

Foreign Credential or Employer Commitment? – The True Barrier to Immigrant Employment in Canada

Raajkumar Kannan

Employment Mentoring Coach

COSTI Immigrant Services

416-917-7912

kannan@costi.org

Culture makes people understand each other better. And if they understand each other better in their soul, it is easier to overcome the economic and political barriers. But first they have to understand that their neighbour is, in the end, just like them, with the same problems, the same questions.

Paulo Coelho

“today most Canadians tend to believe that all races are created equal, and the dominant white majority are generally open to residency and citizenship and commoning with and among other ethnic and racial minorities in public places and social events. But these studies also indicate that this same dominant majority are hesitant about minorities marrying into their families, and they also strongly resist the admittance of minorities to the higher occupational structures in the work world.”

Loren Foster 2006

Is foreign credential evaluation system a barrier?

- Does the FCE provide clarity to employers on foreign obtained education thereby facilitating hiring decisions?
- Are there not adequate FCE facilities that IEs simply could not get their credentials evaluated?
- Are foreign credentials in general devalued and act as a barrier to IE's employment?

Is employer commitment a barrier?

When advertising jobs, are employers letting job seekers know that they value international credentials and competencies.

Does the FCE provide clarity to employers on foreign obtained education thereby facilitating hiring decisions?

- No common system of evaluation - few independent foreign credential assessment agencies
- Original transcripts - impossible for immigrants from many war ravaged countries
- Employers are well informed of the evaluation processes
- Irrelevant credentials – changing labour market requirements

Are there not adequate FCE facilities that IEs simply could not get their credentials evaluated?

FCR Initiatives

The following list (Alliance of Sector Council, 2010) of organizations demonstrates the extensiveness of the FCRP initiatives at both federal and provincial levels

Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades

Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)

Access to Professions and Trades Unit (APT)

World Education Services (WES)

International Qualification Assessment Service (IQAS)

International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES)

Academic Credential Assessment Service (ACAS)

Care for Nurses Program in Ontario

Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC)

Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades (PROMPT)

Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act - Bill 124

National level Initiatives

**Canadian Association of Prior Learning
Assessment**

The Alliance of Sector Councils (TASC)

Canadian Immigration Integration Project (CIIP)

Pan-Canadian Standards in Credential Evaluation

Are foreign credentials in general devalued and act as a barrier to IEl's employment?

Evaluation versus Recognition

Does foreign credential assessment lead to favourable labour market outcomes?

Cultural Competence of Evaluators and Credential Devaluation

Devaluation or Discrimination

The Math

Credential assessment for 35602 skilled immigrants who applied for credential assessment between 2005 and 2010 were evaluated by World Education Services

The applicants were from 178 countries around the world, 45% of the applicants were from India, China, Philippines, United Kingdom and Pakistan.

Engineering, Law, Business, Information Technology, Science and Arts

Devaluation – Bachelor’s degree

Source: “author’s compilation”

	BA		B Sc		B Bus		BCA		B Law		B Eng	
	EQ	<EQ	EQ	<EQ	EQ	<EQ	EQ	<EQ	EQ	<EQ	EQ	<EQ
India	0	148	76	0	23	0	27	52	0	0	310	2
China	124	0	864	0	31	0	280	0	0	0	142	0
Philippines	107	0	0	0	24	0	367	0	3	0	13	0
UK	35	1	25	0	28	0	460	0	7	0	0	96
Pakistan	0	181	87	0	17	0	115	213	4	16	0	97

Devaluation – Master’s degree

Source: “author’s compilation”

	MA		M Sc		M Bus		MCA		M Law		M Eng	
	EQ	<EQ	EQ	<EQ	EQ	<EQ	EQ	<EQ	EQ	<EQ	EQ	<EQ
India	4	518	58	305	444	24	208	6	10	0	100	6
China	24	0	91	0	35	0	0	0	11	0	139	0
Philippines	14	0	34	0	93	9	0	0	0	24	6	0
UK	104	14	382	2	141	0	0	0	21	0	0	9
Pakistan	0	32	33	26	0	36	0	13	0	0	0	0

A closer look at the Devaluation of Foreign Credentials

Extent of Devaluation	India	China	Philippines	UK	Pakistan
Credential with No Academic Value	1	0	0	8	2
Master's degree devalued to less than Bachelor's degree	10	0	0	1	13
Bachelor's degree devalued to less than 3 years of Undergraduate studies	3	0	0	1	486

Source: "author's compilation"

Foreign credential evaluation agencies are doing a fair and thorough assessment.

The devaluation of foreign credentials is a case for concern.

The extent of devaluation does not pose a barrier to employment while competing for appropriate positions.

Keyword Search

Keyword searches were conducted for three areas: 'occupation', 'level of education' and 'evidence of employer commitment in recognizing credentials obtained abroad'.

A fourth area: 'employer commitment to employment equity', was also studied to check if job advertisements were used as a vehicle to reflect hiring policies and employer commitment.

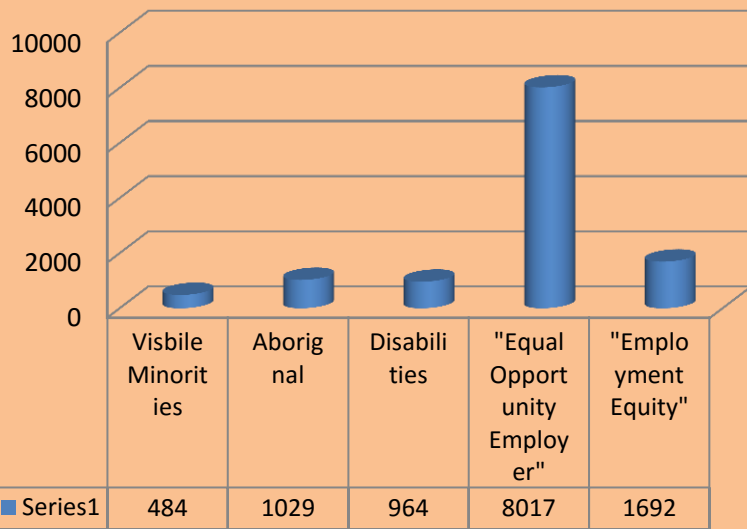
The searches were conducted on the archives of the Toronto Star, for a five year period between 2005 and 2009. Keyword searches were also conducted on workopolis.ca and monster.ca.

Toronto Star Keyword Search Data

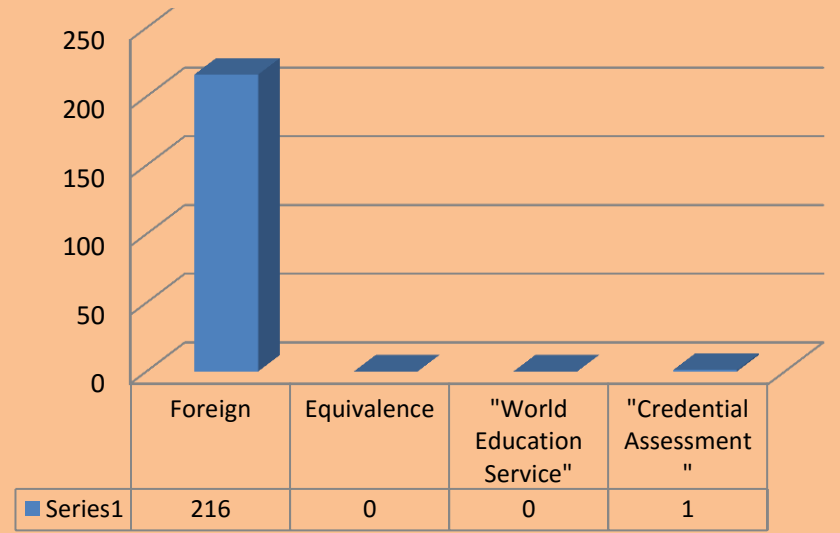
Source: "author's compilation"

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2005-2009
Occupation						
Engineering	1145	1606	1462	1340	792	6345
Law	205	283	264	223	155	1130
Business	1781	3037	2491	1894	1050	10253
IT	1049	2057	1893	989	581	6569
Arts	45	40	41	46	30	202
Science	195	283	243	125	96	942
Education						
High School	47	111	113	61	143	475
Diploma	426	793	614	462	268	2563
Bachelor	217	288	319	164	158	1146
Master	144	156	186	144	92	722
Technician	145	309	196	170	155	975
Technologist	147	198	103	175	78	701
Paralegal	10	24	10	4	2	50
Foreign Credential related						
Foreign	33	73	33	33	44	216
Equivalence						0
"World Education Service"						0
"Credential Assessment"			1			1

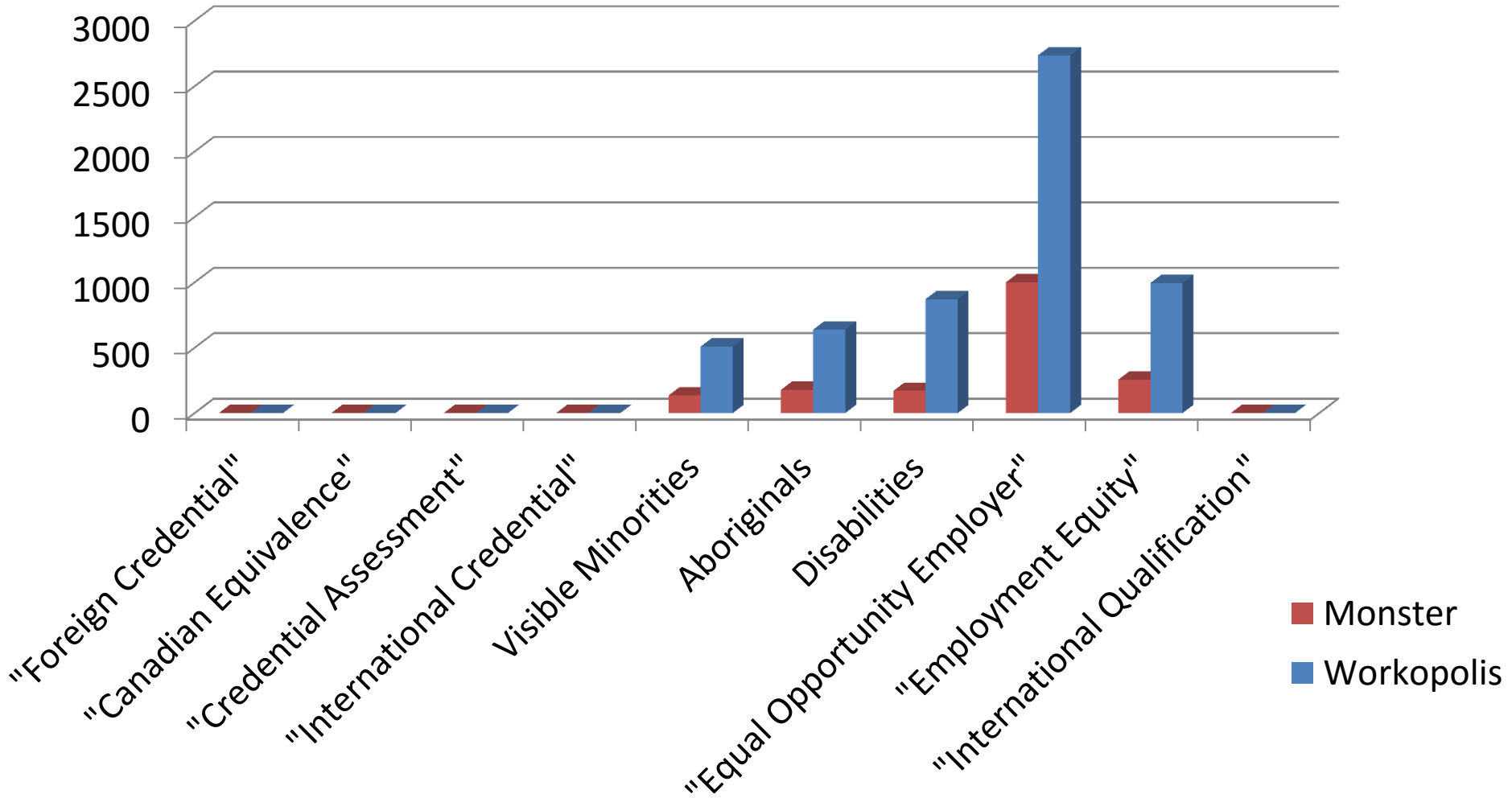
Employment Equity related Keywords -Toronto Star 2005-2009



FCR related Keywords -Toronto Star 2005-2009



FCR/Employment Equity related Keywords



Source: "author's compilation"

Credentials obtained outside of Canada require an evaluation to determine the Canadian equivalence. This evaluation must support the educational requirements for the position as a condition of employment. For further information, visit: World Education Services". (Quoted from job advertisement of Sheridan College)

"Foreign earned credentials may need to be assessed in order to determine Canadian equivalency. Please visit the Canadian Foreign Credentials Referral Office's website for further details."(Quoted from job advertisement of Region of Peel)

The quantitative analysis of job advertisements indicates the lack of employer commitment to recognise foreign earned education even when it was assessed for equivalency in Canada.

What next?

Transformative versus Incremental Change

Organizations need to discern which strategic options are more likely to catalyze transformative change

An incremental approach to achieve “education equity” in the lines of “employment equity” is the need of the hour

A Road Map to hiring and retaining IEIs

(“Alliance of Sector Council” 2010)

“Focus on the skills and job experience of the candidates rather than on where they came from or where they gained their education and experience.

Outline the selection and interview process in your job postings.

When advertising jobs, let workers know that you value international credentials and competencies.

Let potential candidates know that your workplace is inclusive and that it welcomes diversity.”

Recommendations

- Include skills training and experience in addition to education
- Develop collaborative assessment structure to include employer participation
- Provide incentives for educational institutions and licensing bodies to develop competency based assessment tools
- Promote FCRP among grass root employers
- Establish provincial/municipal level programs to promote diversity and cultural sensitivity among employers, particularly medium-sized businesses
- Facilitate discussion forums and workshops for sharing best practices
- Revise the Canadian immigration policy - major emphasis on human capital needs

In a world darkened by ethnic conflicts that tear nations apart, Canada stands as a model of how people of different cultures can live and work together in peace, prosperity, and mutual respect.

Bill Clinton

Successful companies around the world and especially in Canada have long recognized the value and contribution of a diverse workforce. They have moved beyond employment equity and embrace diversity.

As Canada becomes more diverse, those companies that has diversity management as a driving force of their Human Capital management will thrive.

It is the task of the rising generation of Canadians to create a new confidence and a new sense of cultural and civic duty in Canada. Unless we achieve some success on this front, and I believe we are beginning to do so, the very real attractions of the vigorous society to the South of us may attract too many of our able people. Then the human resources and skills required to shape and direct a complex industrial economy will simply not be available to us in Canada.

Mitchell Sharp

Q&A