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Attracting, Supporting and Retaining Skilled Migrants: What Can We Learn From Recently Arrived British and South African Migrants

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Integration of Immigrants Programme

- 5 year FRST funded research programme – Massey University, Albany & University of Waikato
- ***Their successful integration into our economy and society is of critical importance both to their personal experience of settlement and to the wellbeing of New Zealand as a whole. This programme explores how immigrant employees and business owners utilise their skills and experience as they settle in New Zealand***
- Longitudinal research involving, economic modelling, demographic forecasting, face-to-face survey based interviews and case studies

Survey of Immigrant Workers and Business Owners

- Aims
 - identify barriers and opportunities to economic integration;
 - better understand migrant experiences – particularly in work and business, and work life balance
- Participants
 - British, Indian, Chinese, Korean and South African

Lifestyle Migrants

- A new life
 - British – slower pace, less people, less stress
 - South African – personal safety
 - Both groups want better educational and leisure opportunities for their children
- Before arrival in New Zealand and in the initial stage of settlement, lifestyle is the main focus
- Holistic support of skilled migrants
 - active recruitment of migrants involves employer responsibility to provide realistic and up-to-date information
 - and to support new skilled migrants in all aspects of their lives including social engagement for them, their partners, and children

Lifestyle Migrants at Work

- As early settlement needs are met and lifestyle gains begin to be realised – professional aspirations move into focus
- The importance of professional aspirations can be demonstrated by high rates of skilled migrant turnover in the first few years of settlement
 - 19 out of 25 participants are no longer in their first NZ job
 - 50% of UK participants left within their first year of employment
 - Attributes of these skilled migrants - changing positions is not really an issue

First New Zealand Job – A Step Backwards?

- First New Zealand jobs were a step backwards in their careers

“It was going to take me two years to get back to a place that I was already at 5 years ago ... so I left after eight weeks”

“It probably took us 18 months to two years to get back to the level we were working at in the U.K.”

- This was often accompanied by a perceived lack of variation and challenge in the role, leading to boredom
- All compounded by a perceived lack of opportunity for career development

Initial Step Backwards – The Benefits

- **With hindsight, many could see this step backwards as a beneficial experience:**

“I could have done this five years ago when I arrived. Actually what you need to understand is the context and culture of where you work so it was the right thing to do ... even though I could do this five years ago, I can do it better now”

- **Lack of challenge at work allowed greater focus on settling in to new life.**

Current Job Satisfaction

23 of the 25 participants stated they were either happy or very happy in their current position

Common reasons for this included:

- Good support within organisation
- Skills and experience were being used and challenged
- Having more responsibility and professional freedom
- A wide variety of tasks performed

What Can Employers Do in the Workplace?

- **Avoid mismatched expectations by:**
 - providing detailed job descriptions
 - providing clear career development pathways
 - workplace inductions that include migrant specific information

A holistic approach focussing on life outside of, as well as within the workplace is needed in order to best support the migrant worker and increase the chances of retention

Life Outside of Work

- The majority migrated with a partner or a partner and children
- Think about skilled migrant as well as their families – if the partner or children are unhappy this will impact on the migrant employee
 - lack of employment for spouses
 - lack of support networks
 - isolation – both personal and geographical
- The most negative aspect of migration – separation and distance from families and friends

Social Engagement

- Making friends was harder than anticipated
 - friends were mostly fellow migrants but they had also made some Kiwi friends
- Friends in New Zealand often came to be “replacement family”, particularly other migrants with shared experiences
- Established South African community association provide a starting point for making friends and gaining support in initial stages of settlement; the British participants relied on work; social and sport clubs; and migrant support internet sites
- 23 out of the 25 participants rated the social aspect of work as quite important or very important
 - BUT only 4 were involved in work social clubs

Holistic Support of Skilled Migrants

- Provide social engagement opportunities through work
 - social clubs
 - social sport
 - employment orientation/induction should include community and social information
- Human Resources link with Settlement Support New Zealand (SSNZ), they can provide information to employers on:
 - skilled migrant needs in the initial phase of settlement
 - local industry issues and skilled migrant employment
 - employer forums
 - referrals to appropriate service providers
 - community events and social opportunities
 - **Employer can share industry and employment needs and issues with SSNZ**

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Integration of Immigrants Programme

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