

Foreign Credential Assessment and Social Work in Canada

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Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been an increase in research and literature related to professional mobility and recognition of foreign credentials in Canada. Although social work is a regulated profession in Canada, previous studies on foreign credentials have seldom addressed the perspectives of foreign-trained social workers and human services workers. This study demonstrates an effort to fill that knowledge gap.

There are several foreign credential assessment services across Canada that may be used by foreign-trained social workers and human services workers. In addition to the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), other agencies that offer assessment services include the International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS) in Alberta, the International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES) in British Columbia, Academic Credentials Assessment Service (ACAS) in Manitoba, and Comparative Education Service (CES), International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS), and World Education Services (WES) in Ontario. According to CASW, 1094 assessments on foreign social work education have been completed since 2000 (CASW, 2011) and IQAS has assessed approximately 242 applicants with social work related education over the past ten years (IQAS, 2011).

There are very limited data available on the number applicants who have submitted documentation of social work related education to a credential assessment organization whose education was deemed not to be substantially similar to a social work education in Canada. As foreign-trained social workers and human services workers are less likely to apply for social work registration without a positive assessment, social work regulatory bodies have little knowledge of who may be excluded by our systems. Further, we have very little understanding of the barriers and challenges faced by foreign-trained applicants.

With the collaboration of Alberta College of Social Workers, Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers, Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers, and Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers, the Foreign Credential Assessment and Social Work in Canada

Project was launched at the beginning of 2011. The one-year project is aimed to gain a better understanding of the lived experience of foreign-trained social workers and human services workers as well as the barriers faced by them. It will also lead to develop a standardized credential assessment process that may be used by all social work regulatory agencies across Canada.

Background

As a diverse country, every year for the past ten years Canada has received approximately 250,000 immigrants (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009a). Foreign-trained professionals represent an increasingly large component of the Canadian labour market. Between 2006 and 2010, over 522,000 immigrants came to Canada within the “skill worker” category (including the principal applicants, their spouses and dependents) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010).

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2009a), the skilled worker component includes immigrants who are able to demonstrate their ability to enter the labour market and successfully establish in Canada by meeting selection criteria that assess factors such as education, English or French language abilities and work experience. Highly skilled workers are also defined as having a university degree or extensive experience in a given field (Iredale, 2001). Among immigrants who arrived in Canada from 2000-2009, approximately 48.3% had university degrees, with breakdown rates for bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees at 32.3%, 13.2%, and 2.8% respectively (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009b).

There are no specific statistics available regarding foreign-trained social workers and human services workers. However, we anticipate that their experiences would be similar to those faced by other immigrant professionals in Canada.

A key reason why immigrant professionals decide to migrate is their quest for personal, especially career, development (Teo, 2007). Therefore, they are not only focused on the basic needs but also on higher-level needs and self-realization in their professional life in Canada. With the increasing international mobility of labour from one country to another, recognition and accreditation of foreign credentials has become a major social policy issue in Canada; nearly half of the immigrants being accepted into Canada enter as “independent” or “skilled workers”, yet

many of these professionals are experiencing problems in gaining adequate recognition of their foreign credentials in Canada (Watt & Bloom, 2001).

Challenges and barriers faced by immigrant professionals

Being newcomers to Canada, immigrant professionals experience many challenges and barriers when adapting to life in their new environment. As immigrant professionals, they are less familiar with Western values and culture, resulting in culture clashes (Lai & Surood, 2008). Language barriers further exclude many of them from accessing mainstream services, programs, and facilities (Lai & Chappell, 2007). According to Ngo and Este (2006), immigrant professionals also have to deal with the social isolation that resulted from their separation from family and friends in their home countries. Many foreign-trained professionals also experience individual challenges and structural barriers related to foreign credential assessment and recognition.

Individual Challenges

Financial barriers: The respondents in Ngo and Este's study (2006) spent between 18 months and five years preparing for professional re-entry and looking for work in their professional field, and the lengthy process of professional re-entry had caused financial constraints. Because most of the immigrant professionals arrived as independent immigrants, they were not eligible for government assistance. Many immigrant professionals were also financially responsible for their family.

Loss of identity: Analyzing 29 in-depth interviews and four focus groups, Sakamoto, Ku, and Wei (2009) showed that immigrant professionals are experiencing "the depth of the fall" from the perceived peak of their personal and career success in their home country to the deep low of their new life in Canada. As they are not able to use their professional skills to contribute to society, many immigrant professionals have experienced loss of identity and status. Many newcomers also have to deal with cultural, linguistic, financial, and status gaps when arriving in Canada, which may further worsen their situation and affect their self-confidence. According to Sakamoto, Ku, and Wei (2009), due to multiple challenges combined with employment, family integration, mental health and language barriers, many immigrants have expressed a sense of failure.

Challenges related to underemployment: The most critical issue facing recent skilled immigrants from Mainland China is finding employment commensurate with their educational qualifications and work experience (Teo, 2007). It has become commonplace to hear of highly educated professionals working as cheap labour. Usually the underemployment of immigrant professionals is combined with other challenges. According to Teo (2007), one parent often has to stay at home rather than work due to the absence of extended family and affordable childcare; many immigrant couples also suffer marital difficulties and long-term separation as one partner stays behind in the home country to financially support the family. The term “Immigration Prison” has been adopted to describe the situation faced by these immigrant professionals, time which must be served before freedom, which comes in the form of a Canadian passport (Teo, 2007).

Structural barriers

Canada’s point system serves to recruit and admit immigrants who are highly skilled, by awarding points for foreign education and work experience. However, immigrants admitted through this process often discover that their foreign credentials and experience are not valued once they arrive (Somerville & Walsworth, 2010). Many Canadian employers require Canadian degrees as well as Canadian work experience (Teo, 2007). Jimenez (2004) also noted a lack of connection between immigration policies and the way professional associations and regulatory bodies deal with the licensing of foreign-trained applicants.

Discrimination: According to Reitz (2007), the value of foreign credentials held by immigrants is about two-thirds the value of a similar Canadian education. Finnie (2005) further indicates that the earnings gap between immigrants and native-born Canadians is substantial, especially among visible minorities. These findings indicate that foreign education and experience are worth significantly less than their domestic equivalents in Canadian labour markets. In terms of potential earning power, foreign education is worth about 70% of Canadian education and foreign experience is worth only 30% of Canadian experience. The findings of Noh and Kaspar’s study (2003) on Korean immigrants in Toronto indicated the prevalence of perceived discrimination. In their study, fewer than 16.5% of the respondents reported that they had never been discriminated against because of their racial/ethnic background. Foreign-born candidates were evaluated less favourably than Canadian-born candidates, despite their comparable education level, work experience and personality (Louis, Lalonde & Esses, 2010).

Non-recognition of foreign credentials: Man's study (2004) on the lived experience of highly educated and skilled Chinese immigrant women found that where employers require Canadian experience the ability of applicants to gain professional recognition is further disadvantage. As a result, many highly educated and skilled immigrant professionals are treated as cheap labour, while others work in low-skill positions or remain unemployed. Foreign-trained professionals find themselves working in low-wage jobs because employers refuse to recognize the credentials, education and experience earned in their home country (Gray, 2005). The non-recognition of foreign credentials and work experience are challenges met by many skilled immigrants new to Canada (Teo, 2007).

Accreditation and licensing requirements: According to Teo (2007), licensing requirements set by professional associations and the demand for local work experience have been identified as the main obstacles preventing immigrant professionals from gaining employment in their field. Most foreign-educated professionals must complete a complex and lengthy process of accreditation which has created great barriers for highly educated and skilled immigrant professionals from entering their original professions in Canada (Zaman, 2010). Additional structural barriers are created by professional regulatory bodies such as a requirement for Canadian experience and ethnocentric assessment of foreign qualifications and experience (Ngo and Este, 2006) further excluding foreign-trained professionals from the workplace. Many applicants are left in a no-win situation: They cannot get the license without Canadian experience and they cannot get Canadian experience without the license (Jimenez, 2004).

Foreign credential accreditation in Canada

Accreditation of foreign credentials is one of the main barriers immigrants have to deal with to integrate into Canada. According to Watt and Bloom (2001), "credential" refers to a formal document that embodies the recognition and accreditation of learning gained formally or informally, including degrees, diplomas, training certificates, and professional certifications. Foreign credentials refer to the highest education level (above a high school diploma) attained outside Canada (Statistics Canada, 2010). Accreditation is a process of evaluating and assessing the quality of an institution or program of post-secondary education; a program is accredited if it successfully passes through that evaluation and assessment, and achieves the status of a recognized program or institution (Watt & Bloom, 2001). As employers, educators, and professional regulatory organizations lack knowledge and information to assess foreign

education and overseas experience, immigrants have to go to various provincial credential assessment agencies for assessments to prove that their foreign credentials meet Canadian standards (Young, 1999).

Devaluation of foreign credentials

Immigrant professionals may have formal credentials from their home country, however, knowledge, experience and credentials are not necessarily accepted when transferred to another country. After arriving in Canada, many immigrant professionals have experienced devaluation of their learning and work experience obtained from their country of origin. Guo and Andersson well addressed the situation of foreign credential recognition by indicating that, “In the process of assessment and recognition of foreign credentials for immigrant professionals, there is obviously a missing ‘R’ (recognition).” (Guo & Andersson, 2005). Basran and Zong’s (1998) study found that foreign-trained, visible minority, professional immigrants perceived institutionalized barriers such as non-recognition or devaluation of their foreign credentials. Seventy-nine percent of 404 respondents reported that they experienced difficulties in having their foreign credentials recognized in Canada; over 84% of respondents reported that “the difficulty in having their foreign qualifications or credentials recognized” was a major factor that affected (66%) or might have affected (18%) their chance to practice in their chosen professions. Among the 180 skilled workers with foreign credentials in Grant and Nadin’s (2007) study, over 73% reported that their foreign qualifications and 77% that their work experience were not valued by Canadian employers; over 60% of the respondents reported negative emotions associated with difficulties obtaining recognition for foreign credentials and work experience by Canadian employers.

Canada has a well-established immigration system to assess and bring skilled professionals from all over the world to Canada, while ironically many of those skill workers become underemployed, contributing to “brain loss” or “brain-waste”, because their qualifications, despite contributing to gaining them entry, are unrecognized after arriving (Brown & Connell, 2004). Additionally, lack of knowledge about education in other countries (Dali & Dilevko, 2009), ignorance of employers and discrimination (Vu, 2004) all contribute to the accreditation problem of foreign credentials.

Foreign credentials and regulated professions

Regulated occupations are professions controlled by provincial, territorial and sometimes federal law and governed by a professional organization or regulatory body. The regulatory body sets entry requirements and standards of practice, assesses applicants' qualifications and credentials, certifies, registers, and licenses qualified applicants, and disciplines members. To work in a regulated occupation and to use a regulated title, an individual must have a license or certificate or be registered with the regulatory body for their occupation (Watt & Bloom, 2001). Most skilled-worker immigrants have training in occupations that are regulated in Canada, and if these immigrants wish to work as professionals in Canada, they have to undergo credential assessment and acquire accreditation (Girard & Bauder, 2007).

Immigrants who studied outside Canada for a regulated occupation are less likely to be working in that occupation than both immigrants who had studied in Canada and persons who were born in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006). According to Statistics Canada, in 2006, 284,000 employed foreign-educated immigrants had degrees in fields of study that would normally lead to work in a regulated occupation. Of this number, 24% worked in the occupation that matched their studies. In contrast, the match rate was 53% among 163,000 employed immigrants who studied for the same fields in Canada. The match rate among the Canadian born was even higher at 62%.

One of the key players in the arena of foreign credentials accreditation is the regulatory bodies. The study conducted by Ngo and Este (2006) indicated that the professional regulatory bodies set a wide range of requirements for accreditation which may include evaluation of academic qualifications and experience for equivalency, required upgrading, licensing examinations, internship, sponsorship from established members, and English proficiency. The foreign-trained professionals in this study expressed concern about the accreditation requirements such as Canadian experience and letters of reference from Canadian employers, as well as the fact that Canadian institutions did not understand how academic systems in other countries worked and assumed that foreign qualifications were inferior (Ngo & Este, 2006).

Previous studies also pointed out the credential and licensure barriers for some regulated professions, such as engineering and nursing. Girard and Bauder's study (2007) on the assessment of foreign-trained engineers in Ontario showed that full licensing is denied to most immigrants who have been educated abroad, and they have to go back to school to get Canadian credentials or pass a series of technical examinations administered by regulatory bodies to be

qualified for professional registration. Unfamiliarity with international credentials and risk-averse hiring practices has excluded many foreign-trained engineers from the Canadian labour market (Girard & Bauder, 2007). Studies also indicated four tensions associated with internationally educated nurses' licensure in Alberta: length of time for assessment and remediation, costs associated with educational upgrading, concerns about discriminatory processes and decisions, and possibility of discrimination related to ethnicity and race (Ogilvie, Leung, Gushuliak, McGuire & Pinto, 2007).

Foreign credential assessment in social work

There are variations in the recognition of foreign credentials among professional bodies (Ngo and Este, 2006). As well, the educational systems of some countries present more of a challenge to evaluate than others due to their approach to social work and social work education, and the general comparability of education systems (White, 2006). According to Ngo and Este (2006), some human service professions, such as social work, are more willing to recognize foreign credentials, while Man's study (2004), found that pursuing recertification of social work involved applying for an evaluation of social work credentials, doing course work and accumulating field practice, making recognition of foreign social work credentials an expensive and time-consuming process. All the above variations make it necessary to explore in-depth the reality of foreign credential assessment in social work in Canada.

For foreign-trained social workers and human services workers, seeking accreditation of their professional degrees in Canada often means dealing with no fewer than four major institutional stakeholders: post-secondary education institutions, provincial governments, professional self-regulating bodies, and employers (Watt & Bloom, 2001).

Previous studies have pointed out some systemic barriers of current foreign credential assessment system in Canada, such as a complex, lengthy, and overwhelming accreditation process (Zaman, 2010), no national standardization of recognition of international qualifications (Ogilvie, Leung, Gushuliak, McGuire & Pinto, 2007), incompatibility of learning recognition, and jurisdictional barriers such as limited interprovincial portability of credentials (Watt & Bloom, 2001). Finnie (2005) described the credential assessment system as a Balkanized system which wastes resources, and noted that as organizations continually reinvent the assessment wheel, immigrants must often repeat credential assessments each time they change jobs.

Social work is one of the regulated professions in Canada. However, previous studies on foreign credentials have seldom addressed the perspectives of foreign-trained social workers and human services workers. There's a knowledge gap related to foreign credential accreditation and assessment experienced by foreign-trained social workers and human services workers. Therefore, it is very important to examine the experiences of foreign-trained social workers and human service workers as well as the foreign credential assessment agencies and system in Canada.

Research Methodology

This project adopted a qualitative research design with the targets being foreign-trained social workers and human services workers in Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan. Many social services agencies, immigrant services agencies and ethno-cultural communities were identified and contacted to help with the recruitment of foreign-trained social workers and human services workers across the four provinces. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with people who completed post-secondary education in social work or related social services programs outside of Canada with the intention of becoming a social worker.

A few pilot interviews with foreign-trained social workers and human services workers were conducted in Alberta in May 2011 to refine the interview guide. Nationwide data collection was conducted in Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan from June to August 2011.

A total of 47 interviews were conducted with 20 participants in Alberta, 9 in Manitoba, 8 in Nova Scotia and 10 in Saskatchewan. Written consent was given by each participant. The interviews were audio or shorthand recorded and systematically coded. Key concepts and meanings that emerged from the data were analyzed to capture the challenges and barriers that accompany foreign credential recognition and the experience of the participants. Personal information (e.g. names) or information that may make the participants identifiable has been removed from the report.

Findings

Among the 47 participants in this project, the majority were women (78.7%). The foreign credentials were obtained from over 17 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America, with the most common countries being Hong Kong-China, Philippines, the

United States, the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria. Almost 89.4% of the participants have a bachelor's degree, and 53.2% of them have a master's degree and above.

Issues identified in the research included problems accessing information about foreign credential assessment, obtaining foreign credential assessment and becoming registered social workers were discussed by the research participants. Factors affecting foreign credential recognition and social work professional re-entry were identified in the project as well.

Accessing information about foreign credential assessment

Immigrant services agencies, immigration offices, as well as informal channels such as friends and self-online navigation were reported as important channels for foreign-trained social workers and human services workers to access information about foreign credential assessment. On the other hand, many participants reported a lack of knowledge of foreign credential assessment and experiencing barriers and challenges when accessing information.

Having no access to information was reported as one of the main challenges for newcomers.

One participant from Alberta said:

“As an immigrant, the time when I came here, no one would tell you this information...No one reached you or gave you a package for new immigrant, what kind of information you need, what number you can phone.”

Another participant from Alberta shared similar experiences:

“I don't have any way to go to ask for help...not a lot of information to help new immigrant to know how to develop or to keep the profession here... It seems not having a lot of information out in the community to promote or tell people, to tell new immigrants. The information is not easily found.”

A participant from Saskatchewan described the experience as *“that dark area of pockets”*.

A participant from Manitoba stated:

“I did not know that it was an association of social workers...So I wait for four years before I get my credentials or equivalence...information is not accessible.”

Confusion and misunderstanding were encountered by accessing information through different channels.

A participant from Alberta said:

“What I understand is that without Canadian education, I can’t be the member, as I understood from the website, maybe I understood it wrong...Different people told me that I need Canadian degree, but I don’t have any exact information, it’s just opinions.”

Similarly, another participant from Saskatchewan mentioned:

“I was told I had to take my Masters. No one told me I could get myself assessed at a Bachelor’s level.”

Meanwhile, negative feelings were aroused. Two Participants from Manitoba shared their experiences:

“When you go to the university they say this and if you go to the association they say that. It must be one voice, so you won’t be discouraged!”

“I have to go to different places and get the answers...it was very frustrated time for me.”

The current channels to access information were described as lacking clear guidance and not targeting the social work profession.

A participant from Nova Scotia said:

“It is like the middle of the sea, you don’t see the land, so you don’t have an orientation and you don’t know the direction you can take. When we arrive, the first thing we go to the agency for immigrants and sometimes they don’t have the information so we stop there.”

A similar issue was addressed by a participant from Manitoba:

“When you get information from employment counsellors, they do not know exactly what you need to do because they do all professions.”

Experience and issues related to foreign credential assessment

Some participants reported having good experience with foreign credential assessment because of the efficient assessment process, clear guidance and friendly staff to assist with the process, as well as the resources from social service agencies to assist with the application

process and fees. However, a variety of barriers and challenges were also reported by foreign-trained social workers and human services workers regarding foreign credential assessment.

As some overseas educational institutions do not have computerized documentation or transcript delivery systems, some foreign-trained applicants have experienced difficulties submitting original documents required by assessment agencies.

A participant from Alberta said:

“I don’t know whether it’s because they (assessment agency) don’t have any information about my college; they need me to go back to my college to get all the copies and send to them. If I was already here (in Canada), I would have problem to go back to my college to get all the information, because they required everything, like they need to have the information about the courses, the contents, the supervision hours and everything before they can do the assessment. The major concern is that why I have to send everything original?”

Another participant from Alberta also addressed the similar concern:

“They (assessment agency) wanted me to send all my courses name, title, course outline and everything. I really didn’t have those...It’s not computerized there, so it took me a lot of time to collect all the papers.”

Among all the required documents, requiring transcripts being delivered directly by the institutions was identified as one of the major challenges.

A few participants from Manitoba addressed the barriers faced by them:

“I had to travel to Nigeria for my papers. The process is not like in Canada that people call or email and you can submit your request...”

“I have my own copy of my transcripts, but they (assessment agency) ask that send directly by the university. Getting my transcripts done here is discouraged...it is so expensive to go back home again to have the transcripts.”

Participants from other provinces also raised the similar issue regarding obtaining transcripts or other documents from the institutions.

A participant from Nova Scotia indicated:

“I needed a list of documents from the university. So if you are not in touch with your country of origin then it would be difficult.”

Another participant from Saskatchewan said:

“It’s a big problem or challenge for me. If I want to get my credentials assessed, I have to go to Moldova. They will not send directly from the university to Canada. They will not do that. It is different rules, different laws over there. I was told it was up to me, go to Moldova and get my transcripts.”

For applicants whose documents are in languages other than English or French, getting certified translation has created another barrier for them, especially when translation services for certain languages are not available in Canada.

A few participants from Nova Scotia addressed their concerns about translating documents:

“There is no Czech-English translator here... We just decided to do it back home. I did the translation in the Czech Republic as I didn’t know how to find someone here.”

“The school will send the paper in Spanish, so who does the translation and if not will it stop the process? Translation is not easy to find here.”

A participant from Alberta shared the experience as a person from an English-speaking country:

“Maybe that was because I am English-speaking, maybe made it easier that way... for other people whose official language is not in English, I think it’s a problem.”

The current assessment process has been reported as time and cost consuming for foreign-trained social workers and human services workers.

Participants from different provinces addressed their concerns about the time to complete an assessment:

“It was between 4 to 6 months. It was quite a lengthy period...too long.”

“I sent it last year in August and they got back to me in March of this year.”

“It took a long time, over 7 months.”

“It took the assessment agency four months. I didn’t know it would take that much time. If I was waiting for that to get a job, I would be jobless for four months. How tedious and long it is!”

Assessment fees associated with other related costs on obtaining foreign credential accreditation have created additional financial burden for some foreign-trained social workers and human services workers.

A participant from Alberta indicated:

“Money becomes the problem; for landed immigrants, they don’t have money to pay for that.”

Furthermore, the financial costs have an impact on the participants and their family.

A participant from Manitoba said:

“Imagine me expending in getting my transcripts that I have to go and it is \$7000 dollars...this does not work...it is discouraging. It will give a psychological problem.”

Another participant from Manitoba also indicated:

“In my case it is an additional burden for me, because of the payment for the accreditation. This is an effort that my family has to do. These affect me...”

A participant from Nova Scotia addressed the similar issue:

“I haven’t submitted, with the fees I can’t. It has had an impact on my family...”

Not assessing diploma programs, professional certification programs, or related programs using terms other than social work has created further barriers for foreign-trained social workers and human services workers.

One participant from Alberta shared the experience of assessing diploma certificates:

“I paid 200 dollars and the result is that they (assessment agency) said they don’t assess the one with diploma. But they did not refund me. It is very disappointing, because they don’t do this for diploma and people with diploma.”

Another participant from Alberta also indicated:

“They (assessment agency) don’t know anything besides the university. If it’s from the university, they would do the assessment...for anything professional, they don’t know; if it’s the diploma, they would not know.”

Participants from different provinces also addressed the issue of assessing specific human services educational programs or specializations.

A participant from Manitoba said:

“Even if you have the same courses but the description is different. They (assessment agency) might not recognize it. It is a possible challenge!”

Another participant from Manitoba shared the experience:

“I cannot do it because I do not have the degree in social work...In my country, we do not have social work. The problem is that they do not recognize my degree as a social worker. Many countries do not have the same degree, but it doesn't mean they do not have the degree, only is called different.”

Similar issues were addressed by participants from Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia:

“I found out that there is not a similar program to mine in Canada and was not able to submit any application for assessment.”

“Course equivalency across the Canada/US border-that could be the biggest issue is integrating the specializations.”

Another participant from Manitoba further addressed the concern about not valuing professional experience in current assessment systems:

“The credential process only assesses the education component but what about the experience component of being social worker? You have more knowledge and wisdom if you practiced as social worker which is back up your education as well. In my country, for example, licensed social workers had to pass their board examination and practice social work for 8 to 10 years but when they came to Canada they won't give a factor of weight for the 8 to 10 years of experience aside from their education.”

Foreign-trained social workers and human services workers also reported not getting the accreditation for their foreign credentials and some even experienced different assessment results from different assessment agencies.

A participant from Alberta said:

“I was really upset when my two years' master was converted to one year. I studied very hard, and it was a two years' program. They (assessment agency) only said that it is equivalent to Canadian one year master in social work degree, but they did not mention why the two years' program converted to one year.”

A participant from Saskatchewan indicated:

“When anybody came to Canada, their degree was kind of like rough paper or scrap paper...The degrees are not recognized...Which means when we fly to Canada our degrees are wasted. We are not ‘skilled labour’. Back home I am the management guy; I am the degree holder guy. But in Canada, they use as unskilled labour.”

Participants from different provinces also addressed the issues of experiencing contradictory assessment results when using the services offered by different assessment agencies.

“In five years I took two assessments. The first year they (assessment agency) said the education in Philippines is only equivalent to two years of university in Canada. Then I went directly to the Canadian Association of Social Workers at my fifth year...I have two results of my accreditation process. The first one was with Labour and Immigration. The second one was with CASW and they told me that my degree from back home is equivalent to the degree in Canada.”

Another participant with credentials from the Philippines shared the assessment experience with the International Qualifications Assessment Service:

“I am only two years’ university not four years’ university, because I did not have grade 12 in high school. The way they did in Canada is grade 1, grade 2, until grade 12, but mine is only 11 years in high school...They should assess based on the courses you had in order to get the degree for university, it’s not because you didn’t go to grade 12.”

It was reported that duplicate credential assessments had to be done if applying for different purposes or transition took place among different regions.

A participant from Alberta said:

“I prefer to apply once and have everything. For example, if I need to apply for university, I already have the assessment to use. Why do I have to apply again? I think I can’t apply for academic and work purposes at the same time. I have to give them (assessment agency) the name of the university, because they will send the assessment report directly to the university.”

A participant from Saskatchewan shared:

“You might think provinces might recognize more if you are recognized in Canada, in B.C., that there would be some reciprocity...Saskatchewan needed all my transcripts over

again that had already been done! So I spent I don't know how much money, and headaches! You don't even know how frustrated I was with this process. It was horrible. I had to do everything all over again. It seems so unnecessary. Why not having a different path for people that move from province to province?"

Similar concerns were addressed by participants from other provinces:

"The social work association directed me to the assessment agency and they said that I had to get my qualifications checked out. My point is that I did that through the immigration process; it took me months and thousands of dollars to do it. And they did not sway on that. I refused to do it at first then I had to negotiate. Then I convinced them to accept the documents I had. Nothing had changed since the time I immigrated."

"When you came to Canada you have to re-approve to the system that is very strange for me, because you already have your degree. You have to go back several steps and prove your education. And this is happening especially to professionals and students from the third world."

Experiences and issues of social work registration

Besides the challenges and barriers associated with foreign credential assessment, factors which prevented foreign-trained social workers and human services workers from getting their social work registration were also reported by participants from the four target provinces in the project. Having difficulty with the foreign credential assessment process and being unable to get recognition for foreign credentials were identified as key factors affecting foreign-trained social workers or human services workers going for social work registration. Research participants stated that they would give up applying for social work registration if the assessments indicated that their foreign credentials didn't meet the standards of the similar programs in Canada.

One participant from Nova Scotia shared:

"It is just the foreign piece. The only barrier is the foreign training assessment."

Another participant from Saskatchewan said:

"I wasn't looking at getting registered. My credentials were assessed as not equivalent."

Similarly, one of the participants from Manitoba indicated:

"I thought that my degree does not apply here. I never tried. I was thinking to have the social work degree from here (Canada)...I was not sure if I would qualify."

Lack of systems to transfer an overseas social work licence to Canada as well as requirements for specific qualifications have created barriers for foreign-trained social workers and human services workers to get a full license for social work practice in Canada. A few participants who got social work licences abroad shared their experiences:

“It was a little bit lengthy. I was already registered back home as well before I left the UK. It’s kind of stopped and I have to wait for this to happen before I could start again.”

“After I studying for two years in graduate school in social work and working for more than five years in social work, and coming with my ACSW (Academy of Certified Social Workers) credentials, I was surprised that I wasn’t recognized....Just for my registration, I have to go for 1500 hours of supervision; that’s almost 9 months to 12 months before I could get my full licence. That’s one thing I was surprised, as I thought the USA is very close, and has the similar system, so I thought I should be easily accepted...the process is so tedious.”

Many participants reported that the requirement for practicum hours under the supervision of qualified registered social workers in Canada was one of the main challenges for foreign-trained social workers and human services workers to get registered. Participants from different regions addressed their concerns:

“I had a hard time getting back my RSW. Even though I got close to 20 years working experiences of social work in my home country, I still can’t get back my RSW. That is the biggest issue. I took so many years to get back my RSW. It’s 1500 hours, so if you are working as a full-time, it’s one year. And I had to partner with different organizations, and that person has to be a social worker and we worked together. If we worked on a project, imagine how many hours I can get. For example, only those discussion hours and implementation can be counted. The maximum is 50 hours for one project. And how many projects do you need to do in order to get back all those hours.”

“I went to all these websites to search and find the information and I think that the procedure is not easy, especially for immigrants who did not study here. Getting a RSW is not easy. For RSW they need you have one or two years experiences working as a social worker. You need to have that in Canada. I would rather not go for RSW, because of so much trouble getting the RSW. So even I have a master of social work, I never had

RSW, because for me who was educated outside of Canada, it's a trouble. Because the requirements need you to have Canadian practicum, if nobody gives you the job, you won't have the 1500 hours, so how can you apply for RSW, it's impossible."

The participants also reported that being given a provisional status or candidacy period (the status or period given to registrants before they satisfy all the requirements in order to become fully registered) had a negative impact on them.

A participant from Alberta said:

"It affected my family in the sense I was giving a provisional status. And it was hard for me to find a job because wherever I went and was told that they don't want provisional status. That was struggling in getting a job. And I believe that it shouldn't be, because my experiences back was that they (assessment agency) were saying it was equal. What's the point to give a provisional status?"

One participant from Nova Scotia mentioned:

"I was surprised I had to go through it-the 2 years of candidacy, then exams then you become registered... I had to find a supervisor for 2 years and do exams again. I had already worked for over 2 years in my own country. For us it feels like they don't trust our educational or work experience. Because my degree is foreign I have to go through this whole process."

Another participant from Nova Scotia also shared similar experiences:

"This 2 year mentoring is to demonstrate to the association through a mentor that you can be a social worker, but we have earned that title through our education. It lowers your self-esteem because they say you are not a real SW until you do your 2 years. Just giving people their status, it is a self-esteem thing as well as credibility. A card that says SW (Candidate) most people wouldn't know what that was but if a client asked and you had to explain, the client would maybe doubt your credentials."

As new immigrants with a lack of connections to the social work field in Canada, foreign-trained social workers and human services workers have found it challenging to get practicum supervisors or references to assist with their social work registration.

Participants from different provinces shared their experience of seeking practicum supervisors:

“It was so hard to find a supervisor. As a new immigrant, I had a hard time to find someone who was willing to supervise me. When I was applying for my social work registration, I also went to the area coordinator, but the support I got from the area coordinator was minimal. I didn’t get any help regards getting a supervisor. They only gave me suggestions. As a new immigrant, I didn’t know anybody here at that time.”

“It was hard for me to get a full registration. The time that was given was one year, and I was a newcomer and I didn’t know anybody...I had a lot of troubles to get a supervisor, because as a new person, they won’t be able to find anybody in this country.”

“I have no connections here. I am not integrated into the systems to find another social worker that might take me on.”

Challenges of getting references were also reported by the participants. A participant from Alberta said:

“As I mentioned that I have my LCSW-Licensed Clinical Social Worker in New York City, when I applied for the RSW, if I remembered correctly, first I tried to apply for the registered clinical social worker, but I read the requirement, it stated that I need to get one or two clinical social workers or psychologists to recommend me. I feel as a new immigrant, I don’t know anyone. To me, that’s exactly a barrier. I think especially the one having people to recommend. I know it is even for local applicants too. It’s a requirement, character reference or something like that. It’s not just for foreign degree. But what about very new immigrants who don’t know anyone, what would happen to them. To me, it’s definitely a barrier.”

Another participant from Nova Scotia mentioned:

“You needed reference forms from other registered social workers and I had just moved to Canada and I didn’t know a lot of people, my friends are not social workers.”

Financial issues were reported as main barriers for foreign-trained social workers and human services workers, especially new immigrants, to seek social work registration.

A participant from Alberta said:

“For registration, money becomes the program; for landed immigrants, they don’t have money to pay for that.”

A participant from Saskatchewan mentioned:

“I didn't pursue it, because of cost. To become a member there is big cost and I wasn't even practicing.”

Participants from Nova Scotia also shared similar concerns:

“355 dollars a year as an active social worker...but without a job, it is too much. I had to think, ‘Why am I paying this money out?’ I struggled with it.”

“It takes a long time, costs a lot of money...especially after being in school for 6 years...Money is tough when you just graduate and are looking for work.”

Lack of clear guidance, information and knowledge of the system have created barriers for foreign-trained social workers and human services workers to apply for social work registration.

One participant from Alberta said:

“They don't have proper guidance. You need somebody to guide you and there's nobody to guide you - what exactly you need to do. The procedure is very complicated.”

A participant from Nova Scotia shared the experience:

“I felt lost in the process, there was transition going on here...that wasn't clear for me online. The instructions are not clear.”

Participants from Manitoba also indicated:

“The factors that prevent me to register are a lack of information and because my country does not have social work degree however, I was working as a social worker.”

“I have not started yet but for me the challenges maybe are the standards of practice maybe and specific fields like child family services. Yes, even the policies here. I am not familiar with all the policies and the different systems.”

Factors affecting foreign credential recognition and social work professional re-entry

Cultural shifts, lack of Canadian experiences and knowledge of the systems were reported by foreign-trained social workers and human services workers as some of the main factors that preventing them from working in the social work field in Canada.

A participant from Alberta said:

“At that time, as a new immigrant, I was not familiar with how the system works...I never dreamed of working as a social worker again...English is a barrier, and also you don't have knowledge how the system works, and you don't have Canadian experiences.”

Another participant from Albert added:

“People told me that my English is ok, but my confidence is not. That's part of cultural shock and cultural shift.”

One participant from Saskatchewan also indicated:

“The biggest stumble block is that you don't have any work experience in Canada. That is what I heard in every interview. And I told them (employers) if no one gives me a chance to work in Canada I will never have Canadian work experience. They were impressed with my degree and my communication skills but I was told that I didn't have experience working in Canada. ... They said that in order to be in the field of social work you need to have work experience in Canada. Everywhere that is a problem.”

Lack of trust in overseas experience as well as non-recognition of foreign education and qualifications have further excluded foreign-trained social workers and human services workers from working in their professional fields. This also creates a huge gap between their previous profession and current situation. Participants from different provinces addressed the issues associated with foreign credential recognition when seeking for social work professional re-entry in Canada.

A participant from Alberta said:

“The main challenge is working in my field. I talked with different people from different professions and it usually takes about 3 years to get into your profession from immigration-from the moment you immigrated to the time you get into your profession, it takes about 3 years.”

Another participant from Manitoba mentioned:

“My education from abroad is just a second year university in Canada. If I want to be a social worker I have to go to the University of Manitoba.”

Participants from Saskatchewan addressed similar issues:

“I would go to those interviews and they would tell me I needed Canadian experience... and sometimes they would say I was over qualified too. I would be given all kinds of excuses... It was like a ball thrown up and down.”

“I used to get that answer - you are not qualified for here. I did get a job at a hospital (not in the social work field). But I felt I was being treated differently because my education was different. I decided that within a year I would be going back to school to get qualified here... Those roadblocks were there, I really felt it.”

A participant from Nova Scotia also indicated:

“I think I have what I need but the people interviewing think I don't. The equivalencies do not translate...”

Gaps between the professional transitions were further addressed by the participants.

A participant from Saskatchewan said:

“Back home we held prestigious positions in the government and here we are caregivers.”

Another participant from Manitoba mentioned:

“It stresses me out because I cannot pursue my profession here... We have the best jobs back home. Back home I was already a department head of the social services for one of the local government units. So it is depressing because even if you are a social worker you cannot handle every problem. This is personal and it affects your income, your family, your wellbeing, the psychosocial wellbeing. It is very depressed. Sometimes really put you down. Yes it is stressful!”

Furthermore, discrimination associated with the foreign credential recognition and professional re-entry was also reported by the participants. Participants from Alberta shared their experiences:

“I feel it is not easy for an immigrant to apply for a position in the mainstream, only when they have more positions than the workers then maybe they will consider. If more candidates available, then I think we seem to be inferior. That's my feeling.”

“Whenever I applied, they want to know whether I have any Canadian schooling, Canadian credentials. And People don't trust you when you are an immigrant; they don't trust your skills...And I would tell that there's racism everywhere; your skin is not white, you are an immigrant, you have no quality to them. I would say that most people are

really open-minded that they take immigrants, but there are lots of people who have issues and who don't want to take the skills of immigrants, they are afraid of immigrants. Even for my present work, I applied for the position, I know the job, but the guy they hired is just white and there is discrimination."

A participant from Manitoba said:

"I have the feeling that I have to go from the beginning. I feel discriminated - like you came here but you are not good enough. And you have to swallow this and close your eyes. You have to accept this because I am from a different country."

Participants from Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia also addressed similar issues:

"Not much on the assessment - more on the hiring. Wherever you go there would be institutional racial discrimination. I really felt that."

"When do you start being treated like a Canadian? -When you get the same treatment. The immigration process is tight. You have to do a lot of work. So for me to do the registration (foreign credential assessment) again it is duplication....they need to stop it. I still think foreign people are treated badly. They treat you like you are not up to the mark, and you have to prove that you are."

Recommendations and Conclusion

Individual challenges combined with structural challenges have made it a costly and tedious process for foreign-trained social workers and human services workers to obtain foreign credential recognition. In order to improve foreign credential recognition, recommendations to the government, assessment services providers, as well as social work associations were made by foreign-trained social workers and human services workers across Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

Collaboration

A wide range of assessment agencies, including academic institutions, should be recognized by the social work associations to facilitate foreign credential assessments. Collaboration among different assessment agencies should be enhanced to ensure the consistency of assessment.

In-depth collaboration among social work associations, immigrant services agencies and foreign credential assessment services providers should be developed to create culturally appropriate channels for foreign-trained social workers and human services workers to get access to foreign credential assessment. As professional regulatory bodies, social work associations should initiate more collaboration and communication with immigrant services agencies and foreign credential assessment agencies to make sure that clear guidance and updated information on social work registration would be accessible to these agencies as well as their clients who are seeking social work registration.

Reciprocity among social work associations, foreign credential assessment agencies and immigration offices should be established to eliminate duplication in assessment processes.

Facilitation

Time and costs of foreign credential assessment should be minimized to help to relieve the stress on foreign-trained social workers and human services workers; subsidies from the government or social work associations should be offered to assist with foreign credential assessment and social work registration.

Multilingual information manuals, clear guidance, and communication channels should be offered to help foreign-trained social workers and human services workers to gain access to foreign credential assessment.

A foreign credential assessment process and foreign credential department should be adopted by social work associations to offer integrated support to foreign-trained applicants. As social work regulatory bodies have better knowledge of social work qualifications and professional standards, it is suggested that foreign credential assessment services should be developed within the social work associations to facilitate the licensing process of internationally educated applicants.

Integration

Bridging programs, short-term schooling or professional training targeting social workers should be developed to help foreign-trained social workers and human services workers to adapt to the social work profession in Canada; suggested topics include policy, child and welfare system, and standards of practice.

Mentorship programs or support groups should be initialized to help foreign-trained social workers and human services workers to gain knowledge and support.

Processes and resources should be developed by social work associations to assist with supervision, evaluating overseas professional experience and transferring social work registration and foreign credential assessment.

Reflection

Social work components instead of general educational systems should be reflected when assessing the qualifications and credentials of foreign-trained social workers and human services workers.

Social work values should be reflected in the assessment process to evaluate the quality of each case through a personal approach.

There should be an appeal process for foreign-trained social workers and human services workers whose application for registration has been rejected. Opportunities should be offered to applicants whose assessment does not meet the standards to otherwise demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities to the regulatory body.

Standardization

A standardized assessment process should be developed to minimize the chance that different credential assessment agencies would offer different assessment results regarding the same or similar social work programs abroad.

Standardized accreditation on a list of overseas social work programs and institutions should be conducted to replace individual based assessment.

Clear standards and requirements for social work qualifications should be announced to recruit foreign-trained social workers and human services workers as well as to establish the professional standards. Citizenship and Immigration Canada should consult with social work regulatory bodies about standard requirements for social work qualifications when setting up immigration requirements for foreign-trained social workers, so that foreign-trained professionals admitted in the social work immigration category are well qualified for professional registration in Canada.

To fully understand the process of foreign credential assessments and address the issues that accompany foreign credential recognition, it is recommended that the perspectives of assessment agencies should also be included in this project.

As barriers faced by foreign-trained social workers and human services workers who do eventually get registered and those who do not have been identified, mechanisms should be developed by social work associations to reduce or remove them, or to help foreign-trained applicants understand what they need to do to overcome them.

Further improvements should be made by foreign credential assessment agencies, social work regulatory bodies and government to better integrate foreign-trained social workers and human services workers. Assessment agencies should create linguistically and culturally appropriate channels to help foreign-trained social workers and human services workers to gain access to information about foreign credentials assessment. Social work regulatory bodies should involve foreign-educated social workers in developing internal processes to address the needs of foreign-trained professionals. On the policy level, equity policy, professional training and internships should be developed to facilitate the professional re-entry of foreign-educated social workers and human services workers.

From a policy perspective, this project has helped to enhance our understanding of the unique context of foreign credential assessment from the perspectives of foreign-trained social workers and human services workers in Canada, facilitating regulating bodies' and policy makers' understanding of the needs for future structuring and implementation of assessment policies and services.

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Appendix 1

Demographic Summary of Participants

Country of origin/ education	Gender	Education	Profession in country of origin	Current Profession in Canada	Credential Assessment (Y/N)	RSW (Y/N)
Bangladesh	F	Bachelor	Instructor	Non-profit	Y	N
Brazil	M	Master	Academic	Unemployed	In process	N
Columbia	F	Bachelor	Social Worker	Unemployed	Y	Y
Columbia	F	Bachelor	Social Worker	Social Worker	Y	Y
Czech Republic	F	Master	Clinical Social Worker	Social Worker	Y	Y
England	F	Diploma	Therapist	Non-profit	N	N
Germany	F	Bachelor	Social Worker	Unemployed	Y	Y
Hong Kong China	F	Bachelor	Social Worker	Social Worker	Y	Y
Hong Kong China	F	Master	Social Worker	Social Worker	Y	Y
Hong Kong China	M	Bachelor	Workshop Manager in Non-profit	Non-profit	N	N
Hong Kong China	F	Diploma	Welfare Worker/Social Work Assistant	Social Worker	Y	Y
Hong Kong China/	F	Master	Social Worker	Social Worker	Y	Y

Country of origin/ education	Gender	Education	Profession in country of origin	Current Profession in Canada	Credential Assessment (Y/N)	RSW (Y/N)
USA						
Hong Kong China/ England	M	Master	Social Worker	Social Worker	Y	Y
India	F	Master	Human Resources	Not related to social work	Y	N
India	M	Master	Legal Social Worker	Social Worker	Y	Y
India	F	PhD	N/A	Not related to social work	N	N
India & United States	F	Master	N/A	Private Practice	Y	Y
Kenya	M	Bachelor	AID worker	Non-profit	Y	N
Mexico	F	Bachelor	Social Worker	Unemployed	N	N
Mexico	F	Certificate	N/A	Non-profit	Y	N
Moldova	F	Master	Non-profit and Academic	Non-profit	Y	N
Moldova	F	Master	Child Protection Worker	Non-profit	N	N
Nigeria	M	Bachelor	Community Social Development	Not related to social work	Y	N
Nigeria	M	Bachelor	Social Welfare Development Officer	Non-profit	Y	N
Nigeria	F	Master	Clinical Counselling	Unemployed	N	N

Country of origin/ education	Gender	Education	Profession in country of origin	Current Profession in Canada	Credential Assessment (Y/N)	RSW (Y/N)
Nigeria	F	Master	N/A	Non-profit	N	N
Pakistan	F	Master	National Coordinator	Non-profit	N	N
Pakistan	M	Master	Social Worker	Social Worker	Y	Y
Pakistan	F	Master	N/A	Non-profit	Y	N
Philippines	F	Bachelor	Social Worker	Unemployed	Y	Y
Philippines	F	Bachelor	Executive Director	Non-profit	N	N
Philippines	F	Bachelor	Social Worker	Social Worker	Y	In process
Philippines	F	Master	Social Worker	Non-profit	Y	In process
Philippines	F	Bachelor	Social Worker	Non-profit	Y	In process
Philippines	F	Bachelor	Social Welfare Specialist	Social Worker	Y	Y
Scotland	M	Bachelor	Social worker	Social Worker	Y	Y
Slovakia	F	Master	Support Worker	Non-profit	Y	N
UK	F	Bachelor	Senior Community Worker	Unemployed	Y	N
UK	F	Master	Social Worker	Non-profit	Y	Y

Country of origin/ education	Gender	Education	Profession in country of origin	Current Profession in Canada	Credential Assessment (Y/N)	RSW (Y/N)
Ukraine	F	Master	Social Worker	Student	Y	N
United States	F	PhD	Child Protection Worker	Academic	Y	Y
United States	F	Master	School Counsellor	Private Practice	Y	Y
USA	M	Master	Medical Social Worker	Social Worker	Y	Y
USA	F	Master	Social Worker	Non-profit	In process	N
USA	F	Master	Private Practice	Unemployed	N	Y
USA	F	Bachelor	N/A	Non-profit	Y	Y
Wales-UK	F	Diploma	Registered Social Worker	Social Worker	Y	Y

Appendix 2
Interview Guide

Part one. Background Information

- a. Education outside of Canada (country, program and completion date)
- b. Sex
- c. Previous profession in the country where obtained the education
- d. Current profession in Canada

Part two. Key Questions

A. Educational Experiences

A1. What are the requirements of the program you attended in order to get the diploma/degree? Which level is the program? Years of the program? Major courses?

A2. What are the qualifications of the instructors? Are they social workers?

A3. How many years of education does it require before attending the diploma/degree program?

A4. Is there any other information related to the educational system and your educational experiences that you would like to share?

B. Professional Experiences

B1. Is the title “social worker” commonly used in your country of origin/education?

1) If yes, what does social worker mean there? What types of work do social workers do there?

2) If no, why?

B2. What types of work were you qualified to do in the country where you were educated?

B3. Would you please share with me your working experiences before you moved to Canada?

B4. Were you able to work in the field related to your education after you moved to Canada?

1) If yes, please indicate what were the processes in order to work in the related field?

2) If no, please indicate what were the barriers that preventing you from working in the related field?

C. Credential Assessment -Knowledge

C1. Have you ever used or are you aware of any credential assessment agencies in Canada? If yes, what are they?

C2. In which ways did you get access to the information you need regard to foreign credential assessment?

C3. Were the available information and resources enough for you to submit your application on your own?

C4. What would you like to suggest in order to help you gain better knowledge of foreign credential assessment?

D. Credential Assessment –Experiences

D1. How's your experience using foreign credential assessment services?

D2. Have you got your credentials assessed in Canada?

If yes,

1) Which assessment agency (agencies) did you use and what was the outcome of the credential assessment?

2) What was the purpose of the assessment? Study, work or other purposes?

3) Was the assessment result equivalent to the education you got outside of Canada?

4) If the assessment did not indicate equivalent to social work in Canada, were you told what you were lacking?

If no,

1) If you did not have your credentials assessed, why?

2) What were the factors that prevented you getting your credentials assessed?

D3. How does the credential assessment affect you and your family?

D4. What are the barriers and challenges that you have met with or anticipated related to the foreign credential assessment?

E. Social Work Registration

E1. Have you got your social work registration in Canada?

If yes, how's your overall experience?

If no, what were the factors that prevented you getting your RSW?

E2. What are the barriers and challenges that you have met with or anticipated related to the social work registration?

F. Recommendation

F1. What would you like to recommend improving foreign credential assessment or integrating foreign-educated social workers?

1) Recommendations to government?

2) Recommendations to assessment service providers?

3) Recommendations to social work regulatory bodies?

F2. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 3
Recruitment Notice



ACSW
Alberta College of
Social Workers



MIRSW
Manitoba Institute of
Registered Social
Workers



NOVA SCOTIA
ASSOCIATION OF
Social Workers
BOARD OF EXAMINERS

SASW
Saskatchewan
Association
of Social Workers

**Foreign Credential Assessment and Social Work in Canada
Recruitment Notice**

In order to gain a better understanding of the lived experience of foreign-educated human services workers as well as the barriers faced by them, we are going to conduct some interviews with foreign-trained human services workers in Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan from May to August 2011.

We are trying to identify people who completed post-secondary education in other countries with the intention of becoming a social worker and who would like to share their experiences or suggestions with regard to foreign credential assessment. This may include programs such as social work, community development, social administration, child and youth care, social pedagogy, and others that share at least some common content with a social work education.

The goal of this research project is to gather information directly from immigrants on your experience of trying to obtain recognition as a social worker in Canada. This data will help us to identify barriers faced both by those who do eventually get registered and those who do not. Once the barriers have been identified we can begin to look at mechanisms to reduce or remove them, or to help people understand what they need to do to overcome them.

One of the members of our research team will conduct an in-depth interview with you to learn from your valuable experiences and recommendations. Hearing the story of your experience will also help us to develop a standardized credential assessment process that may be used by all social work regulatory agencies across Canada.

For any enquiry about this project, please contact:

Cindy Jing Fang, Project Coordinator/Researcher or Alison MacDonald, Associate Registrar (Alberta College of Social Workers, #550 10707 100 Avenue Edmonton, AB T5J 3M1; 780-421-1167; 1-800-661-3089; Cindy@acsw.ab.ca, Alison@acsw.ab.ca)

We also hope that you could introduce this project to someone you know so that those who are interested to take part can contact us to participate.

Appendix 4
Consent Form



ACSW
Alberta College of
Social Workers



MIRSW
Manitoba Institute of
Registered Social
Workers



NOVA SCOTIA
ASSOCIATION OF
Social Workers
BOARD OF EXAMINERS

SASW
Saskatchewan
Association
of Social Workers

**Foreign Credential Assessment and Social Work in Canada
Consent Form for Interview**

Thank you for your interest in this project. Hearing the story of your experience will help us to gain a better understanding of the lived experience of foreign-educated human services workers as well as the barriers faced by them. It will also help us to develop a standardized credential assessment process that may be used by all social work regulatory agencies across Canada.

The goal of this research project is to gather information directly from immigrants on your experience of trying to obtain recognition as a social worker in Canada. This data will help us to identify barriers faced both by those who do eventually get registered and those who do not. Once the barriers have been identified we can begin to look at mechanisms to reduce or remove them, or to help people understand what they need to do to overcome them.

To help our data collection and analysis, the interview will be audio-recorded. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential by the researcher and ACSW. No personal identifying information will be revealed in reporting this research. If we quote you directly in the research report a pseudonym will be used rather than your real name.

For any enquiry about this project, please contact:

Cindy Jing Fang, Project Coordinator/Researcher or Alison MacDonald, Associate Registrar (Alberta College of Social Workers, #550 10707 100 Avenue Edmonton, AB T5J 3M1; 780-421-1167; 1-800-661-3089; Cindy@acsw.ab.ca, Alison@acsw.ab.ca)

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your record and reference. Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research participant.

Participant Name	Signature	Date
Interviewer Name	Signature	Date

I would like to receive a copy of the research report when it is completed. My e-mail address is:

If you know of anyone else who might like to participate in this research project please ask them to contact us at: _____