

The Impact of Australia's Skilled Migrant Selection System: A Case Study of Japanese Skilled Migrants and Their Families

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Abstract : Australia's skilled migrant selection system is constantly changing its target skills and criteria according to the labour market demands. The government's intention to employ this highly selective market-driven selection system is to better target the skills needed in the economy, enable skilled migrants to be employed in industries that have the highest need, and consequently boost the economy and population. However, migration scholars have called this intention into question, arguing that the system is not making the best use of skilled migrants. This paper investigates the impact of recent reforms in Australian skilled migration system on skilled migrants' employment and related life conditions. Drawing on semi-structured qualitative interviews with Japanese skilled migrants in Australia, it argues that Australia's skilled migrant selection system guarantees neither skilled migrants' employment nor successful transfer of their skills to the labour market. The findings show that Japanese skilled migrants are often unemployed or under-employed, although they intend to achieve upward occupational mobility. The interview data also reveal that male unemployment or under-employment status prompts some Japanese men to leave Australia and find a job that better matches their skills and qualifications in a new destination. Further, it finds that Japanese male skilled migrants who experience downward occupational mobility tend to continue to take a primary breadwinner role, which affects the distribution of paid and unpaid work within their families. There is a growing body of research investigating skilled migrants' downward career mobility. However, little has been written on skilled Japanese migrants. Further, the work-family intersection is a 'hot public policy topic' in Australia and elsewhere. Yet, the existing studies focus almost exclusively on non-migrant families. This calls attention to the urgency of assessing the work-family lives of skilled migrants. This study fills these gaps, presenting additional insight into Japanese skilled migrants' work and family in and beyond Australia.

Keywords : Australia, employment, family, Japanese skilled migrants

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