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vulnerability of these outworkers. Yet it is likely that many of these Vietnamese women (all of whom have self-identified as having limited English) will have little choice but to join the ranks of garment outworkers.

We also examined the occupations of PRC spouses and fiancé(e)s. Unlike the Vietnamese females, sewers were conspicuous by their absence. To the extent that there is a pattern, it is one of remarkable diversity, including, in the case of women, 38 engineers, 30 doctors, 132 clerks and 37 sales assistants out of a total of 690 who identified an occupation. Since few possess vocational English, and none would have had their qualifications evaluated before leaving China, even the better qualified will face the difficulties identified above, and in the accompanying article by Richard Jackman, in finding a niche in Australia's employed workforce.

The Government's administration of the spouse-fiancé(e) category is poor. The growth in the spouse category is unquestionably adding a substantial immediate welfare, English language and retraining burden on the Australian community. Senator Bolkus is well aware of this situation. He also knows the concerns within some ethnic communities about the ease with which some

sponsored spouses exploit their sponsor in order to gain permanent residence in Australia, since he has received representations from the Indian community, among others, on the issue. Yet no action has been taken to tighten up our generous rules.

It is not a matter of preventing Australians from marrying abroad. Rather it is a matter of ensuring the sponsor exercises more responsibly in shouldering any burdens placed on the Australian community, and of ensuring the bona fides of the marriage contract.

References

- ¹ Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs Annual Report 1994-95, 1995, p. 14
- ² For details on the current selection system, see B. Birrell, 'The 1995-96 migration program', *People and Place*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1995, p. 33.
- ³ Department of Employment, Education and Training, 'Issues and options paper on the overseas skills recognition process and related labour market issues', September 1994, p.6
- ⁴ Australian marriage data drawn from Australian Bureau Statistics, *Marriages and Divorces Australia*, 1994, Catalogue No. 3310.0
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EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS FOR NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING-BACKGROUND PROFESSIONALS

Richard Jackman

Many NESB professionals arrive in Australia with little knowledge of employers' selection criteria or practices. Partly because of this, they frequently take additional courses, expensive to the government and to themselves in time lost from their profession. The experience of the government-funded Interlink program indicates continuing serious problems in resolving these issues.

The purpose of this paper is to raise awareness of the problems associated with the employment of overseas qualified professionals of non-English-speaking-background (NESB). There have been a number of recent studies on the perceptions of employers and the reasons for non employment of well-qualified NESB migrants. This paper discusses the post migration experience of such migrants from the perspective of their coming to terms with a work and recruitment culture of which they have no knowledge and for which they were not prepared.

The problems have economic as well as welfare implications. I will attempt to demonstrate that the policy of recruiting highly skilled migrants is potentially rich in benefits for Australia, but the lack of organised and informed early intervention to assist their transition to employment is costly in financial and emotional terms. It also leads to loss of skills.

The background to this paper is the experience gained over four years at the Professional Interlink Program. This program piloted job-search training for NESB

professionals. It commenced in August 1991 and has assisted 384 participants, of whom 65 per cent have regained employment. The program is funded by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) and assists NESB professionals who have experienced difficulty gaining professional employment. In the course of those four years, plus two years as manager of the Professional Employment Service (PES), a former specialist unit of the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES), I have interviewed about a thousand NESB professionals seeking work in their areas of skill in Australia.

The following comments provide an overview of the circumstances typical of the professionals encountered by Interlink. Information was gathered from in depth interviews with 15 recent participants in a current job search program which I conducted. These data support evidence gathered about previous participants in the Interlink program over the past six years.

Most of the 15 were married with children and entered Australia as Principal Applicants under the Independent category. They provide a good basis for analysing the problems faced by NESB professionals, because the majority had received recognition of their qualification before leaving home. Their experience can be summarised as follows:

- All have experienced lengthy periods of unemployment.
- Some had received professional work advice before migration.
- However, none was aware of how to apply for professional-level jobs in Australia.
- Most had approached CES for job search advice, others relied on friends.
- Most felt confident that their written and verbal English was adequate for employment.
- Most had high to medium expectations of obtaining professional level work.
- Most said they needed the kind of job search advice delivered by Interlink on arrival.
- Nearly all undertook further education or training after arriving in Australia in order to enhance their employment chances.
- All courses taken were government-funded.

- The average length of unemployment for these participants was 33 months.
- The average number of job applications for these participants was 167 each.
- The average number of interviews achieved was four (one person had had 24).
- A small number would not have come to Australia if they had known the situation, most would still have come, a few were unsure.

This sample group of recent participants came from 11 countries although Interlinks' total participants have come from 40 countries — most from India, Sri Lanka, the former USSR, and the Middle East. Previous Interlink programs have included people from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Vietnam, China, Philippines, Romania, Hungary, Poland, as well as many other countries.

The very clear majority of job seekers on the courses have been Principal Applicants selected in the Independent category, that is migrants chosen on the basis of their skills. A lesser number came under the Family Reunion category; rarely were any refugees participants.

Entry to the programs did not take migration categories into account. Selection was based on:

- a) qualification recognition,
- b) English at a level which would allow them to operate at a professional level (about ASPLR3+) and
- c) approval by their CES office.

Statistics for the whole 384 Professional Interlink Program participants are interesting:

- Average length of unemployment (months) 21.3
- Number of PhDs 21
- Number of Masters degrees 81
- Number of post graduate diplomas 44
- Average number of job applications 126
- Interviews as share of applications 3%

From the statistical evidence and the experience of dealing with this client group there appears to be a major disparity between the aims of encouraging skilled migration and the facts of employment.

It is true that these participants, by definition, had to have experienced long-term unemployment before they could join the program. But there is little doubt that they, and the hundreds of others who did not meet the minimum criteria for the Interlink course,

represent a significant share of the recently arrived NESB professional work force. The skilled migration programs sets out to encourage the immigration of highly-skilled people for the advancement of Australia's economic welfare in an increasingly global economy. Yet, in reality, in order to bring many of these migrants to the point where they can contribute to this goal, a whole new infrastructure has arisen to attempt to absorb these migrants into the workforce.

Accountants, for example, must undertake bridging programs in order to operate in their profession. These courses are usually provided at public expense.

Our experience with Interlink participants is that one major source of the problem is the NESB migrants' lack of awareness of Australian employers' hiring practices. The recruitment culture in the homelands of the majority of NESB migrants is based on educational qualification as the main determinant of suitability for a position. In Australia this is not so. Unfortunately, migrants, when they arrive here, are not advised of this difference. Accordingly they assume, after several applications for employment, that they need a higher level of qualification. They often enrol for a Masters degree hoping that this will enhance their employability. In most cases it does not. These higher degrees are also gained at public expense. Thus a scheme which sets out to enhance Australia's skill base is extending already stretched resources to no effect. If migrants were properly advised of the employment culture before departure and were professionally guided immediately after arrival, such expensive settlement costs could be avoided to the great advantage of both the migrant and the taxpayer.

The following case studies, which are typical of the professional migrants Interlink has assisted, serve to illustrate the human and financial costs.

CASE STUDY 1

'A' is from Pakistan and is married with four children. He arrived as a Principal Applicant in the Independent category in 1990. He holds a Bachelor of Computer Science and has over ten years experience in academic and commercial information technology.

Since arriving in Australia, he has submitted approximately 500 applications and gained two interviews. His written and oral

English are good. He has undertaken further studies in Unix operating systems, C programming, Certified Network Engineering. He has now been unemployed for five years.

He obtained advice on professional work opportunities before leaving Pakistan which, he says, was inaccurate. He had his qualifications recognised before leaving and gained further advice from relatives in Australia which was accurate. He sought job search advice from CES one week after arrival but gained no knowledge of how to go about making a professional job application.

'A' comments that the training which CES provides for unemployed professionals is just a waste of time and money. It has no benefit in the job market. Employers want experienced people from the local industry. The CES spent nearly \$6,000 on his training but did not provide any 'hands on' component. 'I am still unemployed and looking for a job. I would not have come if I had known the true situation.'

CASE STUDY 2

'B' is from Sri Lanka and is 45 years of age, married with three children. He arrived as a Principal Applicant in the Independent category in 1991. He holds a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering, which was recognised before he left home. He has many years experience in the building services industry.

Since arriving in Australia 'B' has submitted 150 applications and gained two interviews. After 33 months he gained contract work as a design draftsman through the medium of work experience. His oral English is accented and his written English is good. Since arriving he has undertaken studies in Autocad and a graduate diploma in building services engineering. He says these courses have enhanced his employability but he is still working as a draftsman.

'B' obtained his advice on work opportunities from relatives in Australia before leaving, advice which proved inaccurate. His job search advice came from friends and he says he was not properly prepared to compete in the Australian professional job market. He had no idea how to apply for professional positions.

After six months 'B' attended a Job Club (a government-funded small group program designed to facilitate job search) but it was not until he joined Interlink two years later that, he says, he gained knowledge of a kind which enabled him to compete with a chance.

He reports that every employer he contacted wanted local qualifications and experience. Only during his Interlink training did he get a chance as a draftsman which he hopes will lead to employment as an engineer.

CASE STUDY 3

'C' is from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and is 28 years of age and married with one child. He arrived as a Principal Applicant in the Independent category in 1992. He holds a Master of Science from the USA and now has a Graduate Diploma in Computer Science from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT).

Since arriving in Australia he has submitted 'several hundred' job applications and obtained 20 interviews, none of which was successful. His English is very good, as he has studied in America and at RMIT. He has skills in Fortran77, C, C++, Pascal, SQL, Unix and more. He was employed while on Interlink after 28 months unemployment.

He did not obtain any advice on work opportunities before leaving PRC but did have his qualifications recognised. He was confident that his English levels were sufficient for professional purposes and his expectation of gaining employment was high. He says he felt properly prepared to compete in the professional job market and called on the CES for advice. However, he also says he had no idea how to compete for a professional job in Australia.

To quote him: 'People from overseas have much different background as people born in Australia. My personal feeling is I cannot get support from CES, PES. I tried to seek help from many government departments and organisations. They were not interested in helping people from overseas. Interlink is the only one specially designed for helping people from overseas. It helped me to enter a professional career in Australia.'

CASE STUDY 4

'D' is from Jordan and is 42 years of age and is married with two children. He arrived in Australia 1993 as a Principal Applicant in the Independent category. He holds a Bachelor of Applied Science from Coventry University, UK. He also holds qualifications in engineering technology and mechanical engineering. He has extensive experience working in an international environment.

Since arriving in Australia he has submitted over 700 job applications for ten interviews. His English is good as he has trained in England. He has taken two courses locally in VAX system management 2 and 3 to maintain his skill level which, he feels, has enhanced his employment chances. He has now been unemployed for 18 months.

He did not seek advice on professional opportunities before migrating but felt that, as he had trained in England, his chances of work in Australia were high. He sought advice on job search from the PES shortly after arrival but says it was 14 months after arrival before he got some effective advice. He says that he was not properly prepared for professional job search and had no knowledge of how professionals applied for jobs, even though he had lived in the UK.

He comments that he would like to see more help, advice and counsel for newly arrived migrants so that they can join the workforce quickly because long delays, particularly in computer-based occupations, make the job of re-entering the workplace even harder as skills soon became dated.

CASE STUDY 5

'E' is from Sri Lanka and is aged 30. She is married with one child and arrived in Australia 1992 as the spouse of a Principal Applicant in the Independent category. She holds a qualification issued by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (UK) but, as this is not recognised as a higher level qualification in Australia, she undertook bridging subjects at the Victoria University of Technology to obtain a Bachelor of Business.

She went to PES for advice within two months of arrival where they funded two of these bridging units. However, two units proved insufficient to be eligible for Certified Practising Accountancy (CPA) accreditation. Her original qualification required eight further units to be acceptable. She was then funded for those under Austudy. She was not directed to the Overseas Qualification Unit for assessment. She could have obtained accurate advice on her professional status and the steps she needed to comply with Australian accountancy qualifications if she had approached the Institute of Chartered Accountants. However, they charge a fee of \$120.

She comments that, at the point of application for migration in Sri Lanka, she and

her husband were only able to talk to the counter staff who were locally employed officers. No other contact was offered for them to obtain specific advice. She says that, after paying the application fee and lodging the documents, 12 months elapsed before they were called for a medical examination. There was no further contact for another 12 months, then they were given one month to accept the offer of a visa and come to Australia. She says that with more information on the requirements of Australian employers for professional recruitment they could have prepared their references, CVs and gathered evidence of their professional skills to bring to Australia. It is too late after arrival, she says.

CASE STUDY 6

'F', aged 41, is from Fiji and is married with two children. She arrived as the spouse of a Principal Applicant in the Independent category 1993. She holds a BA in Accounting from University of South Pacific, Fiji, Bachelor of Commerce, (auditing and accounting) from India, and a Diploma in Commercial Practice, India. She has now completed bridging programs in Australia and is eligible to be a CPA.

Since arriving in Australia she has submitted over 80 applications and gained one interview. She received no advice from emigration officials in Fiji about the need for bridging programs for Accountants and only found out about this requirement from friends after arrival. She paid \$700 for the first unit before being advised by PES that funding for bridging programs was available from CES. She was also totally unaware that accountancy practice in Australia requires a good knowledge of computing and the use of various software packages.

She, like her husband, a lawyer, sought job search advice from CES and PES but had no experience or knowledge of how to look for work in Australia. She was at first refused admittance to Interlink on the grounds that she had not been unemployed for more than 12 months. She joined Interlink after 14 months of unemployment. She is now employed on contract after 18 months of unemployment. Speaking for herself and her husband, she says they had no idea how to respond to an advertisement, CES job boards were useless for accountants or lawyers, they had no idea of the 'hidden job market' and no

one whom they turned to could help. The effective help which they eventually found came much too late. Both she and her husband suffered deep depression, a sense of failure and great doubts as to the wisdom of their migration.

PROFESSIONAL MIGRANTS AND TRAINING IN AUSTRALIA

There are a number of professions which require bridging courses to be completed before migrants can participate in the workforce. These include accountants, secondary teachers, medical professionals and architects. It is true that the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA) Procedures Advice Manual is strict about providing advice to Principal Applicants before migration that certain professions, notably accountancy, require further study in Australia as a prerequisite to professional accreditation. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that the information is either not given or not understood. In the case of spouses who hold such qualifications, it is also unclear if they are advised of the requirements. In any case, a migrant approaching CES for financial assistance to undertake bridging courses or any other further academic courses such as a higher degree is not required to provide evidence of migration category (for example, Principal Applicant or spouse). If, as an NESB job seeker, he or she is deemed to be 'at risk' of long-term unemployment then approval is given. In fact, such an approval is recorded as a positive outcome by the CES office. These courses include English language at an advanced level for professional occupations, specialised English, Masters degrees, post graduate diplomas and doctorates. These courses are all taken at public expense and frequently in a mistaken belief that higher level degrees will make them more employable.

The costs to Australia are only measurable in part. A figure can be put on the social security benefits and formal training, but what of the human cost? Broken marriages, loss of confidence, loss of dignity, family breakdown, disappointment, ignored resources — how can these be valued?

It can be argued that migrants take their chances and that, in their own words, they do not want to return home. But is that the

point? We, as a nation, encourage the migration of skilled people. By inference, if a points system is devised to identify skills and the language level to support those skills, acceptance of that person's suitability for a visa implies that Australia needs the skills and that work for the applicant is available.

Although the participants I interviewed claimed to be properly prepared for professional job search in Australia, not one had any idea of the process of selection for employment. To all of them the process of job selection is culturally difficult and distressing.

Some may argue that employer prejudice towards migrant professionals is a major problem. While prejudice undeniably exists to some extent, it has been Interlink's experience that many employers are prepared to give the migrants substantial work experience, at considerable effort, which has led to jobs.

This initial work experience is a crucial factor in the process of integrating migrants into the workforce. It provides the essential local referee. Work experience is a far more effective way of facilitating entry into the work force than undertaking more and more study programs. Experience shows that if a migrant professional gets a chance to start work in the appropriate professional environment, he or she quickly becomes part of the company and any strangeness disappears after about three weeks. Any specific training needs can then be identified and dealt with. It is important to recognise that, from an employer's perspective, it can be a risk to any business to employ a migrant who lacks understanding of cultural norms and employer expectations in a position of professional responsibility.

This process has been severely impeded by DEET with its rigid enforcement of a ten-day limit on work experience, a rule which reinforces the view that CES and DEET have, in the past, shown little awareness of the needs of this category of job seeker. This

Table 1: Principal Applicants by selected occupation for Family,^a Independent, ENS and total arrivals, 1994-95

Occupation	Family	Independent	ENS	Total ^b
Chemist	24	90	5	124
Geologist/Geophysicist	20	76	12	111
Life scientist	46	198	10	261
Architect	43	53	1	103
Chemical engineer	28	53	4	91
Civil engineer	81	183	3	307
Electrical/Electronic engineers	118	320	14	501
Mechanical engineers	67	174	7	271
Accountants	352	558	23	966
Computer professionals	302	740	23	1,080

^a Family includes Preferential and Concessional categories.

^b Total includes other categories.

Source: Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, Settler arrivals by ASCO codes, 1994-95

may be changing since in November 1995 the government announced that the work experience limit would henceforth be extended to a maximum of 30 days.

It also needs to be said that employers' real needs are demonstrated to a large extent by the Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS). Under this scheme employers can import the skills they need by nominating an individual from overseas, after testing the local labour market to ensure that the skills are not available. Table 1 shows the figures for those occupations most often represented on the Interlink Program. The very low ENS figures compared to the Independent intake for the same occupations indicate that there is limited demand for the occupations in question.

Even allowing for the fact that some ENS nominations may be contrived and used as a way of circumventing the restrictions inherent in the migrant selection system, there is still a recognisable disparity between market need and migrant selection on the basis of skills.

At the third National Immigration and Population Outlook Conference, Adelaide, 22-24 February 1995, Mr. Bob Lim, Director, Policy and Analysis, Business Council of Australia, said in his address:

Many large corporations are embarked on a strategy of being global players. As a result, there has been a quantum leap in the way organisations deal with the challenges through re-engineering themselves. Human resource strategies of these companies point clearly to

both long term and short term needs. The key attributes are for employees who are adaptable, flexible, highly skilled and so on. These suggest that migration policies should, among other things, take account of business human resource practices and needs. The survey of Business Council companies suggest that, at least in the large corporate sector, there is a preference for recruitment of temporary personnel rather than permanent from overseas.

If these views reflect the general requirements of the business community then the current state of the skilled migrant program should be reviewed. If, however, Australia is to continue the policy of attracting highly skilled migrants to this country, we should recognise that the current lack of organised assistance to settle them into the workforce urgently needs to be addressed. Improved economic conditions are unlikely to greatly ease the plight of unemployed professionals from NESB countries.

If the skilled migrant program is to succeed, the willing co-operation of employers is critical. They must be convinced of the talent, industry, cultural, linguistic and contact opportunities which migrants with overseas qualifications represent.

What is needed is an organised system whereby newly arrived migrants have access to accurate information provided by experienced people who are knowledgeable about Australian recruitment practices for professionals. The recently introduced system of Contracted Case Managers could easily be adapted to assist newcomers. A case manager acting as a mentor would be a very cost-effective way of ensuring a migrant moved logically to an employment result. Work experience could be encouraged by subsidising a host employer to provide three months initial work to provide a bridge to full-time employment. These suggestions would be far more efficient and cost-effective than the current arrangement.

POPULATION POLICIES OF AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL PARTIES — EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT

■ Sheila Newman

Most of the political parties contesting the forthcoming 1996 Federal election have policies bearing on population issues. These policies are detailed in the interests of voters anxious to know where particular parties stand on the matter.

In December 1994 the House of Representatives inter-party Standing Committee on Long Term Strategies produced its report on the Inquiry into *Australia's Population 'Carrying Capacity'*. *One Nation — Two Ecologies* (called here the Jones report, after the committee's chairman, Labor MP Barry Jones). Of the fifteen recommendations in the Jones report, the following four are basic. They recommend:

- the separation of political and administrative responsibility for population and immigration;
- the adoption of a Federal population policy;
- the formation of a Cabinet Committee on population chaired by the Prime Minister;
- the adoption of a consumption strategy.

There will be a Federal election early in 1996. What actions are Australian political parties likely to take on these recommendations? Implicit or explicit population policies of minor and major parties are set

out below with the aim of helping Australians who wish to vote for population growth or against it to make an informed choice.

PARTIES WITH EXPLICIT POLICIES **Australians Against Further Immigration (AAFI)**

The AAFI was formed around the idea of limiting immigration-fuelled population increase. This means that, unlike the other parties, its immigration policy is its central platform. The party's Manifesto expresses a number of principles guiding its population policy under the headings: Environment, Economics, Defence, Humanitarianism, Health, Education, and Culture.¹ Under Humanitarianism it states:

It is right to assist those in need and we recognise our responsibility to help the less fortunate of this world. Large scale immigration into Australia has almost no effect