

## Indian Professional and Skilled Migration to Australia and Singapore: A Comparative Study

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**ABSTRACT** Following the negotiation of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), the movement of individuals or service providers across countries have attained unprecedented recognition. Professional and skilled labour migration forms an important study due to swift economic impact and technological transfer. To the host country, skilled labour means minimal cross-subsidisation of migrant's labour market adjustment by the receiving countries. This preliminary paper has a few objectives. The first is to provide comparative data on Indian professional and skilled migration to Australia and Singapore, secondly the governance of migration in these countries and how far they are adhering to the liberal egalitarian principle of granting people equal opportunities to prove their capabilities and a holistic view of the importance of Indian professional and skilled migration to the economies of Australia and Singapore.

### BACKGROUND

The study of professional and skilled migration is important as it is about people realising their potential, increasing their choices and enjoying freedom to lead lives they value. Investigation into the free movement of people reveals access to freedom of movement reflects unequal rights. Although the majority of the world's population are free to leave their country, only nationals of developed countries and highly qualified people have the right to enter whichever country they choose. Australia and Singapore have been selected as economic giants facing falling birth rates and the inability to replace themselves naturally. Foreign talent is required to check emigration of local talent. The researcher will look at how the barriers and blocked pathways that have prompted emigration can be avoided with the new talent. The issues that may arise due to the research on the Indian ethnic community is just as relevant for other communities. It is hoped that through the findings, both the countries can learn something from each other.

Migration and development has become a prominent theme in the development literature, in national and international debates, and is the topic of the 2009 Human Development Project undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme and the International Labour Organisation. Policy distortions as well as uneven distribution of skills and opportunities compound migration issues. The Human Development Report 2009 will show how a human de-

velopment approach can be a means to redress some of the underlying issues that erode the potential benefits of mobility and/or force migration. Human Development Reports study migrants' vulnerability, freedom, choices, rights and inequalities. It is about putting people at the centre of development.

The positive impact of migration through increased household incomes, better access to education and health are also indisputable. Increasingly, migration is being used to solve issues of emigration, ageing population, low fertility rates, rapidly growing economies which create skilled and unskilled labour shortages. Skilled and professional labour force is critical to 'create new knowledge or to transform imported knowledge into viable technologies for production, to design and create new products and services, and to make these competitive in the global market is an essential condition for progress' (Abella 2005: 1). There is a worldwide shortage of IT workers due to the Internet. Indians' creative ideas, mastery of the English language and the globalized structures have given them an advantage in the development of software industry, communications, financial and networking services' over the other races who hold comparable qualifications (Gungwu 2008: 7).

The number of skilled and professional Indians crossing the borders of Australia and Singapore has increased over recent years. Although as highly qualified people the Indians have the right to enter whichever country they choose, their choice of destination is affected strongly by the destination countries' immigration policies.

### PARAMETERS OF STUDY

The focus of this paper will be on the 'new' Indians who have migrated to Australia and Singapore from January 1989 till May 2009 directly from India. This period coincides with India's Look East Policy development strategy from the 1990s as well as Australia's and Singapore's gradual tightening of selection criteria to enable only those with outstanding skills who will contribute to the respective economies to enter.

It is beyond the scope of this study to focus on 'twice migrants' ('people who had arrived not directly from India but had lived for several years or several generations in another node of the Indian diaspora') or existing Indians of Australia or Singapore (Voigt-Graf 2005: 368). 'It is noted that it is difficult to distinguish between temporary and permanent migration at the start of the process, as temporary labour contracts may turn into permanent residence and foreign citizenship, unless the host countries specifically forbid foreign workers staying on indefinitely' (Chia 2008: 98). The study will focus on the symbiotic relationship between India-Australia and India-Singapore. No attempt has been made to study each bilateral relationship, i.e. between Singapore and Australia, in terms of the other two relationships, given the paucity of scholarly material on how each relationship affects and is affected by the others.

### Contextual Issues of Migration from India to Australia and Singapore

There are several reasons that might explain the historically strong relationship between Australia, India and Singapore. All three countries are former British colonies. The Indian imprint on the construction of Australia and Singapore is indisputable. Although most arrived as labourers, their contribution on plantations and estates as well as the development of government public works was pertinent. While the origins of Indian labour in Singapore extends back to the colonial period, it is said that the first Indian had arrived in Australia as part of Captain Cook's ship, the first settlers in Australia. Indian labour has assisted in the growth of Singapore and Australia at various stages of development particularly when both countries were British colonies. Historically, Indian influx has coincided with economic growth.

In Australia, the 'White Australia' policy, which came into operation soon after Australia became a federal nation, slowly gave way to multiculturalism when Harold Holt became prime minister in 1966. Today, skilled migration which is a composite result of multiculturalism has a profound effect on the Australian labour market. Australia accepted 77 880 skilled migrants in 2004-05 and this figure rose to 97,340 in 2005-6 (Hart 2007). Since 1975, Singapore has been experiencing a drop in fertility levels combined with an ageing population. This has resulted in the importation of skilled workers.

Another big influx of Indians started arriving in Singapore and Australia from 1976 onwards. Owing to versatile educational qualifications, educated Indians are becoming a highly mobile community. As trade and economic relations between Australia-India and Singapore-India is expanding, it is critical to exploit the skilled labour India is now providing. The expanding economies of Singapore and Australia present more economic opportunities than the Indian sub-continent for well-qualified Indians.

Indians who have moved to Singapore or Australia have contributed to the development of India through remittances, transfer of technology, skills transfer and institution building. Although there are issues of brain drain, the clear benefits of overseas Indian diaspora to the Indian economy cannot be underestimated. With India granting dual citizenship from 2005, this has allowed the 'binding of emigrants to the home country, because this brings benefits in the forms of remittances, technology transfer, political allegiance and cultural maintenance' (Castles 2003: 18).

### Nexus between Australia, India and Singapore

A topic such as migration cannot be examined devoid of politics. Viewing immigration as an autonomous process isolating it from other international flows can lead to ineffective and irrelevant policies. Each country reserves the right to deal with immigrants within its national law and administration, 'subject to UN Convention and to the European Convention on Human Rights' (Jupp 2003: 2). This gives political forces considerable scope to influence legislation and administration (Jupp 2003). Australia, India and Singapore have an existential interest in the pres-

ervation of a modern, secular global order, an objective in which the US's interests coincide. Australia and Singapore are America's closest security partner. US has decided to help India become a major world power in the twenty-first century (Latif 2009). India has a large, qualified labour market on offer to use the technology and investment Australia and Singapore possess. The high numbers of Indian migrants moving to Australia and Singapore annually have made both countries more diverse and tolerant. The strong cultural presence of Indians act as 'soft power' reinforcing economic linkages between the three nations (Devare 2006: 170). Skilled Indians exploit their cultural and linguistic capabilities and their contacts to help build software operations. For example, Indians educated in the US have been instrumental in setting up Indian software facilities such as Oracle, Novell, Bay Network (Saxenian 2001: 225 as cited in Iredale et al. 2003: 11).

'India's Look East Policy was unveiled by its Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, in Singapore in 1994' (Latif 2009: 50). Expansion of Indian influence began to take shape when, between 1992 and 1996, India first became a sectoral dialogue partner and then a full dialogue partner of ASEAN (Latif 2009). By joining the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996, India sutured its place in South East Asia. Australia was ASEAN's first dialogue partner in 1974 (Rudd 2008). ASEAN is useful in that it has provided a forum for the three countries to operate under. ASEAN's role is generally preventing conflict among member states 'allowing economic development to progress unimpeded by intra-regional security concerns' (Rudd (2008); 16). India's willingness to enter into a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) including an FTA with ASEAN, was itself a manifestation of India's desire to be a serious player in the politico-economic area of Asia-Pacific (Devare 2006). The CECA agreement between India and Singapore covered work visas that will be liberalised and long term visas will be available in Singapore for Indian nationals (Devare 2006). India's current interest in wanting to be part of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) showcases the keenness for it to be part of the larger Asia-Pacific community (Yadav 2004). The logistical role of ASEAN and APEC in terms of ILM could be to help solve cross border movements and provide better control and

protection of labour. 'A third party can always attenuate confrontations and tensions between two states' (Chantavanich and Risser 2000: 20).

The global efficiency of the national system is built on social capital and trust (Putnam 1995 cited in Low (2002: 11) structural competitiveness may become a more important component of externalities in Asia than in North America. Even the role of the Government in technocratic-corporate partnering in a strategic alliance, as in R&D, has both an externality and welfare perspective (Low 2000: 11).

It is important for Australia, India and Singapore to learn from each other with respect to information technology and infrastructure. 'But as employers search for workers, Australia is increasingly turning to developing countries to fill vacancies' (Maley 2008). Political-social-cultural considerations have led Australia and Singapore to prefer sourcing from India. The 457 business program has grown quickly with businesses very dependent on it. 'Working with more mature political systems and cultures may be less competitive and stressful as efficiency, functionality, and business prevail.' (Low 2000: 22).

In Singapore there is a political dimension to the foreign talent policy that must be handled sensitively (Lim 2000). The foreign talent policy is to maximise Singapore's talent pool- foreign and local. It might have been better politically to have called it a "global talent" policy rather than a "foreign talent" policy. By putting "foreign" ahead of "talent", the policy may have been unnecessarily laden with an emotional dimension, clouding its actual aim: to attract the best talent from anywhere in the world to work in Singapore and, just as importantly, to retain, nurture, and develop local talent to world class standards. This sense of balance must not be lost in its implementation (Lim 2000: 41).

### **Importance of Professional and Skilled Indians to Australian and Singaporean Economies**

Skilled Indians bring to Australia expertise, experience, capital and business connections. Indians with Australian qualifications are highly regarded. Skilled immigration also affects the demand of goods and services which in turn will have a positive impact on the demand for labour. In Australia, sales revenues for the building industry is closely tied to total population and household formation.

Endowed with a wide range of professional and technical expertise, migrants from the Indian subcontinent contribute substantially to the country's economy and constitute a significant 'brain gain'. Indian doctors have played an important role in the Australian health care system and in the last two decades they are enriching the information technology sector. 'Indian immigrant community is increasingly recognized for the valuable contributions its members make to their host societies. Major Australian companies employed Non Resident Indians (NRIs) to manage or advice them on their Indian interests. NRIs are "able to provide a company with indispensable background knowledge, an intimate understanding of India, its culture and business environment, and are highly qualified in their chosen field' (Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade 1998 as cited in Afsar (2004: 6).

Indians have contributed to the growth of Singapore's economy through technical proficiency, cost-effectiveness, productivity and their ability to assimilate into the Singaporean economy. Singapore's transition to a knowledge-based society is highly dependent on the skills and knowledge of this workforce. Singapore is dependent on Indian labour for the following categories: manufacturing and services, IT, banking and finance, healthcare and education.

Singapore has a population planning policy. Skilled migration is encouraged to offset low fertility rates, emigration and to jumpstart new economic initiatives. In Singapore, skilled and professional Indians can be found in tertiary institutions and in the engineering, information technology, business, banking and financial sectors.

### Comparative Data on Indian Professional and Skilled Migration to Australia and Singapore

In today's context, Indian diaspora consists of the Sikkimise, Bhutanese, Maldivians, Sri Lankans, Nepalese, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indians. It should be noted that comprehensive data is not readily available for Indian professional and skilled migration to Singapore and this paper uses various sources and that the paper is preliminary work. At the moment, data on Indian professional and skilled migration to Singapore can only be adduced inferring indi-

rectly from secondary data using demographic methods. No direct statistics are released by the Singapore government. Many such data is kept in secret. In 1980, Indians made up 6% of total but in 2005, 8.2%, more than double in absolute. So evidence can only be adduced indirectly. Officially "sanctioned" influx of skilled immigrants (from all sources) is about 35,000 persons per annum, which might have been breached in the last decade. Some 7 to 10 per cent of this influx could be Indians' (Shantakumar 2008: 570).

Since the 2006 census, Indian born migrants have surged in Australia. In Australia, the last two years of increased Indian migration has changed the demographic profile of Indians. Clearly size and numbers matter in democracies and South Asians have become a visible force in Australia. DIAC has revealed that the number of Indian migrants is one of the largest groups (about second to the UK currently) and have grown in importance over the past couple of decades. Figure 1 reflects skilled settlers in Australia, the top four countries of birth in 1997-98 and 2007-08.

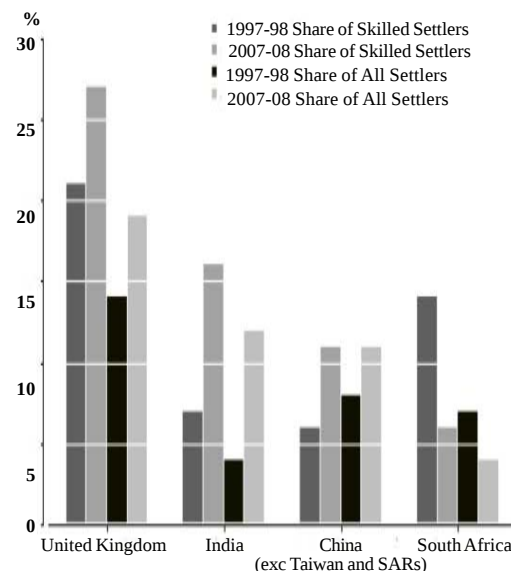


Fig. 1. Share of skilled settler

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics website

### Skilled Permanent and Temporary Entry Visa Categories for Australia and Singapore

In order to understand the nature of gover-

nance and the extent to which a healthy pattern of selection is undertaken, it is important to identify the visa categories in question in both countries.

In Australia, offshore permanent migrants fall under

The skilled independent subclass 175 (offshore permanent). These applicants do not need sponsorship

Skilled sponsorship subclass 176. Applicants need to be sponsored by an eligible Australian relative, or nominated by a state or territory government

Employer nomination 121 allows Australian employers to sponsor employees who are foreign nationals for a permanent visa to work in Australia and offshore provisional

Skilled-regional sponsored (subclass 475). Applicants must be sponsored by an eligible Australian relative living in a designated area or nominated by a state or territory government agency. This is a three year provisional visa

Temporary business (long stay) standard business sponsorship (subclass 457). This program is used to sponsor overseas workers to work in Australia on a temporary basis. This visa is for employers who would like to employ overseas workers to fill nominated skilled positions in Australia. This visa can last from 3 months to 4 years

Medical practitioner 422. This visa allows medical practitioners to work in Australia for a sponsorship employer for a period between 3 months to 4 years

Occupational trainee 442. The occupational trainee visa allows for foreign national to complete structured and supervised workplace training programs of academic research in Australia on a temporary basis. This training must provide people with additional or enhanced skills in their present occupations, tertiary fields or field expertise

The offshore skilled independent, employer sponsored and distinguished talent visa (229 visa). This visa is for people in Australia, nominated for migration on the basis of their internationally recognised record of exceptional and outstanding achievement in a profession, the arts, sport, research or academia.

The above visa sub-categories were current and validated by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship as of July 2009. In Australia and Singapore, skilled and professional migration is

a policy priority. Compared to Singapore, in Australia, allocated numbers or cut-off points for skilled migration is adjusted often. This demonstrates government's proactive and innovative in measuring national needs. 'Permanent entry figures for the skilled categories underestimate the number of skilled people actually migrating as many arrive under different categories' (Iredale 2003: 125).

In Singapore, offshore permanent entry visas for skilled and professional workers is known as Employment Visa. There are a number of variations within the employment visa:

*P1*- Professionals, managerial, executive and specialist jobs fall under this category-visas are valid up to 5 years and renewable

*P2*-Professional, managerial, executive and specialist jobs and people holding recognised qualifications fall under this category

*Q1*-Passholders must have recognised qualifications. In lieu of recognised qualifications, other factors such as skills and years of experience are taken into account

*Personalised Employer Pass or PEP* is a result of a recent policy move. Adults must have earned a fixed salary of SGD\$30,000/annum. PEP is valid for only 5 years (non-renewable). It is not tied to any employer but requires the holders to inform the Ministry of Manpower when they have changed jobs. The PEP holder is able to stay in Singapore between jobs for up to 6 months to undertake job search

*S Pass*- for foreigners earning at least SGD\$1,800 per month. Applicants are assessed on educational qualifications, job type and work experience

*PVP (Professional Visa Pass)* covers professionals who possess specialised skills as commissioning new equipment or are involved in business arbitration or mediation services

*Miscellaneous work permit (MWP)* applies to 3 groups. Key organisers of gatherings relating to religion, race or community, or any cause of political end, foreign religious workers giving talks about any religion, and foreign journalists or accompanying crew not supported by any local government agency.

Temporary visas are termed work permits in Singapore:

Work Permit:

*R1* – Foreigners with National Technical Certificate, similar to trade qualifications. Considered semi-skilled these workers do not earn more than SGD\$1,800 per month.

R2 – Unskilled, mainly domestic workers.

This particular pass is valid for only 2 years

Unlike in Australia, there are no major disparities between onshore and offshore criteria for permanent or temporary visas meant for skilled and professional migrants.

## General Themes Within the Governance of Migration

### Australia

Australia and Singapore have very different traditions and institutional frameworks, although former British colonies. Both island nations' skilled migration selection design is relatively tough in international terms. Both countries make variations to the selection criteria, in meritocratic terms, to achieve superior labour market outcomes<sup>1</sup>. The policies examined in this paper represent an evolving aspect of the Australian and

Singaporean immigration policies. In a sense, both countries endeavour to manipulate policies to accommodate the liberal egalitarian principle of granting people equal opportunities to prove their capabilities. Migrant's country of origin or training has a significant impact on employment outcomes in both countries. Australia is a Eurocentric, western civilization with strong links to western industrialized democracies, but situated in Asia. The states of Europe and Australasia share democratic institutions and political party traditions in many aspects. All the democracies of Western Europe, like Australia have increased ethnic variety based on immigration. However, many European states do not have coherent and planned immigration programs organised through a national ministry like Australia (Jupp 2003).

The way a society handles the fate of foreigners ultimately reflects the values upon which it is based. This relates to the price developed countries are prepared to pay to control their borders

**Table 1: General themes within the governance of professional and skilled migration scheme (Permanent)**

|                                                             | <i>Australia</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <i>Singapore</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Objective</i>                                            | Assist skilled labour to settle in Australia                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Assist skilled labour to settle in Singapore                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>Eligibility schemes</i>                                  | Employer sponsored (886 visa)<br>Independent category (885 visa)<br>State sponsored visa (892 visa)                                                                                                                                                     | P1<br>P2<br><br>Q1<br>Personalised Employment Pass (PEP)<br>S Pass                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>Cost</i>                                                 | Vetting agency's fee is separate                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Administrative fee of \$10 if lodged online. Vetting agency's fee is separate                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>Waiting period for final outcome of application</i>      | Minimum 3 to 12 months                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | A week if submitted online or 5 weeks by manual application                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <i>Method of assessment</i>                                 | Points system                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Case by case basis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>Population policy</i>                                    | No                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Yes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <i>Transparency of assessment criteria</i>                  | Yes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | No                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>Vetting agency assessing professional qualifications</i> | Yes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Yes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <i>Recruitment</i>                                          | Only in the case of Employer sponsored migration, once employers find a suitable candidate, they apply to Department of Immigration and Citizenship for a visa on behalf of the prospective employee                                                    | Once employers find a suitable candidate, they apply to Ministry of Manpower for an Employment Pass on behalf of the prospective employee                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <i>Marriage/Family Reunion</i>                              | <i>Permitted</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <i>Permitted</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>Issues associated with scheme</i>                        | Loss of professional and skilled labour when they work abroad, leading to demands for 'compensation' of the investment in human capital forgone by the receiving countries-Problems with the recognition of skills and qualifications obtained overseas | Like the work permit, Employment passes are tied to specific firms. Loss of professional and skilled labour when they work abroad, leading to demands for 'compensation' of the investment in human capital forgone by the receiving countries<br>Problems with the recognition of skills and qualifications obtained overseas |

Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Australia and Ministry of Manpower, Singapore

in terms of dignity and human rights (Brochmann and Hammar 1999; Schuster 2004 cited in Pecoud and De Guchteneire 2007). The main objective of Australia's skilled migration policy is dispersal. In both the countries' case retention of skilled migrants is also a key feature. An important reason for dispersal is uneven distribution of population can promote differences in population growth in certain areas and socioeconomic disparities. Both countries use eligibility factors and policy instruments to achieve their objectives. The Numerical Multifactor Assessment System (NUMAS) or points system as practiced in Australia is reflective of the system in UK implemented in 2001, Canada 1969 and New Zealand 1991 (Papademetriou 2007). Each criteria is clearly spelt out. An extraordinary focus is accorded to occupational demand which carries 50 or 60 points. The maximum 60 point is allocated to applicants with a degree or better qualifications. Vocational qualifications are accorded 50 points. All other criteria scale down slowly in weightage. In Australia, generally guidelines for subclasses are spelt out clearly under visa categories. This lends greater transparency and reduce the likelihood of a misinterpretation of guidelines surrounding the visa. This is apparent more in the assessment of permanent visas (Table 1) where the points system is strictly followed than in the temporary visas (Table 2), where case workers weigh the individual merits of applications. Information on immigration related matters are disseminated through online resources and hardcopy booklets.

Integration of intermediaries such as migration agents into policy suggests new models of stakeholder participation to manage skilled migration schemes in both countries. The role of migration agencies in promoting Australia and Singapore as favoured choices for migration has impacted on skilled Indians moving to these countries. Speeches and fairs are conducted at various key Indian cities to target prospective applicants. Migration agents have a vested interest in attracting clients as they charge high fees to sustain the business. In Australia, their role is to represent clients' interests with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship should there be issues in the applications. Other intermediaries attracting potential migrants would be recruitment agencies and their chains of subagents, travel agencies, legal advisers and similar busi-

nesses. Integration of intermediaries such as migration agents into policy suggests new models of stakeholder participation to manage skilled migration schemes in both countries.

### *Singapore*

Singapore pursues a system of assessing visa applications which is reflective of the system practiced among the South East Asian countries. Information on immigration related matters are disseminated through online resources and information booklets available at the Ministry of Manpower. Singapore's system in assessing skilled migrants is weighing the merits of each application with minimum criteria, on a case by case basis. There is less transparency in the assessment process, unlike the process in Australia. But this system is by no means 'soft'. Priority is given to diverse work experience, qualifications and capital. Singapore's selection protocol is markedly different from the Western countries including UK, Canada and New Zealand where the point system is practiced. Despite this, the government is able to lure prospective migrants with attractive benefits. The critical issue for both Australia and Singapore in the coming years is the capacity to further refine selection procedures without compromising the scale or quality of skills flows. Australia and Singapore impose levies and quota restrictions to control the negative effects of large inflows of foreign workers, who compete for local jobs and local consumers for public services. This is also done to safeguard national security. Both Australia and Singapore should inform India of the existence of these policies and measures and of the changes made from time to time in order for potential migrants to be better informed before relocation.

Pertinent migration issues and concerns can be addressed directly by sending and receiving countries without the need for bilateral and regional cooperation. These include policies to promote domestic economic and employment growth to minimise the need for workers seeking overseas employment in labour surplus countries; policies to reduce dependence on foreign labour by large deficit countries; signing and ratification of international labour and migration conventions of the ILO; controlling the exploitative fees paid to local governments and labour recruitment and placement agencies; facilitating

**Table 2: General themes within the governance of professional and skilled migration scheme (Temporary)**

|                                                             | <i>Australia</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>Singapore</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Objective</i>                                            | Introduced in 1996<br>Help Australian businesses overcome labour shortages and assess new ideas, skills and technology.<br>Entry of managers and skilled specialists under these categories can also enhance Australia's ability to compete in international markets.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Assists Singaporean businesses overcome labour shortages and assess new ideas, skills and technology.<br>Entry of managers and skilled specialists under these categories can also enhance Singapore's ability to compete in international markets.                                                              |
| <i>Eligibility schemes</i>                                  | 457 Long stay skilled workers of up to 4 years<br>Similar to the H1B visa in the United States, is initiated by employers and is not capped.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | R1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>Waiting period for final outcome of application</i>      | Varies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Varies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <i>Method of assessment</i>                                 | Case by case basis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Case by case basis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>Transparency of assessment criteria</i>                  | No                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | No                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>Vetting agency assessing professional qualifications</i> | Yes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Yes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <i>Recruitment</i>                                          | Only in the case of Employer-sponsored migration, once employers find a suitable candidate, they apply to Department of Immigration and Citizenship for a visa on behalf of the prospective employee.<br>Not permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Once employers find a suitable candidate, they apply to Ministry of Manpower for an Employment Pass on behalf of the prospective employee                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <i>Marriage/Family Reunion</i>                              | Not permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Not permitted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <i>Issues associated with scheme</i>                        | Employer driven. To keep visa valid upon resignation from one organisation, employee needs to secure new job and visa quickly otherwise risk being deported.<br>Organisations prefer cheap overseas labour compared to skilled local labour.<br>Workers Compensation not offered to workers.<br>By allowing foreign companies to import labour, Australia is inevitably allowing these companies to operate outside of Australian laws. Breaches are common in visa conditions, industrial, and in occupational health and safety issues.<br>The role of labour hire companies in the operation of 457 business visas. This despite DIAC spelling out that sponsor of employee must be the direct employer of visa holder.<br>457 visas are being used to exploit workers and to drive down wages and conditions.<br>Uncertainty of long term status.<br>Level of host government commitment.<br>Technological 'fit' (eg. engineering, medicine, nursing) (Hawthorne, 2007).<br>Ancillary professional knowledge:-<br>Management style-Industrial relations/ union issues-Occupational health and safety (Hawthorne, 2007).<br>Challenges of effective measurement of discrimination and labour market protectionism (Hawthorne, (2007).<br>Constrained locational choice (doctors employed in regional areas) (Hawthorne, 2007). | Work permit holders are not permitted to apply for permanent residence and citizenship. They need to apply for special permission to marry Singaporeans and this is decided on a case-by-case basis (Teo and Piper, 2009). Limited migrant rights may mean lower costs for employers and more migrants employed. |

Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Australia and Ministry of Manpower, Singapore.

the inflows of worker remittance; and encouraging the return of migrants and diaspora (Chia 2008: 127).

In assessing both countries' immigration policies, it is apparent that permanent skilled migrants benefit more from the host countries than temporary skilled workers, in terms of employment benefits, certainty and rights within the country. In Singapore, temporary migrants who hold work permits are not permitted to apply for permanent residence and citizenship. They need to apply for special permission to marry Singaporeans and this is decided on a case-by-case basis (Teo and Piper 2009). Limited migrant rights may mean lower costs for employers and more migrants employed. This is one example of how non-citizens are differentiated from citizens.

In Australia, foreign labour and immigration issues are managed by Federal government through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Standard eligibility criteria is applied to all urban and regional migrants. In Singapore, the Ministry of Manpower manages the pre-arrival and immediate post arrival issues after which the Immigration and Checkpoint Authority takes over by looking after issues such as passports, identity cards. Unlike Australia, Singapore is particularly secretive about releasing population movement statistics to the public for scrutiny (Low 1995). Except for employer related sponsorship, the choice of destination countries lies solely on the migrants. It is imperative that immigration policies stay attractive and compelling to lure skilled professional migrants.

In Australia and Singapore, the speed at which the visa is processed correlates directly to the importance of the visa to the economy. The cost to process applications as well as the waiting period before the final outcome is released differs in both countries. In order not to impinge on taxpayers, Australia charges applications the full cost of processing the application. In Australia, applicants are discouraged to contact the Department of Immigration and Citizenship for progress updates unless contacted by DIAC. Processing duration can vary from 6 months to a year.

In Singapore, the processing time for Employment and S Pass application is about a week if the application is submitted via EP Online. For manual submission of application forms, processing time will be at least five weeks from the date of receipt of the application. The outcome will

be mailed to the employer (Ministry of Manpower 2009).

## CONCLUSION

According to the ILO, contributions by migrant workers can only be maximized if they are in a position to develop their potential. This is closely related to the exercise of labour rights. 'The United Nations (1996) has developed the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families' (Stahl 2003: 48). The effectiveness of international laws are undermined by non-compliance even among those States that have accepted them (Opeskin 2009). In this regard, the growing empowerment of NGOs over the years to highlight issues of inequality cannot be overstated. NGO advocates keep watch to ensure fulfilment of human rights and humanitarian criteria.

Migrants from the Subcontinent are well integrated in professional and some important service domains of Australian economy. Among themselves they share some common bonds and heritage and displayed some striking convergences and a few differential socio-cultural and demographic characteristics. What they have experienced in the process of settlement differed in degree but not in substance.

On another note, the exchange of people between India-Australia and India-Singapore has undergone substantial changes over the years. The future of international migration between India-Australia and India-Singapore is here to stay, increasing in complexity and level. Movement of Indians to Singapore and Australia will be accompanied by strengthening of political and economic relationships. There is little evidence to suggest that there might be migration of Australians or Singaporeans to India in the future. This study will extend to investigate the implications and impact of movements on the migrants, communities and countries of origin and destination.

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