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Constructing careers and negotiating barriers: success factors of skilled immigrants in western countries

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Abstract

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Constructing careers and negotiating barriers: success factors of skilled immigrants in western countries

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This paper focusses on skilled immigrants in the western world and the way they harness factors in the external and internal environments of their work domains to facilitate career success. Most research on skilled immigration has highlighted the barriers and difficulties they face. This paper in no way diminishes the importance of that research, but focusses on the success stories found in countries like Canada, the UK, USA and Australia among culturally diverse skilled immigrants who have taken advantage of individual, meso and macro factors to enhance and build their career capital. Skilled immigrants are by definition entrepreneurial and risk takers. They seek to exercise agency in their working lives for themselves and their families. We find that this positive approach to skilled immigrants' careers reveals a range of data and literature pointing to both structural and individual factors that promote success. The intention is to use this knowledge to build policy models and approaches that will broaden and multiply such success stories. The paper draws on Intelligent Career Theory and Career Capital; it employs a multi-level framework that encompasses factors operating at the national (macro), organisational (meso) and individual levels, such as employment equality/equity legislation, regional tripartite initiatives, industry benchmarking, diversity and inclusion strategies and social capital, such as family networks and support. We propose that action research be conducted to further enhance our understanding of these success factors in future.