessment process using the national occupational standards, which relate industry-based competences in the 19 sub-sectors in which practitioners are employed. Following the self-assessment, the applicants' responses are subjected to a three person peer review for verification. Normally, this is the process employed for professional certification as a Canadian Certified Environmental Practitioner, which can only be attained after five years of professional experience in environmental practice and by meeting or exceeding the national occupation standards.

For recognition of foreign competencies, a modification of this process will be employed. The variation will come in the elimination of those national occupational standards that require in-Canada experience. Moreover, the external, peer verification of the self-assessment will include home country expertise appointed by Canadian Environmental Certification Approvals Board. Positive results may be used toward meeting certification standards, and deficiencies can be identified for the individual who can then seek academic or on-the-job training. In the meantime, these results can be "banked" toward future evaluations for certification. Competences met will be identified and provided to the applicant, and these can be used by the applicant in seeking employment. It is quite likely that many potential immigrants will be able to demonstrate Canadian competency in many areas before arriving in Canada, thus giving them valuable "Canadian experience."

What is of particular interest is that the standards used to evaluate immigrants' competences are the same as those for Canadians. The procedures have common standards and results have been generated by one national body. This body is the CCEE using the national occupation standards developed by ECO Canada and procedures mandated by the Canadian Environmental Approvals Board. The results support a nationally recognized, Canada-wide

certification so that portability issues between provinces become irrelevant. Moreover, because ECO Canada is ISO 17024 accredited, its standards conform to an international standard for accreditation.

Since the proposed procedures for evaluating foreign competences are essentially the same as those used for domestic competences through the PLAR process, and since the PLAR process is in place to generate academic credit, the immigrant may be awarded relevant academic credit within Canada for their home-based work experience. The use of the national occupational standards permits a more structured, consistent and verifiable process for justifying the award of such credit. Credit gained in this way may be used for both CCEE programs or for entry or credit in other Canadian post-secondary programs. The development of laddering opportunities to both baccalaureate and master's degrees is a key element in the mandate of the CCEE.

Concluding comments

The proposed structure outlined in this article should be fully operational by the summer of 2007. The model brings together, within one entity, the support mechanisms needed to provide immigrants with the procedures necessary for obtaining, in the most expeditious manner, foreign credential and foreign competency recognition relating to the environmental sector in Canada. It is a model that equates standards for immigrants with those for Canadians, and by linking academic requirements with professional competences and certification, career pathways are clearly documented. Building upon the existing relationship between the environmental industry, which is represented by ECO Canada, and the post-secondary education sector through the Canadian Centre for Environmental Education, the structure can form the natural bridge between the environmental sector as a whole and the federal government's initiatives to make the immigration process more seamless, efficient and rewarding. With the CCEE becoming *the* Centre for credential, competency and prior learning recognition for the environmental sectors, governments, industry and the academic field will have one clear point of reference wherein expertise may be collaboratively developed. It should provide an interesting model for those other employment sectors within the Canadian economy which will inevitably become increasingly reliant on immigration to satisfy their future human resource needs.

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THE ALBERTA INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATE PROGRAM

Context, Mandate, Process and Impact

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the role of the Alberta International Medical Graduate Program (AIMGP) in facilitating the licensure of international medical graduates (IMGs) in Alberta. It presents the AIMGP's own application and assessment process in the context of Canadian medical education and regulatory systems. Key IMG initiatives and challenges across the country are highlighted.

The Alberta International Medical Graduate Program (AIMGP) was created by the Government of Alberta in 2001 with a mission to increase the number of international medical graduates (IMGs) practicing medicine in the province.

IMGs are physicians who received their medical degree outside of either Canada or the United States (www.img-canada.ca).² It is estimated that there are over 500 IMGs residing in Alberta who do not meet the requirements for a medical license in the province.³ The AIMGP runs a competitive and merit-based assessment and orientation service that gives qualified IMGs residing in Alberta who are not otherwise eligible for practice access to dedicated postgraduate residency positions in one of the province's two medical schools. With many communities across the province experiencing difficulties recruiting and retaining physicians, the AIMGP is one way to utilize the valuable skills of IMGs to help address the health care needs of Alberta's population.

Paths to licensure

Canadian medical graduates

The Canadian medical education system is designed so that, in most cases, its graduates will be eligible for a medical license across the country. Canadian undergraduate and postgraduate medical education programs are each accredited by national bodies that ensure the national standards for medical education are being met. Each of the 17 undergraduate medical education programs in Canada, which provide students with the basic medical knowledge they need to enter a postgraduate medical education program (called residency), are accredited by the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (www.afmc.ca).⁴ Residency programs, which prepare the medical graduates for independent practice in family medicine or another specialty, are accredited by either the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) (www.cfpc.ca) or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) (www.rcpsc.medical.org). In most cases, physicians who successfully complete an accredited residency program will participate in the CFPC or RCPSC certification exams. Passing these exams is a requirement for full licensure in most provinces.

The licensure and registration of physicians in Canada is a provincial and territorial responsibility. Each province has a regulatory body that is given authority through a provincial or territorial medical Act to regulate the practice of medicine in the respective jurisdiction (in Alberta, this is the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta). There are commonalities in the requirements for a medical license across jurisdictions. For example, all physicians in Canada must complete both undergraduate and postgraduate medical education in order to practice medicine. In most provinces, physicians must also pass the CFPC or RCPSC national certification exams, be a Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada⁵ (www.mcc.ca) and be authorized to work in Canada in order to obtain a full license to practice medicine. These professional standards help ensure that only good and safe doctors with the necessary skills and competencies receive a license.

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International medical graduates

IMGs have always been an integral part of the physician workforce in Canada. Since 1969, IMGs have represented between 20% and 30% of Canada’s physician pool (IMG National Symposium Proceedings 2002). However, while IMGs come to Canada with medical degrees from abroad, it can be difficult to determine the applicability of their education and practice experience (if any) to the Canadian context. The medical education and health care systems in which IMGs studied and/or practiced can be significantly different from the Canadian system. Figure 1 shows the country of medical education for applicants to the AIMG Program.

The comparability of these other medical education systems to the Canadian system can be determined in some cases. The RCPSC, for example, has assessed postgraduate medical education programs in 29 overseas jurisdictions and deemed them to meet RCPSC criteria. IMGs coming from one of these jurisdictions may be able to challenge the RCPSC exams and go onto obtain licensure with a provincial regulatory authority. Some provincial regulatory bodies will also grant restricted or provisional licenses to IMGs who do not hold national college certification but who have completed a minimum amount of postgraduate medical education comparable to what they would have received in Canada. In Alberta, physicians in this context (including IMGs) may be placed on the “Special Register” of the College of Physicians and Surgeons and are thus

permitted to practice under specified conditions. In 2005, 674 of the 6,279 physicians in Alberta (10.7%) were licensed on the Special Register.

IMGs who cannot obtain a license through either of these routes must demonstrate that they have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for independent practice in Canada before they can be licensed. Each province has its own mechanism for facilitating this process. In most cases, provinces will fund a certain number of residency positions for IMGs at the province’s medical school(s). Some provinces also offer practice-ready assessment programs that assess IMGs in a clinical setting for a period of time. In Alberta, IMGs who are not eligible for registration with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta must apply for one of the dedicated residency positions available through the AIMGP.

Alberta International Medical Graduate Program

The AIMGP assesses IMGs for their readiness to enter residency at the same level (Postgraduate Level 1) as a Canadian medical graduate. There has been sustained and recent exponential growth of the AIMGP since its inception in 2001. The program’s initial mandate to provide qualified IMGs with access to family medicine residency programs only was expanded in 2004 to include selected generalist specialty residency programs as well. The AIMGP has seen a steady increase in the number of applications it receives and the residency positions to

Figure 1: AIMG Program applicants’ country of medical education.

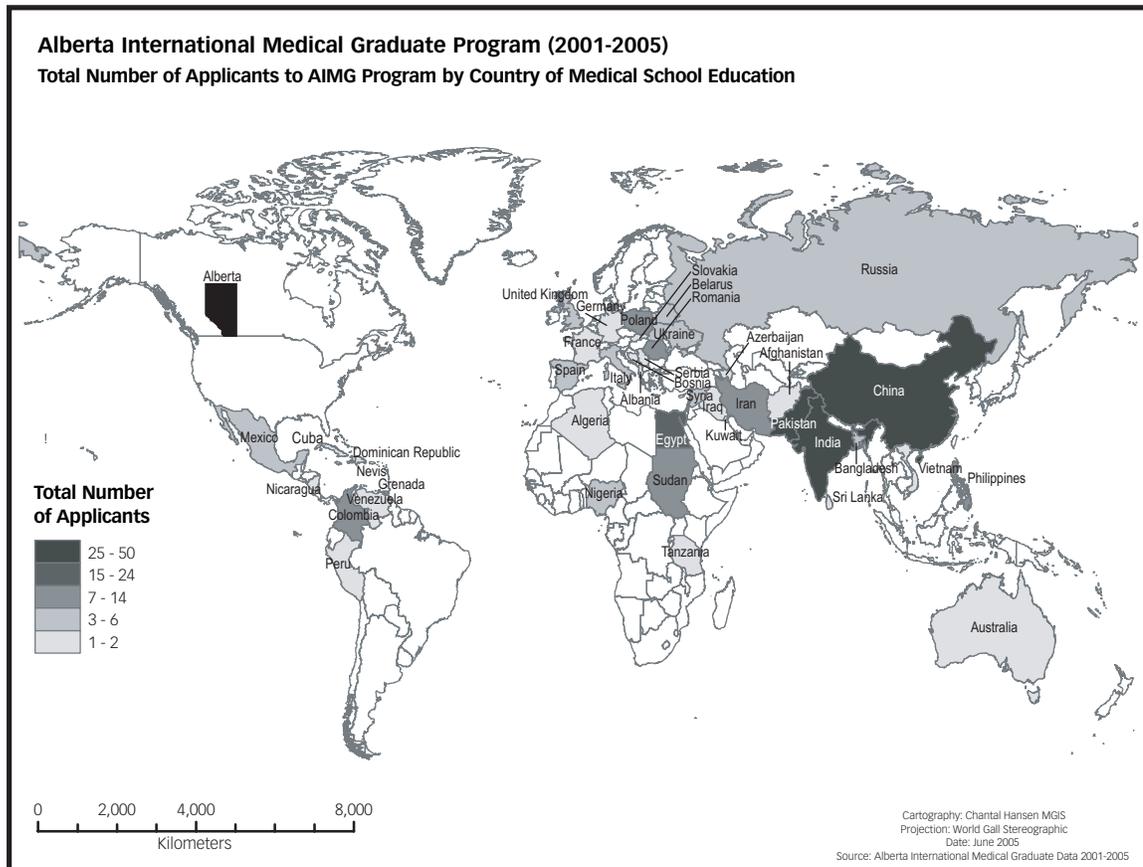


Table 1: AIMG Program growth from 2001 to 2006.

Residency start date	Applications received	Family medicine training positions	Specialty training positions	Total positions
2001	56	11	n/a	11
2002	31	8	n/a	8
2003	39	8	n/a	8
2004	64	12	9	21
2005	92	12	10	22
2006	123	12	12	24
2007	251	20	29	49

which it provides access. Table 1 shows how the program has grown over time.

To date, there are 92 IMGs who have either completed or are currently completing a residency program in Alberta after securing a position through the AIMGP. As of June 30, 2006 there were 35 family medicine residency graduates. While “return of service” contracts have not been a feature of the AIMGP, the vast majority of program graduates are now working in clinical practice in urban centres in Alberta.

The AIMGP assessment process

The AIMGP’s application and assessment process proceeds in four stages. A description of the application requirements and assessment steps can be found at www.aimg.ca. There is an Alberta residency requirement that must be met. A file review of candidates’ applications ensures the required documentation (e.g. a valid medical degree, objective evidence of English language proficiency) is in place. Candidates who submit complete applications are eligible to proceed to an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). In this widely used examination format, candidates rotate through a series of “stations” where they are required to perform a clinical task (or tasks) with a standardized patient.⁶ All of the candidates must address exactly the same medical issue and are observed by an examiner, who scores their performance using a checklist.

In 2006, 175 IMGs participated in the AIMGP’s OSCE in hopes of securing a residency position in 2007. Ten cases were selected for the OSCE in order to provide a good mix of discipline, clinical content, communication and English language skills. IMGs were given ten minutes to complete each case. The areas tested included:

- The ability to obtain a relevant history or perform a focused physical examination on a standardized patient;
- The ability to outline diagnostic impressions and ongoing management;
- Interpretation of laboratory results and X-Rays;
- Communication skills;
- Counselling skills;
- Ethical issues; and
- English language proficiency.

Seven cases included an assessment of communication and verbal language skills. The AIMGP used a communication

checklist that is based on the Medical Council of Canada and the Calgary/Cambridge Guidelines. Oral English language proficiency was judged using a checklist developed by the AIMGP and adapted from the Canadian Language Benchmarks and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages descriptors.⁷ At the conclusion of the clinical examination the candidates were asked to perform two clinical written tasks that were also scored.

The results of the OSCE were collapsed into three categories: the clinical score accounted for 70% of the result, the communications skills score accounted for 15%, and the language proficiency and written English score accounted for 15% of the total result. A rank order of candidate scores was generated. There was good evidence of the face and content validity of this examination. The overall reliability of this examination was 0.75 (Chronbach’s alpha coefficient), which assured a high consistency in the rank ordering of the candidates. Candidates whose OSCE scores were above the minimum acceptable score had their files given to residency program directors for consideration for interviews.

Interviews are an important source of non-cognitive information about AIMGP applicants. The AIMGP’s interview format is semi-structured. Residency program directors in the generalist specialties are responsible for determining which candidates will be interviewed and for conducting the interviews themselves, while the AIMGP coordinates the interviews for family medicine.

For the first six assessment cycles, the AIMGP used a behaviourally based technique (with two teams of two interviewers) for the family medicine interviews. In the spirit of quality improvement and in light of other work that has shown both traditional unstructured and behavioural structured interviews have weak measurement properties, the interview format for family medicine was changed in 2006 to a Multi-Mini Interview (MMI) technique. This procedure (developed at McMaster University and studied at both McMaster and the University of Calgary) provides higher validity and reliability. While psychometric analysis of 2006 AIMGP interview data is currently underway, early analysis of acceptability data shows that 89% of IMG interviewees preferred the MMI over other interview methods and that 100% of the interviewees were willing to participate in the MMI in the future.

Matching IMGs into residency positions

Residency program directors use the results of the OSCE and the interviews as part of their internal program process to rank IMGs for entry into the four-month

clinical assessment and orientation phase, which is the final step before IMGs are accepted into their residency program. In 2006, the AIMGP piloted a computerized “match” program to place IMGs into these pre-residency positions.⁸ This “match” placed IMGs according to their preferred disciplines and city (i.e. Calgary or Edmonton), based on their rankings by program directors.

Each IMG that is matched into a discipline must successfully complete the four-month clinical assessment and orientation phase before beginning residency. This four-month program ensures that selected IMGs have the necessary competencies and understanding of Alberta’s multi-faceted health care and medical education systems to enter a residency program at the level of a Canadian medical graduate. Once they successfully complete the clinical assessment and orientation phase, IMGs exit the AIMGP and become residents at either the University of Alberta or the University of Calgary.

IMG initiatives across Canada

The AIMGP is one example of a provincial initiative that provides IMGs with access to the postgraduate medical education they need to become licensed. A number of provinces have also developed assessment and orientation programs similar to that offered by the AIMGP. Ontario offers the largest number of funded opportunities for IMGs in Canada, with 200 training and assessment positions available to qualified IMGs annually. British Columbia’s IMG program offers 35 clinical assessment opportunities for IMGs wishing to compete for 18 funded residency positions. With 49 positions funded in 2007, the AIMGP is the second largest IMG program in English-speaking Canada.

The development of provincial IMG assessment and orientation programs, coupled with physician shortages and the complexity of IMG workforce issues nationwide, has presented an opportunity for shared learning and planning across jurisdictions. In 2002, the first IMG National Symposium was held. During this pan-Canadian gathering, stakeholders discussed strategies for the successful integration of IMGs in a national context to help address present and anticipated future Canadian physician supply needs. Participants agreed to support the development of a national integrated approach to the assessment and training of IMGs (IMG National Symposium Conference Proceedings).⁹ The Advisory Committee on Health Delivery and Human Resources (a committee of the Conference of Deputy Ministers of Health) responded to the Symposium recommendations and set licensure of internationally educated health care providers as a priority. The committee created a Canadian Taskforce on the Licensure of International Medical Graduates with a mandate to develop strategies to aid in the integration of qualified

internationally trained physicians into the Canadian physician workforce. In February 2004, the *Report of the Canadian Task Force on the Licensure of International Medical Graduates* was released.¹⁰ Six actions were recommended, and these are shown in Table 2. The recommendations were supported by all levels of government. An oversight committee, called the IMG Implementation Steering Committee (<http://testunix.mediaforce1.com/imgtaskforce/>), was established and is now steering a multi-jurisdictional recommendation implementation effort in follow-up to the Task Force’s report. Early indicators of success are encouraging.¹¹

Other initiatives to support IMGs

Along with the ongoing initiatives of governments and their funded programs to coordinate the integration of IMGs into the physician workforce in Canada, other programs to support IMGs are also entering the picture.

Many of the larger provinces have IMG associations that play an advocacy and supporting role for IMGs.¹² Some provinces are also supporting programs to help IMGs develop the language and communications skills they need to be successful in the assessment processes and in residency. The Medical Communications Assessment Program in Alberta (M-CAP) is one such program.¹³ As shown in Figure 2, the original language of medical instruction for IMGs residing in Alberta varies widely. M-CAP aims to help immigrant IMGs improve their medical language and communication skills for entry into the Canadian medical profession.

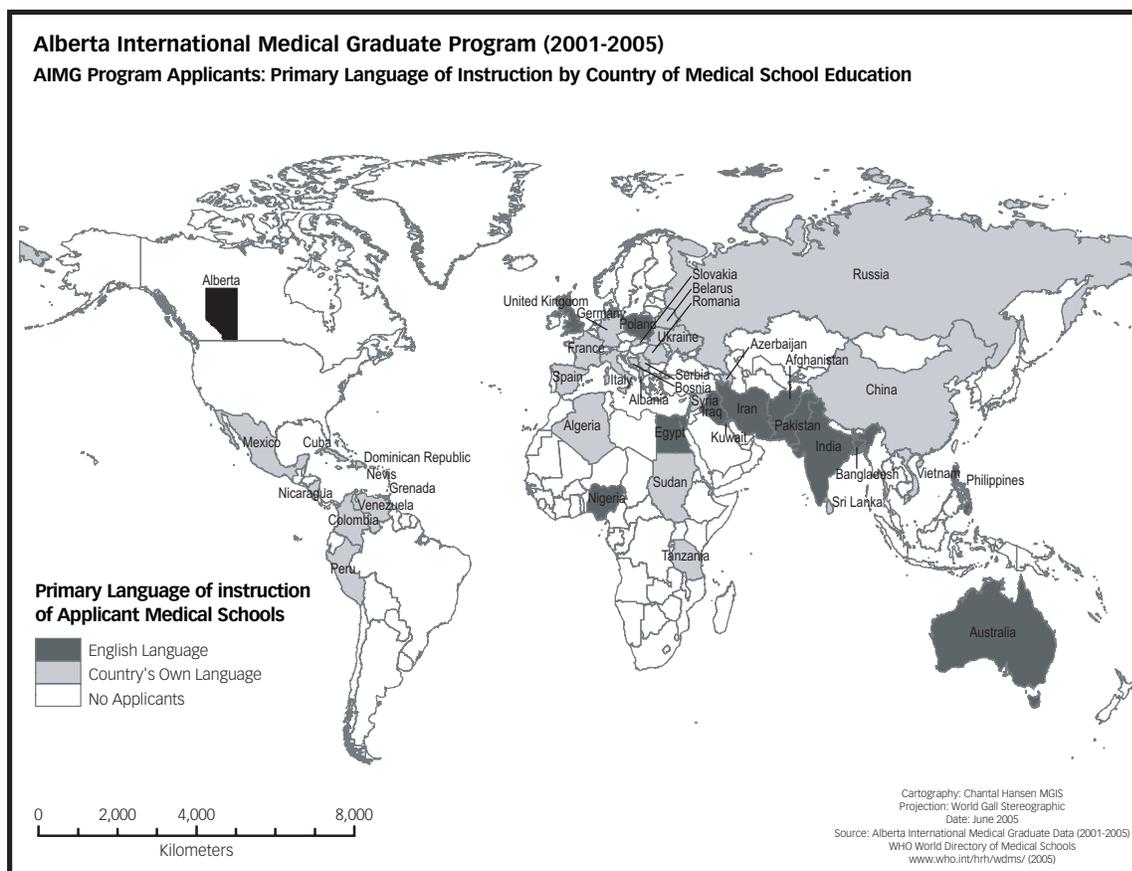
IMGs and our health care system

The collective provincial and national efforts to integrate IMGs into medical practice in Canada are beginning to have a measurable impact on physician supply in Canada. In 2006, 15% of the graduating class from Canadian residency programs were IMGs (www.caper.ca). However, there are a number of other initiatives underway to improve access to health care across the country. For example, we are also seeing enrolment increases at Canadian medical schools, greater utilization of nurse practitioners, the creation of new provider roles and the introduction of inter-disciplinary care teams across the country. The increased opportunities for IMGs in Alberta and in Canada complement these initiatives on a number of levels.

IMG workforce integration efforts have a number of additional benefits beyond increasing physician supply. IMGs bring unique gifts to the practice of medicine in Canada that can help address population and health workforce needs. In order to deliver competent care to our increasingly diverse population, our physician workforce must be sensitive to patients’ and families’ ethnicity, beliefs, values and language proficiency. Health care

While “return of service” contracts have not been a feature of the Alberta International Medical Graduate Program, the vast majority of program graduates are now working in clinical practice in urban centres in Alberta.

Figure 2: AIMG Program applicants' language of instruction.



providers who are able to bridge cultural gaps in the provision of health services demonstrate a clinical skill that is described in some recent literature as “cultural competence” (Betancourt et al. 2005). While in academic circles there is debate about definitional substance or nuances, there is no debate that culturally competent or culturally sensitive care includes care that is characterized by effective communication. With evidence that the quality of “doctor-to-patient” communication is linked to both patient satisfaction and positive health outcomes (Stewart et al. 1999), the ability of IMGs to communicate effectively with a diverse patient base is crucial.

The assessment and education of IMGs has also been found to be a cost-effective way to improve physician supply. In a recently published study, a team at the University of Calgary (Emery 2002) explored whether investments in IMG skills assessment, training and licensure were a socially desirable use of resources. Estimates showed

that resources allocated to providing skills assessments and residency opportunities that lead to licensure for IMGs in Alberta generated real annual rates of return of 9% to 13%.¹⁴

Next steps

While considerable work has been done in Alberta and elsewhere to establish rigorous processes to assess and orient IMGs, much remains to be done. In Alberta, a priority for the AIMGP over the next few years will be the evaluation of its assessment and orientation tools. Development activities that support ongoing quality improvement will be a focus for the program, as will its support of residency programs as they assess, orient and teach IMGs.

Many challenges also remain at a national level. Work is underway across the country to implement the recommendations of the Canadian Task Force on the Licensure of IMGs.¹⁵ In the fall of 2006, the Association of

Table 2: Recommendations of the Canadian Taskforce on the licensure of IMGs.

Recommendations
1. Increase the capacity to assess and prepare IMGs for licensure.
2. Work toward standardization of licensure requirements.
3. Expand or develop supports/programs to assist IMGs with the licensure process and requirements in Canada.
4. Develop orientation programs to support faculty and physicians working with IMGs.
5. Develop capacity to track and recruit IMGs.
6. Develop a national research agenda, including evaluation of the IMG strategy.

Faculties of Medicine of Canada released a Faculty Development Program for Teaching of IMGs. Residency programs across the country can now use this guide to help their faculty and preceptors work effectively and collaboratively with IMGs and to enhance the learning and practice experience of IMGs in their programs. Initiatives that are still underway include the establishment of national standards for the assessment of IMGs, the creation of a national body to verify the credentials of IMGs and the development of a national IMG database. Other challenges include increasing provincial capacity for teaching IMGs, indemnifying physicians who assess and teach IMGs, and developing alternate career paths for IMGs not successful in obtaining work as a physician.

Conclusion

The AIMGP is an evolving and effective program. It is a vibrant example of a provincial program created to respond to provincial health workforce needs by embracing the opportunity to encourage and utilize the skills of unlicensed IMGs residing in Alberta. This program, in tandem with programs in other jurisdictions, is part of the Canadian response to the challenge of providing competent health care professionals able to provide timely care for our population.

Notes

- ¹ The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Alberta Health and Wellness or the Alberta International Medical Graduate Program.
- ² This paper uses the term “IMG” to refer to Canadian-born individuals who left Canada to study medicine abroad and/or physicians who immigrated to Canada after completing medical education. Technically, IMGs may also be citizens of another country who studied abroad and are visiting Canada temporarily to study, teach, or do research; or citizens of another country who studied medicine and live abroad.
- ³ Based on the current membership of the Alberta International Medical Graduate Association (AIMGA), as quoted through consultation with an AIMGA representative in the fall of 2006.
- ⁴ Undergraduate medical education programs in Canada are also recognized by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), which is an American body sponsored by the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Medical Association.
- ⁵ The Medical Council of Canada (MCC) is a national body that, together with key stakeholders, develops, validates and implements tools and strategies to evaluate physicians’ competence and maintains a national registry of physicians and their qualifications throughout their careers. In order to become a Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada (LMCC), physicians must pass the MCC Qualifying Exam Parts 1 and 2 (QE1 and QE2). The MCCQE1 is a basic eligibility requirement for many organizations that work with IMGs, including the AIMGP.
- ⁶ A Standardized Patient (SP) is a person trained to portray a patient scenario, or an actual patient using their own history and physical exam findings, for the instruction, assessment, or practice of communication

and/or examining skills of a health care provider. In the health and medical sciences, SPs are used to provide a safe and supportive environment conducive to learning or to standardized assessment. (Association of Standardized Patient Educators. January 10, 2007. *What are SPs?* http://www.aspeducators.org/sp_info.htm).

- ⁷ Dr. David Watt and Ms. Deidre Lake from the University of Calgary developed the process and English language proficiency tool for the AIMGP.
- ⁸ The computerized match program used by the AIMGP in 2006 was developed by Mr. Jim Jenkins.
- ⁹ Available at http://testunix.mediaforce1.com/imgtaskforce/main_files/Calgary_proceedings.pdf (accessed January 10, 2007).
- ¹⁰ Available at http://testunix.mediaforce1.com/imgtaskforce/main_files/Taskforcefeb2004_fr.pdf (accessed January 10, 2007).
- ¹¹ In April 2005, the IMG Implementation Steering Committee released a *National Projects for IMGs Status Report*, which can be accessed at http://testunix.mediaforce1.com/imgtaskforce/main_files/update-June.pdf (accessed January 10, 2007). In April 2006, Health Canada launched www.img-canada.ca, the Canadian Information Centre for International Medical Graduates. In August 2006, the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC) released its Faculty Development Program for Teachers of International Medical Graduates, which can be accessed at http://www.afmc.ca/pages/sa_faculty_development.html (accessed January 10, 2007).
- ¹² For a list of IMG associations across Canada, visit the “Medical Links” section of www.img-canada.ca (accessed January 10, 2007).
- ¹³ Visit www.m-cap.ca for more information.
- ¹⁴ To calculate the social “rate of return,” Emery calculated the value of the returns to society from investment in the human capital of unlicensed IMGs in Alberta using an income-based approach.
- ¹⁵ Health Canada has provided most of the funding to support the implementation of the recommendations of the Canadian Task Force on the Licensure of IMGs.

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BRAIN DRAIN, BRAIN GAIN AND BRAIN WASTE

Programs Aimed at Integrating and Retaining the Best and the Brightest in Health Care

ABSTRACT

This article looks at recent efforts to better coordinate and integrate health care providers trained abroad. The findings are based on a pilot study of physicians, nurses, midwives and psychologists who have immigrated into Canada. The article traces some of the demographic and policy contexts related to health labour migration.

Although it was common to lament the health care “brain drain” from Canada throughout the 1990s (Hickey 1995, Williams 1997), it is important to note that we are by far a greater importer than exporter of health labour. Indeed, Canada has relied heavily on internationally trained providers in part to help solve shortages in rural and remote under-served areas and in urban subspecialties (Barer and Stoddard 1991, CIHI 2001, OHRC 2002). At the same time, we hear of numerous accounts of internationally trained providers not being able to practice their profession. One of the staples of recent Canadian news writing has become the story of highly educated professionals driving taxis or performing other type of deskilled labour. The deskilling of immigrants is also a recurring trend in the scholarly and policy literatures. This contradicts immigration policies that strive to seek the “best and the brightest.”

Where does this disconnect arise? One commentator has argued that there are “[c]omplex and interdependent actors in multiple jurisdictions with unaligned accountabilities. Governments do one thing, educational institutions do another, and regulatory authorities do a third,” (Fooks 2003). As a result, we have had no nationally coordinated policy for health labour immigration. Efforts have been recently made to address these issues. New specifically targeted efforts have highlighted the importance of the associated problems of lost labour and potential solutions to the current or projected shortages of several kinds of health care providers.

In this article, I discuss some of the recent efforts undertaken to better coordinate and integrate health care providers who have been trained abroad.¹ The cases I present are based on a pilot study of the migration of physicians, nurses, midwives and psychologists into Canada. The purpose of this pilot study was to: 1) examine the demographic and policy contexts surrounding the migration of physicians, nurses, and midwives; and 2) begin to identify the gaps that exist between the policies of various institutions and regulatory bodies to best match the supply and demand of skills and resources needed in our evolving health care system. The methodological approach involved examining, the flow of physicians, nurses, and midwives into and out of Canada through available datasets and published documents, then linking these flows to the policies of professional regulatory bodies and government departments (e.g., immigration, health, human resources) at the national and provincial or state level through the analysis of relevant policy documents and key informant interviews.

Health care professionals on the move

Health care workers have long been nationally and internationally mobile, yet there has been relatively little comparative analysis of policy’s influence on their migration patterns nor of policy responses to their movement. An examination of the process and impact of current health care provider migration policy is of critical importance because labour markets are becoming international in scope and because labour mobility under international trade agreements is often a requirement (Fooks 2003). This has increased both the speed and extensiveness of migration. Moreover, concerns about the international migration of health care providers have become a more prominent and controversial feature of health sector analysis in recent years in light of severe staff and skill shortages in health systems of many countries (Bach 2003).

Clearly, the flow of providers into (as well as out of) Canada is intricately linked to key policy decisions that have been made both historically and most recently (Barer and Stoddard 1991, CIHI 2001, OHRC 2002). In the case of medicine, throughout most of the 1970s, roughly one-third of our

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physicians were international medical graduates (IMGs) but this has most recently dropped to 23%; this downward trend may reflect limits on the number of post-graduate training spaces available as well as other factors (CIHI 2003). More recently, according to the Canadian Medical Association (2001), the number of IMGs recruited has increased quite dramatically from 388 in 1993 to 790 in 1997 (CMA 2001). A recent list of recommendations from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (2004) to deal with the shortages of physicians in that province specifically calls for “expanding the number of assessment and training positions for international medical graduates.”

In terms of the source of immigrant physicians, the majority had graduated from medical schools in the United Kingdom or Ireland. In 1985, 35% of immigrant physicians were graduates of medical schools in the UK or Ireland, which had fallen to just over 5% by 2000. Now the primary source of IMGs who make it into the system is South Africa; South African-trained IMGs accounted for 24% of those who entered in 2000, up from 9% in 1985 (CIHI 2001).

IMGs usually have to complete an extensive licensing procedure before being able to practice medicine in Canada; this includes passing several standardized exams and often two to six more years of postgraduate medical training, to which they have limited access (CIHI 2001). Exceptions are made to these rules, however, such as in the case of hiring needed specialists from abroad for urban hospital placements and fast-tracking the licensure of IMGs to meet the needs of under-served areas, sometimes through temporary licenses (see Figure 1). As a long-term policy solution to the shortages of physicians in particular areas, however, the use of IMGs has been questioned. There is some evidence showing that immigrant health care providers usually do not remain in rural areas without some form of coercive intervention (such as through return of service agreements), and often “leak” into the overall geographically unrestricted Canadian physician supply (Barer and Stoddard 1991).

Though we know a fair bit about immigrant physicians, less is known about the immigration of other health care providers in Canada. We do know that in the 1950s and 1960s, many nurses from Britain, particularly those with advanced training in midwifery, were recruited by Health Canada to serve in northern

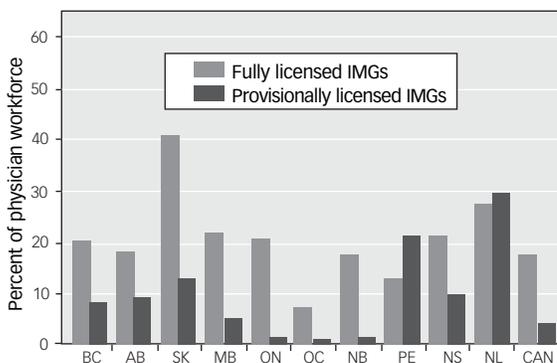
outposts (Mason 1988). Both tighter immigration policies and a change in Health and Welfare Canada policy in the late 1970s and early 1980s required that all pregnant women residing in isolated and under-populated northern areas of Canada travel to urban hospitals located in the south to deliver their babies. This led to an overall reduction in the number of immigrant nurse-midwives practising in remote areas of Canada (Bourgeault et Benoit 2004). Unfortunately, unlike the case for medicine, we do not have readily available demographic data to describe these trends.

More recently, the overall percentage of internationally educated nurses (IENs) has remained relatively steady over the last five to ten years. Specifically, in 2003, 7.3% of all nurses working in Canada were internationally trained, up from 6.8% in 1999 (CIHI 2000). There has, however, been a slight increase in the recruitment of foreign-trained nurses in some provinces and territories – notably in British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories – in the face of impending shortages.

Nurses from the Philippines have been one of the primary sources of immigrant nursing labour in Canada as it is elsewhere,³ but nurses from the UK represent an equal proportion (26%) (Joyce and Hunt 1982, Little 2005), with nurses from the United States (7%) and Hong Kong (6%) representing smaller groups. Demographically, foreign-trained nurses in the current workforce are, on average, more than five years older than Canadian-trained nurses (49.4 years to 44.1 years) (CIHI 2004). We also know that immigrant nurses, particularly those of colour, occupy the lowest echelons of the profession (Calliste 1996).

Although initially the migration of midwives was bound up with the migration of nurses, their recent integration into some provincial health care systems has taken a direct-entry approach. That is, midwives need not have prior training in nursing in order to practice in Canada. Further, the relatively recent integration of midwifery has also meant that almost all of the midwives practising in Canada prior to legislation have been trained outside of the country. Others were trained informally, which adds another layer of complexity to the assessment of equivalency. Midwifery is interesting to examine because of its newness, its strong linkages to foreign training, and its internationally unique entry to practice requirements (a baccalaureate, while in most countries, midwives are trained in vocational institutions or at a level equivalent of community college). Preliminary research suggests that this credential may increase the burden on internationally trained midwives (ITMs) who are not university-trained (Nestel 1996/97).

Figure 1: Temporary and permanent medical licenses by province²



Policy efforts

The ebb and flow of health care providers into and out of Canada is due in large part to policy decisions and the broader policy context of health human resources. Many of the most recent policies attempt to address the key barriers experienced by internationally educated health care providers. Several barriers to internationally trained health care provider integration have been noted in the literature, including:

- Poor information available to prospective immigrants overseas;
- Difficulty in having educational credentials recognized;
- Navigating through the policies, practices and procedures for registration; and
- The time and costs associated with being assessed.

An overarching criticism has been the number of layers of organizations involved in the integration process and the lack of communication between stakeholders. In response to these concerns, some of the key partnerships that have emerged in the new programs to reduce barriers have been between these various organizations, including government and professional bodies at the national and provincial levels. These efforts have prioritized foreign credential recognition by moving towards a system of “one-stop” information sources as well as towards the centralization or national coordination of integration processes.

Foreign credential recognition as a priority

The Advisory Committee on Health Delivery and Human Resources (ACHDHR) is a federal/provincial/territorial committee that reports to the Conference of Deputy Ministers of Health. One of the initiatives undertaken by the ACHDHR with respect to the integration of internationally educated health providers was to identify foreign credential recognition as a priority and, as an initial step, it established a task force in June 2002 to address the integration of IMGs into the Canadian health care system. The goal of the Canadian Task Force on Licensure of International Medical Graduates was to “develop strategies to aid in the integration of qualified internationally trained physicians to the Canadian physician workforce” (ACHDHR 2004, 6). Some of its key recommendations were to increase the capacity to assess and prepare IMGs for licensure, and to work toward the standardization of licensure requirements. These and other recommendations are in the process of being addressed largely through the recently announced funds to Health Canada (discussed below). Moreover, the ACHDHR viewed the work of the Task Force as a successful template that could be used to address the integration of other internationally trained health care providers.

The Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) program was established in 2003 within the federal department of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) as one of the key components of the Government’s broader Internationally Trained Workers Initiative (ITWI). Its mandate is to provide “an integrated, comprehensive strategy in which over 14 federal departments work together to address the barriers to working in Canada that internationally trained workers face.” (<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/comm/hrsd/news/2005/050425bb.shtml>). In concert

with the efforts of the ACHDHR and the FCR program, a series of programs and projects were announced in 2004 and 2005 by federal government agencies including HRSDC, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and Health Canada to address international medical graduates, internationally educated nurses and, to a lesser extent, internationally trained midwives.

Medicine

In March 2004, HRSDC announced it would provide \$341,050 in funding to the Medical Council of Canada (MCC) for the Self-Assessment Tool project. The goal of this project was to “create a self-assessment examination and associated delivery system to be made available to foreign-trained medical graduates wishing to come to Canada to train or practice in the field of medicine.”

Effective integration of IMGs has remained high on the policy agenda with the announcement of a \$75 million plan by Health Canada and CIC just one year later, to be implemented over five years. The goal is to integrate up to 1,000 physicians, 800 nurses and 500 other health care professionals into the Canadian workforce.

One of the programs – again run by the MCC – was a National Credential Verification Agency, which would “create both a one-stop process to assess credentials and a national registry of graduates.” (Eggertson 2005) There were also funds to make the MCC’s evaluation exam available in electronic form to make it more accessible. An Internet portal (www.IMG-Canada.ca) was also established and hosted by the Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

Nursing

In March 2004, HRSDC, through its FCR Program, also announced funds \$545,145 for a Diagnostic for the National Assessment of International Nurse Applicants project by the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA). This diagnostic project (IEN-DP) was aimed at identifying and assessing the current practices and policies with respect to the licensing of IENs. Some of the key recommendations included: 1) the establishment of a national assessment service to create an evidence-based standardized approach to the assessment of IENs; 2) the establishment of nationally standardized and flexible bridging programs to ensure IENs have the competencies required to meet Canadian nursing standards, and; 3) the development of a central Website specific to IENs to access complete, clear and easily understood information related to immigration and nursing licensure/registration (CNA 2005).

Midwifery

In 2003, HRSDC, through its Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program, provided over \$300,000 over three years to fund the National Midwifery Assessment Strategy (NAS) project through the Canadian Midwifery

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Regulator's Consortium (CMRC). The overall goal of the project is to "determine an efficient, effective, and fair pan-Canadian strategy for assessing internationally educated midwives (IEMs) who wish to register to practice in a Canadian province or territory." Its specific objective is to increase access by internationally educated midwives to the profession by building upon the high degree of similarity in professional requirements and standards across the country to create an efficacious inter-jurisdictional process (CMRC 2005). Thus far, the NAS has: 1) approved the development of a pan-Canadian Website for internationally educated applicants; and 2) approved the development of pan-Canadian expertise and a credential evaluation database with the purpose of creating standardization wherever possible.

Conclusion

In sum, there have been numerous task forces, working groups and joint government-profession committees, which have been established to examine the barriers to the integration of internationally educated health care providers and an almost equal number of programs established to address these barriers. Generally speaking, we know a great deal about the barriers experienced by physicians and nurses and are starting to learn what these are for midwives. One of the key recommendations across all professions is the importance of a single portal of information made available to internationally trained health care providers wishing to immigrate to Canada. To date, some action has been taken towards this kind of centralization thus easing the integration process with the help of public funding and support.

An interesting finding arises from a comparative analysis between medicine and midwifery on one hand, and nursing on the other. Specifically, the latter profession has, in most provinces, two different levels of regulatory status: Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses. What this enables is a possible two-step process for integration for internationally trained health care providers. This is not presently possible in medicine and midwifery other than through the temporary licenses and conditional registration programs. Having a "lower" initial entry point – or perhaps stated more positively as a two-step process – would enable internationally trained health care providers to gain important Canadian experience while at the same time honing their skills and being gainfully employed.

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Notes

- 1 Internationally educated health care providers (IEHPS) in the Canadian context are largely those trained outside of Canada and the United States.
- 2 From Audas, Ross and Vardy 2005.
- 3 The Philippines, it is argued, has a government-sponsored policy of producing nurses for export despite having a shortage of nurses.

CREDENTIALS RECOGNITION IN MEDICINE

History, Progress and Lessons

ABSTRACT

This article outlines the process for verifying the credentials of International Medical Graduates. It describes the role of governments, of credentialing bodies, and the graduates themselves. It describes the objectives of the newly created Physician Credential Registry of Canada and ends with some “lessons learned.”

In 1964, I was one of about 800 Canadian medical graduates. My Canadian medical degree from Dalhousie University, a pass mark on the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examinations, and a certificate of satisfactory internship from the medical regulatory body in Nova Scotia would give me access to licensure or post-graduate training within Canada. During the mid- to late-1960s, approximately 1,500 internationally trained physicians (International Medical Graduates or IMGs) arrived each year in Canada. Once their medical degree was recognized by one of the medical regulators in Canada, they too had to meet the same standards. Often they required additional training to meet the internship requirement or other requirements of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, but at that time – when Medicare was just emerging – there were a relative plethora of post-graduate training posts. In other words, access to those educational opportunities was relatively easy, compared to today. Moreover, when graduates of Canadian medical schools entered post-graduate training or practice, it was likely that the medical graduate working on their left and their right would, on average, both be IMGs!

I tell this story as contrast to the situation in Canada today and to outline why an informal system that seems to have worked for IMGs (and for Canada) in the 1960s has, in the last 10 years or so, come to be considered a major challenge for IMGs. This article will describe the elements of credential recognition for medical doctors and will clarify how the process works for all physicians, regardless of where they trained. However, I will begin by describing the role of the federal, provincial and territorial players in the credentialing process. As we move through this discussion, it is critical to remember that education and health, including medical licensure, are provincial and territorial responsibilities as outlined in the *Constitution Act*, 1867.

The players in the credentials world

There are a number of players involved in the recognition and issuing of medical credentials in Canada:

1. At the provincial and territorial levels, the individual medical regulatory bodies, often referred to as MRAs;
2. At the federal or national levels, the two certifying bodies that assess individuals for eligibility to take their certificates in either family medicine (the College of Family Physicians of Canada) or all other non-family medicine specialties like pediatrics or general surgery (the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada); and the Medical Council of Canada, which offers the basic qualifying examinations designed to assess the knowledge and skills required of all physicians, whatever their practice profile or specialty; and
3. At the local level, Canada’s medical schools undertake educational processes and issue judgments of performance at the request of the trainee or applicant. This occurs prior to sitting for the exit examination of organizations such as the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the Medical Council of Canada or when applying for a license to the MRAS.

MRAs regard the recognition of a credential as a yes-no decision: you either meet the requirements or you do not. Moreover, MRAs do not issue their own free-standing credential, but rather they issue the licenses to practice, which may be unrestricted or restricted in terms of what or where physicians

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may practice. When considering a doctor's application for licensure, restrictions can be applied by the MRAs in special circumstances, but most licenses are unrestricted. To that end, the MRAs may use the credentials of the Medical Council of Canada and the two certifying bodies as all three bodies issue a credential for their specific area of medicine.

The need for integrated actions and policies amongst the responsible players

Collaboration between these bodies is imperative to ensure easy access and effective processes for licensing physicians and, of course, to protect the public by verifying the competence of the applicant physician. This is a relatively easy task for Canadian or American medical graduates as there is a common process for medical school accreditation and similar requirements for post-graduate programs, with few exceptions. Canadian and American medical graduates must complete a series of national exit examinations for which the training requirements are clear, such as the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examinations in Canada and the United States Medical Licensing Examinations in the U.S. In both countries, these examinations are recognized by all state or provincial regulators, and all Canadian and American medical graduates who pass these examinations have nationally recognized and "portable credentials." Thus North American medical graduates have a mechanism to level the "credential playing field." In other countries, standardized assessment processes that are validated against actual practice requirements and are reliable in their delivery and accuracy are not typically available. However, it is possible for these graduates to access Canadian assessment processes. The only requirement for IMGs is confirmation that they have graduated from a medical school whose degree is recognized for licensure in the country in which it was obtained. This is important, as the quality of medical schools varies, and it is not possible for Canadian agencies to visit all of them to evaluate their standards. For example, there are thought to be over 80 medical schools in Mexico, but there is no national accreditation process or even a registry of these schools. This story is repeated throughout the world.

Thus, in Canada, like in the U.S., we accept a degree from any medical school that is designated as valid for licensure in the country in which it was obtained, independent of how each country determines this validity. Two sources are used to evaluate whether or not a medical is designated for licensure: the World Health Organization's list and the International Medical Education Directory (IMED), an agency of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) in the U.S. Documents must also be verified by the medical school that issued them, which is called primary source verification,

and is an important step as technology can easily be used to create fraudulent documents with the institutional title and official signatures all appearing to be valid. Once the medical degree is validated, existing processes are used to assess the ability and competency levels of all IMGs as is done with Canadian graduates; the same approach is used in the U.S. In short, we accept the medical credential of the school, verify that that document is valid and then assess the individual's level of competence and performance for licensure by our national assessment methods and processes. This approach was reviewed by the National Task Force on the Licensure of International Graduates (Task Force on IMGs) in 2004, and approved by the federal, provincial and territorial Deputy Ministers of Health in the same year. The recommendation was subsequently supported in a report to Health Canada by the National Assessment Collaboration in 2005.

The Medical Council of Canada: current developments facilitating credentialing processes in Canada

In the last three years, the Medical Council of Canada (MCC) has been a major player in implementing specific recommendations of the IMG Task Force. These developments have been supported in part by the MCC, but also by funding from Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) and Health Canada. Here I will focus on the credentials aspect primarily but I will briefly mention two other HRSDC-funded initiatives designed to facilitate the assessment of applicants' credentials overseas.

As noted, the purpose of primary source validation is to confirm, with the granting medical school, that the applicant is a graduate of the school and has an authentic document. If this is not possible, then other more time-consuming means are used to verify the applicant's standing. The IMG Task Force suggested that unless the applicant is a refugee, verification should be done prior to arrival in Canada. In the U.S., this verification is executed while the IMG is still off-shore, which can avoid several problems or delays for both parties.

For the past 12 years, the MCC has been the main source of initial credentials verification in Canada. The process begins when the IMG applies to take the Evaluating Examination (EE). The EE was created in 1979 at the recommendation of a national medical workforce coordinating committee. It was intended to be given abroad, before immigration, in order to assess the applicant's general knowledge of medicine independent of Canadian peculiarities, such as laws or culture. Initially, the EE was given in embassies or in other settings overseas (in up to 26 sites at its peak), and embassy and foreign affairs staff oversaw the exam. Cutbacks ended this arrangement, and candidates began taking the exam once in Canada. That meant that

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IMGs – some with weaker abilities – were in Canada before any assessment of their credentials or basic medical knowledge had been conducted.

Some larger MRAs carry out their own basic medical degree credential verification, but smaller bodies depend on the MCC to do that job. The IMG Task Force found that the repetitive verification of the medical degree by different bodies increased the cost and delays in accepting IMGs in Canada. Even after an IMG had validated documents and had passed the various required examinations, on applying for licensure in another province or region, the IMG's medical degree again underwent verification. The IMG Task Force recommended a single national agency to carry out the verification. With the permission of the applying physician (to meet privacy requirements), the verification confirmation could be submitted electronically to other requesting bodies. Based on this recommendation, HRSDC awarded a grant to the MCC and its partners to develop a software system to enable e-verification processes, as well as to create a single national agency to verify medical graduates' credentials. The MCC, with the Federation of Medical Regulatory Agencies of Canada (FMRAC), then took steps to establish the Physician Credentials Registry of Canada (PCRC) in 2006.

Why a new body? The evolving role of the Physician Credentials Registry of Canada

The PCRC will use the e-verification software to establish a one-stop single source verification process. With time, it is hoped that all bodies requiring primary source validation will turn to the PCRC, thereby reducing duplication but also permitting almost instant availability of this verification at the request of the IMG. Secondly, the IMG will now only need to pay once for this verification.

Work is now underway to introduce and promote this service into the processes of each agency. The MCC is to be the initial user and, by the end of 2007, it is expected that the MCC will no longer be carrying out independent verifications, but rather using the e-verification software and the services of the PCRC. MRAs will be targeted, as well, and one has already committed to commence using the PCRC this spring; others are expected to follow shortly. Similarly, the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) is preparing to do so later in 2007. It is expected that the PCRC will not be independently financially viable for two years, but by virtue of the agreement between HRSDC and the MCC, the software used in this approach will be available to other professions.

A second phase of the PCRC's evolution will be to introduce this service to Canadian graduates. When Canadian medical graduates move, they must submit

their documents, including subsequent credentials, such as their Royal College or CFPC certification documents, to the local regional health authority or the local hospitals. If they are moving to another province or territory, all of these documents are submitted to the MRA. If the physicians were to deposit all their verified credentials with the PCRC, they would only need to ask that the PCRC forward an e-verification of their credentials to the requesting body. According to a survey of physicians who had recently moved, their move resulted in them having to submit these documents for verification an average of five times to various bodies before they could be licensed, receive a staff appointment at more than one hospital or clinic or an assignment to a health region, or even to respond to an emergency status in a neighbouring town or city. Thus the PCRC would not only be a credential verification agency, but also a repository of the medical credentials of each physician qualified to practice in Canada. In my lifetime, I have worked in four provinces and one territory, and held staff appointments in five or six different hospitals. The PCRC would have saved me much time and effort, in addition to ensuring the physical safety of my medical degree.

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Lessons: where more action is needed

This summary covers a multitude of situations and challenges, both at the national and local levels, which have been faced by the PCRC and the MCC over the past two years. To conclude, I would like to offer a few “behind the scenes” observations and lessons. There is much “tilting of windmills” and pointing of fingers about our credential recognition process, rather than constructive exchange to arrive at a more sensible and smoother process. This is critical because as Canada will continue to be IMG-dependent, particularly in rural or more isolated areas, so solutions are needed. Below, I offer my “top” lessons:

1. Cooperation is required especially in a system where credential recognition and licensure in the field of medicine happens at the federal, provincial and territorial levels. The report of the Task Force on IMGs focused on what to do rather than what not to do, but many still emphasize barriers. Quality assurance and continuous quality improvement should not be considered as barriers, but part of a constructive process to improve outcomes for the public;
2. There is a myth that the failure to recognize credentials is preventing IMGs from accessing post-graduate training or work. This is only true for a small number of IMGs. Over 95% of IMGs will have their basic credential – the medical degree – recognized. Nonetheless, there are a lack of transition courses for

IMGs, which can prevent them from succeeding in the other assessment processes, and while more provinces are offering transitional programs, provincial ministries of health still carefully control access to post-graduate residencies slots;

3. Findings of the IMG Task Force, as well as one-on-one interviews with IMGs, suggest that IMGs who are experiencing difficulty tend to fall into three groups:
 - a. Those IMGs who choose to defer getting further training and let their skills lapse or decrease. This may be a result of personal conditions and is a decision that is not necessarily based on expert advice. These IMGs need “bridging advice” as soon as they arrive;
 - b. Those IMGs who are plainly under-qualified due to inadequate assessment prior to immigration. The Evaluating Examination should be used as it was intended in 1979: administered abroad and with the input and collaboration of the departments of Immigration and Health;
 - c. Those IMGs who choose to reside in the larger cities where they may be professionally disadvantaged because of competition and fewer job openings. They need advice about where they can expect to find opportunities. Bridging processes are also needed along with a realistic assessment of work and training opportunities prior to departure to Canada;
4. We need to create inter-departmental interfaces to better plan where IMGs are needed and to link recruitment and assessment processes before they arrive, with the offer of transitional and bridging processes once IMGs are here. There is no free-market for physicians in Canada: under the *Canada Health Act*, the provinces are in charge of paying physicians and control access to further education. It is what economists would refer to as a “monopsony,” a market situation in which there is only one buyer. There are no free-standing clinical programs to offer preparation,

like an MBA in the world of business. IMG applicants should be required to submit to credential verification with the PCRC before receiving points for their education or experience on their application for immigration to Canada. Indeed, the MCC now offers on-line self-assessment tools in an effort to implement the IMG Task Force’s recommendation to conduct off-shore credential verification and assessment of basic knowledge and skills prior to immigration. By 2008, the MCC will be offering computer-administered screening exams around the world, thanks to developmental support from HRSDC.

A personal wish or two

I began this article with my story about the 1960s, and one could ask “What went wrong?” It seemed so much easier for IMGs then. In my opinion, three factors can help explain our current situation. First, in the 1960s, most physicians came from countries with education systems similar to that in Canada, such as the U.K. or Ireland. Because the systems were similar, these IMGs were, in a sense, pre-screened, and they had a relatively easy transition, educationally and culturally. Today, IMGs come from a wider range of countries, including those in Asia and Eastern Europe, which can make this transition more difficult. Secondly, there was much flexibility in the 1960s with respect to the assignment of training opportunities, which provided IMGs with a range of training choices and posts. Finally, the medical profession was accustomed to the arrival of many IMGs and helped them become established. Today, many teachers and physicians – who are already experiencing overwork – see the arrival of IMGs as an imposition because of the additional education needs that poorly screened or unprepared physicians may have. We should use the excellent tools we have and carry out more valid assessment of applicants to prevent poor selection. We must inform IMGs that validation of the medical degree is only a starting point. With better team work – and that means candor – and bridging plans for all skilled professionals, it is possible to help initiating parties, the federal government and the IMGs be better prepared.

INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS IN ATLANTIC CANADA

ABSTRACT

A number of factors may attract newcomers to Atlantic Canada. While health issues may not be the first that come to mind, if health provision is deemed to be below expected levels of service, this can discourage immigrants from moving in or residents from staying. Major disappointment and frustration are expressed about the non-availability of a family doctor, as well as the non-availability of, or uncertainty about, specialized care and surgical procedures. The attraction, and retention, of internationally educated health professionals is an obvious strategy to address shortfalls in specialized human health resources in the region. This article briefly reviews the state of health services in Atlantic Canada. It evaluates the combination of socio-cultural, economic-fiscal and professional hurdles that are faced by IEHPs who seek to practice in the region and introduces a region-wide research project that will seek stories and voices from IEHP respondents to illustrate and help understand the generic challenges that such professionals face.

Background to immigration to Atlantic Canada

The general drift of the stories and narratives of migrants is typically one of excruciating decisions and choices involving people's life chances. Issues surrounding family, love, work, business opportunities and personal health are amongst the most common that punctuate such decisions and choices. A 2005 study of 320 recent immigrants and settlers to Prince Edward Island (Baldacchino 2006) confirms what probably holds true for Atlantic Canada generally: the key "pull factors" for drawing immigrants to the region are intimately connected to "quality of life" issues. These include hassle-free security, lower crime rates, slower tempo, shorter distances, lovely summers, and affordable housing. The same immigrants are also repulsed by the "push factors" associated with big city life or, especially in the case of refugees, various forms of discrimination.

As with nationwide trends, social factors trump economic ones when it comes to decisions about *coming* to Atlantic Canada; economic factors become ascendant when it comes to decisions about *staying* or not. Common words used by respondents in describing the decision to stay include: "job" (78 hits out of a database of 320 respondents), "family" (51 hits), "friends" (30 hits), "community" (23 hits), "employment" (21 hits), "quality of life" (13 hits), "happiness" (11 hits), "health" (10 hits), and "lifestyle" (9 hits).

"Major Concerns" with health care provision

Health, therefore, figures as one of the concerns of immigrants (Canadian and non-Canadian, men and women, and across all age cohorts) in deciding whether to stay in Atlantic Canada. It comes across as a "hygiene factor" (Herzberg et al. 1959), not high at all amongst the list of features that lure and attract newcomers to the region, but definitely a disincentive for immigrants (and locals) to stay when its provision is deemed to be below expected levels of service. This is claimed to be so particularly in relation to the staffing levels of doctors and of other health professionals. In fact, out of a battery of 18 issues, this factor was cited by the respondents in the 2005 P.E.I. study as the third most serious obstacle towards attracting other settlers to P.E.I. (the absence of suitable jobs and decent levels of remuneration were the top two most serious obstacles).

Concerns about health care reappear in the answers to another (this time open-ended) question in the 2005 P.E.I. study that solicited information about the main obstacle or problem towards attracting settlers to P.E.I. This time, the health issue is the fourth most frequently cited obstacle after work, fiscal and cultural issues. Twenty-four respondents claim dissatisfaction with aspects of health care provision in the province, especially with the non-availability of a family doctor, or with the non-availability of or uncertainty about specialized care and surgical procedures. Health care has many issues, but these two seem particularly salient to newcomers to P.E.I. and especially to Canadians moving in from other provinces.

The nature and quality of specialized care available on the island, as in Atlantic Canada generally, is of special concern to the aged and others who might actually or potentially need it, while the

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non-availability of a family doctor cuts across gender, age and status groups. Such a situation leads to long waiting times, obliges traveling long distances to obtain specialist care, and possibly leads indirectly to serious incapacitation or death. Comments from respondents to the 2005 P.E.I. study included:

Health care in Canada is a major concern. We maintained private health care in Europe, and the difference in quality and service is substantial. Fortunately we are in good health, but a couple of small issues have come up that clearly demonstrated the poor quality and service of the Canadian system. Tests that have substantial waiting times in Canada were done in Europe within days versus months. To get a doctor in P.E.I. takes over a year. Even when you get one, the fact that the facilities lack much of what we considered in Europe as normal technology was shocking. (Respondent #001)

We have one of the most draconian health care systems in the country, and this is something I warn potential newcomers about (especially if they have families). We had a pilot project involving nurse-practitioners. For some unknown reason, this project was discontinued, and yet, nurse-practitioners work in every other province, and they have become essential to basic health care. (Respondent #003)

If something happened to me here (such as a serious illness or a needed operation), I would not hesitate to go back to the U.S. to have a procedure performed. Health care is great here for small illnesses but for something like needing a CT scan or MRI, or an appointment with a dermatologist or other specialist, the wait times are pathetic. For example, I could have breast cancer and need a mastectomy but before I could get an appointment with a surgeon, the disease could have spread to my lymph nodes. This is unacceptable. People die on P.E.I. waiting. This bothers me. (Respondent #034)

Health care issues. Not enough specialists because of the population and having to go off island (to Halifax or Moncton, for example) for treatment or surgery. That can put stress on a person who is ill. No one wants to travel three hours to be treated and have to pay the bridge, gas, hotel, etc. We need to fix this problem. (Respondent #146)

P.E.I. is not Toronto nor Montréal, and nobody expects it to be. However, there are essential services one expects to have like the rest of Canadians. I was without a family doctor for two and a half years. And the doctor I have now is overworked, with no time to develop a relationship with the patient. I cannot see a family with young children waiting for a family doctor that long. It is just not acceptable. (Respondent #155)

Since I have been living here, I find the length of time to see a medical specialist very, very long or even non-existent. There seems to be a reluctance on P.E.I. to even send a patient to a specialist, either because they are not available, the wait is too long or other reasons, whereas in Ontario, it is very common for a general practitioner to seek the advice of an expert in a particular field. Since we are getting older and will require more health care as we age, this is becoming a concern. (Respondent #183)

Social factors trump economic ones when it comes to decisions about coming to Atlantic Canada: economic factors become ascendant when it comes to decisions about staying or not.

There is a lack of accessible health care and inconsistencies with other provinces (such as with seniors in Ontario who have all medicines provided free of charge). (Respondent #231)

I think the shortage in health care specialists is a big concern for a lot of people. I've spoken with a number of settlers over the past couple of years who have all expressed concerns at not being able to find a family doctor. (Respondent #298)

Seeking internationally educated health professionals

The attraction and retention of internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) would be an obvious and natural strategy to address shortfalls in specialized human health resources (HHRs). Given the increasing average age of the current Atlantic health workforce, the retirement of physicians and nurses at an unprecedented rate in the region, and the demographic shift towards a more aged and longer-living population, there is a need to increase the supply of trained professionals in all major areas including general family practice, various medical specializations, pharmacy, physiotherapy and medical laboratory technology. In the Atlantic region, Newfoundland and Labrador has, to date, been by far the most successful province in securing a substantial number of IEHPs as part of its physician and medical specialist complement. Almost half its doctors and almost one-third of its specialists have been educated outside Canada: statistics that are higher than the national average. In Nova Scotia, the Clinician Assessment for Practice Program, which assesses practice-ready family medicine physicians, has placed 30 new physicians into mentored

practice in communities throughout the province, but this relative success with physicians is not matched in other health professions. Thus, less than 2% of nurses in Atlantic Canada are IEHPs; the equivalent nationwide figure was 6.3% (2004 data) (CIHI 2005) (see Table 1).

The issue of licensure and assessment of IEHPs is quite complex and involves challenges that have economic, socio-cultural, educational and professional ramifications (Dauphinee 2005, Mazmanian 2006, ACHDHR 2004)

How welcoming is the host society?

One key issue concerns the ability of the host culture to accommodate those who come “from away” or (less disparagingly) “Atlantic Canadians by choice.” Respondents to the 2005 P.E.I. study put their finger on what they describe, in unflattering terms, as a social conservatism, a quasi-racist clannishness of the host society that subtly excludes those who have “come here” and that also impacts on their employment and career options. This, along with the fact that Atlantic Canadian physicians tend to be amongst the lowest paid in the country (Audas, Ross and Vardy 2004, 20), is likely one of the main reasons that research by the Medical Association of Newfoundland and Labrador indicates that 75% of IMGs coming to the province only stay for two years, during which time they obtain Canadian qualifications, and then move to other provinces like Ontario (Audas, Ross and Vardy 2004 and 2005). As their 2004 report comments (Audas, Ross and Vardy 2004, 21), a strategy is needed that “attempts to fit individuals with the communities where they are apt to stay.”

On this matter of “fitting in,” a recent immigrant to P.E.I. (and one who is also a health professional) notes:

I feel that I am “home.” Many of the people I am close to here are also people who have moved here “from away.” I’ve been discouraged many times since moving here because of the lack of opportunities to advance in nursing ... I once cut a clipping out of a newspaper which said it all ... not the exact quote but something like: “you may have been someone where you were before but you aren’t there now.” It is so true. People are not interested in how things are done anywhere else, regardless of how much more efficient they may be, nor are they interested in your past work experience and assets ... if you are an Islander with no experience, it seems that is better than being “from away” with a lot of it.

I am well aware I’m not “from here” without people pointing it out over and over. Two nurses “from away” have committed suicide since I moved here ... numerous others have left because of frustration with the mistreatment they’ve felt. I have repeatedly felt like I’ve been through a beating since moving here ... however still my heart and soul want to be here. I once taped “Gallant” over my last name on my work name tag, and for those three months not one person turned their nose up at me, clicked their tongue or pointed out I did not have an Island name. I even had another nurse, who is an Islander, come up to me when a new nurse started, and said to “those people from away are not like us, they are so different.” It was spoken in a degrading way, and she had no idea I was from away because I act like and feel like I’ve been here forever.

Other challenges

Other challenges are more job-specific, such as access being maintained through a tough, self-guarded, time-specific, and socially condoned credentialing and assessment process. Doctor shortages, in particular, are a significant social and political issue, and so they have enjoyed (or perhaps suffered) a high public profile. As a result, they have received the most national attention and funding (ACHDHR 2004).

The increasing number of IEHPs entering Canada has led to greater interest in the challenges they and their families face while integrating into Canadian (often rural and other under-serviced areas) communities and health care practice. These include challenges encountered early in the process of immigrating, the most important of which are difficulties in obtaining reliable information about licensing exams and assessment requirements, difficulties and delays in gaining foreign credential evaluation and verification, and the scarcity of mentoring and other pre-assessment supports and bridging opportunities.

Meanwhile, a number of ethical, social equity, and professional development issues have yet to gain the attention they deserve. Access and types of pre-assessment and assessment opportunities vary widely from province to province in Canada, creating significant regional disparities. Short-term training opportunities and longer-term educational opportunities remain difficult to secure and the selection policies used to determine eligibility are not fully transparent. Questions of equity in assessment and in employment contracts and conditions have barely

Table 1: IEHPs in Canada and the Atlantic Provinces.

	P.E.I. Total	Number that are IEHPs	N.B. Total	Number that are IEHPs	N.L. Total	Number that are IEHPs	N.S. Total	Number that are IEHPs	Canada Total	Number that are IEHPs
Family physicians (data for 2003)	121	17	738	171	615	259	1,038	287	30,662	6,934
Specialists (2003)	74	12	486	98	360	113	920	237	28,792	6,352
Registered nurses (2004)	1,377	30	7,361	97	5,452	106	8,602	207	246,575	19,815

begun to be explored by social scientists; and, finally, the long-term career and professional integration prospects of IEHPs who are often employed in the most challenging of environments with reduced access to continuing training and professional development opportunities are rarely addressed. Without a greater commitment to addressing these issues, one risks creating a system of “indentured” health care professionals who may meet our immediate national health care worker supply needs, but will be unlikely to reach full professional status.

Lack of employment leads to lack of experience, and lack of experience leads to an inability to land any employment or secure success in assessment. This is a vicious cycle that afflicts many job entrants in various labour market segments and is compounded by the lack of mastery of required language skills. By way of example, internationally educated medical graduates (IMGs) tend not to perform as well as Canadian medical graduates on qualifying examinations. In 1999, the success rate for Canadian medical graduates in the three Medical Council of Canada (MCC) qualifying examinations was around 95%, while that for IMGs was a paltry 21% (Tyrrell and Dauphinee 1999, Audas Ross and Vardy 2004, 4). This is probably due to a combination of poor communication skills, cultural differences in previous learning styles and approaches to health care, age, and differences in the quality of medical school training (see Hall et al. 2004).

Beckoning research

A federally funded IEHP initiative, supported by Health Canada, is currently addressing these barriers and attempting to determine the gaps remaining within specific health care professions. As part of this study, research teams from the Atlantic Provinces have developed a standardized questionnaire to explore whether there are significant generic or shared features among the challenges faced by IEHPs as residents and professionals. This data generation phase, which is supported by Atlantic Connection funding, seeks to involve some 50 IEHPs from each province, eliciting information that speaks to socio-cultural, economic, professional and educational issues. Respondents will also be encouraged to share their narratives, explaining why they came and have (so far) stayed in Atlantic Canada, and to indicate what they see as the key challenges towards the attraction and retention of more IEHPs in the region. The second phase, scheduled for the summer of 2007, will involve detailed, face-to-face interviews with volunteer respondents, and hopes to benefit from funding from the Atlantic Metropolis Centre. The outcome of this study should provide much-needed data drawn from the newcomers themselves and would feed readily into ongoing public policy.

Conclusion

The challenge of “getting one’s foot in the door” in the health field in Atlantic Canada is especially daunting for non-Canadians. The situation could lead to circumstances where IEHPs secure employment that does not match their professional skills. A trained gynecologist working as a translator, or a medical laboratory technician working as a chef, may seem unlikely, but these are the real-life situations

of unlicensed IEHPs in P.E.I. and are likely replicated in other provinces.¹ As one foreign-trained unlicensed physician working as a pizza delivery man confided: “better a job that secures some regular income, than no job at all.”

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Note

¹ Information obtained from a focus group of IEHPs convened by the P.E.I Association of Newcomers to Canada, Charlottetown, P.E.I., January 9, 2007.

LES PROJETS QUÉBÉCOIS VISANT À FACILITER L'ACCÈS DES PERSONNES IMMIGRANTES AUX PROFESSIONS ET MÉTIERS RÉGLEMENTÉS

RÉSUMÉ

L'intégration professionnelle des personnes immigrantes est une priorité du gouvernement du Québec. Au cours des dernières années, le gouvernement et ses partenaires ont mis en œuvre diverses actions pour permettre aux personnes immigrantes d'obtenir des emplois à la hauteur de leurs compétences. Une attention particulière a été portée à la question de la reconnaissance des acquis des personnes formées à l'étranger.

L'immigration constitue un des outils importants que le Québec s'est donné pour relever les défis de son développement. Toutefois, pour que les personnes immigrantes puissent contribuer pleinement à l'essor du Québec, il est primordial qu'elles puissent occuper un emploi correspondant à leurs compétences. Du point de vue de la personne immigrante, le succès de son intégration sociale et économique repose en grande partie sur la réussite de l'intégration professionnelle. En effet, même si le processus d'intégration comporte plusieurs aspects, notamment l'apprentissage de la langue, la compréhension des codes culturels de la société d'adoption et l'accès à un réseau social, c'est souvent l'obtention d'un emploi qui sera l'élément déterminant de ce processus.

Pourtant, les données du recensement de 2001 indiquent que l'intégration professionnelle des personnes issues de l'immigration n'est pas aussi rapide et réussie qu'on pourrait le souhaiter. En effet, le taux de chômage dans la population immigrée frôle les 12 %, alors qu'il est de 8 % pour la population totale du Québec. En conséquence, la question de l'intégration professionnelle des personnes immigrantes se retrouve parmi les défis les plus importants que la société québécoise ait à relever. L'importance d'agir n'est plus à démontrer.

Cet enjeu, qui est une priorité du gouvernement du Québec, constitue la pierre d'assise du Plan d'action 2004-2007 en matière d'immigration, d'intégration et de relations interculturelles, intitulé *Des valeurs partagées, des intérêts communs*. Dans cet article, nous présenterons quelques-unes des mesures qui découlent de ce plan d'action et qui visent à favoriser l'intégration professionnelle des personnes immigrantes. Nous nous attarderons plus particulièrement aux actions visant à favoriser l'accès aux professions et métiers réglementés, mais évoquerons également d'autres mesures visant à faciliter l'intégration professionnelle des personnes immigrantes.

L'accès aux professions et métiers réglementés

Parmi les difficultés auxquelles sont confrontés les nouveaux arrivants à la recherche d'un emploi, celles liées à la reconnaissance des acquis, particulièrement dans le contexte de l'accès aux professions et métiers réglementés, sont souvent évoquées. Des efforts ont donc été consentis pour s'assurer que la reconnaissance des acquis des personnes immigrantes soit la plus transparente, la plus équitable et la plus efficace possible.

Pour atteindre cet objectif, d'importants efforts de consultation et de concertation ont été menés. Le gouvernement du Québec a consulté les personnes immigrantes et les intervenants touchés par la question afin de bien définir les difficultés et de proposer des pistes de solutions. Il a également associé étroitement les partenaires à la mise en œuvre de solutions.

En mars 2004, un Groupe de travail formé de quatre parlementaires a été formé et a mené une consultation auprès des personnes immigrantes et des intervenants touchés par la question. Dans son rapport, déposé en février 2005, le Groupe de travail pose d'abord un diagnostic sur les difficultés d'accès aux professions et métiers réglementés. Ces difficultés peuvent être regroupées en trois

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grandes catégories : l'accès à l'information, la reconnaissance des acquis et l'accès à la formation d'appoint. Le Groupe de travail de parlementaires formule également une série de recommandations pour remédier à ces difficultés.

Par la suite, une Équipe de travail composée notamment de représentants des ordres professionnels, des établissements d'enseignement collégial et universitaire et du gouvernement a été formée. Cette équipe avait notamment pour mandat de déterminer, en s'appuyant sur les recommandations du Groupe de travail des parlementaires, les actions concrètes pour faciliter l'accès aux professions régies en suscitant l'engagement des intervenants concernés. L'Équipe de travail, qui a étudié la pertinence et la faisabilité de chacune des recommandations du Groupe de travail des parlementaires touchant les professions régies par les ordres professionnels, a déposé son rapport en décembre 2005. Comme nous le verrons plus loin, la plupart des recommandations du Groupe de travail de parlementaires et de l'Équipe de travail sont réalisées ou en bonne voie de l'être.

Les projets liés à l'accès à l'information

L'importance pour les personnes immigrantes et pour les candidats à l'immigration encore à l'étranger d'avoir accès, en temps opportun, à une information sur l'accès aux professions et métiers réglementés n'est plus à démontrer. Cette information doit être facilement compréhensible, complète, pertinente et adaptée aux besoins des personnes immigrantes. Elle doit être accessible aux nouveaux arrivants, mais également aux candidats à l'immigration afin d'éclairer leur décision d'immigrer et de les inciter à entamer leurs démarches le plus rapidement possible auprès des organismes de réglementation des professions et des métiers.

Depuis plusieurs années, le Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles (MICC) offre de l'information portant sur les conditions d'accès aux professions et métiers réglementés, notamment grâce à des fiches d'information. Le ministère souhaite ainsi donner un éclairage juste et réaliste sur les difficultés et les enjeux liés à cette question. Des services d'accompagnement sont également offerts aux personnes immigrantes et aux candidats à l'immigration qui souhaitent exercer une profession ou un métier réglementés.

Mais l'information ne doit pas se limiter aux seules conditions d'exercice des professions et métiers réglementés. Elle doit également porter sur les perspectives professionnelles et sur l'ensemble des avenues possibles d'emploi dans les divers domaines de formation. Les candidats peuvent ainsi connaître les possibilités d'obtenir un emploi dans leur domaine. En effet, ceux-ci ne doivent pas oublier que

le fait de détenir un permis d'exercice ne garantit pas l'obtention d'un emploi. En conséquence, des liens vers des sites Internet proposant de l'information sur les perspectives professionnelles ainsi que des descriptions des secteurs économiques apparaissent maintenant dans plusieurs documents d'information du ministère.

Par ailleurs, le MICC s'assure que les messages visant à faire la promotion de l'immigration au Québec n'éluent pas les difficultés d'intégration professionnelle qui peuvent être éprouvées par les nouveaux arrivants. Il faut en effet éviter de susciter chez les candidats à l'immigration de trop grandes attentes qui seraient source de bien des déceptions.

Depuis septembre 2005, le guide d'aide à l'intégration *Apprendre le Québec*, réalisé par le MICC en collaboration avec ses partenaires, est remis aux candidats à l'immigration à l'étranger et aux nouveaux arrivants au Québec. Ce guide présente l'ensemble des démarches d'intégration au Québec et vise à faciliter la prise en charge par la personne immigrante de son parcours d'intégration. Il est diffusé en français, en anglais et en espagnol sous forme de brochure et dans Internet en format PDF. Une partie importante de ce guide porte sur l'intégration professionnelle. En ce qui a trait aux professions et métiers réglementés, le document insiste notamment sur l'importance d'entamer les démarches auprès des organismes de réglementation le plus rapidement possible, idéalement depuis l'étranger. Ainsi, un candidat est en mesure de bien connaître, avant même son départ, les démarches qu'il aura à effectuer, et raccourcir les délais pour l'obtention de son permis.

Les projets liés à l'amélioration du processus de reconnaissance des acquis

La personne immigrante a la responsabilité de faire les efforts nécessaires pour réussir son intégration professionnelle. Toutefois, la société qui accueille cette personne a le devoir de mettre en place les conditions qui favoriseront cette intégration. Ainsi, il importe de veiller à ce que le processus de reconnaissance des acquis soit le plus équitable, le plus transparent et le plus efficace possible.

À cette fin, l'Équipe de travail proposait notamment d'accorder aux ordres professionnels plus de souplesse pour délivrer de nouvelles formes de permis permettant de faciliter l'intégration professionnelle des personnes formées à l'étranger. Des modifications au Code des professions ont donc été adoptées en juin 2006, afin d'habiliter les ordres à délivrer ces nouvelles formes de permis.

Les ordres pourront donc délivrer deux nouvelles formes de permis : les permis restrictifs temporaires et les

En effet, même si le processus d'intégration comporte plusieurs aspects, notamment l'apprentissage de la langue, la compréhension des codes culturels de la société d'adoption et l'accès à un réseau social, c'est souvent l'obtention d'un emploi qui sera l'élément déterminant de ce processus.

permis spéciaux. Le permis restrictif temporaire pourra être accordé à un candidat qui se voit reconnaître une équivalence partielle de formation, c'est-à-dire à qui on a reconnu seulement une partie des compétences exigées pour l'obtention du permis régulier. Il pourra exercer certaines activités aux conditions et restrictions déterminées par l'ordre pendant qu'il acquière les connaissances et habiletés manquantes. Il lui sera ainsi possible d'intégrer le marché du travail plus rapidement.

Quant aux permis spéciaux, ils limiteront à certains types d'activités ou à certaines clientèles les activités pouvant être exercées par un professionnel, mais leur validité ne sera pas limitée dans le temps, ni à un lieu géographique, ni à un établissement. Ces permis permettront à leur détenteur d'exercer certaines activités professionnelles pour lesquelles l'ordre lui reconnaît les compétences nécessaires, sans avoir à se qualifier à nouveau pour exercer l'ensemble des compétences reconnues aux membres de l'ordre. Afin de délivrer de tels permis, les ordres devront adopter des règlements prévoyant les conditions de délivrance.

Les modifications au Code des professions créent également une nouvelle forme d'ouverture au permis de l'ordre, couramment appelée la délivrance de « permis sur permis ». Ainsi, dans le respect des normes d'équivalence fixées, un ordre professionnel peut établir par règlement la liste des organismes de réglementation étrangers dont les membres seront automatiquement admis à l'exercice d'une profession, lorsqu'il est convaincu que les exigences de cet organisme correspondent à celles du Québec. Les démarches des candidats qui pourront se prévaloir de ces nouvelles dispositions seront ainsi grandement simplifiées.

Les nouvelles dispositions du Code des professions ont également un impact sur le processus de révision des décisions en matière d'équivalence de diplôme, de formation et de conditions supplémentaires d'admission.

En effet, afin d'assurer l'indépendance de ce processus, la révision d'une décision rendue par un ordre professionnel sur la reconnaissance d'une équivalence devra être effectuée par des personnes distinctes de celles qui l'ont rendue.

Par ailleurs, les ordres professionnels se sont récemment engagés dans une démarche d'amélioration de leurs pratiques en matière de reconnaissance des acquis, afin de s'assurer que ces pratiques ne comportent pas d'obstacles à l'accès des personnes formées à l'étranger aux professions régies. Les ordres ont adopté des principes en matière de reconnaissance des acquis et procèdent actuellement à l'évaluation de leurs pratiques au regard des principes adoptés. À la suite de cette analyse, qui doit prendre fin en mars 2007, les ordres professionnels détermineront, s'il y a lieu, les actions qu'ils prendront pour améliorer leurs pratiques. Les ordres auront la responsabilité de présenter ces actions dans leur rapport annuel.

Plusieurs autres projets ont également été mis en œuvre par les ordres professionnels, avec le soutien financier du MICC, en vue de faciliter l'accès aux professions régies. Ces projets ont permis, par exemple, la conception de nouveaux outils de reconnaissance des acquis et l'élaboration de mesures de préparation des candidats à la formation d'appoint ou aux examens de contrôle des connaissances.

Les projets liés à l'accès à la formation d'appoint

Il est parfois nécessaire pour une personne formée à l'étranger de suivre une formation d'appoint afin d'adapter ses connaissances au contexte de pratique québécois. Toutefois, une personne formée à l'étranger ne devrait en aucun cas être tenue de reprendre en entier un programme d'études du domaine dans lequel elle a été formée, alors que quelques cours de mise à niveau seulement seraient nécessaires. Il est donc essentiel d'assurer un meilleur accès à la formation d'appoint de courte durée.

Le MICC collabore donc avec les ordres professionnels et les établissements d'enseignement supérieur pour la conception et l'offre de formation d'appoint. Ces collaborations ont permis la mise sur pied de diverses formations d'appoint, pour les infirmières, les infirmières auxiliaires, les ingénieurs et les technologues en radiologie. D'autres formations d'appoint sont également en cours d'élaboration. De plus, afin d'assurer un meilleur accès à la formation d'appoint de niveau collégial, le ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport s'est récemment engagé à financer toutes les formations qualifiantes prescrites à un candidat par un ordre professionnel, et ce, qu'elles soient suivies à temps plein ou à temps partiel.

La connaissance adéquate de la langue française est essentielle pour assurer le succès des personnes immigrantes qui sont inscrites à des formations d'appoint, qui doivent réussir des examens professionnels ou qui sont à la recherche d'un emploi.

Ainsi, afin de favoriser l'apprentissage du langage spécialisé lié à l'exercice d'une profession, des cours de français sont offerts aux infirmières, aux acupuncteurs et aux ingénieurs formés à l'étranger. Une formation en français spécialisé est également offerte, depuis janvier 2007 et à titre de projet pilote, aux professionnels du secteur de la santé engagés dans un processus de reconnaissance des acquis.

Le Programme d'aide à l'intégration des immigrants et des minorités visibles en emploi

Comme nous le mentionnions plus tôt, il est inutile pour une personne d'obtenir le droit d'exercer une profession ou un métier réglementés si elle ne parvient pas à obtenir un emploi dans son domaine. Plusieurs mesures ont donc été mises en œuvre pour faciliter

La personne immigrante a la responsabilité de faire les efforts nécessaires pour réussir son intégration professionnelle. Toutefois, la société qui accueille cette personne a le devoir de mettre en place les conditions qui favoriseront cette intégration.

l'intégration professionnelle des personnes immigrantes. Bien sûr, ces mesures s'adressent également aux nouveaux arrivants qui souhaitent exercer une profession ou un métier qui n'est pas réglementé.

Une de ces mesures est le Programme d'aide à l'intégration des immigrants et des minorités visibles en emploi (PRIIME) qui a été mis en œuvre en 2005. Il s'agit d'une mesure incitative qui vise à soutenir financièrement les petites et moyennes entreprises afin qu'elles embauchent des personnes immigrantes et des minorités visibles pour des emplois réguliers à temps plein. Son objectif est de permettre aux nouveaux arrivants d'acquérir une première expérience de travail au Québec dans leur domaine de compétence et de faciliter leur intégration en milieu de travail. Le financement du programme est assuré à partir d'une partie des revenus de placement découlant du Programme des immigrants investisseurs pour l'aide aux entreprises et la gestion opérationnelle est assumée par Emploi-Québec.

PRIIME comprend quatre volets. Le premier vise l'acquisition d'une expérience en milieu de travail. L'emploi doit être un emploi régulier à temps plein et supervisé par une personne de l'entreprise. Le deuxième volet permet d'offrir un accompagnement au participant, afin d'aider la personne à s'intégrer à son nouveau milieu de travail. Le troisième permet l'adaptation des outils et des pratiques de gestion des ressources humaines afin de tenir compte des particularités d'une main-d'œuvre diversifiée. Le quatrième volet vise l'adaptation des compétences au contexte de travail nord-américain, grâce à des formations d'appoint ou à des cours de français.

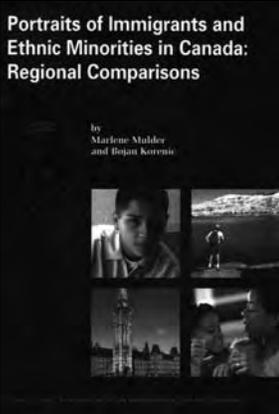
Au cours des 12 derniers mois, PRIIME a permis à plus de 1 100 personnes d'acquérir une première expérience de travail dans leur domaine de compétence au Québec.

L'entente avec la Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec

Les employeurs ont évidemment un rôle primordial à jouer en matière d'intégration professionnelle des personnes formées à l'étranger. Il importe donc de sensibiliser les dirigeants d'entreprises à la nécessité d'embaucher un plus grand nombre de travailleurs issus de l'immigration et de favoriser leur intégration en emploi. D'ailleurs, en raison de l'évolution démographique du Québec, les employeurs sont de plus en plus préoccupés par les difficultés d'assurer la relève de leur main-d'œuvre. Afin de les convaincre qu'une partie de la solution réside dans l'intégration professionnelle des nouveaux arrivants, la Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, le ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles et le ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale ont conclu une entente pour financer l'organisation d'ateliers de sensibilisation à l'intention des employeurs.

Le projet, d'une durée de dix-huit mois, permet d'offrir des ateliers de sensibilisation à la gestion de la diversité culturelle aux dirigeants d'entreprises par l'entremise du réseau des 170 chambres de commerce membres de la Fédération et présentes sur le territoire du Québec. Le contenu des ateliers aide les employeurs à mieux comprendre les différences culturelles et à créer un milieu de travail ouvert à d'autres cultures. Ces ateliers de trois heures, mis au point par le MICC, seront offerts aux dirigeants d'entreprises intéressés à embaucher des travailleurs issus de l'immigration. Ces ateliers s'adressent tout particulièrement aux employeurs situés à l'extérieur des grands centres où la diversité culturelle est moins grande.

Pour obtenir plus d'information sur les projets mis en œuvre par le MICC et ses partenaires pour faciliter l'intégration professionnelle des personnes immigrantes, vous pouvez consulter le site Internet du MICC à l'adresse suivante : www.micc.gouv.qc.ca.



Portraits of Immigrant and Ethnic Minorities in Canada

Regional Comparisons

Portraits of Immigrant and Ethnic Minorities in Canada: Regional Comparisons (2005), by Marlene Mulder and Bojan Korenic, is a much expanded and updated version of the first such publication, which proved to be a very popular resource among the Prairie Centre's community partners and other stakeholders (*Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities on the Prairies: A Statistical Compendium*, published in 2000). The new publication is a compilation of statistics about newcomers to Canada. Unlike the previous volume, which focused only on the Prairies, this book has figures for Canada as a whole, Canadian regions (including the North), as well as detailed information relevant to the Prairies. There is also a chapter focusing on immigration to small communities such as Brooks and Brandon.

To order a copy, contact the Prairie Centre at (780) 492-6600.

NEW IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM DEVELOPING CANADA-WIDE SKILLS ASSESSMENT TOOL

ABSTRACT

A new immigrant employment program in British Columbia has taken an unusual approach to foreign credential recognition. The Immigrant Skilled Trades Employment Program (ISTEP) is helping immigrants build careers in the construction industry and helping employers fill their workforce needs. Workers assessed as job-ready are matched to employers and are on-the-job and earning while their foreign credential recognition is in progress.

The Immigrant Skilled Trades Employment Program (ISTEP) is a new pilot project to help landed immigrants build careers in British Columbia's construction industry and provide employers with workers in the skilled trades. While ISTEP was launched in B.C., it has enormous potential for addressing skills shortages across Canada.

The shortage of skilled tradespeople is widespread across the country and presents considerable obstacles for employers in the construction industry. Contractors struggle to meet the demands of substantial sector growth with a limited workforce. They are recruiting from other countries to try and fill their needs, while immigrants – a significant provincial and national resource – face barriers to training and employment.

Through ISTEP, immigrants with experience in the construction industry, as well as those who would like to start a career in the industry, are matched with employers who have job openings. One of ISTEP's founding partners, the British Columbia Construction Association, has access to hundreds of contractors and consequently thousands of jobs across the province, which is important for identifying opportunities for ISTEP participants.

Immigrants are referred through immigrant agencies and other resource centres to Job Coaches, who are qualified tradespeople and understand the needs of industry. They are responsible for assessing skills and job potential and connecting suitable immigrants to employers. Immigrants are required to have a standard of English that ensures they are capable of doing their jobs well and safely. They are paid at industry standards and according to their skill levels.

Only immigrants assessed as job-ready are presented to employers, and if they require further training, they are referred to appropriate programs. In order to do this, a set of career path tools is being developed that will not only initially assess the worker, but track his or her progress on the job and provide an individual on-going record of training and work history. The goal is to create an "at-a-glance" chart with colours indicating strengths and areas for improvement. It will be a starting point for developing a career plan that will remain in the worker's file and be updated on subsequent visits with the Job Coach.

Nationally, the Construction Sector Council has been actively involved in a number of assessment projects and has been supportive in developing the ISTEP models. The assessment and career path tool is two-pronged and is used by the Job Coaches at different points of the intake process:

1. ISTEP Employability Self Assessment Tool¹

This component contains a series of questions that will assess the employability of the ISTEP applicant. It will indicate whether the person is immediately referable to a job in the construction industry or whether they require further preparation such as improved language skills or technical upgrading. The process involves 26 areas of consideration that are critical to securing employment. An individual will consider each area and select a colour depicting the level they feel they have achieved or which needs attention. This produces a chart with a visual representation of strengths and weaknesses. The charts can be easily updated when further training and skills are acquired.

PAUL MITCHELL

Paul Mitchell is a Project Manager with ISTEP, the Immigrant Skilled Trades Employment Program. ISTEP was developed through a partnership between the BC Construction Association (BCCA) and the Construction Sector Council (CSC) and is funded by the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program.

2. Technical Tool

This component is again a self-assessment tool that will assess the technical skills acquired through work history, review of qualifications, and the area of preferred work. Through a series of approximately 30 questions that one tradesperson would ask another, the tool will pinpoint the worker's areas of expertise and job satisfaction.

A trades-specific vocabulary will also be developed and provided to immigrants to help them with work site orientation and safety. The vocabulary component will be applied to 10 trades and translated into five languages.

The development of a comprehensive career path tool is critical for Job Coaches and valuable for both employees and employers. It will provide a consistent approach that can be adopted across the country if ISTEP becomes a national program.

In the Canadian construction sector, there is a uniform process for achievement of credentials. However, there are several different paths with respect to the recognition of credentials. The standard path is the apprenticeship process, training and subsequent examination, but an individual can undertake their level exams while still putting in the time-in-trade that is required to receive formal accreditation. Ultimately, employers want an assurance that individuals possess the skills they claim to have and, as such, require some means of verifying these skills. They require that credentials be recognized before workers are given jobs in part because this is critical to the safety of workers and consumers.

ISTEP's approach to foreign credential recognition, however, differs from the usual processes. The program's aim is to first help immigrants get suitable jobs based on

their experience and skills, and then to work with employers and immigrants to acquire Canadian recognition.

This does not mean immigrants are put into jobs they are not qualified for, or that national and provincial skill or safety standards are compromised in any way. While recognition of their credentials is pending, immigrants will be carefully supervised and will be placed in jobs that require fewer skills. Once their credentials are recognized, they will work at their appropriate level.

ISTEP was announced in November 2006; 29 people had been placed in just the first 30 days, and there are already success stories. One of the first ISTEP placements was a crane operator from the Philippines who lives in Prince George. Jamil was only able to find a low-paying job in a warehouse. He was referred to ISTEP by the local Immigration and Multicultural Services Society and, following assessment with the Job Coach, was placed with a union contractor working on the University of Northern British Columbia expansion. Jamil now operates the most sophisticated crane on the site and, with help from the Job Coach, has enrolled in the level 3 crane operators training in Vancouver to earn his red seal certification.

Many more success stories are anticipated as ISTEP moves forward in its scheduled three-year run as a pilot project in B.C. After that, an independent consultant will assess the effectiveness of ISTEP and its potential for implementation as a national program that will help our immigrants begin construction careers in Canada.

Note

¹ The employability tool was based on the Unified Employment Theory[®] developed by Glenn Olien and used with his permission.



Metropolis World Bulletin Bulletin mondial Metropolis

The World Bulletin is Metropolis' International Newsletter. In addition to reporting on the activities of Metropolis' international partners, the World Bulletin includes thematic articles on topics related to migration and diversity. Recent issues have included a comparative examination of:

- Diversity in Cities
- Migration Management
- Diasporas and Transnationalism

Bulletin mondial est le bulletin d'information internationale de Metropolis. En plus de rendre compte des activités des partenaires internationaux de Metropolis, *Bulletin mondial* présente des articles thématiques sur des sujets liés à la migration et à la diversité. Les derniers numéros offrent un examen comparatif relatif à une question en particulier tel que :

- La diversité dans les villes
- La gestion de la migration
- Les diasporas et le transnationalisme

You will find the World Bulletin online at: http://www.international.metropolis.net/publications/index_e.htm

Vous pouvez consulter les numéros de *Bulletin mondial* en ligne, à l'adresse suivante :

http://www.international.metropolis.net/publications/index_f.htm

PREJUDICE IN THE WORKPLACE

The Role of Bias Against Visible Minorities in the Devaluation of Immigrants' Foreign-Acquired Qualifications and Credentials

ABSTRACT

In this article, we demonstrate that the ambiguity of foreign credentials allows prejudice to affect the evaluation of the qualifications held by visible minority immigrants. The implications of this work and strategies for more fully utilizing the skills that visible minority immigrants bring with them to Canada are presented.

Does prejudice against visible minorities play a role in the assessment of immigrants' qualifications and credentials in Canada? This question is important to address because of the high, and increasing, proportion of visible minority immigrants who are admitted into Canada each year on the basis of their qualifications, the evidence that visible minority immigrants are faring particularly badly in the Canadian labour market, and recent reports by visible minorities that they experience high levels of discrimination in Canada. In this article, we provide background information on the employment experiences of immigrants to Canada (and, in particular, on visible minority immigrants), explain why prejudice is especially likely to play a role in the assessment of the foreign-acquired qualifications of visible minority immigrants, and then describe the research we have conducted that specifically examines how visible minority status and prejudice affect the evaluation of immigrants' qualifications and credentials. We conclude by discussing the implications of our work, and suggest strategies for more fully utilizing the skills that visible minority immigrants bring to Canada.

The employment of immigrants in Canada

In recent years, the majority of immigrants to Canada have been admitted in the "economic class," for which skill-based selection criteria are employed (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006). The Canadian economy increasingly relies on these immigrants in an effort to fill labour shortages that threaten its global competitiveness. Recently, immigrants have accounted for over 70% of labour force growth in Canada, and now comprise about 20% of the total work force (Statistics Canada, 2004). In turn, success in the labor market and perceptions of equal treatment are crucial for immigrants' economic and psychological well-being. The skill-based selection criteria that allowed them to immigrate to Canada create an expectation among immigrants that they will be able to use these skills once in Canada.

Despite the importance of immigrant participation in the Canadian labour force, the integration of immigrant employees is slow and suboptimal. Immigrants to Canada experience lower levels of earnings and labour force participation than do native-born individuals (e.g., Li, 2001; Reitz, 2001, 2003). Moreover, responses from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) indicate that in 2001-2002, after two years in Canada, over half of immigrants who were admitted under the skilled worker category were not working in their desired occupations (Statistics Canada, 2005). One important factor contributing to the unemployment and underemployment of immigrants is "skill discounting," which refers to the devaluation and lack of recognition of foreign credentials, such as education (e.g., degrees and diplomas), professional training (e.g., apprenticeships), work experience, and other work-related skills that immigrants bring with them (see Li, 2001; Reitz, 2003, 2005). In the LSIC, one of the most common problems in finding employment reported by immigrants was the lack of recognition of foreign qualifications (Statistics Canada, 2005). Apparently, the skills that are so valued when immigrants are assessed for admission into Canada are devalued once they arrive and attempt to enter the labour market.

Of particular concern is that skill discounting is especially likely to affect visible minority immigrants to Canada (e.g., Metropolis Conversation Series, 2001; Reitz, 2003, 2005; Swidinsky & Swidinsky, 2002). For example, Alboim, Finnie, and Meng (2005) reported that a foreign university degree held by an immigrant had, on average, an earnings return of less than one-third that of a Canadian university degree held by a native-born employee, unless the immigrant was White, in

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which case the foreign degree was comparable in value to a Canadian degree. The proportion of immigrants to Canada who are visible minorities is high (73% of those who came in the 1990s), and increasing. As a result, the negative effects of skill discounting can be expected to become more severe in the coming years (Jackson & Smith, 2002; Statistics Canada, 2003).

The fact that visible minorities are particularly likely to experience skill discounting has led to debate about its antecedents. Essentially, two positions have emerged. On the one hand, skill discounting could be attributed to the actual lower quality of the foreign skills held by visible minority immigrants while, on the other, skill discounting could be explained as an expression of racial prejudice. For example, it has been suggested that visible minority immigrants often come from countries in which educational standards and training are lower than in Canada, so that ascribing lower value to degrees from these countries would be appropriate (Sweetman, 2004). If this were to be the case, however, it would require a reassessment of the point system for selection of skilled workers that might include a country-specific allocation of points (e.g., a degree from one country would not receive the same points as a degree from another). It might also require additional programs for immigrants to improve their knowledge and skills. An alternative, or additional explanation, however, is that the heightened discounting of foreign skills held by visible minority immigrants is at least to some extent attributable to prejudice against visible minorities (e.g., Conference Board of Canada, 2004a; Reitz, 2005). This would mean that the responsibility for discounting the skills of visible minority immigrants lies in the biases held by employers and would suggest that remedies aimed at reducing these biases, or reducing the impact of these biases, are required.

With the type of data available to date, the debate about the quality of foreign credentials versus prejudice against visible minorities cannot be resolved. Census and survey data do not directly measure prejudice, and often, visible minority status and country of origin are inextricably linked, so that either one may be driving skill discounting. Indeed, as we will argue shortly, because country of origin and visible minority status are so closely linked, it is especially easy to justify discrimination against visible minority immigrants as based not on prejudice, but on the supposed poorer quality of their qualifications. The ambiguity surrounding the quality of foreign credentials and qualifications also contributes to the ease with which this argument can be made.

Subtle prejudice and the evaluation of visible minority immigrants' skills

Subtle prejudice against visible minorities in Canada

Unfavorable attitudes and beliefs about visible minorities and immigrants persist in Canadian society today, though they are typically less blatant than in the past and operate in subtle ways so that those who harbour these biases are often unaware of their effects. For example, research has shown that White Canadians are particularly likely to feel "uncomfortable" around visible minority immigrants and to show a preference for members of their own group (e.g., Berry & Kalin, 1995; Centre for Research and Information on Canada, 2003). A recent poll found that many Canadians see immigrants from Europe as making a bigger and better contribution to Canada than immigrants from Asia, India, or the Caribbean (Curry & Jimenez, 2005). In addition, immigrants are at times seen as competing with native-born Canadians for economic resources and for cultural dominance (e.g., Esses, Hodson, & Dovidio, 2003; Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998). Beliefs about national identity, such as beliefs that to be a Canadian one must have been born in Canada, be part of the dominant culture, and be White, can also lead to the exclusion of immigrants and visible minorities (e.g., Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Semanya, 2005).

It is also the case that if visible minorities are asked about their experiences in Canada, many say they are indeed targets of discrimination because of their minority status. Recent analyses of the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey by Reitz and Banerjee (in press) show that a substantial proportion of visible minorities, particularly Blacks, Chinese, and South Asians, report having experienced discrimination in the last five years and of feeling vulnerable to future discrimination. Survey research also suggests that visible minorities tend to believe that prejudice affects their opportunities in areas such as employment. Although Whites acknowledge that racism exists in Canada, they are less likely than visible minorities to believe that it takes the form of reduced opportunities for visible minorities (Centre for Research and Information on Canada, 2003).

The ambiguity of foreign credentials and qualifications

The evaluation of foreign credentials differs in several ways from that of domestic credentials. First, often those who make hiring decisions need to invest more effort in evaluating foreign credentials. Second, even with additional effort, the evaluation of foreign credentials is associated with greater ambiguity than the evaluation of Canadian

One important factor contributing to the unemployment and under-employment of immigrants is "skill discounting," which refers to the devaluation and lack of recognition of foreign credentials... Of particular concern is that skill discounting is especially likely to affect visible minority immigrants to Canada.

credentials. Decision-makers may believe they do not have, or they may actually not have, sufficient information about foreign skills to make informed decisions, leading them to feel that they have to make judgment calls (Environics, 2004). Third, even if they have sufficient information, decision-makers may still feel less confident in their decisions about foreign-trained employees than about Canadian-trained employees. As we will discuss shortly, the ambiguity of foreign skills assessment is important for understanding the potential role of subtle prejudice against visible minorities in this assessment.

Linking subtle prejudice with the evaluation of foreign credentials and qualifications

Research on modern forms of prejudice indicates that blatant discrimination is now often suppressed by societal and personal norms and values. As a result, discrimination will not usually occur unless it can be explained away as being based on something other than prejudice (e.g., Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). Contexts in which this is facilitated are those where the norms and rules for appropriate behavior are ambiguous or where justifications for the discrimination — other than prejudice — are readily available. In these contexts, individuals can continue to believe they are not prejudiced, and that visible minorities are being treated fairly.

The discounting of the skills of foreign-trained visible minority immigrants fits into this framework. Although individuals who make hiring decisions and assess the quality of applicants may consciously try to avoid bias and discrimination in decision-making, subtle prejudice may influence their behaviour nonetheless. As discussed earlier, in many cases the rules and norms for assessing foreign credentials are unclear, creating ambiguity about the true value of these credentials. As a result, the expression of prejudice against visible minorities may no longer be suppressed, leading to discriminatory behavior. Moreover, the “foreignness” of qualifications can be used as a seemingly legitimate justification for failing to take into account the full value of the qualifications of visible minority immigrants. Thus, discounting the skills of visible minority immigrants may appear as legitimate rather than as a manifestation of prejudice. Overall, then, discrimination against visible minorities may occur without being recognized as such by individual decision makers or by other individuals within or outside of organizations.

As mentioned earlier, visible minority status and country of origin are often confounded in census and

survey data so that it is not possible to test their differential effects on the discounting of the skills of visible minority immigrants. Thus, in our research, we have used experimental procedures to control the factors of interest and directly examine the effects of prejudice and visible minority status per se.

The research evidence

In our first study, participants were asked to evaluate an applicant for a marketing position in a Canadian firm on the basis of the information provided in his résumé (see Dietz, Esses, Bhardwaj, & Joshi, 2005). Each participant was presented with one of four résumés with equivalent qualifications. However, the applicant was presented as either an immigrant who had received his education and training in South Africa, or as a native-born Canadian who had received his education and training in Canada. In addition, through the applicant’s name and his described participation in local clubs, we were able to imply that he was either White or Black. As we expected, when applicants were educated and trained in Canada, they were evaluated equivalently irrespective of visible minority status. In this case, there was little doubt about qualifications and no ready justification for discrimination. When the applicants were immigrants with foreign qualifications, however, we found that the Black immigrant applicant was evaluated significantly less favorably than the White immigrant applicant and than the Canadian applicants. In this case, the fact that the individual had foreign qualifications made the situation more ambiguous and provided an excuse for devaluing them. As a result, it was easy to judge the Black applicant as unsuitable for the position without appearing to be prejudiced. Thus, even when there were no actual differences between the qualifications of the White immigrants and those of the Black immigrants, the Black immigrant with foreign skills was especially likely to have his

skills discounted. Importantly, if there were true concerns about the foreign (i.e., South African) qualifications, the White applicant with these qualifications should also have been evaluated as unsuitable for the position. This did not occur. Of interest, one rationale commonly provided for discounting the Black South African applicant’s credentials was a need for “Canadian” experience, which has been described as the Catch-22 for immigrants (Canadian experience is needed in order to obtain a job to gain Canadian experience; Reitz, 2005).

In a second study, we examined the effects of prejudice more directly (see Esses, Dietz, & Bhardwaj, 2006). First, in an independent context, we assessed participants’

The “foreignness” of qualifications can be used as a seemingly legitimate justification for failing to take into account the full value of the qualifications of visible minority immigrants. Thus, discounting the skills of visible minority immigrants may appear as legitimate rather than as a manifestation of prejudice.

subtle prejudices. Several weeks later, we asked them to evaluate an applicant for a position at a health services clinic on the basis of information provided in her résumé. In this study, the applicant was of Asian Indian descent in all cases. We varied, however, whether she was born and had received her qualifications in Canada, in the United Kingdom, or in India. As in the previous study, the qualifications held by the applicants were equivalent. Nonetheless, we found that the application of an immigrant from India with Indian qualifications was evaluated less favorably than the other two applications. Importantly, this unfavorable evaluation was provided only by individuals who had earlier been found to hold subtle prejudicial attitudes. In this case, the foreign qualifications from India were seen as particularly ambiguous, and provided an excuse for those who held prejudicial attitudes to discriminate against the applicant. As in the previous study, if there were true concerns about the Indian qualifications, then the less prejudiced participants should have evaluated the applicant trained in India less favorably as well. Once again, this did not occur.

Two additional studies have shown that under some conditions, foreign credentials can serve as an asset, but only if one is *not* a member of a visible or religious minority. In particular, in a study examining perceptions of foreign-trained physicians in which all applicants were licensed to practice in Canada, foreign training and experience (obtained in Singapore) led to higher evaluations for a White individual, but this did not extend to Chinese and East Indian applicants with identical qualifications (Esses, Dietz, & Dixit, 2006). In a study examining perceptions of foreign-trained individuals applying for a position in the health domain, we manipulated the applicant's religious affiliation through the use of a pendant worn by the applicant during a videotaped job interview (Bennett-Abu Ayyash, Esses, & Dietz, 2007). Again, foreign training (obtained in Cyprus) was considered an asset, but only for the "Christian" applicant; the "Muslim" applicant with identical qualifications did not receive this benefit. Thus, foreign training and experience can be perceived as value-added benefits (see also Arthur, 2004), but, as shown in the current research, only if one is a member of the mainstream in terms of race and religion.

Implications

Our research supports the assertion that visible minority immigrants are especially likely to experience discrimination in employment and that this discrimination is specifically attributable to their visible minority status. Our participants were likely unaware of the influence that their biases had on the evaluations they provided. Nonetheless, the very subtlety of these biases may allow them to operate unchecked, and allow those who discriminate on the basis of their biases to confidently believe they are deciding objectively.

Our assertion that the ambiguity of foreign qualifications makes it easier to discriminate against visible minority immigrants is important for policy makers, organizations, and immigrants to Canada. As indicated earlier, Canada needs immigrants in order to maintain a strong and globally competitive economy, and in recent years, the

majority of immigrants have been visible minorities. Discounting the skills of visible minority immigrants hurts their ability to contribute to the economy (e.g., Metropolis Conversation Series, 2001; Reitz, 2005), and means that Canadian companies may have greater difficulty attracting and retaining skilled workers in the future (Conference Board of Canada, 2004b; Human Resources Development Canada, 2002). Furthermore, knowledge that they are victims of discrimination has significant negative effects on the integration and well-being of visible minority immigrants (e.g., Aycan & Berry, 1996; Reitz & Banerjee, in press). Therefore, discrimination against visible minority immigrants must be eliminated in order to foster and promote a truly inclusive society.

A first step toward eliminating discrimination is identifying and understanding its antecedents. Our work suggests that the ambiguity surrounding the foreign qualifications of visible minority immigrants allows prejudice to play a role in their evaluation. As a result, interventions must be designed to delegitimize the use of foreign credentials as a reason for not hiring visible minority immigrants. When decision-makers have specific information on the quality of an applicant's foreign credentials, there is less informational ambiguity and, as a result, prejudice is less likely to lead to discrimination (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). Thus, effective interventions could include awareness training for organizational decision-makers, more widespread use of credential evaluation services (such as World Education Services) providing information on the equivalency of foreign-acquired qualifications, and standardized and enforceable organizational policies on the evaluation of foreign skills. In our future research, we plan to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies for reducing discrimination against visible minority immigrants. As the need for skilled labour in Canada continues to increase, it seems likely that not only will government agencies have an interest in promoting the integration of visible minority immigrants into the workforce, but employers will as well.

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ENGAGING EMPLOYERS

Strategies for the Integration of Internationally Trained Workers in Ottawa

ABSTRACT

This article reviews research from the Internationally Trained Workers Partnership and looks at the barriers to employment for foreign-trained workers from both the immigrant and the employer perspective. It presents the Hire Immigrants Ottawa project as a community-based strategy for employer engagement in Ottawa.

Ottawa is the destination of choice for thousands of immigrants each year. Many of these immigrants are highly skilled. More than half of new immigrants in 2002 held a university degree, while many others held a diploma or trade certificate, and twice as many with a Ph.D. settled in Ottawa than in the rest of Canada (CLBC, World Skills, United Way 2003, 7).

The majority of these immigrants are foreign-trained workers who, upon arrival in Canada, must seek employment within a unique labour market context. Ottawa has strategic challenges not faced by other major metropolitan centres. The city's tradition as a government town has meant limited economic diversification, and despite some recent shifts, employment has been typically concentrated within the public and the information and communication technology sectors. The requirement for fluency in both official languages also poses a challenge in many employment sectors in Ottawa.

Despite a high level of knowledge and experience, more than a quarter of university-educated immigrants find themselves employed in an occupation that does not match their skill level, which is twice as likely as their Canadian-born counterparts (Ibid., 10). Recent immigrants to Ottawa with a university degree are four times more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to be unemployed (Ibid., 9).

The Internationally Trained Workers Partnership

In its 20/20 plan, the City of Ottawa noted that Canada loses an estimated \$5.9 billion annually by under-employing internationally trained workers (City of Ottawa 2003); a significant portion of this loss affects the Ottawa area. The Internationally Trained Workers Partnership (ITWP) was formed in 2002 to respond to this challenge. Six community partners came together to develop a more coordinated approach to facilitate the integration of internationally trained workers into the Ottawa labour market.

One of ITWP's central premises is the reliance on local partnerships and organizations as a means to develop locally relevant approaches that utilize the community's talent and resources. The ITWP's partners include:

- United Way/Centraide Ottawa;
- the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce;
- the Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la Capitale nationale (RGA);
- LASI/World Skills, a coalition of eight Local Agencies Serving Immigrants; and
- the City of Ottawa and OCRI/TalentWorks, ensuring the project builds on and integrates other workforce development initiatives and community planning efforts.

The ITWP, which is governed by a Steering Committee, believes in the power of collaboration and has aligned many of the organizations related to the employment of skilled immigrants in Ottawa. Members of its Advisory Committee represent the three levels of government, policy, labour, educational institutions, and immigrant service delivery organizations.

Through a series of research studies, community consultations, employer interviews and program initiatives, the ITWP has made significant strides toward addressing this issue in Ottawa over the past four years. This article reviews the partnership evolution throughout three primary phases:

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Ginny Adey is the Director of Communications for Hire Immigrants Ottawa and the Internationally Trained Workers Partnership (ITWP). The ITWP partners are United Way/Centraide Ottawa, the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, the Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la Capitale nationale, LASI/World Skills, the City of Ottawa and OCRI/TalentWorks.

- Research and Stakeholder Consultations, which examined the barriers to integration for immigrants;
- Understanding Employer Needs, which elicited workforce requirements and barriers to hiring immigrants from an employer perspective; and
- Hire Immigrants Ottawa, ITWP's nascent employer engagement project.
- Lack of knowledge of *local labour market information* and employment opportunities; and
- Difficult access to language and technical *skills upgrading* programs and the expense associated with bridging and training programs.

The challenge of sustainability was also raised during the roundtable discussions. Funding for immigrant employment programs tends to be project-based, ad hoc, or for piecemeal initiatives with limited time frames. More sustained efforts are required to ensure the continuity and success of programs and enable systemic changes to occur.

Phase 1 (2002-2004):

Research and Stakeholder Consultations

In 2002, ITWP received approval under the federal Voluntary Sector Initiative for its first research project. The project was designed to develop a community-based strategy to support the integration of internationally trained workers by addressing the barriers that immigrants face in entering the labour market.

The project focused its efforts on individual sectors, ensuring there would be a match between the supply of internationally trained workers on the one hand, and the demand for workers in the occupations for which they were trained, on the other. Five sector-specific roundtables were held with teachers, engineers, doctors, nurses and masons. At each table, there was representation from foreign-trained workers, service agencies, employers, unions, regulating bodies, training or educational institutions and other experts. A forum was held in 2004 with over 120 community representatives who refined and strengthened the findings from the roundtables.

The following summarizes the common barriers and recommended solutions identified in the roundtables. The full results can be found in the report *Moving Forward: A Strategy for the Integration of Internationally Trained Workers in Ottawa* prepared by ITWP in April 2004.

Immigrant barriers to employment

The range of barriers encountered by immigrants who were trained as teachers, masons, engineers, nurses or doctors is broad. The findings from the roundtables suggested that there was not a single most important barrier that all internationally trained workers from these groups faced, and thus, there was no single solution that could be designed to alleviate the barriers. That said, some common barriers were identified, such as:

- *Lack of Canadian work experience*, leading to a lack of employment opportunity. Also noted was the importance of understanding Canadian workplace culture;
- *Lack of information* about available programs and services;
- *Lack of employer contacts* and networking opportunities was identified as one of the most severe barriers;
- Barriers related to *licensing and accreditation*, particularly the difficulty obtaining documentation from abroad and the heavy bureaucratic requirements;

Recent immigrants to Ottawa with a university degree are four times more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to be unemployed.

Recommended solutions

Time was spent at each of the roundtables to develop specific recommendations for each occupational sector. Some solutions have broad applications, whereas others are occupation-specific. The following solutions were identified by at least four of the five occupational groups:

- Better access to *language training* adapted to the workplace;
- Access to *mentoring* that would be supported by more established professionals; and
- Availability of *financial assistance* programs that are better suited to the particular needs of internationally trained workers.

A significant proportion of recommendations were of relevance to only one or two of the five sectors. Clearly, it would be difficult to suggest a set of universal solutions that would address the needs of all groups, and at the same time, be specific enough to be useful. Instead, recognizing the complexity and fragmented nature of the integration process, the Partnership determined that a community-based strategy would be a more effective way to address barriers to employment.

The Partnership agreed to explore the feasibility of a leadership council, similar to the one that had recently been established in Toronto by The Maytree Foundation and the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), as the cornerstone of a local strategy for integration. However, to effectively engage employers, ITWP first had to understand the barriers from the employers' perspective and thus proceeded to the next research task.

Phase 2 (2004-2005):

Understanding Employer Needs

ITWP secured funding from United Way/Centraide Ottawa and from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to undertake the second phase of the project. This would expand the plans for the leadership council by interviewing small- and medium-sized enterprises and large employers from Ottawa's business community.

Large employers workforce needs

ITWP joined forces with the TalentWorks program of the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI) to conduct in-person interviews with 25 of the largest employers (more than 1,000 employees) in Ottawa. The full results and analysis of these interviews can be found in *Ottawa@Work: Large Employers Workforce Needs Analysis*, which was prepared by OCRI and ITWP.

Employers interviewed were from five sectors: public administration, information and communication technology (ICT), retail, health care and social sciences, and education services. Employers for this survey represented about 35% of the total number of people employed in Ottawa.

Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) workforce needs

The research approach was tailored for SMEs to assess their awareness of the labour market realities and explore their views on how immigrants could participate. Interviews with 12 local SMEs were completed with employers from sectors for which immigrants in Ottawa had the appropriate skills. The findings were reported in *Final Report: Internationally Trained Workers Project – Ottawa*, which was submitted by the ITWP to the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, which funded the project.

Employer barriers to hiring immigrants

When asked about hiring immigrants, some employers spoke of their desire to be socially responsible, acknowledged that it makes good business sense, and recognized the potential to grow their businesses. Several interviewees appreciated that immigrant workers could help them understand their increasingly diverse client base and how to enter or increase new markets in the immigrants' countries of origin.

While most employers interviewed were aware that Ottawa's future workforce will depend, in part, on immigrants, many were not familiar with statistics related to workforce integration. Despite the fact that large employers and SMEs have different perceptions and needs, many of the barriers they identified were similar, and are summarized below:

- *Language:* Language fluency, workplace-specific language, and preferences for fluency in both official languages were raised as critical factors in employers' hiring decisions. SME employers differentiated between proficiency in the language and "clarity," emphasizing that accent is an issue in customer and sales service positions;
- *Networking:* Employers often do not know how to reach qualified immigrant candidates as they are not part of formal and informal networks;

- *Training:* Cross-cultural training is imperative in creating a welcoming environment on the employer side, and language and acculturation training is helpful for immigrants;
- *Social perception:* Employers identified societal perceptions that may be reflected among their employees and clients. The economic benefits of immigrants are often overlooked, and racism and discrimination can be found in the workplace;
- *Strict requirements:* The federal government has strict application criteria, with respect to language, Canadian citizenship and security clearance requirements (which may extend to those who contract with the government, as well);
- *Human resource tools:* Many recruiting and hiring systems, especially those of SMEs, are based on North American culture, which hinders efforts to recruit from other backgrounds; and

When asked about hiring immigrants, some employers spoke of their desire to be socially responsible, acknowledged that it makes good business sense, and recognized the potential to grow their businesses.

- *Pre-screening:* Employers want easy and direct access to job-ready candidates. Ideally candidates should be pre-screened for language, credential evaluation and job readiness. SMEs may not have the capacity for human resources functions such as internships and sometimes feel they cannot risk hiring immigrants as they do not have the luxury of making a "mistake."

Supports and solutions

Employers identified a range of remedies they believe would make a difference in hiring more skilled immigrants into their workforces. These include:

- Successful practices, such as *mentoring programs*, employment equity and diversity initiatives, could be adapted to support an immigrant workforce;
- In-house expertise in *workplace acculturation* could be shared outside the organization;
- Proactively supporting immigrants to attend *networking opportunities* such as association and/or business events;
- Opportunities for *cross-cultural training* and awareness sessions for existing workforce/employers would provide an important opportunity to share information and demystify cultures; and
- Additional supports that required involvement by other stakeholders, such as student visa processes, information portals for hiring immigrants and a pre-security clearance qualification program.

All employers agreed to consider participating in a future leadership council for internationally trained workers. This positive feedback, along with the needs identified in the *Moving Forward report*, prompted ITWP's next phase.

Phase 3 (2006):

Hire Immigrants Ottawa

In 2006, ITWP applied for and received funding for three years from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration for an employer engagement strategy called Hire Immigrants Ottawa. This project is designed to fulfill the need for a leadership council in Ottawa, which was identified in the research phases. The focus is on the health care, information technology, finance and the public sectors, all identified in Phase 2 as important to the future economic growth of Ottawa. Hire Immigrants Ottawa is the first project of the ITWP.

Hire Immigrants Ottawa's objectives will be achieved through a multi-pronged approach, implemented over the course of the next three years and will include three key elements. The central project component is to launch the Employer Council of Champions (ECC), featuring approximately 25 top Ottawa employers that will champion the integration of skilled immigrants into the labour force. In addition to acting as local spokespeople on the issue, the members of the ECC will create an environment of cross-sector collaboration, stimulate strategic investments and partnerships and act as catalysts for ideas and innovation.

The second element is to establish Working Groups to include members from business, employers, immigrant agencies, unions, government, and educational institutions that are working on the front lines to tackle barriers in the health care, information technology, finance and public sectors. The Working Groups will recommend and implement solutions to sector-specific barriers. They will share information and identify gaps, and will link qualified immigrants with local employers.

Finally, Hire Immigrants Ottawa will launch a local social marketing campaign to promote greater understanding of the social and economic value immigrants bring to Ottawa.

Recruitment of the ECC and Working Groups is being initiated in early 2007, and the ECC and Working Groups will be launched in 2007 with a summit planned in 2008. The summit will highlight best practices and generate discussion and momentum around the issue in Ottawa. After the summit, the ECC will share results with

the broader community and encourage others to adopt best practices in recruiting and hiring skilled immigrants.

The way forward

ITWP's progress is based on an understanding of Ottawa's immigrant population, an intimate connection to local labour market needs and a reliance on local partnerships to deliver the strategy. Research and consultations conducted over the period of 2002-2004 led to a better understanding of sector-specific barriers from both immigrants' and employers' perspectives. Hire Immigrants Ottawa is the culmination of this work; the Employer Council of Champions will give employers a collective voice in championing the importance of local integration.

ITWP has learned that the process of bringing diverse stakeholders together to facilitate the exchange of ideas and strategies is sometimes as fruitful as the results. This was manifested through the creation of new projects, and enhancements to existing partnerships, such as the Teach in Ontario program launched by the Ontario College of Teachers, Skills for Change, LASI World Skills and the Ontario Teacher's Federation. It also contributed to the Career Access for Newcomers program, a partnership between LASI WorldSkills and the City of Ottawa, which was designed to help newcomers to access employment appropriate to their experience and education.

Despite this significant progress, in many ways, the work has just begun. The transition from immigration to finding skills-appropriate employment takes time and, for some of Ottawa's skilled immigrants, it may never happen. Clearly, there is still much more that can, and must, be done to facilitate the integration of immigrants into the labour market. Every skilled immigrant should have an equal opportunity to contribute to the future growth and vibrancy of Ottawa, and the work will continue until this goal is attained.

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CAREER ESSENTIALS: “A LIGHTHOUSE IN AN OCEAN FULL OF INFORMATION AND OPTIONS”

ABSTRACT

AXIS Career Services is a division of the Association for New Canadians in Newfoundland and Labrador. AXIS offers a suite of employment assistance programs and services to internationally educated professionals and trades persons. The Career Essentials program is one of AXIS' core employment programs which assists internationally educated workers in obtaining recognition for their skill sets and experience, clarifying their individual goals and marketing themselves to potential employers. The ultimate goal of the program is to assist newcomers in gaining the skills necessary for successful career transitions in order to find satisfying and sustainable employment in their fields of expertise. Through the various components of the Career Essentials program, the ANC has developed inclusive, practical, client-centred programs and services designed to address the full continuum of challenges and barriers facing internationally educated professionals and tradespersons.

Newcomers arrive in Canada with unique combinations of internationally obtained education, experience, perspective and ambition. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Association for New Canadians (ANC) is the first point of contact for newcomers, providing settlement and career services for people to whom everything in Canada is new and different. Newcomers face barriers in accessing the labour market that native-born Canadians do not experience. Three of the most common of these barriers are 1) language and cultural differences, 2) lack of Canadian work experience, and 3) cumbersome credential assessment procedures. Through a joint Federal and Provincial partnership, the ANC has developed and adapted a unique and broadly based AXIS Career Centre (Acquiring Experience; Integrating Skills) that helps newcomers overcome these barriers and guides them through the daunting task of finding employment in their new home. The Centre offers an array of customized, client-driven programs that bridge the gap between immigrants and local employers in ways that help newcomers use their skills and abilities and also help employers meet their employment needs. These services have proven so useful to newcomers over the years that the AXIS Career Centre has been described by clients as “a lighthouse in an ocean full of information and options” (Reza).

The AXIS Career Centre delivers targeted employment programs to support newcomer integration into the local job market. As part of the services offered by AXIS, the Career Essentials program provides internationally educated professionals and trades persons with comprehensive employment assistance services and current information on Canadian labour market conditions. It helps highly skilled newcomers match with employers in all sectors to fill a wide range of positions. Through the Career Essentials program, newcomers learn to recognize the value of their skills and experiences, clarify their individual goals and market themselves to potential employers. With particular emphasis on “essential” skills, Career Essentials enables new clients to evolve within their jobs and adapt to workplace change. The program is based on the nine essential skills recognized by the Government of Canada as being fundamental to learning all other workplace skills, and includes: reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking skills, computer use and continuous learning.¹ The ultimate goal of the program is that clients find satisfying employment in their fields of expertise and also gain the skills necessary for a successful career in their chosen fields. In this way, Career Essentials takes a holistic approach to helping newcomers integrate into the local workforce, emphasizing client skills, developing labour market strategies and providing direct linkages between newcomers and local employers.

Skills-focused approach

The nine essential skills form the foundation of the skills-focused approach of Career Essentials by encouraging clients to recognize their own abilities and supplement their academic credentials

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with workplace communication skills. With particular focus on the clients themselves and their individual skill sets, the Career Connections component of the Career Essentials program offers a series of workshops that provide clients with detailed information and practical tools to help them make informed career decisions and to assist them in their job search. In addition to assisting newcomers with job search techniques and communication skills for integration into the Canadian workplace, Career Connections directs newcomers in assessing and identifying their own skills and abilities and communicating those skills to potential employers. Clients learn about résumé preparation, career action plans, labour market research, internet job search, how to access the “hidden job” market, networking with employers and key industry contacts, job interview skills, employer expectations, and job maintenance skills. The ultimate goal of Career Connections is to assist clients in acquiring the knowledge and skills essential for success and sustainability in their chosen careers.

Language and cultural differences present a significant barrier to many newcomers in their search for employment in Canada. Through the Career Essentials program, clients develop occupation-specific language competencies, particularly through the Enhanced Language Training (ELT) component, which is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. ELT prepares newcomers for the Canadian workplace by helping them develop more precise communication skills and build a glossary of technical terms and acronyms relevant to their profession.² Clients engage in strategic, hands-on activities directed towards identifying the meaning of key terms and acronyms in context. They prepare for success in the local labour market by improving their clarity, accuracy and comprehensibility in the English language and they connect what they learn to their careers, field opportunities and work environments. Whether developing a portfolio, preparing for an interview or engaging in a work placement, ELT ensures that clients have a solid understanding of their profession or trade in its Canadian context.

Building on the language and communication skills development of ELT, Portfolio Development Seminars help clients showcase their strengths and abilities, demonstrate the transferability of their skills, build self-confidence and self-marketing strategies, and participate in self-reflection. Portfolios are an effective way for newcomers to trace their career history and provide supportive evidence of prior learning to earn credit for training and professional development. Through the Portfolio Development Seminars, clients create a profile of prior learning, explore their own knowledge, skills and personal attributes, develop goal-directed career action plans and generate job-specific knowledge and skills.³ They also learn self-marketing strategies and effective ways to present themselves and their skills to potential employers. The portfolio has

proven to be a useful way for newcomers to demonstrate continuous learning in their chosen profession.

Labour market strategies

The Career Essentials program also helps newcomers develop labour market strategies, including self-marketing and networking skills that prepare participants for the world of work. A variety of bridge-to-work options guide clients through the job search process, provide them with current Canadian labour market information and help them integrate into the labour market in a sustainable manner. Relevant marketing strategies help clients identify their own specific skills sets that they have to offer potential employers and ideas for targeting their skills, talents and abilities. The Career Information Resource Centre (CIRC) provides clients with information on the job search process, current labour market trends, college and university programs, and licensure and accreditation processes. The Centre is equipped with an automated bibliographic database and circulation of over 1500 books, journals and periodicals covering a variety of academic disciplines.

Clients can access the Centre five days a week and are also assisted by an employment counsellor who helps them determine their career paths. The Mentoring component provides clients with industry-specific advice by matching them with a professional employed in their field of expertise, which helps clients gain a better understanding of their occupational area in its Canadian context. Together, the CIRC and the Mentoring component help clients make informed decisions regarding their future career paths in Canada. By providing clients with local perspectives on employment, wage standards, qualifications, working conditions and labour market trends, the Career Essentials program helps newcomers

find suitable pathways through the maze of the Canadian job search process.

The lack of Canadian work experience presents additional challenges for many internationally trained workers in accessing the local job market. The Career Essentials program helps newcomers overcome this barrier by providing direct linkages between newcomers and employers, especially in terms of work placements in the client’s field of expertise. In particular, the Strategic Transitions & Employment Partnerships (STEP) program brings clients and employers together in a direct way. STEP is a collaborative opportunity where businesses host a skilled worker in an unpaid career placement for a five-to ten-week period. Employers gain access to skilled and motivated individuals who can address skill shortages while newcomers gain valuable work experience in a Canadian career setting. Gaining Canadian work experience is especially important for internationally trained workers because many local employers require Canadian experience from potential employees and they hesitate to consider

In the Career Essentials program, newcomers learn to recognize the value of their skills and experiences, clarify their individual goals and market themselves to potential employers.

newcomers who have only worked in an international context. AXIS addresses this issue by emphasizing to employers the importance of “relevant” work experience rather than specifically “Canadian” work experience. Through work placements and through liaising with potential employers regarding clients’ relevant work experience, AXIS provides a critical link between internationally trained individuals and local employers. Further linkages and opportunities for networking will be created in March of 2007, when the ANC hosts its first Immigrant Job Fair. The Fair will serve to encourage and support newcomers with their future career plans. Seminars and information sessions will focus specifically on careers in demand, such as the skilled trades and those in the oil and gas industry. In addition, the Job Fair will highlight the training requirements and long-term forecasts for various careers, enabling newcomers to make more informed decisions about their future career paths.

Strategic alliances

One of the greatest strengths of a small centre is the ability to build strategic alliances. The ANC has invested tremendous time and energy in fostering partnerships with all levels of government, non-governmental organizations, community agencies, educational institutions and the business community. The Coordinating Committee on Newcomer Integration (CCNI), for example, is a collaborative partnership with key departments at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels, as well as with educational and other stakeholders. Through the CCNI, these stakeholders work to establish policies, supportive and inclusive programs, and services to promote Newfoundland and Labrador as a desirable settlement destination for immigrants. Strategic partnerships have also proven valuable for the ANC in helping newcomers overcome employment barriers related to foreign credential recognition (FCR). In this area, the ANC has made significant inroads with various regulatory bodies and sector councils to assist trained professional and skilled workers in receiving Canadian licensure or designation. Much of the success gleaned in this area is due largely to the Association’s capacity-building efforts. The ANC is a small centre with a proven track record of 25 years building partnerships with local government and industry representatives. Clients of AXIS truly benefit from these extensive strategic alliances as ANC employees use these partnerships to link newcomers directly with networking and employment opportunities.

AXIS has also built strong strategic alliances with the local business community. The Centre markets its services and clients through regular presentations to groups and organizations and is constantly seeking out new partners as the clients skill base is constantly changing. The ANC maintains close ties with professional organizations,

such as the Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland and Labrador and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, to assist clients in need of credential recognition and licensure. The approach is integrative and coordinated as no one body or organization can dismantle the daunting barriers. As the provincial economy continues to improve and skills shortages are increasingly becoming an issue, employers are reaching out to the ANC to create new partnerships to assist with recruiting and training newcomers. The Centre also maintains a database of employers willing to provide newcomers with a mentor or a work placement, as part of the Association’s important STEP program. As the ANC develops new programs, it relies on existing partnerships and continues to build new ones. A recent research initiative concerning foreign credential recognition in Newfoundland and Labrador brought together representatives from regulatory bodies, government, health and education sectors and employers to discuss the

issues facing skilled newcomers on finding work in the province. All of these partnerships involve individuals who are concerned about the gap between local shortages in the trades and professions and the reserve of qualified newcomers who face barriers to filling those areas of skills shortages.

The Career Essentials program places a high priority on the client’s individual abilities and on helping newcomers develop strategies conducive to workplace success and sustainability. Accordingly, it is not enough for newcomers to find a job – the ANC aims to equip newcomers with the skills to succeed in the workforce and maintain their initial success. Under the holistic approach of the Career Essentials program, internationally trained workers recognize their own abilities and fine-tune their essential skills, learn employment strategies for success in the Canadian labour market and benefit from access to career mentors, networking

opportunities, and work placements. By engaging clients in self-assessment activities, helping them match their essential skills to the Canadian workplace and coaching them to present themselves and their qualifications to potential employers, Career Essentials empowers newcomers with the confidence and the tools to maintain success in their chosen careers.

By providing clients with local perspectives on employment, wage standards, qualifications, working conditions and labour market trends, the Career Essentials program helps newcomers find suitable pathways through the maze of the Canadian job search process.

Notes

- ¹ http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/hrp/essential_skills/essential_skills_index.shtml (retrieved 29 December 2006).
- ² The AXIS Career Centre has developed specific language modules in four key sectors: business, engineering, education and medicine.
- ³ A profile of prior learning includes previous work experience, volunteer work, formal education and training, travel and life experience, home-based activities, and hobbies.

UN PAS VERS L'EMPLOI AVEC LE CENTRE D'APPUI AUX COMMUNAUTÉS IMMIGRANTES DE BORDEAUX-CARTIERVILLE (CACI)

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article offre un aperçu des programmes offerts par le Centre d'appui aux communautés immigrantes de Bordeaux-Cartierville (CACI) pour aider les clients à trouver un emploi dans leur domaine de compétence.

Au Québec, comme dans la plupart des pays industrialisés, nous sommes aux prises avec un déficit démographique ayant un impact très important sur les besoins de main-d'œuvre de notre société. Cette réalité nous oblige à aller à la recherche des personnes immigrantes qualifiées et compétentes. Au Québec, l'immigration est un outil essentiel pour relever les défis en matière de développement.

Dans le cadre de l'Accord Canada-Québec, il appartient au Québec de fixer ses objectifs en termes d'immigration et d'offrir tous les services d'accueil et d'intégration aux immigrants de toutes les catégories. Le Québec assure la sélection des immigrants du volet économique, des réfugiés se trouvant à l'étranger et des cas comportant des considérations humanitaires ou d'intérêt public. Toutefois, c'est le gouvernement fédéral qui accorde le statut de résident permanent aux candidats qui ont été sélectionnés par le Québec. Depuis cinq ans, le Québec a admis près de 40 000 immigrants par année et l'un des objectifs du plan d'immigration 2007 du gouvernement du Québec est d'assurer une progression du nombre d'immigrants admis pour que celui-ci s'élève à 48 000 par année.

Cependant, pour que les immigrants s'intègrent et contribuent pleinement au développement du Québec, il est essentiel que ces personnes puissent occuper un emploi dans leur domaine de compétence ou d'expérience professionnelle. Pourtant, trop souvent, l'insertion professionnelle des personnes immigrantes n'est pas aussi rapide et réussie qu'on pourrait le souhaiter. Plusieurs facteurs contribuent à cette situation, notamment des barrières linguistiques, des obstacles institutionnels ainsi que la difficulté à faire reconnaître l'expérience et les diplômes acquis à l'étranger. Pour certains immigrants membres des minorités visibles la discrimination s'ajoute à cette liste.

La déqualification professionnelle est aussi un problème. Au Canada, une personne sur cinq souffre de cette problématique, mais, pour les personnes immigrantes, la déqualification est frappante et semble les toucher pendant longtemps. Un immigrant faisant l'objet de déqualification professionnelle a une formation professionnelle de grade universitaire et/ou une expérience professionnelle acquis à l'étranger, mais il ne réussit à obtenir une reconnaissance professionnelle ou un emploi que pour un poste exigeant seulement un diplôme d'études secondaires.

Plusieurs études réalisées par Statistique Canada révèlent que les nouveaux immigrants sont deux fois plus susceptibles que leurs homologues nés au Canada d'occuper des emplois exigeant peu d'études. Plus de la moitié des nouveaux immigrants détenant un grade universitaire occupent un emploi exigeant seulement un diplôme d'études secondaires, comparativement au quart de leurs homologues nés au Canada. De plus, les nouveaux arrivants sont beaucoup plus longtemps dans cette situation que leurs homologues nés au Canada. Dix ans après leur arrivée au Canada, 21 % des immigrants ayant un grade universitaire occupent un emploi à faible scolarité.

Dans leur article « Un emploi correspondant à ses compétences? » publié en 2006, Jean Renaud et Tristan Cain révèlent qu'au Québec, le taux de non-qualification, c'est-à-dire de personnes immigrantes n'ayant jamais occupé un poste ni supérieur ni correspondant à leurs compétences, est de près de 30 %, même après 5 ans de résidence dans la province, et un peu plus de 60 % possèdent un diplôme universitaire. Par ailleurs, Jeffrey Reitz, dans son article intitulé « Immigrant Skill Utilisation in the

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Canadian Labour Market » (2001), déclare que le coût de la non-reconnaissance des diplômes et de l'expérience équivalait à une perte de gains d'environ 2 milliards de dollars annuellement. Cela engendre un accroissement de la pauvreté et génère des coûts sociaux importants, tels que des tensions sociales, de la frustration, une faible participation citoyenne et de l'isolement.

Les défis actuels et futurs de la société québécoise nécessitent certains changements au sein de la population et une volonté politique claire et précise des différents ordres de gouvernement. La participation active des entreprises, des syndicats, des corporations professionnelles, des instances de concertation régionales et locales sont est aussi d'une importance primordiale pour la réussite d'un projet de société juste, démocratique, participative. Pour que le Québec soit une société moderne et exemplaire, il faut que tous ses citoyens se considèrent partie prenante à un projet de société commun.

Dans ce contexte, le Centre d'appui aux communautés immigrantes de Bordeaux-Cartierville (CACI) s'est donné comme mission, depuis 1993, d'aider les personnes immigrantes à mieux s'intégrer, socialement et économiquement, à la société québécoise. Le CACI est un organisme non gouvernemental qui a su, au fil des ans, se faire reconnaître comme une ressource importante pour l'intégration des personnes immigrantes.

Les affaires du Centre sont gérées par un conseil d'administration qui s'occupe principalement des orientations générales du CACI et des ses priorités et objectifs. De plus, le conseil d'administration s'assure de la mise en œuvre du plan d'action annuel et de toute décision prise en assemblée générale des membres.

Entre autres, nos activités couvrent l'accueil et l'établissement des nouveaux arrivants, la francisation, le soutien aux familles monoparentales et aux jeunes mères, l'employabilité, un café-Internet, une halte-garderie et le logement. Bref, le CACI offre une vaste gamme de services visant tous les domaines de l'intégration et de la participation citoyenne. Ces services répartis entre les volets de l'accueil et l'établissement, de la vie communautaire et de l'employabilité mettent aussi l'accent sur la sensibilisation de nos partenaires et de la société d'accueil en général à la problématique des personnes immigrantes en processus d'intégration.

Le service **Accueil et établissement** aide d'abord les gens à s'installer, à apprendre le français, à mieux connaître leur société d'accueil et à créer un réseau social.

Le volet **Vie communautaire** permet aux personnes immigrantes et aux membres de la société d'accueil d'avoir accès à un Café-Internet, à des cours de langues et à de nombreuses activités, notamment socioculturelles et

comprenant des sorties, qui ont pour but d'aider au développement de l'entregent et de réseaux sociaux.

Le volet **Employabilité** regroupe plusieurs programmes. Le programme PANA est axé sur le développement de l'employabilité. Il offre aux personnes immigrantes le soutien requis pour entamer les démarches nécessaires à leur insertion au marché du travail. Le projet « Un pas vers l'emploi » pour les jeunes immigrants scolarisés, le projet « Mentorat » pour les membres des communautés culturelles domiciliés dans l'arrondissement Ahuntsic-Bordeaux-Cartierville et le projet « Immersion professionnelle » sont d'autres programmes offerts par le CACI pour aider à éliminer les obstacles à l'insertion professionnelle des personnes immigrantes dans leurs domaines de compétence.

Un pas vers l'emploi

Le projet « Un pas vers l'emploi » réalisé par le CACI, en collaboration avec les Services intégrés en périnatalité et pour la petite enfance (SIPPE), offre des ateliers de recherche d'emploi utilisant des technologies de pointe. Les immigrants apprennent à faire leurs recherches d'emploi au moyen de logiciels de traitement de texte et d'Internet. Le SIPPE organise aussi des rencontres avec des jeunes immigrantes, nouvellement installées dans le quartier et qui vivent dans un contexte de vulnérabilité extrême. La majorité de ces personnes sont très scolarisées mais elles n'arrivent pas à accéder au marché du travail. Ces ateliers donnent à 30 personnes immigrantes isolées l'occasion de s'exprimer au sein d'un groupe avec l'aide d'une personne-ressource.

Mentorat

Après 12 ans d'expérience, le CACI a bien constaté que l'intégration à moyen et long terme dépend de l'intégration socioéconomique et surtout de l'insertion dans le marché de l'emploi. Le programme de jumelage interculturel a été conçu pour aider la population immigrante à s'orienter, à s'adapter et à s'intégrer à la communauté d'accueil. Le projet « Mentorat » pour les membres des communautés culturelles vise aussi à aider les immigrants à s'intégrer dans leurs domaines de compétence.

Le projet est exécuté par le CACI en collaboration avec la CDEC-Ahuntsic (dans le cadre du Budget d'initiative locale ou BIL) et du CLE-Ahuntsic. Il vise les personnes qui ont acquis leurs diplômes à l'étranger dans les domaines de l'informatique, du génie et de l'administration. Trente participants sont sélectionnés chaque année en fonction des critères d'admissibilité suivants : homme ou femme immigrants; ayant 18 ans ou plus; sans emploi ou sans revenus ou qui sont prestataires de l'assistance-

Le but ultime est l'insertion professionnelle dans le domaine de compétence des participants. Le mentorat nous sert aussi à faire une bonne évaluation du parcours du candidat et à dresser un plan d'action pour bien appuyer le nouvel arrivant dans ses actions jusqu'à l'atteinte de son objectif principal de se trouver un emploi.

emploi ou de l'assurance-emploi; détenant un diplôme d'études universitaires ou ayant une formation spécialisée obtenus dans un autre pays; n'ayant pas exercé dans son domaine professionnel au Québec et qui sont résidents de l'arrondissement Ahuntsic-Cartierville.

Le projet de mentorat aide les participants à définir leurs objectifs professionnels et à recueillir des informations pratiques d'une part sur leurs domaines de compétence et d'autre part sur le travail et la culture propres aux entreprises du Québec. Cette approche promeut le savoir-être et le savoir-faire. Elle encourage les participants à apprendre à connaître les attentes et exigences particulières des employeurs ainsi qu'à créer des occasions d'échanger sur leurs compétences, leur expertise et leur cheminement personnel/professionnel. Le projet permet aux participants de développer un réseau de contacts professionnels et d'améliorer leur propre mise en marché en apprenant à connaître les valeurs nord-américaines.

Les activités du projet se réalisent dans des ateliers animés par des mentors du même domaine de compétence que les participants. Par ailleurs, ce projet permet aux mentors (employeurs et travailleurs) de découvrir des participants, d'avoir une meilleure connaissance de leurs expériences de travail et de reconnaître leurs expertises et leurs habitudes de travail qui constituent des atouts importants pour les employeurs d'ici.

Dans ce projet, nous privilégions une intervention individuelle pour maximiser les chances de la clientèle immigrante. La diversité de la clientèle et des champs professionnels nécessite obligatoirement une intervention personnalisée à chaque étape du projet.

Dans les processus d'intégration en emploi des personnes immigrantes, la connaissance de soi est un élément central. La relation mentor-participant exige une communication ouverte, même si l'accent est mis sur le soi professionnel. Cette relation personnelle et d'intérêt mutuel profite autant aux personnes immigrantes participantes qu'aux mentors.

Il faut souligner que le don de soi n'est pas la seule gratification du mentor; celui-ci ressent une grande valorisation en jouant un rôle dans l'intégration des personnes immigrantes. Les mentors nous ont aussi dit qu'ils prennent plaisir à être en contact avec des personnes immigrantes du même domaine professionnel et ressentent une satisfaction d'avoir les mêmes préoccupations que les autres citoyens vivant au Québec.

Les mentors recrutés ont une expérience significative dans le domaine de compétence du participant; de plus, ils sont motivés et prêts à participer à l'intégration des nouveaux arrivants, à partager leur compréhension de la réalité du marché du travail ainsi qu'à faire connaître les détails de leur profession. Le succès du programme dépend en grande partie des mentors. Le CACI s'assure donc que ceux-ci sont préparés et formés pour bien communiquer et transmettre leurs connaissances et leur apprentissage de leur domaine professionnel.

La préparation des mentors les motive à participer à ce projet et les incite à acquérir les outils nécessaires pour comprendre la réalité du processus migratoire, tels les impacts psychologiques, sociaux, économiques et les obstacles auxquels doivent faire face les nouveaux arrivants. Les mentors

sont capables de comprendre les difficultés associées à l'apprentissage d'une nouvelle langue et les sentiments d'impuissance face au désir absolu de pouvoir intégrer le marché du travail dans son domaine de compétence.

Le mentor est une ressource importante dans l'insertion professionnelle du participant dans la mesure où il peut l'aider à développer de façon significative son réseau de contacts, lui donner les conseils d'un spécialiste du domaine professionnel choisi, l'aider à développer une compréhension partagée des codes culturels ayant cours dans la profession, lui suggérer des pistes d'emploi ou le référer à d'autres employeurs, et si possible lui offrir la possibilité de faire un stage dans son milieu de travail.

Le but ultime du projet est l'insertion professionnelle dans le domaine de compétence des participants. Le mentorat nous sert aussi à faire une bonne évaluation du parcours du candidat et à dresser un plan d'action pour bien appuyer le nouvel arrivant dans ses actions jusqu'à l'atteinte de son objectif principal de se trouver un emploi.

Immersion professionnelle

Les personnes immigrantes rencontrent toutes sortes de difficultés freinant leur pleine intégration sur le marché du travail, par exemple la disqualification, le racisme, la méconnaissance de la culture du travail au Québec, l'ignorance des codes culturels de leur profession et de la terminologie technique, l'absence d'un réseau de contacts professionnels dans leurs champs de compétence et la nonmaîtrise des nouvelles technologies.

En collaboration avec le ministère des Ressources Humaines et du Développement social du Canada, le CACI a lancé un projet d'immersion professionnelle qui a pour but de donner une première expérience de travail québécois rémunéré. Le programme est conçu pour les jeunes membres des communautés culturelles ayant acquis leurs diplômes à l'étranger (niveaux collégial et universitaire) et sans expérience de travail québécois dans leur domaine de compétence.

Pour être considérés, les participants doivent être âgés entre 16 et 30 ans, posséder un diplôme collégial ou universitaire, être sans expérience et/ou formation canadiennes, être en situation de sous-emploi et ne pas toucher de prestations d'assurance emploi. L'objectif d'admission pour 2006-2007 est de 12 candidats.

La dernière étape de ce projet est le placement en emploi et l'accompagnement. Le conseiller en emploi définit un programme de rencontres individuelles régulières avec chacun des participants. Le suivi est effectué en fonction des besoins uniques de chaque participant et de l'employeur. Les participants placés en entreprise reçoivent un appui psychologique qui leur permet de dissiper leurs appréhensions, et de prendre connaissance des exigences de l'employeur.

Grâce à des services adaptés et à une meilleure visibilité de notre organisme auprès de la clientèle visée, nous avons favorisé l'emploi des jeunes membres des communautés culturelles dans notre quartier. Par ailleurs, nous aidons à promouvoir l'idée de la diversité au sein des entreprises et des avantages associés à un milieu de travail pluriel.

Ce programme est un excellent outil qui permet à l'immigrant, d'une part, d'acquérir une première expérience canadienne et, d'autre part, de s'intégrer au marché du

travail. Le but ultime du projet est l'insertion professionnelle dans le domaine de compétence des participants. On peut aussi dire que ce projet connaît du succès auprès des employeurs, qui bénéficient ainsi d'une main-d'œuvre qualifiée.

Ces trois derniers projets ont eu de fort bons résultats. Le taux de placement en emploi est supérieur à 80 %. Nous pouvons donc présumer que ce type d'interventions aide à éliminer les obstacles à l'intégration socioéconomique des personnes immigrantes. Toutefois, nous avons des moyens limités qui ne nous permettent pas de répondre

aux besoins de la clientèle immigrante. Nous avons reçu plus de 600 personnes en 2006, qui auraient aimé bénéficier de nos services d'amélioration de l'employabilité. Cependant, les ressources financières limitées du CACI nous ont permis d'aider seulement 72 personnes durant l'année.

Il serait souhaitable de pouvoir développer des projets aussi efficaces pour nos clients appartenant à d'autres catégories d'immigrants et dans l'incapacité de se trouver un emploi dans leurs domaines de compétence, afin de changer leur perception qu'ils ne contribuent pas à leur société d'accueil.



Canadian Diversity Diversité canadienne

Integration of Newcomers: International Approaches / Intégration des nouveaux arrivants : Approches internationales

The Winter 2006 edition of *Canadian Diversity / Diversité canadienne* provides a comparative perspective on international approaches to the integration of newcomers.

The issue includes profiles of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the European Union, Finland, France, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. There are also thematic articles on civic discourse, challenges to integration, the "second-generation," and a debate on the Danish cartoon controversy.

This issue is the latest in a series of international comparisons on migration and diversity topics. Past issues looked at National Identity and Diversity, International Approaches to Pluralism, and Negotiating Religious Pluralism.

Le numéro de l'hiver 2006 de *Canadian Diversity / Diversité canadienne* fournit une perspective comparative sur les approches internationales en matière d'intégration des nouveaux arrivants.

Ce numéro présente le profil de l'Australie, de l'Autriche, de la Belgique, du Canada, de l'Union européenne, de la Finlande, de la France, d'Israël, de l'Italie, des Pays-Bas, de la Nouvelle-Zélande, de la Norvège, de la Pologne, du Portugal, de l'Espagne, de la Suède et de la Suisse. Il présente également des articles thématiques sur le discours civique, les difficultés d'intégration et la « seconde génération », ainsi qu'un débat sur la controverse touchant les caricatures danoises.

Ce numéro est le dernier d'une série de comparaisons internationales sur les thèmes de la migration et de la diversité. Les numéros passés se sont penchés sur l'identité nationale et la diversité, les approches internationales face au pluralisme et la négociation du pluralisme religieux.

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SUCCESSSES AND STUMBLING BLOCKS

The Creation of a Mentorship Program for Internationally Trained Professionals¹

ABSTRACT

This article describes a mentorship program that was developed by the Employment Help Centre to assist newcomers in their integration into the local labour market. It outlines a number of “lessons learned” that could be applied by other organizations wishing to develop a similar program.

You are by now familiar with the story that Canada is wasting its imported talent: your pizza delivery man mentions that he was once an engineer in India or the lady who cleans your office was a lawyer in Columbia. You have been on a waiting list to see a doctor for three years, but in our counseling offices, we see Sudanese doctors eager to work but not able to. Many view these situations as a shame, but think that there is little they can do.

The Niagara Region is well aware of the problems that newcomers and immigrants face. In addition to the immigrants that the Niagara Region receives, 15% of Canada’s refugees enter at the Fort Erie border and settle in the surrounding cities including St. Catharines and Welland, in Southwestern Ontario. This is a significant number for one region, particularly given the unique needs of refugees. Five years ago, the Employment Help Centre in St. Catharines asked “What can we do about the challenges facing immigrants?” The Centre eventually received funding for a program to help internationally trained professionals move towards licensure and certification; one unique part of this program was the inclusion of a mentorship component.

The goal of the program is to help the internationally trained obtain licenses or employment in their original professions or to gain employment in related fields. We recognized this would be difficult and time-consuming, given the power of the regulatory bodies, so we appointed an advisor responsible for communicating the interests of the internationally trained to the regulatory bodies. The role of the advisor is to work with regulating bodies to advocate for change in their systems.

We also called upon our community to help retain our imported talent. It was a call to action, and our goal was to match internationally trained professionals with Niagara residents in the same field of work. We were excited about the program and sought to find programs in communities comparable to those in the Niagara region. There were few such programs in comparable communities, so we turned to a successful mentorship program at St. Michael’s Hospital in Toronto. The positive energy of the program helped us develop our own program, a program that has had considerable success. Of course, there were many stumbling blocks, which I outline below and share with others who may wish to develop a similar program.

Humble beginnings and mixed messages

We enlisted the assistance of community agencies, newspapers and the radio stations to find Niagara residents who could help internationally trained professionals learn about work in their field in Niagara. This led to our first – and perhaps surprising – stumbling block: too many mentors, not enough mentees. We had anticipated that finding mentors would be the more difficult task, so we had focused our efforts here, with less attention devoted to introducing mentees to the program. Our next difficulty was that it was difficult to make matches because although we had several volunteer mentors, many were in “unique” fields, including ice sculptors, authors and human resources specialists, while our mentees were engineers, nurses, doctors and lawyers. We learned quickly that it is more effective to undertake a needs assessment of the mentees that you have and then target your mentor search in those specific sectors. We immediately developed relationships with the local health boards and engineering chapters. This helped us resolve our matching problem.

We then began to receive feedback from the mentors and learned that some were experiencing what I have heard referred to as “compassion fatigue.” Mentors sympathized with the barriers and roadblocks faced by mentees and felt as though they would “never be able to get this guy a job.” Had

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Jackie Crawford graduated with honours from Brock University with a major in Canadian Studies. She has worked in the employment assistance field for ten years with a focus on programs assisting the internationally trained. Currently she is a Project Manager with the Employment Help Centre in St. Catharines and Welland, managing a program for the internationally trained and a program for mature workers.

we provided mentors with the impression that they were responsible for finding mentees a job? Our expectation was that the mentor would teach the mentee about working in the field in Niagara, would help the mentee develop networks within the community, and would provide some résumé tips to help the mentee tailor his or her résumé specifically to the sector. If the mentor helped the mentee find a job, this was of course a bonus, but it wasn't expected. We thus learned the importance of communicating the goal of the mentorship program and developed mentorship and mentee training workshops so that participants could learn about the expectations of the program.

During these training workshops, we discussed issues that might arise in a mentee/mentor relationship, including the obvious cross-cultural issues, as well as cross-gender mentoring issues. Indeed, on the mentee application form, participants are asked if they would prefer a mentor that is of the same gender as them. We also discussed employer expectations in Canada. Many of our male mentees suggested that they would not be able to work for a female manager, while many of our female mentees offered that they were looking for employment in organizations that were more "female dominated," such as social services. Some mentees were very flexible in their mentor preferences as long as the relationship was in a professional capacity. These mentees were not especially interested in making a lifelong friend, but were more concerned with gaining a lot of information in a short period of time.

Generation gaps were another issue. Some mentees suggested that they would prefer to be mentored by an elder, while other mentees offered that they could not be mentored by someone younger than themselves regardless of the mentor's high employment status or experience.

During our workshops, we would also present various scenarios. One question that always got a laugh was: "What would you do if your mentor asked you out for dinner or for drinks?" It was an important question to ask and allowed us to open up the discussion around appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour. Given that participants are looking to gain something different from the mentorship program, the application form, sign-up packages and workshops were extremely useful.

Workshops were led by our mentorship coordinator who was responsible for collecting data about the participants, recruiting all the mentees and mentors, and making the appropriate matches. The most important aspect of this role was to guide the mentee/mentor relationship and be a sounding board for participants. Just two mentor relationships were discontinued, and the reason was the same in both cases: the mentor was extremely motivated to help, but the mentee was not taking the commitment seriously. Our mentorship coordinator intervened in these relation-

ships, given the mentor's personal, professional and financial contribution to the relationship, and the mentee's failure to show up for paid engagements and follow up with the mentor and our organization. We did not want to lose these committed mentors, so we made more appropriate matches for them.

Fine-tuning the program: communication breakdowns

Mentor feedback also alerted us to our next stumbling block: "I just can't understand him." This we heard from many mentors. We had included a language level requirement for mentee participation in the program, and as mentioned earlier, our Centre assists many refugees for whom, in most cases, English is not their first language. Although we were accustomed to working with newcomers with various accents and levels of language fluency, our mentors were sometimes less able to understand the mentees. As a result, we were matching mentees and not realizing that they might have communication problems with their mentors. We thus included a suggested language level requirement for mentee participation in the program. We found that often, when asked, mentees would admit that it would be best to wait and participate in the mentorship program after they had increased their language levels.

Number crunching

One realization that we had not considered when setting the goals for our program is that not all internationally trained professionals want to be mentored! Some newcomers don't have the time to be mentored; they want to concentrate on language studies, or they just want to get a job. We had mistakenly assumed that all internationally trained professionals participating in our free employment program would want to access our free mentorship program. As such, we noted in our program proposal that 100% of our participants would be mentored. We learned that services must be tailored to the needs of participants, and many of our clients simply did not want the one-on-one, longer-term relationship that our mentorship program was providing. Many clients wanted shorter meetings or wished to participate in a group setting. Based on this, we created Group Mentorship meetings where professionals in engineering, nursing or accounting fields in our community would come and speak to groups of five to ten mentees. These groups usually met three or four times, and often one-on-one meetings were arranged when a mentee needed specific help.

A recipe for success

About six months into the program, we realized we had something to be proud of. Agencies from all over the region enquired about taking advantage of our program for their clients, and the community was involved in

We called upon our community to help retain our imported talent. It was a call to action, and our goal was to match internationally trained professionals with Niagara residents in the same field of work.

creating a solution for a problem that, thus far, governments had been unable to solve. The engineering mentorship program was particularly successful because of the commitment of the mentor who led group and individual mentorships. He was concerned about the problems faced by internationally trained engineers and, along with our job developers, visited employers to outline the advantages of hiring an internationally trained engineer, as well as encouraging his previous employers and contracting partners to hire our mentees. He led courses in project management, as this was his specialty before retiring, and because he had worked all over the world, he contributed his cultural sensitivity and optimism. He did this as a volunteer and, in return, he gained friendships and a new understanding of what it is for a newcomer to live in this country. He assisted more than 60 mentees before illness forced him to reduce his participation in our program.

In addition to the commitment of our volunteers, networking, graduations and rewards were other ingredients in the success of program. We learned early on that every mentor brings with them at least two or three networking connections that could be useful to our mentees. This allowed us to significantly increase our mentor family. Mentors noted that they appreciated that we would contribute articles to newspapers and community magazines about the contributions of our mentors. Recognition was important and included certificates of appreciation, Christmas cards, business cards and business card holders, leather portfolio cases, pens and stationary. Mentees who graduated from our program and found employment in their fields were encouraged to “give back” to the program and participate in the program as a mentor. Clients appreciated hearing success stories from people who were involved in the program.

Outside forces

We then encountered yet another stumbling block: participation drop off. Where were all the clients? At one time, we easily had 30 international clients a month and then suddenly, workshop rooms were empty. The implementation of the Safe Third Country Agreement, which came into effect in December 2004, likely contributed to the decline in participants, which we noted shortly after the Agreement was implemented. Many viewed the Safe Third Country Agreement as a “closing of the border to refugees,” and following its signing in December 2002, hundreds of refugee claimants crossed the bridge in Fort Erie wishing to enter Canada before “the bridge closed.” Many of these refugees sought employment assistance from our Centre and were linked to our program. However, after the implementation of the Agreement, our intake numbers slowly declined to between 10 and 15 international clients per month. Of these, only six to eight were trained in a profession or trade.

Evaluation

Evaluation is key to a successful program and most “program gurus” suggest that the evaluation criteria be

defined before the start of the program. We began our program with such an evaluation, but after a year, we realized that there were just three important questions to ask:

1. Did the mentee and mentor achieve the goals they had set at the beginning of the program?
2. Did they feel that the mentorship coordinator had made an appropriate mentee/mentor match?
3. Were they satisfied with the mentorship component of our program? Would they recommend it to others?

Doing it for the right reasons

As we head into our fifth year of programming, we have successfully matched over 400 mentees and mentors through group mentorship or one-on-one relationships. There is no “right way” to create a mentoring program; you begin by designing a program that will help your organization achieve its goals and that matches its values. At the Employment Help Centre, we wanted to help internationally trained professionals enter the careers and professions that they enjoyed before arriving in Canada. The licensure process is lengthy, and we were concerned that we would lose the talent that we saw among internationally trained professionals who visited our Centre each day. This program helped give some hope to newcomers who felt like they were “spinning their wheels” in this country. We also aimed to encourage and give confidence to our mentees, who often felt that their time in Canada was being “wasted,” or who were embarrassed about their survival jobs. Moreover, some mentees noted that they were losing their partner’s respect because they “couldn’t make it in this country.”

Our community residents really rose to the challenge. Feedback from our evaluation forms highlighted that 86% of our mentee participants were satisfied with our program. The feedback contained thank you notes, and mentees were pleased with the networking connections they were able to make through the program. Seventy percent of our participants became employed through our program, and 68% of those employed gained employment in the field of their original training or related training. Indeed, we do not seek to employ our internationally trained clients in survival jobs; we are working towards employment in their original professions and careers. Our mentorship program has been a great complement to our employment centre, and we base our success on the fact that we started out doing this for all the right reasons.

Note

¹ This article is dedicated to Boyd Henderson, an incredible mentor and friend to our organization who passed away on January 3, 2006, and to retired Executive Director Rudi Masswohl, whose passion and commitment for aiding the internationally trained certainly led the way in this region.

FCR IN KEY SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY

ABSTRACT

This article outlines the role of sector councils in foreign credential recognition. Sector councils are permanent organizations that bring together key stakeholders in an industrial sector. The authors provide examples of some of the activities being undertaken by various councils.

Research suggests that by 2011, Canadians alone will be unable to fill the country's job openings, and immigration will be the source of all net labour force growth. In short, we are fast running out of people.

The recognition of newcomers' competencies and credentials is key to complete integration, both economically and socially. Immigrants face a complex process that includes an overseas application, settlement, and eventual entry into the workforce. Employers' recognition of newcomers' abilities, through a validation of their skills, competencies and credentials, is essential.

According to figures from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), in 2005, 156,310 newcomers arrived in Canada as Economic Immigrants, which includes skilled workers, business immigrants and those who enter under the Provincial and Territorial Nominee Program. There were also 99,141 newcomers to Canada through the Temporary Foreign Workers Program. Finally, another 99,120 immigrants came to Canada through the Family Class or Refugee programs. Newcomers in all of these categories provide a crucial labour supply for the Canadian economy.

Role of sector councils in foreign credential recognition

Sector councils are permanent organizations that bring together key stakeholders in an industrial sector. They typically involve five main partners: employers, employees, educators, governments and other relevant stakeholders (such as regulators). They work closely with the federal government, through Human Resources and Social Development Canada and CIC. Sector councils provide industry-driven labour solutions and are well-placed to provide key insights to governments on the demand for skilled workers in their industries.

Various sector councils have documented critical skills shortages in their industries. For example:

- The Canadian Trucking Human Resource Council estimates that they will require 37,000 truckers a year over the next five years;
- The Construction Sector Council forecasts that they will have 150,000 retiring workers between 2005 and 2014;
- The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council projects there will be 300,000 new jobs over the next decade in their industry; and
- The Mining Industry Human Resource Council estimates that approximately 81,000 workers will be needed in the next decade.

The solution to these skills shortages lies both in the education of Canadians and in increased labour participation by immigrants. Young Canadians have not been educated and trained to sufficiently match the skills gaps that Canada now faces, and the results of a new, more focused approach to education and training will not be immediate. Immigration thus offers a partial solution. The efficient recognition of international training is a win-win situation for the immigrant and employer alike, and will allow Canada to remain competitive.

The industries represented by Canada's sector councils, numbered at more than 30, cover some 50% of the Canadian economy and require skilled workers at all points in the education and training spectrum. This includes lower-skilled and frontline workers, to mid-level skilled workers and tradespersons, to highly educated workers in business management, science, technology and international trade.

The Alliance of Sector Councils (TASC), through its Working Group on Foreign Credential Recognition and Immigration, brings sector councils together to address common issues and challenges in the integra-

tion of internationally trained individuals into their industries. With the help of this Working Group, TASC has recently published *Who Does What in FCR*, a report that provides an overview of the wide range of federal, provincial, municipal, educational and other non-governmental organizations involved in the recognition of internationally trained workers.

Highlights from selected sector councils

Several councils have begun to address the recognition of foreign credentials and competencies. While foreign credentials are generally understood as paper-based qualifications, such as certifications or degrees, foreign competencies include work experience and other assets. The following is a thumbnail sketch of what some sector councils are doing to address the needs of their particular industries:

Canadian Aviation Maintenance Council (CAMC)

The CAMC has developed Prior Learning and Foreign Credential Assessment and Recognition System (PLFCAR), a program built on integrating two key processes: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) and Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR).

Canadian Tourism Human Resources Council (CTHRC)

The CTHRC is conducting research on FCR for non-regulated professions. Areas of research include: overview of federal immigration programs; immigrant-serving agencies; educator engagement and review of existing credit transfer/credential recognition systems; review of foreign systems; review of regulatory practices; review of legal concerns in creating a FCR model; and employers' views.

Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council (CTHRC)

The Trucking Foreign Competency Recognition Project is designed to review Canada's need for foreign-trained workers in the trucking industry, to ensure that there exists a mechanism that recognizes the competencies of foreign-trained workers; and to establish a system to create seamless work transitions for new Canadians whose competencies have been recognized.

Environmental Careers Organization of Canada (ECO Canada)

ECO Canada's work includes the administration of a nationally recognized environmental certification program that demonstrates an environmental practitioner's level of competency to employers, clients and peers. A CEPIT designation verifies foreign credentials and allows newcomers to gain a Canadian designation, which increases their chances of employment (see Moss and Trump in this volume).

Information Communications Technology Council (ICTC)

ICTC developed a report on barriers to recruitment and integration of internationally educated professionals (IEPs) to better understand the issues as they pertain to Canada's ICT sector. In this first phase of the IEP initiative (entitled Building the IT Framework for Internationally Educated Professionals), ICTC has conducted research and developed partnerships to build a framework to enable Canada to become a worldwide leader in the attraction, retention and integration of IEPs into the ICT sector.

Construction Sector Council (CSC)

This council conducted a Study of Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Credentials in the construction industry and has established a Construction Industry Immigrant Employment Program.

Canadian Plastics Sector Council (CPSC)

In early 2005, the CPSC engaged in a series of four consultation sessions, Profitability in Diversity, with plastics industry representatives as well as representatives of four employment groups: Aboriginal peoples, newcomers to Canada, persons with physical disabilities and women.

Textiles Human Resources Council (THRC)

The Foreign Workers Program will develop industry-wide surveys to benchmark the skills required in various textile occupations. Based on industry benchmarks, a survey tool is being developed to compare skills and experience of incoming foreign workers.

Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Council (CARS)

CARS' Research Study on Internationally Trained Workers is an in-depth study that investigates how well internationally trained automotive

repair and service workers are able to integrate into the Canadian workforce, what supports are available to them and where gaps exist.

Two associate members of TASC, who work closely with all sector councils, also have projects underway. These include:

Canadian Council of Professional Engineers

The Canadian Council of Professional Engineers has introduced From Consideration to Integration (FC2I), aimed at developing new processes and/or improving current processes by which international engineering graduates (IEGs) are able to obtain an engineering licence without compromising public safety or lowering professional standards, and to find meaningful engineering employment (see Lemay in this volume).

Young Canadians have not been educated and trained to sufficiently match the skills gaps that Canada now faces, and the results of a new, more focused approach to education and training will not be immediate. Immigration thus offers a partial solution.

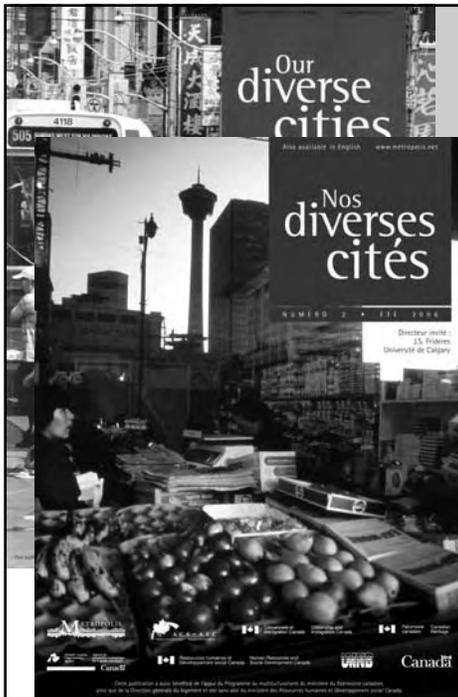
Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)

ACCC has developed a program that will conduct pre-assessment of immigrants after they have been accepted to migrate, but before they leave their country of origin. Offices are being opened in New Delhi, Hong Kong and Manila. This is a pilot project that could be replicated elsewhere (see Murray in this volume).

For more information on any of these councils, please visit the TASC Website (www.councils.org), which features a listing of all sector councils and relevant links.

Conclusion

As a range of economic stakeholders now address the urgent need to bring in immigrants with a variety of skills, the debate has changed. Twenty years ago, foreign credential recognition was only about helping the immigrant in their new land. Today it has taken a major additional step as it has also become a matter of keen interest for business and hence for the Canadian economy. The opportunity for long-lasting solutions is enormous and should be seized.



Our Diverse Cities Nos diverses cités

Our Diverse Cities is a special Metropolis series that examines issues related to diversity, integration and immigration in cities. Research findings, policy approaches and community-based initiatives are highlighted in concise articles contributed from across the country. Volume 1 (Spring 2004) focuses on immigration and diversity and its impact on larger Canadian cities. It includes articles on housing and homelessness, infrastructure and planning, policing and justice, parks and recreation, political participation, health, arts and culture, and demographics. Volume 2 (Spring 2006) focuses on immigration and diversity in so-called second- and third-tier Canadian cities. It includes cases studies from cities in every province and is aimed at increasing awareness about the impact and response to immigration and diversity in different sized cities. Two future volumes are planned. One will look at immigration to cities in Ontario, while another will look at immigration to small towns and rural communities.

The series has been disseminated to more than 60,000 policy-makers, researchers and NGOs. It has also been assigned as course reading in university classes across the country.

Nos diverses cités est une série spéciale de Metropolis qui examine les questions liées à la diversité, à l'intégration et à l'immigration dans les villes. Les résultats des études, les approches politiques et les initiatives communautaires sont mis en évidence dans des articles concis auxquels contribuent des personnes de tout le pays. Le volume 1 (printemps 2004) porte sur l'immigration et la diversité et leurs répercussions sur les grandes villes canadiennes. Il comprend des articles sur le logement et les sans-abri, l'infrastructure et la planification, le maintien de l'ordre et la justice, les parcs et les loisirs, la participation politique, la santé, les arts et la culture, ainsi que la démographie. Le volume 2 printemps 2006) porte sur l'immigration et la diversité dans les villes canadiennes de taille moyenne et de petite taille. Il comprend des études de cas de villes de chaque province et vise à accroître la sensibilité à l'égard de l'impact et de la réponse à l'immigration et à la diversité dans les villes de différentes tailles. Deux futurs volumes sont prévus. L'un portera sur l'immigration dans les villes de l'Ontario, et l'autre, sur l'immigration dans les petites villes et collectivités rurales. Cette série a été distribuée à plus de 60 000 décideurs, chercheurs et ONG. Elle a également été distribuée comme documents à lire pour des cours universitaires, dans tout le pays.

To obtain a copy of Volume 1 or 2 in English or French / Pour obtenir un exemplaire du volume 1 ou 2, en français ou en anglais : canada@metropolis.net

This declaration is excerpted from Schedule 1 of the Application for Permanent Residence, which can be found on Citizenship and Immigration Canada's website: http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/kits/forms/imm0008_1e.pdf. All immigrants applying for permanent residency sign this declaration prior to entering Canada.

Authority to disclose personal information

By submitting this form, you consent to the release to Canadian government authorities of all records and information any government authority, including police, judicial and state authorities in all countries in which you have lived may possess on your behalf concerning any investigations, arrests, charges, trials, convictions and sentences. This information will be used to assist in evaluating your suitability for admission to Canada or remaining in Canada pursuant to Canadian legislation.

Declaration

This declaration covers the information I have provided on this form and all the information submitted in my application for permanent residence as well as in the attached schedules and accompanying documents.

- I declare that the information I have given is truthful, complete and correct.
- I understand that if I wish to work in a regulated occupation, it is my responsibility to obtain information on the licensing requirements from the appropriate regulatory body in Canada and that should I be issued a permanent resident visa for Canada, I am not guaranteed employment in Canada in my occupation or in any other occupation.

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- I understand that should I be issued a permanent resident visa for Canada, conditions may be imposed on me at the time of its issuance and that I will be required to meet them.
- I understand all the foregoing statements, having asked for and obtained an explanation on every point that was not clear to me.
- I realize that once this document has been completed and signed, it will form part of my Immigration Record and will be used to verify my family details on future applications.
- I will immediately inform the Canadian visa office where I submitted my application if any of the information or the answers provided in my application forms change.

Signature

Date

Day	Month	Year

DO NOT COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SECTION NOW. YOU MAY BE ASKED TO SIGN IN THE PRESENCE OF A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT OR AN OFFICIAL APPOINTED BY THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT.

Solemn declaration

I, , do solemnly declare that the information I have given in the foregoing application is truthful, complete and correct, and I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing it to be true and knowing that it is of the same force and effect as if made under oath.

Signature of applicant

Interpreter declaration

I, , do solemnly declare that I have faithfully and accurately interpreted in the language the content of this application and any related forms to the person concerned.

I have been informed by the person concerned, and I do verily believe, that he or she completely understands the nature and effect of these forms, and I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing it to be true and knowing that it is of the same force and effect as is made under oath.

Signature of interpreter

Declared before me at this day of of the year

Canadian Government official Name Signature
Please print or type

The information you provide on this form is collected under the authority of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and will be used for the purpose of assessing your application for permanent residence in Canada. This information will be retained in the Personal Information Bank CIC PPU 039 entitled Overseas Immigration Case File. Under the provisions of the *Privacy Act* and the *Access to Information Act*, individuals have the right to protection of and access to their personal information. Instructions for obtaining information are provided in InfoSource, a copy of which is located in all Citizenship and Immigration Offices.

THE INCLUSION OF SKILLED MIGRANTS INTO THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET

Research Relevant to the Development of More Person-Centred Policies

ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview of two studies that will be published in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of International Migration and Integration*. The studies look at the employment barriers faced by skilled immigrants and document their personal experiences using a variety of quantitative and qualitative approaches by researchers from different theoretical persuasions and disciplines in different immigrant-receiving countries. The two studies suggest that a person-centred approach to policy development is needed to address the structural barriers that foreign-trained migrants face.

The Canadian government has made considerable efforts to recruit highly skilled immigrants over the last 15 years. As such, it is hardly surprising that the 2001 Census shows that native-born Canadians tend to be less educated than Canadians born in another country (Mulder and Korenic 2005). By and large, the majority of these highly educated individuals did not emigrate from Western Europe as in the past, but rather from Asia (58.2% versus 19.5% for immigrants arriving between 1991 and 2001). Indeed, the most recent census shows that in 2001, 9% of the Canadian population was composed of immigrants who could be described as racialized Canadians of mostly Chinese (28%), South Asian (24%), Black (13%) or Filipino (8%) ethnic origin (Ibid.). That is, the policy of recruiting highly skilled immigrants from around the world has made Canada both more competitive and more culturally diverse.

Since 1967, people have been admitted as economic class immigrants to Canada under a points system which, for most, emphasizes the value of both their educational qualifications and their work experience. Therefore, foreign-trained, skilled personnel receive the implicit message that Canadian employers and professional accreditation bodies will recognize and value their credentials and work experience should they decide to immigrate to Canada. Unfortunately, this implication is unfounded as the Canadian government has no mechanisms in place to ensure such recognition. Indeed, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that Canadian employers and professional accreditation bodies are not up to the task of evaluating the merit of foreign qualifications and work experience obtained in countries from very distant parts of the world. Specifically, a human capital approach to research investigating this issue has shown that foreign qualifications and work experience are consistently undervalued resulting in initial wage gaps that for recent immigrants, particularly immigrants of colour, are much larger than in the past (Grant and Sweetman 2004, Li 2003, Picot 2004). Further, a recent, fine-grain analysis of income differentials by field of study (Anisef, Sweet and Frempong 2003) illustrates a particularly pernicious aspect of this problem. It shows that immigrants tend to be trained in prestigious professions that are associated with the highest incomes within the Canadian labour market (e.g., engineering, physical sciences and commerce). Yet racialized Canadians with foreign training in these fields of study were the ones who tended to be most underpaid relative to White, native-born Canadians. Further, other research suggests that the initial wage gap for racialized immigrants is an important pay equity issue because it results from both an undervaluing of the immigrant's professional credentials and from discrimination, with women being especially adversely affected (Boyd 1999, Li 2003, Reitz 2001).

Essentially then, many highly skilled immigrants, particularly immigrants who are members of a visible minority, suffer considerable downward mobility upon their arrival in Canada. That is, they are often unemployed or underemployed with disproportionate numbers living below the low income cut-off relative to native-born Canadians. Here, a recent analysis by Picot (2004) is pertinent as it shows that the proportion of Canadians born in another country who were living below the low

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income cut-off increased from 24.6% in 1980 to 35.8% in 2000, while the proportion of native-born Canadians living below the low income cut-off declined from 17.2% to 14.3% during the same period. Further, these proportions vary substantially by source country, such that increases in the proportion living below the low income cut-off are confined to immigrants from Asia, Africa and the poorer European countries outside of Western Europe.

Clearly, a human capital approach has great value in documenting the nature and extent of the barriers to economic integration faced by highly trained immigrants from Asia and other regions of the world. In my view, however, policies developed to allow them access to higher echelons of Canada's labour market must be grounded in the experiences of the immigrants themselves. That is, the human capital approach is limited because, while it can document the impoverishment of recent skilled immigrants in terms of income and employment status, it can only detail how or suggest why these negative outcomes occur in very broad terms. Thus policy designed to address this important social issue is hamstrung by a lack of relevant detail. The papers in an upcoming special issue of the *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, which will be published this year under my editorship, provide such detail and, therefore, can offer an empirical base for new policy directions that are more person-centred than those developed in the past. The studies in this special issue document the personal experiences of skilled immigrants facing employment barriers using a variety of quantitative and qualitative approaches by researchers from different theoretical persuasions and disciplines in different immigrant-receiving countries. I find it both interesting and heartening that, in this special issue, the findings, the conclusions, and the policy recommendations described in the articles are both compatible and complementary. This provides triangulation of the broadest kind. In the remainder of this brief article, I will describe two articles that have been accepted for publication in the special issue (some are still under review) to illustrate this point by drawing out similarities between their findings, conclusions, and recommendations. In this way, the reader can gain some feel for the general policy directions suggested by this new body of work and, hopefully, will gain an appetite for more.

A questionnaire study by Grant and Nadin (in press) focuses on the psychological reactions of a sample of highly skilled, foreign-trained personnel (mostly skilled migrants) who had recently emigrated from Asia or Africa (N = 180) and experienced credentialing problems. The sample was obtained from a moderate-size city in the Prairies using the extensive local contacts of trained research assistants, who themselves had recently emigrated from Asia and Africa. The typical respondent was in her or his thirties, was married with at least one child, and of Christian (46%) or Islamic (25%) faith. Although English was not

the mother tongue of any of the respondents, about half had been educated in English and even more had learned to speak English as a child (60%). Given their ongoing credentialing problems it was shocking but not surprising to learn that 83% had a personal income of less than \$30,000 a year. This stark fact can be juxtaposed against the respondents' considerable skill level and work experience: most (91%) had a university degree in a wide range of fields spanning natural and applied sciences, health, education, social sciences, and business and finance, and they had worked in their profession, on average, for nine years prior to emigrating. Respondents had made a great deal of effort to obtain a suitable job in their profession, but to no avail. Indeed, about half stated that it was "very difficult" or "impossible" to obtain recognition of their credentials from Canadian employers, or to find a job that fully utilized their training and experience. Almost a third had never worked at a job that drew on their professional skills and two-thirds had had to take one or two unskilled jobs because their family needed the money. All in all, the evidence showed that these highly skilled professionals have experienced considerable downward mobility since coming to Canada.

Many highly skilled immigrants, particularly immigrants who are members of a visible minority, suffer considerable downward mobility upon their arrival in Canada.

Recognizing that their unsatisfactory employment situation was partially due to a lack of recognition of their foreign credentials, many respondents felt forced to repeat their training or to obtain training in a related field at a Canadian university. While this was not felt to be difficult, it did cause considerable financial hardship. Indeed, respondents who retrained in this way suggested that increased financial assistance, more advanced language training, and more opportunities to retrain would be of most help. Of course, some respondents (20%) also suggested that recognition of their foreign credentials should be

made a priority, and this suggestion has added poignancy given that a formal credentials assessment by a Canadian assessment agency was judged to be of little use (only 12% felt that it helped them find a job).

A major section of the questionnaire asked respondents for their psychological reactions to their situation. Most (74%) were surprised that they were finding it so hard to obtain a suitable job in Canada. Just over half of the respondents stated that their experiences with Canadian employers were more negative than they expected, that their credentials and work experience were not valued, and that Canadian employers treated immigrants unfairly. Furthermore, almost 90% of the respondents felt that immigrants faced discriminatory barriers as they tried to enter the Canadian labour market. It is unsurprising that the situation the respondents faced evoked strong negative emotions which were a mixture of disappointment, sadness and hurt, with frustration, resentment and anger. In a separate paper, I show that these feelings, together with the belief that Canadian employers discriminate against immigrants in general, predict intentions to

engage in protest actions such as lobbying, attending meetings, signing petitions and taking part in peaceful demonstrations (Grant 2005). That is, the current barriers to accessing the Canadian labour market for foreign-trained personnel in Canada represent a waste of skilled human capital and have the potential to create social unrest. Clearly, this is an undesirable situation.

In Switzerland, there is also an increasing number of skilled immigrants, with national statistics collected in 2000 showing that 62% of recently arrived foreigners to Switzerland are university-trained. The underlying assumption seems to be that skilled, better-educated workers will assimilate into the labour market more easily than the unskilled but, like Canada, this is clearly not the case. Noting this, Riano and Baghdadi (in press) studied foreign-trained immigrant women for four specific reasons. First, skilled labour migration has been increasingly feminized, but this fact has been largely ignored by researchers who have concentrated on the exploitation of unskilled women. Second, labour market statistics from several immigrant-receiving countries show that highly skilled immigrant women fare less well than immigrant men in the host country's labour market. Third, there is a need to investigate skilled, foreign-trained personnel who enter the host country as family-class immigrants, many of whom are women, as often they face special problems (e.g., Switzerland does not allow family class immigrants a permanent work permit, which severely limits their employment opportunities). And fourth, existing research is focused mostly on science and technology, to the relative neglect of health, social services and education, the segments of the labour market where skilled immigrant women are concentrated.

The researchers, who are geographers, used a feminist theoretical framework and a qualitative methodological approach in contrast to the approach used by Grant and Nadin (in press). Specifically, they constructed detailed case studies of 57 skilled immigrant women from Latin America, the Middle East, and South East Europe (Kosovo, Bosnia, Montenegro) of both Islamic and Christian faith. This population has not been studied in Switzerland, but represents current migration trends in Switzerland. Using theoretical sampling, the authors chose cases that represent a wide range of situations for women of different categories: immigration status (refugee, immigrant, family class, and so on), age (28 to 60 years), length of residence (3 to 30 years), and family situation. Very few emigrated for work-related reasons (most were family class immigrants), although the Latin American women usually entered Switzerland through marriage, while the others usually came to escape political strife in their countries of origin. Most in the sample were highly trained, university-educated women (largely trained in

business, commerce or social sciences). Proportionately more Latin American women emigrated to Switzerland with foreign credentials and work experience, while the others tended to come at a younger age and completed their university education in Switzerland.

Riano and Baghdadi (in press) used an interpretive biography method in which, through discussions, groups of respondents would interpret each person's life history just prior to and following emigration with the participants and the researchers producing this knowledge jointly. Then individual interviews were used to obtain a more detailed and accurate narrative of each person's history.

In spite of the fact that this study is so different from that of Grant and Nadin, the findings of the two studies are largely complementary. For example, Riano and Baghdadi find that the three most common types of labour force participation by their respondents were a) not in labour market (30%), b) employed below skill level (25%), and c) employed at appropriate skill level (45%).

Further, employment was usually short-term and intermittent with only 10 (18%) of the respondents holding a permanent, full-time position in which they could fully utilize their professional skills. As well, both studies showed how repeating their education in the host country was a strategy for gaining access to the labour market, but that this was hard to finance. Finally, both studies showed that many immigrants volunteer as a way to circumvent the "catch-22" they face: the need for work experience in their new country in order to convince employers to give them work experience in their new country!

While reinforcing each other's main findings, these two studies illustrate the complementarity provided by using different theoretical and methodological approaches. This is illustrated most clearly when examining the different policy

recommendations stressed by these two sets of researchers. Riano and Baghdadi choose to discuss various specific strategies adopted by the different women in their sample as a way to illustrate how class, ethnicity and gender combine to disadvantage (and sometimes advantage) different women in different ways. In particular, they discuss four strategies that women commonly use in response to the labour market barriers they face. These are 1) re-skilling (gaining qualifications in the host country), 2) taking any, often part-time job for financial and family reasons (often their cultural knowledge gives them an advantage), 3) using available, non-traditional resources to gain further qualifications (e.g., put children in day care or rely on husband to care for the children), and 4) abandoning career goals and becoming stay-at-home mothers. Riano and Baghdadi's general point, derived from a detailed examination of individual life stories of very different women, is that women follow different

It is important to develop flexible immigration policy initiatives that can address structural barriers to the skilled labour market in the context of the career goals and the financial circumstances of foreign-trained migrants, themselves.

strategies when faced with different life circumstances. For example, they note that in Switzerland, “paradoxically more opportunities were available to women who entered as refugees, became single mothers and had low incomes,” illustrating the importance of developing social policies which address the particular employment-related barriers to the skilled Swiss labour market. It is instructive to note that the main policy recommendation made by Grant and Nadin complements this general point. This new policy direction is to give skilled immigrants clear career paths to follow so that they can regain their professional qualifications in a reasonable length of time. Adopting this policy direction would mean that more women would pursue the re-skilling strategy than before. Clearly, this is the desired option from a human capital perspective, but as importantly, it is likely to be practically useful because, as Riano and Baghdadi show, this is the option that all their highly trained respondents strongly desired when they first immigrated to Switzerland. Together, the two studies suggest that it is important to develop flexible immigration policy initiatives that can address structural barriers to the skilled labour market in the context of the career goals and the financial circumstances of foreign-trained migrants themselves. I believe that this more person-centred approach to policy development is what is needed if Canada is to fully realize the benefits of recruiting talented, highly trained personnel from around the world.

For information on the *Journal of International Migration and Integration*'s special issue on Foreign Training and Work Experience: The Skilled Immigrants' Perspective, please visit <http://transactionpub.metapress.com/link.asp?id=120165> or www.jimi.metropolis.net.

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La présente déclaration est tirée de l'annexe 1 de la demande de résidence permanente, qui figure sur le site Web de Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada à l'adresse : http://www.ci.gc.ca/cicexplore/francais/form/imm0000/0008f_1.pdf. Tout personne qui demande la résidence permanente doit signer la présente déclaration avant d'entrer au Canada.

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Autorisation de divulguer des renseignements personnels

En soumettant ce formulaire, vous consentez à ce que soit communiqué au gouvernement canadien par toute instance gouvernementale, y compris les autorités policières, judiciaires et civiles de tout pays où vous avez résidé, tout dossier ou toutes informations qu'elles pourraient détenir à votre sujet concernant toute enquête, arrestation, inculpation, condamnation, peine et tout procès. Ces renseignements seront utilisés pour évaluer votre admissibilité à immigrer au Canada ou à y demeurer en vertu de la législation canadienne.

Déclaration

Cette déclaration s'applique aux renseignements que j'ai inscrits sur ce formulaire et, s'il y a lieu, tous les renseignements fournis dans ma demande de résidence permanente ainsi que dans les annexes et les pièces justificatives qui y sont jointes.

- Je déclare que les renseignements que j'ai donnés sont véridiques, complets et exacts.
- Je reconnais que toute fausse déclaration de ma part ou dissimulation d'un fait important pourra entraîner mon exclusion du Canada et que la délivrance d'un visa de résident permanent du Canada ne me garantit pas un emploi au Canada dans mon domaine ou ma profession ou dans tout autre domaine ou profession.

- Je reconnais que si je souhaite exercer une profession réglementée, il m'incombe de me renseigner sur les critères d'obtention d'un permis d'exercice auprès de l'organisme compétent au Canada et que la délivrance d'un visa de résident permanent du Canada ne me garantit pas un emploi au Canada dans mon domaine ou ma profession ou dans tout autre domaine ou profession.
- Je reconnais que la délivrance d'un visa de résident permanent du Canada peut être assujettie à des conditions auxquelles je devrai satisfaire au préalable.
- Je déclare avoir compris tous les éléments du présent formulaire, ayant, au besoin, demandé et obtenu une explication de chacun des points que je ne comprenais pas bien.
- Je comprends que le présent document, une fois rempli et signé, fait partie de mon dossier d'immigration et qu'il servira à vérifier les informations sur ma famille pour toute demande ultérieure.
- Je préviendrai immédiatement le bureau canadien des visas où j'ai présenté ma demande si certaines des informations ou réponses fournies dans les formulaires de demande changent.

Signature

Date

Jour	Mois	Année

NE PAS REMPLIR IMMÉDIATEMENT LA SECTION SUIVANTE. ON PEUT VOUS DEMANDER DE LA SIGNER EN PRÉSENCE D'UN REPRÉSENTANT DU GOUVERNEMENT CANADIEN OU D'UNE AUTRE PERSONNE DÉSIGNÉE OFFICIELLEMENT PAR LE GOUVERNEMENT DU CANADA.

Déclaration solennelle

Je, , déclare que les renseignements que j'ai donnés dans la présente demande sont véridiques, complets et exacts, et je fais cette déclaration solennelle la croyant en conscience vraie et sachant qu'elle a la même force et le même effet que si elle était faite sous serment.

Signature du requérant

Déclaration de l'interprète

Je soussigné(e), , déclare solennellement que j'ai interprété fidèlement et exactement, en (langue), le contenu de la présente demande et de tous les formulaires connexes pour la personne concernée.

Cette dernière m'a dit, et je le crois vraiment, qu'elle comprend parfaitement la nature et l'objet de ces formulaires, et je fais cette déclaration solennelle la croyant en conscience vraie et sachant qu'elle a la même force et le même effet que si elle était faite sous serment.

Signature de l'interprète

Déclaré devant moi à ce jour de de l'an

Représentant du gouvernement du Canada Nom en lettres moulées Signature

Les renseignements que vous fournissez dans le présent document sont recueillis en vertu de la *Loi sur l'immigration et la protection des réfugiés* pour déterminer si vous pouvez être admis au Canada à titre de résident permanent et seront versés au fichier de renseignements personnels numéro CIC PPU 039 intitulé *Dossiers des immigrants des missions à l'étranger*. Ils sont protégés et accessibles en vertu de la *Loi sur la protection des renseignements personnels* et de la *Loi sur l'accès à l'information*. Les instructions sur les moyens d'obtenir des renseignements sont publiées dans InfoSource, dont vous pouvez obtenir un exemplaire dans tous les bureaux de Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada.

SKILLS INTERNATIONAL

Linking Internationally Educated and Trained Professionals with Employers in Canada

ABSTRACT

Canada is increasingly dependent on immigrants for population growth, as well as for bringing skills to strengthen communities and fuel our economy. Yet we know that immigrant skills – the very skills we need – are not being used to their full potential. This means we all lose. Immigrants lose the opportunity to contribute productively to the economy, as well as to provide for themselves and their families. As a country, we lose the competitive edge immigrants provide in a global marketplace. Central to this issue is the difficulty that employers face in finding work-ready, skilled immigrants. Skills International bridges this gap. The first of its kind in Canada, this tool unites pre-screened, internationally trained individuals with employers who need their skills. It is cost-effective, efficient and easy to use.

The issue

For almost a decade, between 1992 and 2001, Canada was ranked as one of “the best places in the world to live in.” This ranking was published in the *United Nations’ Human Development Report* and is based on a measurement of several quality of life factors. Our economic indicators are also considered one of the best in the world. Canada’s gross domestic product per capita was US\$29,480 in 2002, compared to US\$26,050 in Sweden and US\$28,260 in Australia. As a result of these factors, Canada continues to successfully attract educated and trained immigrant professionals, many of whom come to Canada through the skilled worker class.

This is important, given demographic trends. For example, many developed countries are experiencing low birth rates that will result in a decrease in overall population if they do not compensate for this with a population increase through immigration. Canada’s current fertility rate of 1.5 children per woman means parents are not even “replacing” themselves. This will mean a continuing aging of the population to the point where deaths will outpace births within the next 20 years. As a result, Canada’s population will likely decline.

A recent editorial in the *Toronto Star* noted that “when the median age in Canada hits 42.5 years in 2020, in Europe it will be 52 years, which will mean the competition for capable immigrants is going to be fierce.” Canada will be competing with these other countries to attract the best and brightest from a global talent pool, and this will have implications for labour force growth. In Ontario alone, immigration currently accounts for an estimated 70% of the province’s net labour force growth, and it will account for all of the net labour force growth within the next 6 years (Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration 2005).

To maintain and grow our economic base and standard of living, Canada needs an effective immigration policy to attract immigrants who can contribute to our economy. There is a clear need for immigration in Canada to address these issues, and Canada is generally able to attract immigrants. Indeed, a study by Statistics Canada found that the country “ranked first among G8 nations with a net international migration rate of 0.61% between 1994 and 2004.” Net international migration rate “is the change in population when the number of people who leave the country are subtracted from the number of immigrants” (Weber 2005).

Two pieces of the puzzle must be put together. We have the need and the resources for immigrants, but we are missing tools to effectively use these resources. We know, for example, that the talent and resources of internationally educated and trained professionals who have chosen Canada as their new home are not being fully utilized. The Conference Board of Canada conducted a study in 2001 assessing the impact of unrecognized education, noting that “eliminating the current learning recognition gap would enable Canadians to earn an additional \$4.1 billion to \$5.9 billion in income annually.” (Bloom and Grant 2001, 1-2). In another article, Jeffrey Reitz indicates “skill under-utilization amounts to \$2.4 billion annually.” (Reitz 2001, 26)

Employers have identified several key factors contributing to the under-utilization of the skills of internationally educated and trained professionals. These factors range from certification to educational equivalence, language, and Canadian work experience. Skills International was developed to

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Sohail Khan has been with Skills International as the project manager and director since the inception of the project in 2004. He brings over 15 years of experience in IT and business management.

assist in addressing these issues, as well as other barriers that internationally education and trained professionals face in obtaining relevant employment.

The project

Skills International is a project sponsored by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and is currently funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. It is an Internet-based initiative that highlights the talent and skills of pre-screened internationally educated and trained professionals already residing in Canada and already deemed qualified as “job ready.”

Skills International is a collaborative project led by WIL Employment Connections in London, Ontario; COSTI Immigrant Services in Toronto; and the New Canadians Program operated by the Waterloo Region District School Board. It was launched in March 2006.

Skills International collaborates with community-based agencies that prepare newcomers to meet the needs and expectations of employers in Canada. Skills International’s role is to connect and market “job-ready” internationally educated and trained professionals with employers who need their skills. Employers register with Skills International and search the database for prospective employees with the relevant skills they seek by using an easy to use “e-matching” tool.

The Skills International solution

The application allows employers to quickly search numerous criteria, including required skills and competencies, certification, work experience and past employers. Employers post opportunities, which remain active in the system, and candidates who best fit the job requirements are automatically sought. This allows employers to continually search for specific sets of skills and competencies. In addition, Human Resources professionals can create a “hiring community” within a posting, send login information to members of the hiring committee, view prospective candidates, and share recommendations and comments with the hiring committee members.

Skills International is unique in that employers control the process and review and initiate contact with prospective candidates whom they identify. Employers also have access to more detailed candidate information than that which is available in a standard résumé. Electronic copies of educational degrees and certifications, letters of recommendation and references, information pertaining to regulatory and licensure status for regulated professions, and an optional video introduction are all available to registered employers through Skills International.

It is our goal to provide proper and accurate information about candidates, who are vetted and then directed to the hiring manager within an organization by

their individual employment advisor at the community-based agency assisting them.

Currently, there appears to be a disconnect between the information that internationally educated and trained professionals have on their skills, education and previous work experience, and how this information is actually presented and communicated to employers in Canada. To make this process more effective, it must be standardized, so that the information model is trusted, effectively communicated, and understood by all stakeholders. A survey by the Public Policy Forum found that “collecting information on these skills and communicating them to employees will help employers to better understand how they can more strategically and effectively access the skills they need from immigrants in their communities” (Lopes and Poisson 2004, 26).

Employers have identified the need to trust information that is provided by internationally educated and trained professionals and to better understand how their credentials and experience compare to those of Canadians. In an Environics survey, 72% of employers indicated that it would be useful to have access to a résumé validation and reference checking service when considering the hiring of internationally trained and educated professionals (Leebosh 2004, 92).

Skills International is geared toward meeting the needs of employers who want to access high-level skills, but may experience difficulties in finding candidates possessing the required skills. Currently, a reference and employment verification process is being implemented for internationally educated and trained professionals listed with Skills International. This will allow employers the ability to evaluate and assess candidates who have already been verified by a third-party organization in terms of previous verifications of employment

history and references. This is a unique feature that helps to mitigate delays that typically occur during the process of verifying employment history and references, delays that can sometimes last several weeks to months. This feature is an added attraction for small- and medium-sized organizations that provide over 50% of the job opportunities to internationally educated and trained professionals. These organizations typically do not have the time and resources to perform certain verifications, so this feature is an added value for them.

In addition, Skills International provides valuable employer feedback to agencies, which helps them adapt and direct the various training and preparation programs offered to newcomers. This employer feedback has also been used to update and improve the functionality of the application and to help streamline employers’ hiring processes.

Employers have indicated that internationally educated and trained professionals must also take responsibility and

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better prepare for the Canadian job market by improving their marketing and interviewing skills. This issue was also identified in research performed by the Public Policy Forum where employers indicated, “In the focus groups, survey findings were reinforced by employers who complained that even when immigrants present excellent résumés and qualifications they cannot hire them because immigrants are often unable to describe their skills and experience in an interview” (Leebosh 2004, 24).

In collaboration with the community-based agencies with which it works, Skills International is implementing Internet technology that will allow candidates to independently hone their interview skills. The technology will allow them to perform an unlimited number of practice interviews and share the results with their counsellors so that comments and feedback can be provided. As the technology is enhanced, it will allow employers to post questions and view interviews of the candidates they are evaluating.

Candidates listed on Skills International are able to create their profile and update it with all content being filtered and approved by either their individual counsellor or by Skills International. Their counsellors have also viewed all additional documents, which are scanned and attached to the candidate’s profile. This approval process provides an additional check on the data that is being published about and by the candidate.

Regional approach – national objective

Presently, Skills International is an Ontario-based project funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. Skills International currently has participation agreements with community-based agencies and employers across Ontario. Our long-term goal is to turn Skills International into a national project, with working relationships with community-based agencies and employers throughout Canada.

This is, in part, because our candidate population is one that tends to be mobile, particularly when they are seeking employment opportunities in their respective fields of expertise. The majority of internationally educated and trained professionals settle in a particular city based on the presence of family and the community support network in that area, but over 65% of the candidates listed on Skills International have said they would be willing to move within their province or within Canada for the right job opportunity.

This represents a major recruiting opportunity for employers in other cities and in smaller communities that are not primary landing destinations for newcomers to

Canada. They will gain access to a pool of internationally educated and trained professionals who have been prescreened as “job-ready” and are willing to relocate to find relevant employment in their field.

Skills International value proposition

There are numerous Internet-based job boards that provide access to a wide range of candidate groups. Skills International is the only application that provides exclusive access to the internationally educated and trained professional pool already pre-screened and assessed as “job ready” by community-based agencies that support newcomers to Canada. Each of these candidates has completed an assessment program and has worked both in a one-on-one and a group environment with an individual counselor in preparation for employment in the Canadian workplace. Skills International has established partnerships with third-party vendors and developed processes to ensure that the information an employer receives on a candidate is accurate, complete and trustworthy.

Skills International is committed to establishing partnerships with stakeholders to facilitate ITS expansion and integration within other regional and national projects. If you require further information on Skills International please visit the Website at www.skillsinternational.ca or forward an email to info@skillsinternational.ca.

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