

The Evaluation of Immigrants' Credentials: The Roles of Accreditation, Immigrant Race, and Evaluator Biases

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Here the authors seek to answer the question: Why are the credentials of immigrants evaluated less favourably than those of Canadian-born? They look at three factors of skill discounting: accreditation of credentials, race and the evaluator's prejudice. The study uses the responses of 405 students at a Canadian university regarding their current and past work experiences. The report concludes that if foreign credentials were accredited, the worker was no longer discounted relative to Canadian credentials of equal quality regardless of race and the location of the institution where the credentials were gained.

Key Issues

- although immigrants account for 70% of labour force growth, they experience lower rates of labour force participation and earn lower wages than the Canadian-born population
- the credentials of visible minority immigrants are evaluated less favourably than Canadian-born and white immigrants
- subtle biases ultimately affect the economy and the well-being and productivity of immigrants when foreign credentials are not accredited as it results in the under-utilization of immigrants' skills
- the discounting of foreign skills can serve as a justification for discriminating against visible minorities
- the lack of established standards for evaluating foreign skills leaves room for subjective factors and biases to play a role in employment decision making

Results of the Study

- qualified white Canadians were evaluated more favourably than unqualified white Canadians
- the credentials of Canadian-born with Canadian credentials and immigrants with accredited credentials were evaluated more favourably than unaccredited foreign credentials of immigrants
- the evaluations of Canadians with Canadian credentials and immigrants with accredited foreign credentials did not differ
- Black immigrants with unaccredited credentials were evaluated less favourably than White immigrants with unaccredited credentials
- the credentials of White and Black Canadian-born were not evaluated differently
- the credentials of White and Black immigrants with accredited credentials were not evaluated differently
- Black Canadians with Canadian credentials and Black immigrants with accredited foreign credentials were evaluated more favourably than Black immigrants with unaccredited foreign credentials

Policy Implications

- the authors suggest that the points system should place heavier emphasis on the place where foreign credentials were obtained

- immigrants should be encouraged to take training programs that would improve their credentials
- public policy makers should inform employers about the implications of subtle biases

Key Stats:

Statistics Canada, labour force growth: “Recently, immigrants, who already comprise approximately 20% of the labour force, have accounted for over 70% of labour force growth” (p. 4).