



Creating Valuable Skills:

A New Framework for Migration as Development

May 2013

Written by Amanda Alampi, Jillian N. Anderson, Grisel Caicedo, Cosmo Fujiyama, Yady Ibarra, Matthew A. Lisiecki, Heidi McAnnally-Linz, Mercedes Pepper, Natalie Relich, Andreina Seijas, Maria Claudia Sarta Herrera, Fiona Wanqing He, Casey Weston, and Ali K. Wimer.

Cover Photo: Suva, Fiji

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Associated with the World Bank, based at the Center for Mediterranean Integration, and New York University, Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, Capstone: Case Studies and Lessons for Skill Development and International Migration.

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Executive Summary

Policymakers around the world have increasingly considered international migration as a tool for increasing incomes and fostering economic development. Central to the relationship between migration and development are migrants’ skills and the ways those skills can be leveraged when migrants enter new labor markets. As a result, policy discussions have begun, albeit gingerly, to investigate how to ensure that migrants’ skill remains visible when they move from one location to another. Migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries have experimented with labor migration programs to address skill visibility, but the results of these programs have been mixed.¹

Skill visibility is a problem that is arguably most acute for workers with “mid-level” skills—skills that are not traditionally accompanied by a university degree. Mid-level skills are often acquired on-the-job as workers practice their trade. When workers migrate, many encounter difficulty obtaining employment that makes the best use of the skills they already possess. This harms both the migrants—who are forced to work in lower-skilled jobs with lower wages—and the receiving country—which often needs the “invisible” skills that their migrants already possess. We call this process “brain waste.”

Much of the recent policy discussion on the labor market incorporation of migrants with mid-level skills has focused on measures to make skill visible as a solution to brain waste. While we recognize the importance of skill visibility from the perspective of program architects, our data indicated the importance of a more inclusive perspective that invites all parties involved in the skill and migration arena to identify skill value. These parties include migrants, employers,

¹ In order to understand the elements of a successful labor migration program, the World Bank commissioned a research team from New York University’s Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service to conduct research into existing migrant skill-building programs. The resulting report discusses findings from programs across four countries and presents recommendations for future programs.

industry associations, migrant-related NGOs, and both sending and receiving country governments. They also include program beneficiaries who might not necessarily migrate but still economically benefit from involvement in the program. In order to focus on the bigger picture of using skill development programs to foster effective migration, improve domestic employment, and facilitate development, our paper sought to answer the following question: *what are the requisite features of a functioning migration skill development system?*

To answer this question, our team conducted onsite research of three different migration skill development systems: the extensive network of migration-related agencies and programs in the Philippines; the Australian-Pacific Technical College, a skills training program run by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) in neighboring Pacific Island Countries; and *Plazas Comunitarias*, a Mexican program that operates across the U.S. Our time in these locations allowed us to construct case studies of how the programs we explored were developed and how they function today. We are offering these case studies because the programs we analyze are complex and nuanced, and they differ radically across contexts. In the Philippines, migration and skills programs successfully support tens of thousands of participants each year and undergo continual improvement and tailoring to meet the needs of migrants heading to diverse labor markets around the world. The case of the Australian-Pacific Training College reveals the challenges faced by a program that trains and certifies Pacific Islanders according to Australian vocational standards, yet fails to facilitate the emigration of the workers it certifies. The Mexican program, which is popular among migrants in the United States even though it does little to promote labor market integration, suggests that migrants may participate in skill development programs for reasons other than access to employment. In order to have a meaningful discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the programs and how they might apply to future policy, we first provide a brief sketch of the main program features.

We draw five key lessons – or themes – from the case studies. Some cases displayed these themes more forcefully than others, but they were all related to the program’s ability to achieve its goals in the context of both migration and skill building. First, we learned that skill visibility is not a sufficient program goal and that programs must instead focus on creating skill value. Skill value goes beyond visibility. It is not enough for employers to know that a worker has a specific skill; they must also value that skill, view it as enhancing productivity, and thus be willing to employ the worker for it. Second, we noted the importance of creating functional partnerships in which both partners have the incentive to participate actively. Third, we found that for labor market value to be transferable across contexts, migrant-sending and receiving countries must devise new rules to formalize the mutual recognition of skill and must amend migration policies to facilitate the movement of people with those skills. We found that this alignment of norms and policies required the deliberate reconciliation of institutional differences, and that this process was so intensive it amounted to the merging of institutions. Fourth, we learned that when policymakers collect information from multiple actors and use this information to modify program activities or outcomes, the programs they design and implement are more responsive to emergent challenges. Fifth, we found that, although programs were designed to achieve one specific set of goals, the highly politicized world of migration in which they functioned forced unanticipated changes in program design.

These lessons apply to each of the programs that we observed and serve as a basis for five key recommendations to guide policymakers as they design new transnational skill development programs. To ensure that migrants' skills are visible and valued over the long term a successful migration skill development system should:

1. Be guided by the principle of creating skill value through both establishing bilateral agreements and focusing on prioritizing industry needs.
2. Form partnerships with employers and migrant-support organizations to connect skilled workers to employment.
3. Identify and merge the efforts of relevant institutions, in both sending and receiving contexts, which reconcile skill, migration, and employment.
4. Utilize an open program design that incorporates feedback from relevant actors.
5. Be prepared to accept and adapt to unpredictable changes in political environments.

These recommendations reflect the fundamental requirements of a functional, adaptable migration and skills development system capable of meeting the emergent labor market needs of a rapidly changing global marketplace.

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Special Line for Overseas Filipino Workers in Manila Airport, Philippines

Part I: Introduction

Introduction

International migration has reached an all-time high, increasing from 150 million to 214 million migrants over the past ten years.² Experts predict that this flow of migrants will continue to accelerate in the next few decades.³ Populations in the developed world are aging, partly contributing to the creation of labor shortages. Simultaneously there is an increasing number of unemployed youth in the developing world, creating incentive to migrate. Not only is there a labor gap geographically, but changes in industry have also changed global demand for skills. Construction is booming as new parts of the world are developing and urbanizing at high rates. Climate change is creating pressure to reduce resource consumption and find sustainable sources of energy. And aging populations are creating growing demand for health services. The knowledge-based econo-

2 United Nations. “*High-level Expert Policy Dialogue on Migration in the Post 2015 Development Agenda.*” Accessed April 28, 2013. <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/about-migration/facts--figures-1.html>.

3 International Labor Organization. “*Labour Migration.*” Accessed April 27, 2013. <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm>.

my is driving technological innovation to solve the world’s development challenges, and the demand for skilled labor in these industries is growing. International migration is one key way to respond to these pressures and, consequentially, solve the labor and skills gaps that are emerging between countries.

This global transformation of industry is shifting the labor migration policy discourse to a skill-based discussion that emphasizes migrant knowledge and skills.⁴ The key policy component of this skill-based discussion has been skill visibility—the ability to demonstrate or draw attention to skills when moving from one location to another.

The bulk of the policy literature on skilled migrant labor has focused on either high-skilled workers, who possess “formal education equal or superior to the median level of workers in the receiving labor market,” or

4 Kapur Devesh and McHale John. “*The Global Migration of Talent: What does it mean for Developing Countries?*” CGD Brief. Center for Global Development. (2005).

low-skilled workers, who possess “less formal training” and typically work in jobs that do not require previous experience or education.⁵ The discussion around low-skilled labor tends to be politically charged because these conversations often focus on how low-skilled migrants place downward pressure on wages for national workers, causing national workers to resist low-skilled migrants who might take their jobs at lower wages. The high-skilled labor discussion also focuses on the controversy of “brain drain,” or the migration of skilled and educated individuals from one nation to another, leaving a deficit of high skill workers back home. Policymakers are concerned that highly skilled migrants leave their home countries behind, especially in the sciences or in medicine.⁶

Certain recent policy discussions have identified a phenomenon related to this “brain drain,” which they call “brain waste.” Brain waste occurs when a migrant possesses relevant education or experience gained in their home country that is in demand but not accepted or recognized in the new market.⁷ These workers then fill positions below their skill level, leading to wasted human capital for industry. This brain waste occurs most often among those workers who we consider to be “middle-skilled” because, despite having years of relevant experience in a particular industry in their home country and often secondary or technical education, these workers end up being forced into jobs requiring only low-level skill.

5 Natasha Iskander and Nichola Lowe. “*Hidden Talent.*” (2010).

6 World Bank. “*Engaging the Diaspora to Deal with Brain Drain.*” Accessed May 12, 2013. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTCDRC/0,,contentMDK:20461439~menuPK:64169181~pagePK:64169212~piPK:64169110~theSitePK:489952,00.html>.

7 Randy Capps, Michael Fix and Serena Yi-Ying Lin. “*Still an Hourglass? Immigrant Workers in Middle-skilled jobs.*” Migration Policy Institute (2010). Accessed May 15, 2013. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/sectoralbrief-Sept2010.pdf>

Until recently, middle-skilled labor migration was little discussed because it was overshadowed by the demand for high-skilled workers and the politics surrounding the downward pressure of wages created by low-skilled labor. The skills these workers possess, unlike high-level skills, are rarely signaled by conventional markers, such as a university degree or a transnational certification. These skills are most often acquired on the job, as workers learn by practicing their trade. Furthermore, middle-level skills are tacit; they are difficult to describe or quantify, and they are best expressed through demonstration. Middle-level skills are therefore often invisible for migrants who leave a particular institutional context that understands and values their skills and, without clear evidence of these skills, enter a new institutional environment.

Given these challenges, recent policy discussions have unsurprisingly perceived the missing policy link between middle-skilled migrants and available jobs to be a mechanism to increase the visibility of migrant’s skills.⁸ Policymakers, therefore, find skill visibility to be an urgent priority and have prioritized programs and resources accordingly. Skill visibility is indeed an essential component in linking skilled workers to available jobs. Our initial research design focused heavily on exploring the policy mechanisms to make skill visible that either migrant-sending or migrant-receiving governments deployed.

Our research concurs with the prevailing policy view that making skill visible is critical to improving migrants’ ability to enter new labor markets and employ their human capi-

8 International Labor Organization. (Third item on the agenda for 298th Session ILO Governing Body Geneva, Switzerland, March 2007). Accessed May 15, 2013. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_gb_298_esp_3_en.pdf

Invisible Skill

Iskander and Lowe provide a real-world example of the invisibility of middle-level skill through their case study of Mexican bricklayers in the U.S.⁹ In Mexico, these workers are master bricklayers, and they are experts, for example, in “the consistency of the mortar and its appropriateness for a specific style of construction.”¹⁰ But the required consistency of mortar is not something you can prove you know how to do without showing someone. It is a skill that requires understanding the precise consistency needed, but it cannot be precisely measured or proven. These migrants’ skills are thus effectively invisible to relevant employers in the U.S. labor market. Consequently, while these workers have “middle-level skills,” they are nevertheless regarded as low-skilled by potential employers and often tasked with assisting bricklayers or other construction workers rather than more complex responsibilities.

tal fully. However, we also find that making-skill visible is only a first step. Skill visibility is a necessary but insufficient component of any program or system that allows migrants to carry their skill from one labor market context to another. We found that if a program or system focused exclusively on skill visibility, the program failed to adequately address the challenge of brain waste. Therefore, our research poses the broader policy question: “What are the requisite features of

9 Natasha Iskander and Lowe Nichola. “*Hidden Talent*.” (2010).

10 Ibid, Pg. 134.

a functioning migration skill development system?”

Research Methods

To approach this question, in October 2012, our fourteen-member group began exploring research methodologies and migration skill development programs before settling on three case studies: the Philippines, Australia and the Pacific Islands, and Mexico and the U.S. For the Philippines, we read policy notes and policy articles on their migration program successes.¹¹ We reviewed program websites to understand how the institutions were organized, who managed them, and what goals they aspired to. In Australia and the Pacific Islands, we read reports on the certification and training program that would become the focus of our research, we spoke with researchers who had evaluated the program, and we analyzed websites to understand the program’s structure.¹² In the Mexico case, we read reports and saw presentations of previous fieldwork on our program of interest, and we spoke with researchers who had conducted this fieldwork.¹³ We also studied the program websites and the websites of the various partner institutions and organizations (where websites were available). Following this preliminary research, we divided into three teams to conduct two-to-three weeks of fieldwork in each

11 Dovelyn R. Agunias and Neil G. Ruiz. “Protecting Overseas Workers: Lessons and Cautions from the Philippines.” (2007).

12 Australian-Pacific Technical College “6-Monthly Report June 2012.” Accessed May 11, 2013. <http://www.aptc.edu.au/images/Reports/6monthlyprogressreport.pdf>

Robin Nair. “*Critical Analysis of the Australian-Pacific Technical College*” (2010).

13 Interview with Alexandra Delano. *The New School*. New York City, United States. November 21, 2013.

Marguerite Lukes. “We Thought They Had Forgotten Us: Research, policy, and practice in the education of Latino immigrant adults.” *Journal of Latinos in Education*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2009). Alexandra Delano. “Mexico and its Diaspora in the United States: Policies of Emigration since 1848.” *Cambridge University Press*. (2011).

of the case study regions. To address the complexity of our research question, we examined the topic through qualitative research, including first person interviews and direct program observation.

The team that traveled to the Philippines investigated a relatively mature and high-volume migration certification system with a constellation of migration programs. The Philippines research team interviewed government officials from various migration programs and offices as well as participants in the programs. We focused on three programs: the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) skills certification and training programs, the RN Heals nursing training program, and the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars (PDOS) required for all Filipinos leaving the country to work abroad. We met with senior leaders from all of the relevant government agencies, observed TESDA training sessions and PDOS classes for temporary and permanent workers, interviewed representatives of recruitment agencies and migrant advocacy NGOs, and spoke with participants in each of the programs. In total, the team conducted 80 interviews across 17 organizations or offices.

Another team travelled to Canberra, Australia and Suva, Fiji to research the Australian-Pacific Technical College, an Australian government-sponsored skills training and labor mobility initiative for Pacific Islanders (APTC). Researchers conducted interviews with senior administrators in both the Australian and Fijian governments, leaders of migration and education organizations, private sector representatives, and key personnel currently working at the APTC. In total, the team conducted 68 interviews across 27 organizations or offices. In addition to conducting interviews, team members evaluat-

ed reports and surveys and visited two APTC training facilities in Suva, where they spoke with trainers, local tutors, and students.

The third research team evaluated the certification programs and practices of *Plazas Comunitarias*, a program created by the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME), a subdivision of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Team members visited consular offices and spoke with program administrators, instructors, and beneficiaries in both existing and discontinued *Plazas Comunitarias* programs in four cities across the U.S. – Houston, Austin, Chicago, and New York. Throughout the course of our fieldwork, we also became familiar with the program's function and value at the federal level by way of interviews with high-level officials in Mexican foreign affairs organizations. In total the team conducted 65 interviews across 21 organizations or offices.

Evaluating Migration Skill Development Systems

An in-depth discussion of these programs is presented in the form of three case studies. Our case studies provide the basis for our analysis by offering a descriptive account of how the programs explored function today, what they do, what their reach is, how their policies came into being, and how they succeeded, and in many cases, failed, in creating a functioning migration skill development system. We are offering these case studies because the programs we analyze are complex and nuanced, and they differ radically across contexts. In order to have a meaningful discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the programs and how they might apply to future policy, we must first provide a brief sketch of the main program features.

The Filipino case describes the migration system of the Philippines, a constellation of programs that have, for the most part, led to a functioning migration skill development system. We learned that the Filipino migration system is successful because the government is able to continually upgrade and adapt their training systems to respond to both international labor market needs as well as the diverse needs of migrants going to hundreds of different countries. On the other hand, the Australia and Pacific Islands case examines the challenges faced by a program that trains and certifies Pacific Islanders according to Australian standards yet fails to leverage skills into meaningful jobs for Pacific Islanders in Australia. We found that the program's heavy focus on meeting Australian skill standards and inattention to other essential program components led to this failure. Finally, the Mexico and U.S. case highlights a popular program for Mexican migrants in the U.S. that has, for the most part, operated under the radar with minimal impact on connecting skills to employment. The program has succeeded in providing migrants with the basic education skills needed to begin to learn a second language, and it provides a crucial space for migrants to gather and learn from each other, but it does not make skills visible or economically valuable.

The cases provide five lessons learned which encompass the central features of a migration skill development system that we found critical to success. Not all the cases achieved or displayed all of these traits as forcefully as the others, but they all reflected the importance of the features. Even if a particular feature highlighted in our lessons learned does not stand out from the case, each case speaks to all of the components in the lessons learned. First, we learned that skill visibility is not a sufficient program goal and that programs must instead focus on creating skill

value. Skill value goes beyond visibility; it is not enough for employers to know that a worker has a specific skill, they must also value that skill and be willing to employ the worker for it. Second, we noted the importance of creating functional partnerships in which both partners have the incentive to participate actively. Third, we found that for labor market value to be transferable across contexts, the institutions governing skill development and recognition had to be reconciled. This reconciliation process was so intensive as to warrant saying that institutions were merged. Fourth, we learned that when policymakers collect information from multiple actors and use this information to modify program activities or outcomes, the programs they design and implement are more responsive to emergent challenges. Fifth, we found that, although programs were designed to achieve one specific set of goals, the highly politicized world of migration in which they functioned forced unanticipated changes in program design.

Drawing on these lessons, we offer five key recommendations that can be applied in countries building or overhauling their migration system. To ensure that migrants' skills are visible and valued over the long term a successful migration skill development system should:

1. Be guided by the principle of creating skill value through both establishing bilateral agreements and focusing on prioritizing industry needs.
2. Form partnerships with employers and migrant-support organizations to connect skilled workers to employment.

3. Identify and merge the efforts of relevant institutions, in both sending and receiving contexts, which reconcile skill, migration, and employment.
4. Utilize an open program design that incorporates feedback from relevant actors.
5. Be prepared to accept and adapt to unpredictable changes in political environments.

The organization of the paper is as follows. Part I lays out the context and methodology employed. Part II presents the three case studies: the Philippines, Australia and the Pacific Islands, and Mexico and the U.S. Part III highlights the five key lessons learned from these cases, and Part IV highlights directed policy recommendations and conclusions. Part V is a postscript in which we consider the application of the policy recommendations to a program designed to facilitate the incorporation of migrant North African healthcare workers in the French healthcare industry.



TESDA Bulacan in Manila, Philippines

Part II: Cases

Philippines

Migration experts have praised the Philippines as an example of migration program success because it has numerous and diverse programs that help connect skilled workers to jobs around the world.¹⁴ Despite its wide reach and purported success, little research has been conducted to identify the characteristics that make the Filipino system particularly effective. Our research finds that the reason for the Filipino system's success is rooted in its deliberate attention to the skills that migrants possess and deploy in labor markets around the world. The entire system is organized around regular learning and updating of their migration programs. Moreover, the system focuses on both building and making skills visible as well as preparing migrants for the whole labor market context.

14 Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. "Migration Policy: Guidelines for Practice." Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit and Center for International Migration and Development (2013). Accessed May 15, 2013. <http://www.giz.de/Themen/de/dokumente/giz2013-en-migration-policy.pdf>

The Filipino migration system is complex and extensive. The Filipino government estimates that 10.5 million Filipinos live abroad, and 90% of them are abroad legally under residency or work visas.¹⁵ One or more of the many programs in the Filipino migration system serve each legal migrant, as well as a significant portion of the undocumented migrants.

In order to select programs for our analysis, we identified three problems that have historically plagued skill and migration programs and chose one program that appeared to address each challenge particularly well. First, most programs have difficulty reaching migrants; many have been unable to attract and serve more than a few hundred participants. In contrast, the Filipino Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS), a mandatory training that all migrants undergo before leaving the country, reaches hundreds of thousands of Filipinos every year.

15 Interview. Commission on Filipinos Overseas Officials. Manila, Philippines. January 7, 2013.

Second, few migration programs succeed in defining specific skills and abilities, and even fewer make them clearly visible through certifications. In contrast, the Filipino Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) trains and certifies migrants in vocational skills in a wide array of industries. TESDA has developed a unique system to identify the core skills needed for certain jobs and subsequently trains and certifies workers around these skill definitions. Third, most migration programs talk about the importance of partnerships, but few are successful in forming meaningful collaborations. In contrast, the RNHeals program, an on-the-job training program for nurses, successfully builds partnerships between local government units, hospitals, and health centers across the country and the private sector.

If a successful migration system connects migrants' skills to meaningful employment abroad, then the Filipino system is a success story, albeit an imperfect one. We found that the programs we studied do indeed achieve volume, skill certification, and robust partnerships. But the broader success of the system as a whole is driven by continually upgrading and adapting training systems to respond to both international labor market needs and the needs of migrants going to hundreds of different countries. This migration system is able to be responsive due to on-going integration of lessons learned through constant evaluation, responses to crises, and even the movement of system administrators from one role to another. By integrating these lessons learned, the government of the Philippines has understood that skill visibility through certifications is important, but it is not enough. For example, preparations to be a household service worker vary because being a household service worker in Saudi Arabia is drastically dif-

ferent than being a household service worker in the United States. The skills and certifications are the same, but there is a different layer of power dynamics, culture, rights, and even what to do in distress. The Philippines addresses this distinction by not only training and certifying in employable, standardized skills but also preparing migrants for the whole labor market context that they are preparing to enter.

The following case study illustrates the main reasons why we consider the Philippines a successful migration skill development system and discusses some of the on-going challenges.

Migration as an Export Policy and the Emergence of the Welfare Focus

Filipino success evolved over many decades, beginning in the 1970s under President Ferdinand Marcos. The underemployment rate in the Philippines at the time averaged approximately 16%, and there was growing dissatisfaction with domestic employment prospects.¹⁶ To address growing popular dissatisfaction with domestic employment prospects, the Marcos government began to encourage migration to the Middle East, which was experiencing a boom in construction due to high oil prices. After this initial push, the government eventually created programs and agencies to manage the rising flow of Filipinos overseas.¹⁷

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Filipinos were leaving their home country to work overseas at a rapid pace—in 1975, 36,035

16 Bureau of Labor Employment Statistics “2012 Yearbook of Labor Statistics.” Accessed March 26, 2013. http://www.bles.dole.gov.ph/PUBLICATIONS/Yearbook%20of%20Labor%20Statistics/YLS_Home.html.

17 Fabio Baggio and Michelle Taguinod. “Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars: A Positive Joint Venture between GOs and NGOs in the Philippines.” *World Bank*. Accessed May 15, 2013.



Manila, Philippines

Filipinos were working overseas, while in 1980 that number had risen to 214,590.¹⁸ In order to benefit from this mass movement of labor, the Marcos government began to collect a small fee from exiting migrants, and over time, these small charges amounted to significant income, which the government allocated to assisting overseas workers. The availability of these “excess” funds, as well as a public backlash over reports of abuse of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), spurred the creation of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), whose mandate is to oversee the welfare of Filipino migrants around the world.¹⁹

Since its establishment, OWWA has responded to a number of migrant concerns, including that worker rights have not been

18 Maruja Assi. “The Philippines Culture of Migration.” *Migration Information Source*. (2006). Accessed April 17, 2013 <http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=364>.

19 Interview. *DOLE*. Manila, Philippines. January 18, 2013.

recognized under the law or respected by employers, particularly in the Middle East.²⁰ An OWWA instructor, who has worked with migrants in the Middle East, recounted the abuses workers described, including not being paid on time or not being paid at all, not receiving compensation for overtime, and being forced to work in hazardous environments.²¹ Migrants and their families also have brought these abuses to the attention of NGOs that have supported by providing potential migrants with the information to make educated and informed decision about overseas work.²² One senior government official explained that many of the govern-

20 Maruja Assi. “The Philippines Culture of Migration.” *Migration Information Source*. (2006). Accessed April 17, 2013 <http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=364>.

21 Interview. Overseas Workers Welfare Administration. Manila, Philippines. January 10, 2013.

22 Fabio Baggio and Michelle Taguinod. “Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars: A Positive Joint Venture between GOs and NGOs in the Philippines.” *World Bank*. Accessed May 15, 2013.

ment's welfare-focused migration programs were rooted in the response to this pressure, saying that, "NGOs have kept us on our toes."²³

Dedication to Migrant Welfare

Our interviews with Filipino program administrators revealed a dedication and fervor for assisting migrants. One administrator described her work in overtly religious terms, explaining that, "The Philippines is the new Jerusalem and Overseas Foreign Workers are the new chosen people."²⁴ Other interviewees, nearly all of whom had spent time working with OFWs abroad, explained how stories of overworked, underpaid, and underfed workers,²⁵ as well as worker evacuations at gunpoint,²⁶ inspired them work to protect Filipinos abroad. Many of the government's migrant welfare programs were created because of public demand in the face of government inaction. Nevertheless, once the programs were created, they were staffed with administrators who are true believers in the importance of protecting Filipinos abroad. Further demonstrating their commitment, many administrators also boasted of the longevity of their service in migration agencies.

One important response to this pressure was the creation of the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars (PDOS). PDOS began as a seminar designed to provide workers with basic legal information about their rights abroad. In 1983, the government mandated participation in Pre-Departure Orientation

23 Interview. Philippines Government. Manila, Philippines. January 18, 2013.

24 I Interview. OWWA. Manila, Philippines. January 10, 2013.

25 Interview. PDOS. Manila, Philippines. January 10, 2013.

26 Interview. DOLE. Manila, Philippines. January 8, 2013.

Seminars (PDOS) for all emigrating workers to provide counseling and information services for departing workers in order to prepare them to cope with overseas employment. The Filipino government enlists the support of embassies to enforce this mandated PDOS participation. Consequently, prospective migrants are unable to receive a visa from any embassy or officially leave the country without a PDOS certification. For example, at one PDOS for permanent migrants to Canada, nearly all of the participants indicated they heard about the training when they attempted to apply for their visa and were told that PDOS certification was a necessary prerequisite for travel.²⁷ Additionally, the travel tax for all Filipinos leaving the country, which costs approximately 1650 PHP, is reduced to 250 PHP for OFWs who have obtained PDOS certificates.²⁸

Because the program is required to work abroad, PDOS reaches a high volume of migrants, serving approximately 650,000 OFWs in 2011.²⁹ To serve such a large population, OWWA contracts hundreds of NGOs around the country to administer the PDOS. NGOs usually apply to run the PDOS, although occasionally OWWA will reach out to an NGO that is particularly active in migrant advocacy.³⁰ OWWA provides NGO staff a three-day training course on how to conduct the PDOS and randomly monitors and evaluates the NGO's classes.³¹ Every one to two years, OWWA conducts a systematic evaluation of the program, where they invite

27 Interview. Council of Filipinos Overseas, Canada Pre Departure Orientation Seminar. Manila, Philippines. January 10, 2013.

28 Philippine Consulate General, "Travel Tax." Accessed April 17, 2013. <http://www.philippineconsulate.com.au/travel-tax.html>.

29 Overseas Workers Welfare Administration. "OWWA Annual Report 2011." Accessed May 15, 2013. <http://www.owwa.gov.ph:8080/wcmqs/about/Annual%20Report/>.

30 Interview. OWWA. Manila, Philippines. January 16, 2013.

31 Ibid.

OFWs, welfare officers from the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs), and NGO staff to provide feedback. These evaluations contribute to regular updates of PDOS curriculum.³²

The PDOS program has continued to grow and addresses a variety of problems, ranging from recruitment procedures and abuses to exploitation by employers.³³ The training includes an orientation to international travel standards and requirements, with a focus on how the Filipino government can be a resource in times of crisis. In one of the PDOS seminars we attended for permanent migrants with green cards traveling to the U.S., the trainer asked the class, “So what do Americans do in the movies when they’re in distress?” The class mumbled for a bit and then numerous people shouted, “They go to the Embassy!” He went on, “That’s right, they go to the embassy because they know they’ll be safe there no matter what happens.” He further explained how the Filipino embassies and consulates would provide the same kind of support to Filipinos abroad and why it was important for them to remain connected to the embassy or consulate, and in particular, the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs). The POLOs are designed to help protect migrants in case of any challenges with work contracts or abuses by employers.³⁴ The POLOs are based in embassies and consulates all over the world, and the labor representatives help negotiate with employers, ensure the welfare of workers, and provide a safe haven in times of need.

³² Ibid.

³³ Fabio Baggio and Michelle Taguinod. “Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars: A Positive Joint Venture between GOs and NGOs in the Philippines.” *World Bank*. Accessed May 15, 2013.

³⁴ Interview. *Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar for permanent migrants to the United States*. Manila, Philippines. January 10, 2013.

Philippine Friendship Games

During our field research, we spoke with administrators who had been working in migration since the inception of the Overseas Welfare Workers Administration (OWWA) in 1982. Although Filipino Overseas Foreign Workers (OFWs) now enjoy legal protections negotiated in employment contracts and formally recognized by both sending and receiving governments, these protections were not always available. Furthermore, prior to the establishment of Philippines Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs) that provide on-site welfare protection, officers serving migrants in the Middle East were not permitted to provide in-country support to their citizens. This prohibition allowed for creative solutions to welfare problems, including a secret back room in the consulate or embassy to hide abused OFWs until the situation could be resolved (or in extreme cases, until the OFW was repatriated). Many OFWs and their supporters were still isolated, however, this is because OFWs were mostly isolated and not able to network with each other. To skirt these restrictions, OWWA created the “Philippine Friendship Games”—an Olympics-type athletic competition solely for OFWs in the Middle East. These games allowed OFWs to gather, compete, and celebrate Filipino culture. They also served as a backdrop for secret meetings between OFWs and welfare officers. Under the guise of athletic competition, Filipinos abroad secretly built a strong support network. As the Filipino government negotiated more protections for OFWs, these networks became more and more open, and the Friendship Games were eventually rendered obsolete.³⁵

³⁵ Interview with former DOLE senior official. Manila. January 18, 2013.

While all PDOS cover basic travel information, the PDOS curriculum is designed to be specific to destination countries and varies depending on whether the migrant intends to migrate permanently or as an OFW for temporary contract work. For example, the PDOS for permanent migrants to the U.S. reviews how to become a dual citizen with the U.S. and the Philippines, whereas the PDOS for OFWs to Canada describes the code of discipline and penalties for overseas workers, including prohibiting future travel to Canada and even withholding remittances.³⁶ The specialized curriculum is also regularly updated through an annual or biannual evaluation process, and changes are based on current trends and risks in particular countries. The NGOs that run PDOS are retrained in the updated curriculum, reinforcing the focus on migrant welfare in the context of specific countries and circumstances.

Connecting Skills Training to a Welfare-Focused System

Despite its establishment of the PDOS and overseas labor offices, the Filipino government continued to be pressured by the public to provide support to OFWs. This pressure increased following a series of international incidents, including the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, which caused the Filipino government to repatriate 30,000 Filipinos living in Kuwait.³⁷ In a 1995 incident, Singapore executed Flor Contemplacion, a Filipino domestic worker, after she confessed to murder under controversial circumstances, sparking public outcry in the Philippines. Filipino politicians and labor organizations held protests across the country

36 Interview. *Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar for permanent migrants to the United States and Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar for Overseas Filipino Workers to Canada*. Manila, Philippines. January 10, 2013.

37 Interview. *DOLE*. Manila, Philippines. January 8, 2013.

boycotting Singaporean products and in at least one case burning the Singaporean flag.³⁸ Mishandling of the Contemplacion case also led to the resignations of both the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of Labor and Employment.³⁹ Outrage at the government's failure to protect Contemplacion grew into a larger indictment of the Philippines' labor export policy. While the Kuwait repatriation and Contemplacion cases were the highest-profile OFW controversies, between 1996 and 2001, the Filipino government repatriated the bodies of 1,224 OFWs who had died under "unknown or mysterious circumstances."⁴⁰

These incidents—and resulting public pressure—led to the introduction of additional government programs aimed to protect OFWs. These programs took the form of increased training for OFWs, especially those in the most vulnerable situations. A senior official from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) explained that OWWA and POEA ultimately determined that household service workers (HSWs), like Contemplacion, are more vulnerable than workers in construction or other common migrant occupations because of their isolation from other OFWs. This categorization of particular skills as vulnerable is both subtle and important, and ultimately led OWWA to open a training center in 2007 to focus specifically on these vulnerable workers. At this center, HSWs who have already completed a PDOS participate in an additional three or six-day language and cul-

38 Philip Shenon. "Outcry Mounts in Philippines Over Hanging." *New York Times*, March 22, 1995, World. Accessed April 6, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/03/22/world/outcry-mounts-in-philippines-over-hanging.html>.

39 Dovelyn Agunias and Neil Ruiz. "Protecting Overseas Workers: Lessons and Cautions from the Philippines." Migration Policy Institute (2007). Accessed May 15, 2013. http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/MigDevInsight_091807.pdf

40 Ibid. Pg. 8.

tural training course. This course, which now serves approximately 12,000 HSWs per month, is designed to provide the basic language skills needed to interact with employers and others in the receiving country, highlight the difficulties of life as an HSW, teach HSWs to effectively manage stress, and to provide first aid skills.⁴¹ During the trainings, HSWs are encouraged to migrate only as a last resort because of the difficulties HSWs face living abroad.⁴²

HSW trainings also include a module informing workers of the rights guaranteed to them under employment contracts. Negotiations conducted jointly by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) with migrant receiving countries have led to a defining of the minimum standards for employment. The results have been new protections in the standard HSW employment contract, such as a guaranteed minimum wage, allowing workers to maintain possession of their passports, a guaranteed flight home, and the ability to travel between the Philippines and the receiving country. OWWA officials explain these protections during a contract orientation session with the HSWs. At the training center, we interviewed one HSW who had taken advantage of the ability to return to Manila after her two-year contract expired in order to receive more training before departing again to Singapore. She noted that she wished she had been able to access this language and cultural training course prior to her first contract because, she said, “I would have known my rights, it would have made communication easier and my relationship with my employers stronger.”⁴³

41 Interview. OWWA. Manila, Philippines. January 9, 2013.

42 Interview. POEA. Manila, Philippines. January 15, 2013.

43 Interview. OWWA. Manila, Philippines. January 9, 2013.

A Domestic Need for Skills Training and Certification Becomes a Way to Leverage Work Abroad

In addition to preparing OFWs for the legal and cultural environments of receiving countries, in the 1990s the Filipino government began to focus on developing worker skills. While these skill-building programs were initially aimed at filling employment gaps domestically, they soon became useful tools for workers hoping to display and utilize their skills overseas.⁴⁴

The government recognized the need to make middle-level skills more visible, as these skills were in demand, but there were limited opportunities for prospective workers to be trained in these industries or to show their skills clearly to employers. To respond to this need, in 1994, DOLE created the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), which trains and certifies Filipinos in technical and vocational skills. TESDA provides recognizable skills to workers who often lack the skills needed to obtain available jobs, both locally and abroad, and offers certificates in industries ranging from 3D game art development to welding. Students and employers alike, view TESDA as the gold standard in training and skills assessment.⁴⁵ In addition, the International Standards Organization (ISO) has awarded its certification to TESDA’s training and certification programs, augmenting international recognition of the program.⁴⁶

44 Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. “TESDA Home.” Accessed April 1, 2013.

<http://www.tesda.gov.ph/>.

45 TESDA Women Center. “Surging ahead towards quality and relevance.” (Presented at the conference The 8th National TVET Forum, Manila, Philippines, December 11-12, 2008).

46 Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. “ISO 9001 for the international recognition for quality management standards.” Accessed April 11, 2013. http://www.tesda.gov.ph/page.aspx?page_id=366.



TESDA Bulacan in Manila, Philippines

Demonstrating the perceived gap in skills and skill visibility that TESDA seeks to fill, one participant, who had already completed two years of university-level automotive training, explained that she had decided to participate in the TESDA automotive worker training program because she had not gained the practical skills necessary to secure a job during her time at the university. After completing TESDA training, however, she fully expected to pass the TESDA certification test and secure a job. TESDA has filled this skill and skill visibility gap by providing relevant, accessible, high quality and efficient technical education, skill development, and certification.⁴⁷ TESDA's certification process is extremely thorough, consisting of a written test, oral examination, and practical skill demonstration. To date, TESDA has assessed and certified over 800,000 people.⁴⁸

47 Interview. *TESDA Women's Center*. Manila, Philippines. January 10, 2013.

48 Interview. *TESDA*. Manila, Philippines. January 14, 2013.

Not only has TESDA accomplished success in the scale of their certification process, but they also highlight the importance of a regular assessment process that is tied to industry needs. In a process they call "stakeholder analysis," TESDA consults with domestic private sector actors, specialized consultants, and international government and industries to determine which skills are lacking in the workforce, and therefore, warrant a targeted training effort. After identifying priority industries, the "stakeholders" conduct a "functional analysis" to identify and define "competencies," the skills needed to successfully perform a job function or occupation.⁴⁹

Each occupation has three levels of competencies: basic, common, and core, and each level contains several outcomes a trainee must master before being certified. TESDA's Automotive Body Repair certificate, for ex-

49 Interview. *TESDA*. Manila, Philippines. January 14, 2013.

ample, has as its core competencies as preparing a vehicle body for repair, repairing a vehicle's body panel, and replacing damaged parts with pre-fabricated panels. Each competency has specific outcomes, which certificate examinees must demonstrate such as "replacing damaged parts with pre-fabricated panel." These competencies, and the specific skills required to demonstrate them, are displayed in "competency matrices."

TESDA has developed competency matrices for 237 occupations, with many matrices containing more than 50 competencies. The high number of competencies for some occupations shows the nuance and attention to detail that goes into creating each competency matrix.⁵⁰

The president of a professional construction industry association who has participated as a "stakeholder," explained that TESDA often approaches industry associations to identify 5 to 10 experts in the field to gather information on existing regulations and standards and then with TESDA develop a set of competencies for trainings and assessments.⁵¹ TESDA uses this process to annually update their training curricula and certification competency matrices with current information on market trends and industry needs. Like PDOS, TESDA utilizes feedback from those involved in the process and tailors its' training to specific contexts. For PDOS it is the skills needed to navigate different country contexts, and for TESDA, it is the skills needed to navigate different occupations. TESDA's process is understandably more complex than PDOS, given the 237 occupations and multiple "competencies" they specifically cover, but the principals for pro-

50 Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. "Downloadable Files: Competency Matrices." http://www.tesda.gov.ph/program.aspx?page_id=29. Accessed April 1, 2013.

51 Interview. *Construction Industry Association*. Manila, Philippines. January 18, 2013.

gram evaluation and skill building remain the same.

While TESDA initially set out to only fill skill gaps domestically, the program's extensive stakeholder analysis process has created training programs that meet international industry standards. By adapting to workers' needs and the demands of the international labor market, over time, TESDA began to attract an increasing number of Filipino workers who were using their certifications as a means to access jobs abroad. Recruiters now look for TESDA certified employees, and employers around the world have begun to recognize the quality of the TESDA certification.

Individual experiences of TESDA trainees reflect the global value of TESDA certificates.⁵² In some cases, overseas employers have even required that workers who already possess TESDA certifications complete additional TESDA training to keep pace with changing industry standards. One Filipino studying at TESDA's training and assessment center in Bulacan, who had been working as a welder in Saudi Arabia, explained that though he had already received TESDA certification before leaving for the Gulf, during the four years he was working there, TESDA had updated welding competencies to reflect industry changes, and his employer had sent him back to complete the updated training certificate. The welder was planning to return to Saudi Arabia after updating his certificate.⁵³

While a number of industries abroad already recognize the value of TESDA certification, especially given the new ISO certification, the Filipino government has also executed a handful of bilateral Memoranda of Agree-

52 Interviews. *TESDA Women's Center and TESDA Bulacan*. Manila, Philippines. January 11 and 14, 2013.

53 Interviews. *TESDA Bulacan*. Balacan, Philippines. January 11, 2013.

ments (MOA) with foreign governments in an effort to create official mutual recognition of skills. MOAs currently exist between the Philippines and South Korea, Taiwan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and four Canadian provinces.⁵⁴ These MOAs serve to foster skill recognition, visibility, and Filipino labor mobility. This was illustrated during a meeting with TESDA Directors, as we learned that the Philippines, Canada, and Australia have coordinated national standards on butchering to foster the migration of more Filipino butchers to Canada and Australia.⁵⁵

Finally, TESDA not only focuses on certification in making skills visible, but also like PDOS, considers skills in a broader labor market context. For example, the TESDA Women's Center adds what they call an "empowerment" module to each of their trainings. In these modules, women are trained in areas such as self-employment, micro-enterprise, and computer literacy. The center's leadership explained that this additional training was to ensure that even if there were not jobs immediately available in a trainee's area of expertise, a woman could start her own small businesses or find a way to adapt her skills to an evolving labor market.

Training without Global Industry Involvement Creates Imbalance Between Skills and Demand

While TESDA trains workers for a variety of jobs and industries, a number of Filipino training initiatives limit their focus to a specific occupation. RNHeals is one of these programs, specifically targeting the nursing occupation. Created to respond to both a na-

tional nursing labor surplus and regional nurse shortages, RNHeals has trained and placed numerous nurses and, also faced a number of challenges that have prevented the program from matching the success of TESDA. The nurse training sector is not yet connected to the same strong evaluation and adaptation culture that TESDA illustrates, nor have they trained nurses to adapt beyond basic skill capability to the full labor market context.

The simultaneous surplus and shortage of Filipino nurses grew out of a unique set of circumstances. In recent years, lower-middle class Filipinos discovered that becoming a nurse is an effective way to get a good job abroad.⁵⁶ As nursing became an increasingly popular career choice, new nursing schools opened throughout the country, preparing record numbers of nurses for national certification. From 2001-2011, 421,468 nurses passed the national certification (with more than twice that many paying for nursing school training but not passing the certification). However, over the same time period, only 200,145 nursing jobs (67,202 domestic and 132,943 overseas) were available for Filipino nurses leaving over 200,000 certified nurses without nursing jobs.⁵⁷

Filipino nurses unable to find jobs after graduating from nursing school face dim future employment prospects. One concern is that many nursing jobs in the Philippines and overseas require at least one to two years of experience working as a nurse.⁵⁸ One nurse recruiter in Abu Dhabi explained that while eighty nursing positions were open in Abu Dhabi, only twenty-eight applicants for

54 Philippine Overseas Employment Administration. "Labor Agreements: MOU." Accessed May 15, 2013. <http://www.poea.gov.ph>

55 Interview. TESDA. Manila, Philippines. January 14, 2013.

56 Interview. RNHeals. Manila, Philippines. January 15, 2013.

57 Interview. Board of Nursing. Manila, Philippines. January 15, 2013.

58 Interview. Board of Nursing and RNHeals. Manila, Philippines. January 15, 2013.



Near Puerto Galera, Philippines

these positions were considered sufficiently qualified.⁵⁹ In an effort to gain the experience required to access jobs abroad, many Filipino nurses began paying to intern at hospitals. While this type of internship was becoming more common around the world, the Filipino government viewed the practice as a form of exploitation. In 2009, in response to pressure from the public and NGOs about this exploitation and nurse unemployment, President Gloria Arroyo created a program called Nurses Assigned to Rural Service (NARS), the predecessor of RNHeals.⁶⁰

The goal of NARS was to provide experience and training for unemployed certified nurses by assigning them to underserved rural areas of the Philippines, thereby ameliorating staffing shortages in rural areas and high

overall unemployment in the nursing sector. Registered nurses younger than 35 years of age who had not held any nursing-related positions for three years were eligible to participate in NARS, and those who had been laid off or were impacted by the “Global Crisis” were given priority.⁶¹ Nurses were assigned to one of the over 1,000 rural municipalities served by NARS and received a salary of 8,000 pesos per month, roughly half the wage of an entry-level nurse. In its first year, NARS employed 10,000 nurses. By sending these nurses to underserved areas to receive on-the-job training, NARS reconciled motivation for migration (training that would lead to jobs abroad) with solving development challenges (a shortage of trained professionals in rural areas).

59 Interview. *Recruitment Agency*. Manila, Philippines. January 16, 2013.

60 Interview. *DOLE*. Manila, Philippines. January 8, 2013.

61 Department of Labor and Employment, “Original NARS project plan.” Accessed April 20, 2013. <http://www.dole.gov.ph/projects/view/3>.

NARS was originally housed in the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) because it was designed as a training and employment program. DOLE partnered with various levels of government and even the private sector to design and implement the program. DOLE leadership found this program and its partners important enough to even strong-arm pharmaceutical companies into cooperating (and contributing funding).

A Creative Solution to Nurse Unemployment

Our interviews with current and former high-level officials working to improve the employment situation of Filipino nurses highlighted that there were many creative ways to fill employment gaps. Interviewees explained with pride that Filipino nurses had such a good reputation around the world that they had even started to be hired by airlines to serve as stewards.⁶² Filipino nurses were working as airline stewards not only because they were good with people but also because they were able to handle in-flight medical emergencies. We experienced the value of these medical skills during our flight home from Qatar. A passenger sitting next to us had a seizure, and a steward, identifying himself as a nurse, stepped forward to handle the crisis. The steward cared for the passenger, who later arrived safely at his destination. We later learned that the steward was a certified Filipino nurse, who was unable to find a job in the Philippines and lacked sufficient hospital experience to work as a nurse abroad.

62 Interview. *DOLE*. Manila, Philippines. January 8, 2013.
Interview. *Board of Nursing*. Manila, Philippines. January 15, 2013.

DOLE used both threats of “labor problems” such as legal action against labor code violations at their firms and incentives such as tax credits to spur cooperation.⁶³

When President Benigno Aquino III came to office in 2010, NARS was moved from DOLE to the Department of Health (DOH) and became known as RNHeals. According to a former NARS manager, this name change was entirely cosmetic and occurred so that the new administration could capitalize on the popularity of NARS by claiming the program as its own. In our interviews, representatives from DOLE and DOH were hesitant to describe the transition in great detail but both emphasized their respective programs’ goal of nurse training. They each continued to argue that the other version of the program did not focus enough on training. This insistence on training is significant because it shows that there is a strong demand for training and pressure to focus on building skills. We further pressed our interviewees on the reasons behind this disagreement between the two versions of the programs, but they did not want to expand on the tensions, preferring instead to reiterate their focus on the need for improved nurse training.

We found that RNHeals is conceptually very similar to NARS. The program still focuses on training nurses by giving them experience in hospitals; however, there is no longer an emphasis on placing nurses in rural areas. A DOH representative argued that this new focus was to ensure that nurses were adequately trained in hospitals in skills that they would use in the future.⁶⁴ In 2013, the program employs 30,000 nurses in hospitals throughout the country. Of the RNHeals nurse participants we interviewed, the ma-

63 Interview. *Former Government Official*. Manila, Philippines. January 8, 2013.
64 Interview. *Department of Health*. Manila, Philippines. January 13, 2013.

majority hoped to work abroad once they gained one to two years of experience domestically.⁶⁵ While our interviews were primarily in the main hospitals of Manila, and thus not representative of nurses throughout the country, each of the program supervisors we interviewed were one of perhaps two people from their cohorts of 20-30 nurses who were still working in the Philippines.⁶⁶ The rest had received their two years of training in the hospitals and moved abroad to take better jobs.

Inspired by TESDA's success, RNHeals is developing a certification process covering five levels of skills, including surgical and management specializations. Program designers hope that these new certifications will make Filipino nurses' skills more visible both domestically and internationally, but doing so will be challenging. As several RNHeals participants told us, nurses that receive training and certification in the Philippines currently find jobs abroad that are a step below their qualifications. One young man told us he wanted to find a nursing job in Canada, but he would have to start as a caregiver first and then work his way up from there, even though he already had two years of experience at a highly ranked hospital in Manila.⁶⁷ We expect that this relatively new certification program will eventually allow for a clear professional development path, both domestically and internationally, for Filipino nurses. As we have seen in the case of the welder or household service worker profiled above, we hope the new certification might also encourage more Filipino nurses to return to the Philippines to be retrained or recertified.

65 Interviews. *RNHeals, Philippine Heart Center and National Kidney Transplant Institute*. Manila, Philippines. January 15, 2013.

66 Interviews. *Philippine Heart Center and National Kidney Transplant Institute*. Manila, Philippines. January 15, 2013.

67 Interview. *RN Heals, National Kidney and Transplant Institute*. Manila, Philippines. January 15, 2013.

TESDA has avoided the excess supply in certified professionals, which has plagued the Filipino nursing industry, through their process of consulting with industry experts at home and abroad and adjusting their training to reflect lessons learned from these consultations. While so far it seems that the new nursing certification program is not as well organized with robust "stakeholder analyses," it is possible that the new nurse certification process will help with the excess supply of nurses. However, unless the certification process can also be tied to nursing training and education, we expect that many more nurses will continue to have their nursing license but will still be unable to access jobs.

Conclusion

The network of migrant training and assistance programs in the Philippines has grown over the last 40 years into a strong set of governmental agencies and programs with high visibility both at home and abroad. Our research suggests that by systematically preparing workers for both jobs and employment environments and adapting to changing labor market contexts and needs, the Filipino programs have avoided common problems faced by migration assistance initiatives around the world. In addition to these system-wide characteristics, these agencies have also succeeded in other ways that will be discussed in further detail in the analysis section. Despite this success, however, the system has experienced some challenges, including the lag between skills training and real-world demand, as seen in the case of nursing. Nevertheless, the Philippines provide a number of lessons that should be considered in the creation of future migration programs.

As we will see in the Australia and Pacific Islands case, the focus of the Philippines on both adapting to change and taking into consideration skill visibility and the entire labor market context in their training is the difference between perceived success and perceived failure. The program we analyzed in Australia and the Pacific Islands was set up to provide certifications of specific skills at Australian standards for Pacific Islanders. These certificates were designed to help Pacific Islanders migrate to Australia and find jobs where their new skills were in demand.

While this program did make skills more visible, the program did not consider the various potential employment contexts of its trainees, and it was static and unable to adapt to change. As a result, the program was unable to connect certified Pacific Islanders to middle-skilled work in Australia, and the program is widely considered a failure.

TESDA Bulacan in Manila, Philippines



Australia & the Pacific Islands

As in the Philippines, emigration is a common phenomenon in Pacific Island Countries such as Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, and Tonga. The World Bank estimates that in 2010, 21.3% of Fiji's total population, or approximately 182,000 Fijians, lived abroad.⁶⁸ This diaspora is even more pronounced in Samoa, where 67.3% of the total population – 120,400 people – lived abroad in 2010.⁶⁹ Many of these emigrants are skilled workers who earn relatively high incomes and support their families at home through remittances. This is particularly true in Samoa, where 76.4% of those living abroad hold a college degree.⁷⁰ Even with a drain of skilled workers from Pacific Island Countries, stagnant local economies make it difficult for local unskilled workers to find employment. Pacific Island Countries, in turn, want to find

ways to retain skilled labor while increasing unskilled labor migration.

Unlike the Philippines, which invested local resources into migration assistance programs, the much smaller Pacific Island Countries turned to nearby Australia to request help in promoting unskilled labor migration. In 2005, Pacific Island Countries lobbied Australia to create an unskilled seasonal workers program to provide temporary jobs for Pacific Islanders. While unsuccessful in their efforts, the countries' pressure contributed to the creation of the Australian-Pacific Technical College (APTC). APTC is a network of training institutes housed in the Pacific Island Countries that are designed to train Pacific Islanders in vocational occupations experiencing labor shortages in Australia. APTC was conceived as a way to train Pacific Islanders according to Australian standards in order to ease the migration of Pacific Island labor to Australia. Despite this ambitious goal, five years after inauguration, the

68 World Bank. "The Migration and Remittance Factbook 2011." Migration and Remittance Unit, Accessed May 11, 2013. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Fiji.pdf>

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

college experiences relatively poor results—with only 1.8% of APTC graduates successfully migrating in general.⁷¹

APTC was designed to make skills visible, harmonize trainings to match Australia's labor market gaps, and ease movement of Pacific Island laborers to Australia; however, through our research, we determined that APTC has been unable to achieve its goals due to three key failures. APTC failed to adapt to local industries standards, directly link APTC certifications to the immigration process, and effectively engage the program's beneficiaries. Since APTC is not in contact with Australian employers regarding industry developments and changes, APTC does not train its graduates to current industry requirements in Australia. APTC's certifications are not linked to Australian immigration policy, which means that an APTC certificate does not ease migration and its graduates' vocational trades are no longer relevant to Australian labor needs. Last, APTC does not incorporate beneficiaries' interests – the migrants, employers and Pacific Islands' governments – in the design of the program. As follows, APTC does not adapt to changes in either Pacific Island Countries or Australia. Despite these shortcomings, APTC continues to train Pacific Islanders in the region, and has indirectly played a positive role to ratchet up training and skill standards in Pacific Island Countries.

The Origin of the Australian-Pacific Technical College

APTC was initially conceived after the 2005 Pacific Island Forum, an annual meeting of regional leaders from Pacific Island Countries, Australia and New Zealand, aimed at strengthening economic, political, and secu-

rity collaboration in the Pacific.⁷² Prior to the 2005 Forum, Pacific Island Countries had anticipated the approval of a pilot seasonal workers program for agricultural and horticultural workers in Australia and New Zealand. Australia's Cabinet, however, rejected the proposed program. According to Alexander Downer, then Foreign Minister of Australia, the program was rejected because “the answer to the Pacific's large and growing unemployment problems does not lie in a few hundred unskilled young people coming to Australia to pick fruit for a few months of the year.”⁷³

Exchanges at the 2005 Forum became heated after John Howard, Australian Prime Minister, announced the dismissal of the seasonal workers program and then stated that “manual laborers on the ‘holiday maker visa’ is not the same as the ‘seasonal labor’ idea.”⁷⁴ Representatives from Pacific Island Countries questioned Howard and Australia's rejection of the program. Tuvalu's Prime Minister Maatia Toafa's inquired why other parts of the world were given preferential treatment in terms of accepting unskilled migrants for manual labor, such as for the holiday maker visa.⁷⁵ The holiday maker visa allows young people to have an extended holiday supplemented by low-skill short-term employment that is commonly in agriculture.⁷⁶ Shortly after being reportedly cor-

72 *Forum Communiqué: PIFS(05)12*. The Pacific Island Forum Secretariat. Accessed May 11, 2013. <http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/2005%20Forum%20Communiqué,%20Madang%2025-27%20Oct%2005.pdf>

73 Nic Maclellan and Peter Mares. *Labour Mobility in the Pacific: Creating seasonal work programs in Australia*. Accessed on May 11, 2013. http://eprint.anu.edu.au/ssgm/global_gov/pdf/ch08.pdf

74 Philbert Aisaisa, “Somore, Howard Leave Forum in Tiff.” *Pacific Island Report*, October 27, 2005. Accessed May 11, 2013. <http://pidp.org/archive/2005/October/10-28-02.htm>

75 Ibid.

76 Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship. “*Working Holiday*,” Accessed May 12, 2013. <http://www.immi.gov.au/visitors/working-holiday/>

71 Australian-Pacific Technical College “6-Monthly Report June 2012.”. Accessed May 11, 2013. <http://www.aptc.edu.au/images/Reports/6monthlyprogressreport.pdf>



Parliament Canberra, Australia

nered and embarrassed at the meeting, Howard proposed the creation of the APTC.⁷⁷ It was divulged that APTC emerged as a compromise between Pacific Island Countries and Australia after the low-skill seasonal workers program did not pass.⁷⁸ And, according to an interviewee, with ties to a former APTC advisory board member, “Howard was already in plans to set up Australian Technical Colleges”⁷⁹ to meet industry skill shortages. Thus, Australia’s government “expanded to include Pacific Island Countries by adding one more college to their ongoing policy plans after the Pacific Island Forum pressures.”⁸⁰ Howard’s government officially

77 Interview. *Professor at The Australian National University*. Canberra, Australia. January 14, 2013.
Philbert Aisaisa, “Somore, Howard Leave Forum in Tiff.” *Pacific Island Report*, October 27, 2005. Accessed May 11, 2013. <http://pidp.org/archive/2005/October/10-28-02.htm>
78 Interview. *Professor at The Australian National University*. Canberra, Australia. January 14, 2013.
79 Interview. *ACCI*. Canberra, Australia. January 14, 2013.
80 Ibid.

announced its plans for the APTC at the 2006 Pacific Island Forum, and APTC was operational by 2007.

A Flawed Design: APTC’s Inability to Sync Curriculum with Industry Changes and the Australian Immigration Process

APTC operates in seven Pacific Island Countries – Fiji, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Republic of Nauru – and offers certifications in industries ranging from hospitality and community services to technology. Government funds support the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), which manages the APTC. AusAID carefully designed APTC curriculum to match Australian standards, which are “a widely recognized baseline of skills in the region.”⁸¹ In addition, courses were to link with the skills preferred

81 Interview. *AusAID*. Canberra, Australia. January 16, 2013.

in the country's visa process; Australian immigration policy is based on a point system and applicants earn more points increasing their approval of a visa if trained in occupations listed on the Skill Occupation List (SOL). AusAID staff described that "APTC's early design intended to match vocational careers in demand [in Australia], published on Australia's SOL."⁸² AusAID believed Australian standards and occupational categories' corresponding visa points would allow APTC graduates to obtain employment in Australia.⁸³

In 2008-09, APTC expenditures accounted for 22% of AusAID's education spending in the Pacific.⁸⁴ One major expenditure, a \$10 million dollar scholarship program, is intended to "ensure equity of access from all Pacific Island Countries," and in 2007-2008 APTC granted 509 scholarships.⁸⁵ However, by the end of 2008, only 67 students had graduated,⁸⁶ a troubling statistic given that roughly AU\$53,000 are spent on each student, which is an equivalent cost to complete a similar course in Australia.⁸⁷ The cost of training one APTC student is approximately \$97,666 Fijian dollars, five to ten times the cost of comparable Fijian programs. According to Robin Nair, an outspoken Australian critic of APTC, the Fiji National University could train four to five students for the equivalent cost of training one APTC stu-

dent.⁸⁸ Many Pacific Islanders and Australians knowledgeable of APTC's expenditures have questioned the effectiveness of such an investment. One interviewee, a Fijian bureaucrat, informed us that Fiji's Acting High Commissioner to Australia suggested that rather than paying for students to study in the Islands, Australia should simply allow these students to attend schools in Australia.⁸⁹ Furthermore, he stated, "It would have been more effective to invest the money on local training institutions [in the Pacific Islands]."⁹⁰

As of 2012, after six years of operation and \$150 million Australian dollars invested, APTC has graduated 3,931 Pacific Islanders. AusAID representatives have positively reported that "people are getting promotions, feel valued, and are getting better pay" once they graduate from APTC. The representatives further affirmed that graduates "are hot-in-demand locally."⁹¹ However, precisely because APTC graduates are stated to be in such demand locally, is one component that detracts APTC from their primary objective - to fill skill shortages in Australia. Failure to achieve this goal could not be more apparent, as only 72 out of 3,931, or 1.8%, of APTC graduates have migrated to any other country, not even all to Australia.⁹²

As explained by AusAID representatives in Fiji, APTC "shifted to training people more generally," abandoning its initial design to match the industry skill shortages published in Australia's Skilled Occupation List (SOL).⁹³

82 Interview. *AusAID*. Canberra, Australia. January 16, 2013.

83 Ibid.

84 ANAO "AusAID's Management of Tertiary Training Assistance." *Audit Report No.44 2010-2011* (2011). Accessed May 15, 2013. <http://www.anao.gov.au/~media/Uploads/Audit%20Reports/2010%2011/201011%20Audit%20Report%2044.PDF>

85 Ibid.

Interview. *AusAID*. Suva, Fiji. January 18, 2013.

86 *AusAID's Management of Tertiary Training Assistance*, ANAO Audit Report No.44 2010-2011, 89.

87 AusAID. "Australian Pacific Technical College Stage 2: Design 2011-2015, Annexes." *Design Document*. Accessed May 15, 2013. <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/countries/pacific/fiji/Documents/aptc-program-design.pdf>

88 Robin Nair. "Critical Analysis of the Australian-Pacific Technical College" (2010).

89 Interview. *Secreteriat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment*. Suva, Fiji. January 17, 2013.

90 Ibid.

91 Interview. *AusAID*. Suva, Fiji. January 18, 2013.

92 Australian-Pacific Technical College "6-Monthly Report June 2012." Accessed May 11, 2013. <http://www.aptc.edu.au/images/Reports/6monthlyprogressreport.pdf>

93 Interview. *AusAID*. Suva, Fiji. January 18, 2013.

Consequently, APTC has not updated its certifications with occupations and skills listed in later versions of Australia’s SOL. This failure to update curriculum only further hampers graduates migration, as an occupation on the SOL is a big way visa applicants can acquire enough points for a visa.⁹⁴ When APTC’s certificates are compared to the current SOL, they are no longer desirable given the time lag that has made “occupations on the list no longer in demand.”⁹⁵

Political Challenges in Australia and the Pacific Islands and APTC’s Failure to Appease National Governments

In addition to an outdated curriculum and Australian immigration, political changes in Australia also hindered APTC graduates’ attempts to obtain employment in Australia. In 2007, the year APTC was launched, Australian Prime Minister Howard, lost the federal election to the opposition Labor Party. As Australian APTC advisors admitted, “The timing of APTC’s inception was not right.”⁹⁶ After the change in political power, APTC faced, and still faces, three particular challenges.

First, Australia’s Department of Immigration and Citizenship shifted the country’s immigration policy “from a labor supply-driven system to a labor demand-driven system.”⁹⁷ The “supply-driven” system had allowed workers to apply for and hold a working visa before securing a job in Australia. Meanwhile, the new “demand-driven” system raised the number of skill points required to obtain a work visa. According to one Australian professor, for an average

APTC graduate “the maximum points one can get according to the current point system is 55, while the threshold is 60,” making it “nearly impossible for [APTC graduates] to migrate.”⁹⁸ Admitting this bias, a senior executive of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship claimed that “the new point system is primarily for high-skilled workers, and whether semi-skilled workers can migrate is essentially dependent on whether they have an employer to sponsor them.”⁹⁹ He further affirmed that immigration policy has changed “to differentiate who’s more promising.”¹⁰⁰ Lamenting this change in policy, a representative from the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry suspected that APTC “could have helped meet the [Australian] industry need if the visa requirements didn’t change.”¹⁰¹

A second political challenge for APTC has been Australian unions, which were invigorated by the Labor Party’s election win. Australian unions and the Nurses Registration Board “blocked [APTC] every step of the way” when APTC attempted to offer an Elder and Homecare Certification.¹⁰² Despite being listed in the 2006 SOL, the Elder and Homecare Certification was rejected by the nurses union, which opposed foreigners entering the field to protect union jobs and maintain “quality.”¹⁰³

The third political challenge was the Labor Party’s new agenda for AusAID, which in

94 Interview. *Department of Immigration and Citizenship*. Canberra, Australia. January 17, 2013.

95 Ibid.

96 Interview. *ACCI*. Canberra, Australia. January 14, 2013.

97 Interview. *AusAID*. Canberra, Australia. January 16, 2013.

98 Interview. *DIAC*. Canberra, Australia. January 17, 2013.

98 Interview. *Professor at The Australian National University*. Canberra, Australia. January 14, 2013.

99 Interview. *DIAC*. Canberra, Australia. January 17, 2013.

100 Ibid.

And, it is interesting to note, that AusAID APTC representatives were unaware of these immigration policy implications on APTC graduates. Interview. *AusAID*. Canberra, Australia. January 16, 2013.

101 Interview. *ACCI*. Canberra, Australia. January 14, 2013.

102 Interview. *AusAID*. Canberra, Australia. January 16, 2013.

103 Interview. *ACCI*. Canberra, Australia. January 14, 2013.

2008 created a new seasonal workers program more in line with Labor Party priorities. As a result, APTC began to lose visibility in Australia. As an illustration, one current member of the Australian House of Representatives from the Labor Party admitted that he had “not heard of [APTC]” even though he is known to be involved in labor and migration issues.¹⁰⁴

As APTC fell out of political favor in Australia, the program also faced obstacles from Pacific Island Country governments who became skeptical of APTC as it failed to meet local needs. Pacific Island leaders initially advocated for a joint program with Australia in order to increase the migration of their unskilled labor and decrease the drain of skilled labor to Australia. Functionally, APTC failed to meet these objectives and in fact was adverse to them. APTC is seen to undermine local training institutions and is unwanted by Fijians who desire a stronger country.¹⁰⁵

According to one senior Fijian bureaucrat, “APTC is a way for Australia to take our intellect.”¹⁰⁶ This same bureaucrat questioned, “Why not rather invest in pre-existing programs? [APTC] should have given the money to our institutions that were doing a good job, and help them improve.”¹⁰⁷ A Fijian business leader echoed this concern, explaining that “APTC was not welcomed in Fiji because they were afraid Fiji would lose all of

104 Interview. *Australian Parliament*. Canberra, Australia. January 18, 2013.

105 Robin Nair. “Critical Analysis of the Australian-Pacific Technical College (APTC)” (2010). Nair states: “The Australian Parliament Senate report also mentioned that the 2009-2010 Australian Budget had some allocations ‘to support the education system in Fiji’ and to be consistent with the recommendations in the report, those funds should have been channeled to be used for the upgrading of FNU lecturers qualifications and also the facilities so that FNU could successfully meet the demand and expectations from the industry as well as the nation and region’s work force.”

106 Interview. *Secreteriat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment*. Suva, Fiji. January 17, 2013.

107 Ibid.

A Successful Australian Training Initiative for Nauruan Welders

In the early 2000s, Australia experienced a shortage of welders. To fill this gap, East Coast Apprenticeships (ECA) successfully brought Pacific Islanders, specifically 24 Nauruans to Australia for training. As a non-profit training organization that arranged training for trainees to Australian qualifications, ECA was able to ensure that the Nauruans gained the skill set required by Australian employers.

Brought to Australia in two groups, the Nauruans upon finishing the program, received Certificate II-level qualification and an International Welding Certificate. Half of the Nauruan welders were employed after completing their training. ECA asserted that their partnerships with employers in Australia were key to the success of the program. According to the ECA, after these 12 welders were employed, their remittances contributed to a small increase in Nauru’s GDP.

There are two distinct features that made this program successful. Firstly, the program partnered with employers and the curriculum was based on employers’ needs. Secondly, as the training took place in Australia, the employers were confident of trainee skills. Employers and Australia’s Department of Industry Innovation and Tertiary Education view experience gained in Australia, compared to those gained abroad, more favorably.

their graduates to Australia.”¹⁰⁸ A Fijian scholar, currently working on developing regional qualification standards, went further, explaining that Pacific Island Countries “know how to educate their people, and we are fed up with being told what and how to

108 Interview. *Fiji Chamber of Commerce*. Suva, Fiji. January 18, 2013.

do things [by Australia].”¹⁰⁹

To improve its perception, APTC attempts to partner with local training institutions. One partnership, between APTC and the Fiji National University (FNU), consists of FNU trainers taking APTC courses, and APTC building classrooms on two FNU campuses. However, FNU trainers, administrators and students informed us that, “APTC’s classrooms are only for APTC classes, we can’t use them.”¹¹⁰ Some trainers working for other local institutions perceive APTC as a competitor. Illustrating this concern, the director of a Fijian training institution stated, “I don’t think they are a competitor to our program, but I know some colleagues who believe that APTC is a competitor to them.”¹¹¹ As a result, the Fijian government has shown skepticism toward APTC because it does not support the government’s effort to better qualify and retain skilled Pacific Islanders.

Failing to Fulfill Student Employment Needs

Pacific Island Countries have struggled with retaining skilled labor, largely due to slow economic and industrial growth, which leads to a lack of suitable employment and skill value. APTC, however, overlooks this. An APTC representative described how APTC’s approach is “flexible to respond to industry demand in Pacific Island Countries.”¹¹² Although, a Fijian industry leader asserted that, “economic and industry growth in the Pacific is limited”¹¹³ and leads to inadequate jobs for skilled laborers and APTC graduates.

109 Interview. *Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment*. Suva, Fiji. January 17, 2013.

110 Interview. *Fiji National University*. Nadi, Fiji. January 24, 2013.

111 Interview. *Privately led hospitality training center*. Suva, Fiji. January 21, 2013.

112 Interview. *AusAID*. Suva, Fiji. January 21, 2013.

113 Interview. *Fiji Employers Federation*. Suva, Fiji. January 21, 2013.

Therefore, concerns by the Pacific Islands that they are losing skilled workers due to APTC are unfounded.

According to an Australian NGO executive who works to connect foreign laborers to Australian employers, “APTC doesn’t work with the industries, so its design doesn’t have what’s required [by Australian employers].”¹¹⁴ Further limiting migration to Australia, many Australian employers are suspicious of qualifications obtained abroad – even if they are Australian qualifications.¹¹⁵ According to an employee who is responsible for skill recognition of migrant workers – a component to acquire points for a visa – in the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE), “APTC is a training institution, not a skill-recognition agency. So, APTC’s recognition of a student’s prior experience is not necessarily compliant with the Australian process.”¹¹⁶ The employee further explained that DIISRTE, as well as some Australian employment agencies, do not evaluate APTC qualifications as highly as those received in Australia.¹¹⁷ DIISRTE’s hesitation signifies the fine comb process to attain enough occupational visa points as an APTC graduate, further limiting APTC graduates’ migration.

APTC does not assist graduates to find employment in the Pacific Islands, beyond providing access through informal trainer and staff networks, as APTC representatives continuously stated, “we are not an employment agency.”¹¹⁸ After completing APTC trainings, 61% of APTC graduates return to the same

114 Interview. *East Coast Apprentinships*. Canberra, Australia. January 18, 2013.

115 Ibid.

116 Interview. *DIISRT*. Canberra, Australia. January 17, 2013.

117 Ibid.

118 Interview. *APTC*. Suva, Fiji. January 23, 2013.



APTC Automotive training center in Suva, Fiji

job held prior to taking the course.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, most APTC students already possess experience and training prior to enrolling in APTC. In fact, students must demonstrate prior working experience or credentials from a local training institution in order to enroll. Another reason APTC has failed to connect graduates to new jobs is that many students enroll in APTC with motivations beyond building skills or improving employment. For instance, a Samoan APTC scholarship recipient informed us that after migrating to Fiji for APTC she “eventually dropped out because classes were on the weekend and she worked during the week.”¹²⁰ And, also one Fijian student, who had already obtained similar qualifications from FNU, enrolled in APTC to receive a stipend

119 APTC. “*Graduate Tracer Report- 2012.*” Corporate and Student Services Office. Accessed May 11, 2013. <http://www.aptc.edu.au/index.php/graduate-student-tracer-reports>

120 Interview. *Privately led hospitality training center.* Suva, Fiji. January 22, 2013.

because “They pay you.”¹²¹ An APTC representative confirmed that, “stipends are generous, and more than [students] would be paid in the market, because these countries have different societal obligations.”¹²² While there may be a temporary financial incentive to enroll in APTC, few benefit financially in the long run with new jobs or promotions, even though some become more skilled than their bosses.¹²³ What APTC is missing and needed in Fiji according to one senior Fijian industry leader, is a nationally run employment center.¹²⁴

121 Interview. *Fiji National University.* Nadi, Fiji. January 24, 2013.

122 Interview. *APTC.* Suva, Fiji. January 23, 2013.

123 Ibid.

124 Interview. *Multinational organization.* Suva, Fiji. January 21, 2013

APTC's Defense and Susceptibility to Graduates Minimal Migrations

Benefits for APTC graduates are not clearly understood without improved employment or migration; and therefore, APTC is sensitive when it comes to talking about their migration results. Instead, APTC focuses on how “APTC upskills the workforce of the Pacific Islands, which is what we are mandated to do.”¹²⁵ It is acknowledged by APTC staff that its graduates in Fiji are not necessarily moving abroad, which is partly why APTC has endured criticism in both Australia and Pacific Island Countries.¹²⁶ As a result, we noticed both AusAID and APTC explain APTC's accomplishments in terms of flexibility. AusAID representatives in both Australia and Fiji emphasize how APTC's “flexibility has been key” as they have been able to “withstand all the political tensions, [allowing] APTC to survive and adapt.”¹²⁷

APTC's flexibility can be said to appease their opponents, fluctuating between Australian and Pacific Island governments, industries and other training institutions. For this reason, APTC appears to be cautious in their language around migration and their apprehensiveness to divulge information or grant access for a site visit. An Australian scholar confirmed, “It's just that APTC is a sensitive topic.”¹²⁸ And thus, APTC relegates highlighting its potential benefits to graduates and Pacific Island Countries, and incorporates flexibility to appease oppositions in Australia and Pacific Islanders.

125 Interview. *APTC*. Suva, Fiji. January 23, 2013.

126 Ibid.

127 Interview. *AusAID*. Canberra, Australia. January 16, 2013.

128 Interview. *Professor at The Australian National University*. Canberra, Australia. January 16, 2013.

Skill Recognition by Local Community

Efrain* is a resident handyman at a Fijian school we visited and a graduate of the APTC painting program offered in Suva, Fiji. Efrain shared with us his experience taking an APTC course and the impact it had on his life. “I can fix anything!” he proudly shared with us. “I took the APTC course because I already had a lot of experience and because they were offering Certificate IV for painting. Now, more people in my neighborhood are asking me to fix and paint their houses. Now I have my own business and I can still work my current job here [at the school].” According to Efrain, the best aspect of APTC was his trainer. “Whenever I have a question,” Efrain explained, “I can go to my old teacher even though I've already graduated. He gives me advice.” With the trainer's guidance, Efrain is able to accept more jobs because, as he told us, “if I am not sure how to do it, my teacher will support me, and I can finish the job.” When we asked if he would ever consider leaving Fiji to work abroad in Australia, he reached for his wallet and showed us a picture of his two smiling daughters. He smiled widely and said, “I will stay with my wife and daughters.”

*Efrain is an alias

APTC's Positive Contributions to the Pacific Islands

Despite failing to fulfill its goal of connecting workers to jobs in demand in Australia, or even helping graduates get promotions in the Pacific Islands, APTC has had positive impacts. When we visited APTC training centers, we observed the passion, talent, and enthusiasm of trainers, students and staff.

The training centers were of high quality, and well equipped, which allowed trainers and students to engage in thoughtful discussions and learn. Through these centers, APTC has improved the overall quality of vocational training in the Pacific Islands. In Fiji, APTC trains local vocational trainers, as well as employees from the Ministry of Education, according to Australian standards, which has led local institutions to upgrade training programs, including the entire Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system. A public servant from the Ministry of Education affirmed, “Since we didn’t have any other organization doing assessment training, APTC was good for us. Before APTC, [local] institutions had different systems and terms for certifications. Now, institutions have changed their certification language into APTC’s language

like ‘Certificate I,’ ‘Certificate II,’ etc.”¹²⁹ A representative from the Fiji High Education Commission further explained, APTC “changed the paradigm because now all institutions want to improve their quality, and while trained students may not necessarily leave Fiji, it’s important that now they have the opportunity.”¹³⁰

One effect of this upgrading in skill training has been increased labor mobility among the Pacific Island Countries. Migration in the region is accepted and encouraged due to Pacific Island Countries’ long history of migration and mobility among each other.¹³¹ Many Fijians, for example, have moved to Papua

129 Interview. *Ministry of Education*. Suva, Fiji. January 21, 2013

130 Interview. *Fiji High Education Commission*. Suva, Fiji. January 18, 2013

131 Interview. *Professor University of the South Pacific*. Suva, Fiji. January 22, 2013



New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu for jobs in construction and mining.¹³² While most of this mobility is not permanent, the migrants who do move [regionally] are usually skilled professionals.¹³³

Conclusion

While the APTC has failed to increase migration to Australia, it has successfully increased skill visibility of graduates, contributed to improvements in the region's vocational education standards, and advanced regional labor mobility. However, because APTC did not meet its beneficiaries' needs, it encountered opposition from both Australian and Pacific Island governments. And as a result, to pacify these political pressures and continue operations as an AusAID program, APTC adapts their program design – or as they have termed flexibility.

For APTC to stimulate labor migration to Australia, partnerships with all participating actors would need to be strengthened. One potential step would be to have the final stage of training take place in Australia. Another improvement would be to incorporate Australian employers in both curriculum planning and practical training processes to help graduates secure better employment. Furthermore, APTC would have true potential if it were more consistent with Australian immigration policy.

132 Interview. *Chamber of Commerce*. Suva, Fiji. January 21, 2013.

133 Interview. *Professor University of the South Pacific*. Suva, Fiji. January 22, 2013

Mexico

While the previous two cases discuss systems for creating “economic skill value”—that is, utility to employers or industry—this case expands on the understanding of what makes skills valuable to migrants. A skill development program can succeed if it develops skills that, though not necessarily visible to employers, serve as conduits for accessing economic skill value. This case explores a Mexican government program called *Plazas Comunitarias* that provides Spanish-language, primary and secondary education to immigrants living the United States. Our study reveals that the program and the certificate its participants receive holds relatively little value in the labor market. Nevertheless, the Mexican government reports that, as of 2009, more than 35,000 students from over 40 countries ranging from Latin America to Northern Europe were enrolled in more than 400 different *plazas* in 35 cities throughout the United States.¹³⁴ These fig-

ures demonstrate migrants’ valuation of the *plazas* program that does not reflect its labor market value.

Plazas have been established in, and administered by, a range of local organizations. Hosting institutions include neighborhood associations, churches, literacy agencies, public health organizations, and hometown associations—or groups of Mexican migrants from the same region. Each organization implements the program to suit specific migrants needs, as shaped by the local political and economic environments. Migrant needs in the self-proclaimed “immigrant haven” of Chicago differ markedly from those in states such as Texas, which spend millions of dollars on anti-immigration law enforcement and virtually nothing on Spanish-language education programs. Depending on the environment, some of these organizations have structured their *plazas* curriculum to serve as a stepping stone toward taking the General Education Diploma (GED) exam or vocational certificate programs. By

¹³⁴ Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos. “Impacto de los Programas del INEA en E.U.A.” *Summary of observations, 2011-2012 survey*. (2012)

contrast, other organizations utilize *plazas* as a safe space to develop a sense of social unity and self-efficacy critical to migrants' well-being in the United States. The *plazas* case illustrates how migrant responses to localized political pressures can generate economic and noneconomic "skill value," independent of "skill visibility."

Mexican Migrants in the U.S.

Mexican immigrant communities in the United States (U.S.) have a forty-year history of engaging with their communities of origin through migratory labor, remittances, and state remittance-matching policies.¹³⁵ Mexican migrants represent more than a quarter of the U.S.'s 38 million foreign-born residents. Three out of four Mexican migrants had not completed high school at the time of migration¹³⁶ and are therefore described as "low-skill" by educational institutions, employers and the U.S. government.¹³⁷ Furthermore, nearly seven million of the twelve million Mexicans in the U.S. entered the country without documentation. The prevalent political argument that "low-skill," undocumented Mexicans burden the U.S. welfare system and take jobs from U.S. citizens has threatened immigrants' economic and social well-being, leading to large-scale deportations and cases of extortion.¹³⁸ In the late 1990's, in response to this political marginalization, immigrant communities mobilized to demand protection and assis-

135 Natasha Iskander. *Creative State: Forty Years of Migration and Development Policy in Morocco and Mexico*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

136 Kate Brick, A.E. Challinor and Marc Rosenblum. "Mexican and Central American Immigrants in the United States." *Migration Policy Institute and European University Institute*. (2011). Accessed May 15, 2013. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/mexcentamimmigrants.pdf>.

137 Randy Capps, Michael Fix and Serena Yi-Ying Lin. "Still an Hourglass? Immigrant Workers in Middle-skilled jobs." *Migration Policy Institute* (2010). Accessed May 15, 2013.

138 U.S. Department of Homeland Security. "Removal Statistics." (2012). Accessed May 15, 2013. <http://www.ice.gov/removal-statistics/>.

tance from the Mexican government. Increasing political instability in Mexico and the growing economic role of remittances prompted a response from the sitting Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*—PRI) in an attempt to reestablish its political legitimacy.¹³⁹

To engage migrant communities in a dialogue about their needs, the Mexican Secretariat of External Relations (*Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*—SRE) launched the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad (*Programa para las Comunidades Mexicanas en el Exterior*—PCME) in 1990. The SRE placed PCME staff in a rapidly-expanding network of Mexican consulates across the U.S. with the goal of understanding how to address migrants' needs. Over the course of the decade, PCME staff discovered that migrants perceived their "low-skill" status as a barrier to safety and skill development. In fact, hometown associations in Chicago and Los Angeles had begun to address this challenge using a Mexican program called *Plazas Comunitarias*.

Design and Implementation of the *Plazas Comunitarias* Model

Mexico's National Institute for Adult Education (*Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos*—INEA) developed a Spanish-language basic education curriculum called *Plazas Comunitarias* in the early 1990s to improve literacy and educational achievement among rural Mexicans over the age of sixteen.¹⁴⁰ They partnered with community organizations in rural Mexico to offer the courses for free using a DVD and computer-

139 Natasha Iskander. *Creative State: Forty Years of Migration and Development Policy in Morocco and Mexico*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

140 Yevgeny Kuznetsov and Carl Dahlman. "Mexico's Transition to a Knowledge-Based Economy." *World Bank* (2005). Accessed May 15, 2013. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/KFDLP/Resources/461197-1199907090464/Mexico.pdf>.

based curriculum. The organizations report student progress to INEA through an online monitoring system known as SASACE (*Sistema de Acreditación y Seguimiento Automatizado para Comunidades en el Exterior*). The curriculum includes topics such as family planning and Mexican culture and culminates with a Mexican secondary education certificate. The graduation certificate bears the insignia of the Mexican government, thus enabling migrant to apply for a *matricula consular*, which is legal form of identification for Mexican migrants who reside in the U.S. However, employers in the U.S. rarely acknowledge these certificates because they only validate an education level still below the national baseline for accessing higher paying jobs.¹⁴¹

The program's digital platform, secondary degree certification, and focus on Mexican culture made the *plazas* particularly attractive to dispersed hometown associations within the U.S. Attuned to the low educational levels of their constituent populations, community organizations in Chicago and Los Angeles began informally replicating the *plazas* model. The U.S. Department of Education, also noting the need for educational support within the Mexican migrant community, signed a Memoranda of Understanding with INEA to support investments in educational opportunities for Mexican adults in the U.S. Encouraged by this development, PCME formalized the work of the hometown associations and began expanding U.S. implementation of the *Plazas Comunitarias* program in 2002. The following year, President Fox's administration combined PCME with another migrant affairs bureau the following year to create the Institute for

141 Anthony Carnevale, Stephen Rose and Ban Cheah. "The College Payoff: Education, Occupations and Lifetime Earnings." *Georgetown University*. (2010). Accessed May 15, 2013. <http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/collegepayoff-complete.pdf>.

Mexicans Abroad (*Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior*—IME), prompting INEA and IME to codify institutional roles with regards to *plazas*.

INEA would provide training in Mexico and the U.S. for *plazas* instructors, while IME would oversee international implementation through the robust Mexican consular network. IME assumed the responsibility of identifying community organizations with the capacity to implement the program and advertising the free service to migrants. IME also agreed to ensure that participating organizations received pedagogical materials and graduation certificates. Thus, over the course of several years, the IME expanded upon localized migrant initiatives to provide *plazas* certifications to Mexican migrants across the U.S.

Not fully understanding the value of the *Plazas* program, however, IME officials lacked information about its feasibility in the U.S.'s varied political environments. Regardless, IME institutionalized the entire *plazas* program in the image of the successful Chicago and Los Angeles models. At the same time, American anxiety about migrant documentation status and employment, in certain regions in particular, triggered immigration policies that sought to restrict immigrants' mobility and access to the U.S. labor market. Strict enforcement of these policies in environments unfavorable to immigrants reduced the likelihood that implementation of the *plazas* program would result in uniform outcomes across the country. Thus, IME officials maintained a broad objective: "to support and further individual and collective development of Mexicans abroad."¹⁴² As the program expanded, IME consular representatives observed migrant community efforts

142 Institute of Mexicans Abroad. "IME Bulletin June 2008." (2008).

to add value to the *plazas* program across varied political contexts, as well as the migrant-developed mechanisms for developing valuable skills.

Observations of *Plazas Comunitarias* throughout the U.S. revealed that the provision of *plazas* certificates is associated with a wider array of social and economic benefits beyond skill acquisition. Migrants use the certificate to obtain a *matrícula*, which allows them to exercise citizen rights such as receive medical attention, obtain a driver's license, and to apply for a job. Where the certificates of basic education are not recognized under U.S. vocational requirements, the flexibility in design has allowed for other noneconomic benefits. As a Mexican consular representative suggested, education is a key part of migrants' lives abroad: "To learn a new language, they must first master their own. Language is key for migrants to adapt, to learn the rules and to improve their quality of life."¹⁴³ Furthermore, program flexibility eschewed the formal accountability of Mexican governmental institutions and strict module design which could not work within the regional and political complexities, as well as funding limitations of the U.S. Therefore, the "invisible" implementation of the *plazas* through local community organizations facilitated the program's success in providing noneconomic value for its beneficiaries.

The following sections analyze the extent to which migrants adapted *Plazas Comunitarias* to fit their needs in Chicago, Texas and New York. Differences in consular support and anti-immigrant policy enforcement across these sites shaped migrants' efforts to create skill value in these settings. In each site, the visible skill—the *plazas* certificate—provided no economic value for migrants. Further-

143 Interview. *Mexican Consulate*. New York City, United States. February 13, 2013.

more, no site's *plazas* demonstrated intentional compliance with IME's guidelines. Instead, organizations developed their own means of leveraging intrinsic skills to access economic skill value.

Chicago: A City of Established Immigrant Organizations

Of the three regions studied, Chicago presents the most successful manifestation of the *plazas* program's ability to translate migrant skills into economic value. An "immigrant-friendly"¹⁴⁴ institutional environment in Chicago, in which undocumented residents can obtain drivers licenses, for example, together with a strong history of Mexican migrant activism, allowed *plazas* to flourish in local community organizations. Prior to the institutionalization of *plazas* by the IME, hometown associations in Chicago had already adopted the *plazas* curriculum as a means of providing formalized recognition of worker literacy by linking it to state-recognized certification. Today, *plazas*-housing community-based organizations, such as the Poder Learning Center and Instituto del Progreso Latino, have created innovative programs to encourage students' progression from adult basic education in Spanish to the development of economically valuable skills. These include advanced computer classes, customer service trainings, and resume preparation workshops. Staff and students describe the *plazas* program as one of many within a network of services aimed at improving life outcomes for members of the Mexican diaspora.

By partnering with private organizations and leveraging public funds, *plazas* housing organizations provide educational, vocational, and employment opportunities to Mexi-

144 Interview. *Mexican Consulate*. Chicago. January 13, 2013.

can migrants. Elementary and middle schools in Chicago's Elgin Public School District have openly petitioned the state for funding to provide the *plazas* curriculum with the explicit goal of "serving parents so they can support and engage their kids through a positive example of learning."¹⁴⁵ *Instituto del Progreso Latino*, a community-based educational center in one of the most underserved and heavily Hispanic neighborhoods in South Chicago, provides basic education, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses and GED training to more than 14,000 participants annually.¹⁴⁶ This organization funnels all *plazas* beneficiaries through "mini crash courses on public benefits and resume preparation,"¹⁴⁷ and guides them towards a manufacturing skills program administered by a publicly funded workforce development agency.

Poder Learning Center, another organization located in the same neighborhood as *Instituto del Progreso Latino*, began as an adult education and ESL center but now includes a training-to-employment pipeline that feeds directly into the center's customer service call center. Entering students are placed directly into the *plazas* curriculum, where they build the foundations of literacy, language, and writing skills. Once students achieve functional literacy in their native language, students move into ESL coursework and customer relations training without completing the *plazas* certificate. After sufficient customer relations training, students begin taking calls, first in their native language, and then half of their calls in English. The director reported that, "There was initial resistance to this transition [from basic education] toward workforce development, but

145 Interview. *Mexican Consulate*. Chicago. January 13, 2013.

146 *Instituto de Progreso Latino*. Accessed May 16, 2013. <http://www.idpl.org/>

147 Interview. *Instituto de Progreso Latino*. Chicago. January 12, 2013.

everyone realized that integration makes sense."¹⁴⁸

Chicago's organizations demonstrate the *plazas* ability to develop migrants' intrinsic skills, such as literacy and self-efficacy, which they can then leverage for the attainment of economically valued skills. While the Mexican consulate in Chicago remains involved in *plazas* implementation, these organizations drive its execution and success due to their size and experience. Thus, this site also reveals how political support and availability of public financial resources provide the secure and productive environment needed for hosting institutions to flourish.

Houston & Austin, Texas: Diamonds in the Rough

Compared to Chicago, Texas is a far more hostile environment for immigrants. The state consistently rejects optional allocations for federal welfare programs benefiting undocumented immigrants, and the governor boasts of convincing legislators to devote over \$220 million dollars to border security efforts during his tenure¹⁴⁹. Despite a large number of residents who speak Spanish as a first language, the state allocates virtually no money to adult education programs for non-English speakers. A staff member from a now-defunct *plazas* organization in Houston stated, "We would have kept the Spanish program, but the state grant is for English-only programs."¹⁵⁰

A majority of Texan *plazas* are notably less public and less formalized, and are housed outside of robust, accessible organizations, as they are in Chicago. These *plazas* also re

148 Interview. *Poder*. Chicago. January 12, 2013.

149 Office of the Governor Rick Perry. Accessed May 15, 2013. www.governor.state.tx.us

150 Interview. *Avance*. Houston, United States. January 8, 2013.

Dreams Beyond Basic Education

Stepping into the brown, monolithic office building of Manos de Cristo, in Austin, Texas chattering voices in Spanish and the bustle of smiling people drew me into a large, crowded cafeteria-like room. There were people of all ages standing in eight lines, others scattered throughout the room with calculators, pencils, and looks of consternation directed at the pages in front of them. A chipper, blonde woman approached and with excitement told us, “Today is registration for all of our spring classes. It’s exciting, isn’t it? They have to take the preliminary assessments and then get placed in a class. A lot of them are here for English, or the computer course, that one’s pretty popular. [Spanish translated] But here is one of our brightest students in the *Plazas Comunitarias!* She’s already completed one book and should be done with her second soon, right?” We were quickly introduced to an exuberant woman with long brown hair and a bright smile. She beamed proudly at the introduction and warmed quickly as she shared her experiences entering into the *plaza* program.

“I heard of the classes taught at Manos through a friend of mine. She came to visit me at my home because I had been going through a lot of depression at that time. I never left the house. I was eating a lot. And, I started to realize how fat I was getting” she says with a bashful, crooked smile and a small chuckle. “My friend says to me ‘You should come to Manos de Cristo, they have cooking classes for healthy meals, and ESL, many classes.’ And, when I arrived they had so many interesting classes, but I only went to school in Mexico up to the third grade. I wanted to help my boys with homework, and I could not even read their assignments. So I came to the *plazas*... What I like about the *plazas* is that I learn things I never thought of before. Every page is something new and interesting. Like the birth control lesson. It was very interesting...when I finished my first book, I was so proud of myself. My husband was there, he was very happy. And I was happy...I go out now, play with my boys at the park. Things are much better. But now I am on my next book, and it’s pretty easy but it takes a long time. I work little by little, a little every day...I tell my husband to watch the boys for fifteen minutes every day so I can do my work... It may take me a long time, but I will do it... And I will definitely leave my job as soon as I can. I hate cleaning hotels. I want a nice job in an office. And one day, who knows, maybe I will get my GED. Or, I could go to college, I can do anything I want... If I could do anything one day I would be a photographer. And maybe that’s not realistic, but I think, yes, it will be hard, but I can do it... Anybody can do it.”¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Interview. *Plazas Comunitarias Student*. Austin, United States January 6, 2013.

ceive very little attention from the IME. Apart from one director of a *plaza* in a federal correctional facility, none of the Texas *plazas* coordinators we interviewed reported being approached by an IME consular representative to launch their *plaza*. In fact, several coordinators reported that they sought assistance from the federal corrections' staff to set up their *plazas* due to difficulties communicating with IME representatives. According to one *plazas* administrator, "I emailed and emailed for months trying figure out who I was supposed to speak with."¹⁵²

Two of our interviewees identified the causes of IME's divergence from its role of spreading awareness and launching *plazas* in Texas. First, the IME constantly rotates its staff throughout the Mexican consular network in the U.S., preventing the development of strong relationships between IME officials and local NGOs. Second, Mexican officials were simply not interested in expanding the program. In sharp contrast to the interest in the *plazas* demonstrated by consular officials in other sites, one IME representative in Texas avoided discussion of the *plazas* program, touting the benefits of another consular program, instead. While IME had a peripheral role in implementing *plazas* in the other two sites, Texas' "anti-immigrant" political environment led to the absence of much-needed consular support, which was particularly detrimental to *plazas* there. In failing to fulfill their obligation to support Texan *plazas*, the IME corps in Texas demonstrates their unawareness of the program's ability to improve migrant's wellbeing despite its lack of economic benefits.

For students enrolled for longer periods of time, the program created a greater sense of self-efficacy, or the belief that one is capable of success. Participants reported that with

¹⁵² Interview. *Manos de Cristo*. Austin, United States. January 3, 2013.

time and dedication, they aspired to loftier goals, such as GED attainment or college matriculation. Interviewees elaborated that the *plazas* offered them a unique safe space devoid of the suspicion, criminalization, and discrimination they generally experience in Texas' anti-immigrant political climate. Furthermore, these spaces allowed students to interact with other migrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. An education coordinator in Austin reported that, "You can really see the sense of community in the *plazas* in a way that's not like any of the other classes here. Certainly not my ESL class."¹⁵³ Despite the challenges of tight schedules, challenges to mobility, and slow academic progress, high levels of student retention prove the intrinsic benefits of the program regardless of its inability to offer economic value. These benefits, while prevalent in *plazas* in all three sites, assume particular significance in Texas, where undocumented migrants have few venues in which to cultivate a sense of community.

Despite extreme limitations in funding and institutional support for undocumented communities in Texas, new *plazas* open each year, demonstrating the real benefit of a sense of security, social inclusion, and self-efficacy. These qualitative benefits encourage later attainment of economic skill value, for migrants themselves or their families. Nevertheless, the Texas organizations have not succeeded in generating the kinds of benefits enjoyed in other more immigrant-friendly environments. In many Texan sites surveyed, *plazas* frequently maintained Spanish-language literacy as a primary goal simply to reduce extreme isolation and vulnerability. The more ambitious goals pursued by the Chicago organizations, such as English fluency, GED acquisition and job train-

¹⁵³ Interview. *Manos de Cristo*. Austin, United States. January 3, 2013.

ing, were reportedly beyond the capacity of Texan *plazas*. As a result, the data from Texas reveal that the programs have failed to directly make migrants' skills sufficiently valuable to attain economic benefits in the U.S.

New York: Replicating Innovation in New Environments

Despite its history as an “immigrant-friendly”¹⁵⁴ city, New York City is a relatively recent destination for Mexican immigrants. The Mexican population in New York City jumped from 7,000 in 1980 to 186,000 in 2000, driven by a high birthrate and new waves of migration to the East Coast.¹⁵⁵ They have become New York City's fastest growing ethnic group, rivaled only by Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. These new immigrants have the lowest per-capita income in the city and a severe educational disadvantage; Mexicans complete an average of nine years of schooling compared with the New York City average of thirteen.¹⁵⁶

The regulatory environment in New York City is comparable to Chicago and considerably more favorable to migrants than Texas. The region's rich history as a haven for migrants has fostered the development of a variety of institutions that cater to migrants and a general acceptance of diverse immigrant communities. In 2005, the first *plazas comunitarias* in New York City evolved from existing *círculos de lectura* (reading circles) that had been organized with consular support. *Plazas* in New York City advertise themselves most frequently as social service organizations. Indeed, many initially operated with the primary goals of HIV preven-

154 Christina Boyle. “Mayor Bloomberg: New York is the most immigrant-friendly city in the country.” *New York Daily News*. nydailynews.com. April 25, 2012.

155 U.S. Department of Commerce. “U.S. Census Bureau Report.” *Census Bureau*. (2003).

156 U.S. Department of Commerce. “U.S. Census Bureau Report.” *Census Bureau*. (2003).

tion, economic support, and community welfare, and only later adopted the *plaza* program as a means to respond to their constituents' educational needs. One *plaza* program, the Volunteer Unit for Adult Education (*Unidad de Voluntarios para la Educación de los Adultos*—UVEA) had been teaching Mexican adults how to read and write since the late 1990s in the basement of a church in Manhattan. The organization became a *plaza* in 2008, and has survived due to the commitment of its volunteers, most of whom are former students from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Smaller and less established *plazas* like UVEA are common in New York, but they emphasize a focus on migrant populations.¹⁵⁷ The competitive nonprofit environment in New York, along with the incipient and scattered Mexican immigrant community in the city, contributes to the relatively small scale of these institutions and limits their ability to secure resources. To recruit the number of program participants necessary to justify substantial funding, organizations hosting the *plazas* have had to look outside of the Mexican diaspora. The prevalence of other Spanish-speaking immigrants, such as Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, in New York City *plazas* demonstrated the program's adaptability to local contexts.

Despite this favorable intercultural cooperation, New York *plazas* have not expanded as rapidly as those in Chicago. One consular representative assessed that the *plazas* “mission has been to provide assistance to those in need. We need to walk the extra mile like Chicago did, and go beyond assistance to provide opportunities for people to integrate, to find jobs and to become more ac-

157 Interviews. Adelante Alliance. New York City, United States. January 13, 2013.

tively involved in their communities.”¹⁵⁸ Our research revealed another limitation of New York’s *plazas* network. A temporary lack of interaction between these organizations and the local Mexican Consulate led the *plazas* to effectively function as autonomous organizations. As a result, consular representatives lost track of immigrants’ needs and were unable to monitor the impact of the program and provide quality services to the growing immigrant community.¹⁵⁹ In the absence of guidance and resources, some of the *plazas* closed.

Despite a policy context similar to Chicago, the New York situation was more reminiscent of the level of disengagement and community organization witnessed in Texas. The Mexican community’s relatively short history in the region, the competitive non-profit environment, and the community’s continued struggle to integrate and organize challenge the *plazas*’ ability to grow and thrive. Chicago *plazas*, on the other hand, were housed in larger and more robust organizations capable of targeting a more organized and engaged community of immigrants.

Aware of these challenges, IME representatives have sought ways of adapting New York *plazas* to the reality of their particular communities. “The *plazas* program was tailor-made to meet educational needs in Mexico. We must adapt it to the needs of our migrants in each community. We can’t allow reality to overcome us,” explained one consular representative.¹⁶⁰ One of the strategies suggested to accomplish this goal was to replicate the funding innovations observed in Chicago’s *plazas* as a way of ensuring a more

efficient allocation of resources. Program directors now recognize the range of program benefits across different contexts, from the ability to help children with their homework to greater opportunities for workplace advancement. As a result, IME has recently incorporated “integration” to its list of primary objectives of the *Plazas Comunitarias* program.¹⁶¹ The openness to adapt the program in response to contextual realities, reveals the flexibility of its design, a feature that is absent in certification programs with fixed designs and outcomes.

Conclusion

The *Plazas Comunitarias* program illustrates that open design, strategic partnerships, and responsiveness to varied contexts help maximize the effectiveness of a transnational skill development program targeting vulnerable—and varied—populations living and working in environments that may be politically and socially hostile to immigrants. The program’s flexibility encourages the development of a variety of skills, such as the ability to argue for adequate wages, understand deportation and legal threats, and read Spanish-language signs and directions.¹⁶² Though made visible through the *plazas* certificate, these skills are not valuable on the labor market. Despite their lack of economic value, however, these skills fundamentally enable migrants’ pursuit of economically valuable skills. Mexican officials added “integration” to its *plazas* program goals because these intrinsic skills facilitate the integration necessary for mid-level skill development. This case demonstrates that the

158 Interview. *Mexican Consular Representative*. New York. February 13, 2013.

159 Meeting with Consular Representatives and coordinators of “Plazas Comunitarias”. New York, March 1, 2013.

160 Interview with Mexican Consular Representative. New York. February 13, 2013.

161 Alexandra Délano. “A diez años del Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior.” *Letras Libres*. (January 9, 2013). <http://www.letraslibres.com/blogs/frontera-adentro/diez-anos-del-instituto-de-los-mexicanos-en-el-exterior>.

162 Interviews. *Adelante Alliance*. New York City, United States. January 13, 2013.

Interview. *Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation*. New York City, United States. January 16, 2013.

definition of skill value is not as tightly delineated as many policymakers believe and that skill visibility does not imply skill value. Despite skill value's susceptibility to the local political environment, an adaptable program can benefit migrants across a range of settings. Perhaps most importantly, the skills that migrants develop, while not always economically valuable, can facilitate economic skill value development. Accordingly, despite the challenges posed by the enforcement of anti-immigrant laws in Texas, *plazas* provided benefits to program partici-

pants; *matrículas* provided legal identification; and participants developed self-efficacy in the program and improved their literacy. Similarly, the established Mexican communities in Chicago facilitated *plaza* participant access to local labor markets. In New York, consular responses to adopt some of Chicago's creative mechanisms of accessing economic skill value may allow for the evolution of program goals to meet the needs of the city's growing Mexican immigrant community.

La Fuente plaza closed due to funding in Austin, Texas, US





Sydney Harbour Bridge in Sydney, Australia

Part III: Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

Regardless of the three studied programs' level of "success" or "failure," they shared same traits. These traits—or themes—formed the analytic frame for this section. Our analysis of the three cases reveals five key lessons that provide a basis for designing programs related to the transfer of skill across international borders:

1. Skill visibility is a necessary goal of functional skill certification programs but insufficient to guarantee that migrants access jobs matching their skills. A focus on building skill value by pairing certification programs and bilateral agreements is therefore necessary.
2. Functional partnerships in which both partners have an incentive to participate actively are critical to the success of a program.
3. A merging of the institutions governing skill development and recognition assists in the transfer of skill value be-

tween migrant sending and receiving labor markets.

4. Programs are more responsive to emergent challenges when the policymakers who design them collect information from multiple actors and use it to modify program activities and outcomes. We define these programs as having "Open Design."
5. Although programs are often designed to achieve one specific set of goals, the volatile political environment surrounding migration forces programs to make unanticipated changes in their design.

We consider each of these lessons in the context of the three cases and draw on specific examples from individual programs. While certain lessons are more visible in specific country programs than others, they nevertheless played profound roles in shaping program outcomes in all three cases.

1. Focusing on Skill Value

Skills become “invisible” when an employer is potentially interested in hiring a migrant worker but cannot recognize the worker’s full skill set. “Brain waste” refers to the case of skill invisibility—when employers cannot see skills that might be useful to the labor market, thus wasting them. Policymakers have focused on increasing skill visibility because it addresses the concern of brain waste. Therefore, skill visibility is often considered an important determinant of program outcomes. While skill visibility is a necessary goal of functional skill certification programs, it is insufficient to guarantee that migrants access jobs matching their skills. A focus on creating skill value is therefore necessary. Skill value goes beyond visibility because it is the value of a particular set of abilities in the labor market. It is not enough for employers to see that a worker has a specific skill; they must also be willing to employ that worker for this skill.

In examining the cases, we identified two main types of regulatory mechanisms that facilitate skill visibility across borders: certification programs and bilateral agreements. Certification programs refer to both domestic and transnational programs that recognize and standardize skills needed to perform a specific task or job. Bilateral agreements, on the other hand, are contracts or understandings between the governments of migrant-sending and receiving countries that provide formal standardization and recognition of certification programs. Each of these mechanisms can make skills visible but cannot make skills valuable on their own. Skill visibility, while requisite to skills having any value in the labor market, does not guarantee that an employer will be interested in hiring a worker with such skills. Therefore, building skill value is

critical to assisting migrants secure jobs that demand their skills. In the cases we analyzed, this goal was accomplished by pairing certification programs and bilateral agreements.

TESDA: Visible Skills and Transferable Labor Market Value

TESDA, the Filipino certification program, successfully makes skills both visible and valuable in the different labor market context. Labor market value can be transferable across borders or it can be nontransferable, meaning that it is only valued in a worker’s home country. Many Filipinos informed us that they planned to go abroad with a TESDA certificate because industries in receiving countries value TESDA certification. As evidence of this value, some employers actually send their employees back to the Philippines to update their TESDA certifications.¹⁶³ Furthermore, international recruitment agencies in the Philippines also seek candidates with TESDA certification on employers’ request.

A key factor enabling TESDA’s success has been the numerous bilateral agreements between the Philippines and migrant-receiving countries. The Filipino government has successfully negotiated several Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) with other countries, allowing Filipinos to successfully migrate and make their skills visible and valuable. For example, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) negotiated MOAs with the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia. These MOAs serve as a basis for mutual skill recognition, meaning that Filipino job training is not only visible but also recognized and valued in Canada. The MOAs also help fill labor shortages in the Canadian provinc-

¹⁶³ Interview. *TESDA*. Manila, Philippines. January 11, 2013.

es and ease the migration of Filipinos to those provinces.¹⁶⁴ Beyond this direct impact, the MOAs reinforce the reputation that individual Filipinos have earned abroad, which creates a path for even more Filipinos to find work abroad. By combining bilateral agreements with certification programs, the Filipino government has made it easier for potential migrants to find overseas employment in their fields of choice.

APTC: Visible Skills, but Non-transferable Labor Market Value

The APTC, which uses Australian standards as a means to achieve technical skills visibility, has failed to meet the expectations of both policymakers and participants. According to one Fijian bureaucrat, those who hold certificates with Australian standards have better chances of finding jobs anywhere in the Pacific region.¹⁶⁵ Many APTC graduates themselves also believe that because they possess Australian certificates, they will be more attractive to employers.¹⁶⁶ However, in practice, this purported visibility has not helped graduates secure employment in Australia. Therefore, since very few APTC graduates work in Australia, an APTC certificate is almost “invisible” to Australian employers, many of who are wary of certifications earned abroad. One reason for this suspicion is that Australian employers are generally not familiar with the quality of the APTC skills training programs.

Another reason for this failure to translate skills earned in the Pacific Islands to the Australian labor market has been the APTC’s inability to negotiate bilateral agreements. Despite being managed by the Australian

government, the APTC has not been recognized by regulatory bodies¹⁶⁷ in Australia due to a lack of official agreement. We spoke with a government employee responsible for assessing migrants’ skills for immigration purposes, who indicated that APTC does not have the authority to issue Australian certification because it “is only a training institution.”¹⁶⁸ Both the APTC and the regulatory bodies are components of the same government shows a lack of communication, which has prevented APTC graduates from finding employment in Australia and thus diminished the value of their skills.

Plazas Comunitarias: Visible Skills, but Non-economic Value

Skill value does not refer solely to labor market value; as seen with *Plazas Comunitarias*, it can also be non-economic. This non-economic value is not represented by employment or increased income but rather takes the form of increased self-sufficiency, self-esteem, community involvement, and social integration into a new community. These traits may not directly lead to employment, but they are crucial to migrants’ productivity and success in their new country.

In this example, skill visibility and value are facilitated again by the pairing of a certification program with a bilateral agreement. *Plazas Comunitarias* provide a certificate to individuals enrolled in the program who complete any grade level of their primary or secondary education. These certificates serve a dual purpose, acting both as evidence of skills training and as a legal document that can be used to obtain a *matrícula consular*, an identification card issued by the Government of Mexico to its nationals who reside

164 Interview. *POEA*. Manila, Philippines. January 15, 2013.

165 Interview. *Fiji High Education Commission*. Suva, Fiji. January 18, 2013

166 Interview. *Ministry of Education*. Suva, Fiji. January 21, 2013

167 Such as the Australian Department of Industry, Innovation, Science Research, and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE).

168 Interview. *Trades Recognition Australia, DIISRTE*. Canberra, Australia. January 17, 2013.

outside of Mexico. Some states, municipalities and businesses accept the *matrícula* as an official form of identification, which gives migrants access to bank accounts, library memberships, driver's licenses, and other benefits. These benefits, while only indirectly contributing to a migrant's ability to find employment, provide noneconomic value by helping a migrant adjust to life in a new country.

Lesson Summary

The three cases demonstrate that while skill visibility is a necessary prerequisite for a functioning migration skill development program, it is not sufficient to best assist migrants in obtaining overseas employment. For migrants to find jobs, visibility must be expanded into recognized skill value through the pairing of certification and bilateral agreements. The Philippines has been successful at making skills both visible and valued, as evidenced in the TESDA example, while the APTC has succeeded in making skills visible and valuable only within the Pacific Islands and not in Australia. Finally, *Plazas Comunitarias* has made skills visible, but the value provided has been largely non-economic.

2. Forming Functional Partnerships

As discussed above, transferable skill value, rather than skill visibility alone, increases migrants' labor market value. While governments can develop certification programs and form agreements with other countries or among agencies, creating transferable skill value also requires established partnerships with employers, migrant advocacy organizations, and industry representatives. To encourage the creation of transferable skill value, the government programs studied in this report cultivated enduring, and

symbiotic relationships—or partnerships—with organizations active in the labor market, such as industry associations, social service organizations, and recruiters. These organizations can be classified as either industry partners responsible for identifying skill demand in specific markets or as migrant-focused organizations that help advocate for migrants and connect workers and employers.

Lessons from our research illustrate that a government's engagement in both of these types of partnerships—with industry and with migrant-focused support organizations—enables the transnational transfer of skill value. First, government programs need to develop partnerships with industry representatives during program design. Prior to program implementation, collaborations with industry partners permit program architects to identify valued skill and give industry representatives the opportunity to show training agencies the skills they need the workforce to have. Second, program administrators must partner with recruiters and social service organizations that facilitate migrant employment during program implementation. These migrant-focused partnerships assist in the transfer of employer-valued skills to the host-country context. Programs that failed to effectively develop and maintain both of types of partnerships did not generate transferable skill value for migrants.

Industry Partnerships

When designing programs, governments can collaborate with industry partners to identify skills valued in the labor market. The Filipino migration system has been particularly adept at this process due to its intentional integration of industry partners into all of its migration related programs. TESDA, in

particular, has excelled in the cultivation of mutually beneficial relationships with industry leaders by actively seeking their input in the identification of relevant skill competencies. The dialogue TESDA fosters with industry increases the comparative economic value of TESDA certifications as, for example, job-seeking Filipinos decide to pursue TESDA certifications even after obtaining university-level training. By engaging industry leaders in annual conversations to update course curricula, TESDA encourages employers to design trainings and certifications that meet their skill needs. This incorporation of industry feedback allows TESDA participants to gain skills that employers value.

In contrast to TESDA, APTC's designers and administrators failed to cultivate productive partnerships with industry, decreasing the transferable skill value for program beneficiaries. Rather than actively engaging industry, the APTC instead chose to passively and independently research Australian skill standards. The APTC consulted, for example, the Skilled Occupations List (SOL), produced by the Australian government, to decide what types of skills to offer instead of relying on industry leaders for iterative feedback. This process created a time lag between APTC curriculum and shifting industry needs, and failed to address the employers' "mindset in Australia that offshore registered training organizations are not credible and their compliance with Australian standards is suspicious."¹⁶⁹

Plazas Comunitarias administrators also failed to engage in industry partnerships during initial program design. Institute of Mexicans in the Exterior (IME) merely formalized and expanded an existing program pioneered by Mexican migrants to improve Spanish literacy, a skill with minimal value in

¹⁶⁹ Interview. *DIISRTE*. Canberra, Australia. January 17, 2013.

the U.S. labor market. Despite this stark mismatch with employer needs, even muted efforts to improve migrants' skill value faced opposition. For example in Texas, state legislation does not support the financing of Spanish-language education. Consular officials lamented the "infeasibility" of the *Plazas* program in Arizona, as their enforcement of immigration policies discouraged organizations from providing services to migrants.¹⁷⁰ The political barriers that stymied IME's skill development efforts in these contexts, also precluded the cultivation of industry partnerships. IME relied instead on partnerships with migrant-focused support organizations.

Migrant-focused Partnerships

While partnerships with industry serve to equip potential migrants with valuable skills, successful migration also requires partnerships that help potential migrants secure overseas employment and relocate to a new country. Migrant-focused support organizations and recruiters can help advocate for and connect migrant skills to the labor market context of a receiving country.

Filipino programs relied on both migrant support organizations and recruiters. While TESDA, for example, engaged international employers and industry leaders in program design to ensure skill recognition and value, to operationalize these valuable skills, the Filipino government also created a variety of partnerships with migrant-focused support organization and recruiters. These partnerships were formed after reports of recruiters exploiting Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) prompted migrant advocacy organizations to lobby the Filipino government to regulate recruiters. By subsequently creating

¹⁷⁰ Interview. *Mexican Consulate*. Chicago, United States. January 13, 2013.

a series of laws aimed at holding recruiters accountable, the Filipino government successfully engaged both recruiters and migrant-advocacy organizations to facilitate the transfer of skills across borders.

In contrast to TESDA, the APTC failed to partner with migrant-advocacy organizations or recruiters to support the transfer of skill value. Without recruiters to translate the value of migrants' skills into jobs and funnel migrants overseas, and without migrant advocacy organizations to facilitate the migration process, the value of APTC-acquired skills was not transferable to the Australian labor market.

While the APTC excluded migrant advocacy organizations, *Plazas Comunitarias* partnered almost exclusively with these kinds of organizations. As community-based nonprofits, the organizations that house individual *Plazas* benefit from their relationships with local migrant populations and their knowledge of local labor market standards. With these assets, the organizations help transfer the education migrants receive in the *Plazas* to local contexts. Most *Plazas* accomplished this task by developing literacy skills, a sense of self-esteem, or self-efficacy, all of which are critically important to the well being of migrants in more hostile environments, such as Texas.

The most effective *Plazas* partners, including Poder and Instituto del Progreso Latino in Chicago, were able to expand beyond migrant social services to promote direct industry employment. These individual organizations formed partnerships with industry representatives that encouraged the design of programs to focus on functional skills. For instance, Poder developed partnerships with a major telecommunications company to define skill competencies for customer service representatives, and the local *Plazas* pro-

gram incorporated these competencies into its training curriculum. Not all *Plazas* have the resources to partner with organizations capable of accomplishing these workforce-oriented goals, yet, New York- and Chicago-based consular officials have made efforts to identify these types of *Plazas* host organizations.

Lesson Summary

Programs that succeed in developing and utilizing skills valued by employers in migrant-receiving countries do so through partnerships with industry and migrant-focused support organizations. Industry partnerships permit the identification and development of skills valued by employers, and migrant-focused partnerships allow for the transfer of skill value into the receiving country context. Enduring partnerships occur when employers and migrant workers mutually benefit from collaboration and can also help bridge the gap between institutional contexts, which we explore further in the following lesson.

3. Merging Institutional Contexts

As stated in our first lesson, programs can highlight skill value by combining certification programs with bilateral agreements. To build an effective bilateral agreement, both the sending and receiving countries must devise a new set of rules that formalize the mutual recognition of skills and reconcile migration policies to ease barriers to movement.

During our research, we observed that the prevailing approach to transferring labor market value focuses on programs and policies that facilitate the movement of people. This is an incomplete way of developing crucial bilateral agreements because it focuses solely on moving a person and not on cre-

ation of an environment that will support migrants as they move. Instead of focusing on the movement of people, a successful migration system should focus on the movement—or merging—of institutions. This occurs when institutions in the sending and receiving countries combine their norms and procedures to create a new type of institution. We argue that programs and policies that facilitate the movement and harmonization of institutions—rather than people—are stronger because they recognize that migration, skills, and employment are inter-connected.

The process of harmonizing skill certification, migration and employment across contexts reflects a merging of institutional contexts. As a result of merging institutions, the usefulness of skills-based programs is not only evident on their application to migrants but on the new institutions created to support skill development and employment. The merging of institution structures allows skills to be useful to program participants even if they do not migrate. In the Philippines, for example, the skills and certification TESDA provided were relevant not only for workers preparing to move overseas but also for them to find domestic employment. In Australia, even if the APTC did not achieve labor mobility, it nevertheless assisted in upgrading training and skill standards in the Pacific Islands. In Mexico, the *Plaza Comunitarias* allowed migrants to access a path to additional skill training and eventual employment.

Bilateral Agreements as Mechanisms to Formalize the Merging of Institutional Contexts

One aspect of merging institutional contexts is the syncing of skill standards. The Filipino government, for example, identifies and col-

laborates with multiple actors to merge its skill-building standards with those of different migrant-receiving countries. As part of its “stakeholder analysis,” TESDA compares the Philippine Qualifications Framework—a national policy that defines training and certification standards—with National Qualifications Frameworks in countries like Australia and Canada to ensure “international alignment.” One result of this process is the alignment of the Philippine Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system with the Australian system.¹⁷¹ The merging of training norms and procedures across contexts strengthens TESDA’s mandates to develop a “globally competitive and flexible” national workforce and “facilitate greater mobility across occupations and locations.”¹⁷²

The merging of skill-building institutions alone, however, is insufficient to facilitate the movement of skill. Bilateral agreements illustrate how foreign policy institutions like the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in the Philippines reconcile both skill-building standards and migration policies with those of other countries. In discussing the role TESDA plays in bilateral agreements such as the Canadian Live-In Caregiver Program for private-home childcare, a senior Filipino government official reported that while TESDA provides technical specifications, the main responsibility of negotiating falls under DFA. In addition, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) plays a role negotiating employment contracts and recruitment efforts, including a job fair for the caregiver program that DOLE arranged in British Columbia. Thus, bilateral agreements are successfully created, manifesting the value of these skills in different context and fa-

¹⁷¹ Interview. TESDA. Manila, Philippines. January 14, 2013.

¹⁷² Ibid.

ilitating the movement of skill from the Philippines to other countries.

Institutional Transfer does not Result in Merging of Institutional Contexts

In stark contrast to the Philippines, the APTC model was imported to the Pacific Islands without input from or collaboration with local training and assessment institutions. Furthermore, the APTC failed to update its curriculum to reflect a new version of Australia's Skilled Occupation List (SOL) and was unable to reconcile its training curriculum with the Australian government skill-assessment authority, Trades Recognition Australia, which does not formally recognize APTC certification.¹⁷³

Also damaging to APTC's goals was the lack of coordination between the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in Australia. This was evident in the lack of information we received from AusAID representatives regarding the migration policies that affect APTC graduates. Lack of coordination between these two institutions prevented the APTC from keeping up with migration policy changes in Australia, such as new visa requirements and tightening of the country's migration point system. These visa requirements impose on APTC graduates a difficult—if not insurmountable—set of hurdles. In order to successfully migrate to Australia, APTC graduates must pass both a skill assessment and English test, find an employer, and prove they possess three or more years of directly relevant working experience.¹⁷⁴ The above examples illustrate the failure of the APTC

model to merge skill-building institutions and migration rules across Australian and Pacific Island contexts.

Merging Institutional Contexts in the Case of an Ex-Post Training Program

Like the Australian government, the Mexican government brought the *Plazas Comunitarias* model to the U.S. in an effort to facilitate the movement of migrant skill across different contexts—in particular from basic educational achievement in Mexico to acquiring vocation skills and employment opportunities in the U.S.

Unlike Australia, however, the coordination between the Mexican government agencies involved in the *Plazas Comunitarias* and the non-profit organizations housing them in the U.S., facilitated the process of merging institutional norms. The Institute of Mexicans in the Exterior (IME), through Mexican consulates in the U.S., has partnered with local non-profit organizations to deliver Mexico's *Plazas Comunitarias* program created by the National Institute for the Education of Adults (INEA). The program was open and welcoming to Spanish-speaking migrants regardless of their documentation status in the U.S. As reported by an IME consular official, "Institutional relations are what make the *Plazas*. The consulate's role is to be a part of reporting and facilitating ... the *Plazas* must be transferred to third party entities to create spaces [that extend] beyond education [and] promote social integration of the community."¹⁷⁵ For example, Instituto del Progreso Latino, a workforce development non-profit in Chicago uses *Plazas Comunitarias* as an entry point for migrants to learn English, obtain a high school equivalency

173 Interview. *DIISRTE*. Canberra, Australia. January 17, 2013.

174 *Ibid*.

175 Interview. *Mexican Consulate*. New York City, United States. December 6, 2012.

certification, increase job skills, and obtain employment.¹⁷⁶

That both legal and undocumented migrants participate in the program after they arrive in the U.S. circumvents the need to merge migration institutions across Mexico and the U.S. Consequently, the program operates in the absence of a bilateral agreement between the countries and within a political environment marked by heated debate on the future of U.S. immigration policy. Nevertheless, the merging of skill-building institutions in Mexico and ancillary institutions in the U.S. facilitated the movement of skills relevant to the needs of migrants in the particular economic and political contexts.

Lesson Summary

These cases illustrate how merging institutional contexts is critical to facilitating the movement and harmonization of institutions that support skill building across sending and receiving countries. In order to create functional transnational skill building certification programs, administrators must reconcile norms and rules across three main institutions: skill building and certification, migration, and industry institutions. Bilateral agreements represent one mechanism of formalizing the process of merging these institutional contexts.

4. Utilizing an Open Design

In the case studies, we described the varying degrees to which programs respond to the changing needs and demands of a diverse set of actors. These actors include program beneficiaries, regulatory agency policymakers, and industry representatives and employers. Through our research, we learned that when program architects, such as government of-

¹⁷⁶ Interview. *Instituto del Progreso Latino*. Chicago, United States. January 12, 2013.

ficials and program directors, gathered information from industries, migrants, governments and advocacy groups and then used this information to improve program activities and outcomes, programs were more effective in making skills visible and facilitating the movement of skill from one context to another. Even with motivation and incentives to adapt, transnational skill visibility programs need the capacity to adapt. In this section we will discuss how program design affects the ability of a program to respond to various challenges and changes.

In management theory, program design is the set of activities an organization creates in order to achieve desired outcomes.¹⁷⁷ In transnational skill training programs, desired outcomes include increased skill visibility for migrants seeking employment abroad. A design is considered to be “open” when feedback is used to modify program activities or outcomes, unlike in a “closed” design, in which feedback is not used to modify or amend programs. Program architects in the Philippines, Mexico and the U.S., and Australia and the Pacific Islands used different methods of open design to collect information from different actors, including government agencies, immigration offices, industries, and migrants.

Philippines: An Intentional Open Design

The Philippines provides examples of programs designed to gather and incorporate feedback from multiple actors on a recurring basis. As described in previous sections, TESDA consults with domestic private sector actors, specialized consultants, international government actors, and industry associations through their “stakeholder

¹⁷⁷ World Bank. “Project Design and Formulation.” Accessed April 10, 2013. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/ag249e/AG249E03.htm>

analysis” to identify skills lacking in the workforce and update training curriculum and certification competency levels for priority industries. TESDA intentionally seeks input from multiple actors and uses the information to adjust program activities to increase worker skill visibility through training and certification. Through this iterative stakeholder analysis process, TESDA certified Filipino workers meet local and international skill demands and are able to gain employment in both contexts.

In addition to this formal feedback, TESDA also receives informal feedback from international employers who demonstrate their preferences by hiring certified workers in some skill areas more than others. This feedback helps TESDA identify which training components need further development. In order to help develop competencies even further, TESDA aligns its curriculum with international labor standards, reinforcing and increasing the value of Filipino labor and prestige of Filipino migration programs.

Mexico and the US: An Accidental Open Design

Unlike in the Philippines, Mexico’s *Plazas Comunitarias* program did not intentionally capture feedback from different actors. Instead, IME modified the *Plazas* program’s objectives over time using information about immigrant needs gained incidentally from host organizations. In Chicago, one of these host organizations, the Instituto del Progreso Latino, uses feedback from program beneficiaries and industry associations to situate the *Plazas* program as an education module that is an initial step in its workforce development programs.

In Austin, Manos de Cristo situates its *Plaza* as a prerequisite for illiterate migrants inter-

ested in ESL coursework. A staff member of Manos de Cristo explained how this partnership with *Plazas* came to fruition. She explained that students in her ESL programs were failing out because of low literacy. “I knew we needed Spanish literacy and I heard about the *Plazas* at a literacy conference... where someone was talking about *Plazas* in the Bastrop prison facility. And I said ‘that’s it!’”¹⁷⁸ As this example illustrates, it was not the IME, but rather informal dialogs with other community service organizations, that informed the organization of the availability of the *Plazas* program.

Unlike TESDA, IME has not significantly altered the *Plazas* curriculum based on feedback from multiple actors. Rather, NGOs are the true architects of the programs adaptations. Nevertheless, IME observed the innovative ways by which partner organizations applied the *Plazas* program and used this information to reframe program objectives from “literacy” to “improving quality of life” to “integration.” A consular representative from the Mexican consulate summarized this process: “Beyond providing a certificate, we need to connect with the realities on the ground. Community organizations should be the consulate’s main resource to understand the needs of Mexican immigrants.”¹⁷⁹

Australia and the Pacific Islands: A Reluctant Open Design

The APTC provides an example of a program that has reluctantly captured information from actors to modify program objectives on an as needed basis. This reluctant open design is illustrated in the ways the APTC did not fully incorporate information from Australian industry into the design of its train-

178 Interview. *Manos de Cristo. Plaza Comunitaria*. Austin, United States. January 3, 2013.

179 Interview. *Mexican Consulate*. New York, United States. February 13, 2013.

ing courses. For example, while the APTC established its training curriculum based on the Australian Skills Occupation List (SOL), it has not updated its certifications to match the occupations listed in newer versions of the SOL. Furthermore, the APTC's original advisory board had strong ties with Australian industry and provided industry insights to help design curriculum. However, in 2009, this advisory board was replaced with a new one, breaking ties with Australian industry. While the new advisory board did represent Pacific Island industry, feedback from industry members was not reflected in APTC curriculum.

The APTC also failed to incorporate immigration policy changes. Despite Australia's Department of Immigration and Citizenship raising its visa point system's threshold, AusAID representatives who work with the APTC were unaware of the immigration policy change and its implications for APTC graduates. Furthermore, given the APTC's accountability to the Australian government, any updates to the program were made according to the Australian government's objectives rather than the feedback of Pacific Islanders and other related parties. As one of the APTC trainers explained, "At the end of the day, the program is paid by the Australian taxpayers and we have to keep that in mind."¹⁸⁰

Lesson Summary

A transnational skills development program must consider elements of an open design that solicits information about changes in policy, industry demands, and migrant needs, and adapts to these changing demands. In the Philippines, TESDA built a system that gathered feedback and enabled administrators to translate these insights

into programmatic changes. Mexico's *Plazas Comunitarias* demonstrated an unintentional process that took into account student feedback and information from other community service organizations to update its curriculum and objectives. The APTC program, while strategically designed to obtain feedback from specific sources, did not actionably incorporate this feedback into program design.

5. Effects of Political Pressure

Open design elements are necessary for programs to adapt to changing needs. In our research, we found that one of the most common reasons for adaptation was political pressure. While each of the programs was created to meet the needs of one specific group or organization, such as the domestic government, foreign governments, industries, the general population, or advocacy networks (primarily comprised of NGOs), once programs were created, other actors realized that these programs either benefitted or stood in opposition to their interests.

In each case, the program's creators intended their program to achieve one specific set of goals. However, these programs all existed in the highly politicized world of immigration, and were therefore all subject to political pressures that affected their goals. Agencies that originally created programs to achieve certain goals had to adapt to these pressures. Goals changed in all three cases: for the APTC, facilitating migration became "upskilling;" in the Philippines, the goal of solving domestic unemployment led to the goal of developing a certificate that allowed workers to emigrate; and for *Plazas Comunitarias*, Spanish literacy became a path to legal status for Latin Americans in the U.S. Whether or not it was specifically intended to be migration-related, each program found

¹⁸⁰ Interview. APTC. Suva, Fiji. January 23, 2013.

itself operating in the highly charged political climate surrounding immigration.

The APTC: From Migration to Upskilling

The APTC was initially designed as the Australian government's response to political pressure from the Pacific Islands to create a program to facilitate migration to Australia. Administered by AusAID, the APTC soon attracted attention from other actors. As such, it was quickly affected by political tensions within both Australia and the Pacific Island Countries. In Australia, industrial unions opposed the APTC because they saw it as a source of competition for jobs. These unions pressured the Australian government to prevent the APTC from offering certain courses in order to prevent APTC graduates from obtaining skills that were in demand in Australia. In addition, government agencies in the Pacific Island Countries did not want to lose their trained workforce and opposed APTC. Existing Pacific Island job training programs, which charged for their services, also opposed the APTC because it was free or paid stipends. These training programs lobbied their government to oppose the APTC as well. In response to these pressures, the APTC began focusing on workers who were unlikely to migrate, such as those who already had jobs and money. The APTC shifted its focus away from migration, and therefore switched its focus to "upskilling" the Pacific Island population by providing further skill development with no accompanying path to migration.

TESDA: From Domestic Employment to a Tool for Migrants

In the opposite trajectory, some Filipino programs that today enable migrants to make their skill visible and valuable across labor markets were not originally created to sup-

port transnational skill recognition. As noted earlier, TESDA was created to train the Filipino workforce in occupations with domestic shortages. The government noticed that Filipino college graduates held degrees in subjects with no available jobs. Further, Filipinos with degrees in occupations with shortages did not have the required skills.

These domestic-focused programs were quickly affected by migration politics when TESDA began interacting with members of the Filipino workforce. These workers had been living in a country focused heavily on exporting labor for almost 20 years. When TESDA started training workers, they saw it as a chance to build skills that international employers were looking for. In addition, those international employers saw TESDA's potential as a cheap way to identify and train skilled workers. Each TESDA program has a nominal fee (which varies depending on the materials needed to conduct classes). For example, a two month-long course on electrical installation costs approximately US \$40.¹⁸¹ This is not a prohibitive investment for an employer looking for skilled labor; therefore, foreign employers saw TESDA as an affordable and fertile recruiting and training ground for their workforce, and TESDA's focus shifted from primarily domestic employment to domestic and foreign employment.

Plazas Comunitarias: From Spanish Literacy to a Path to Legal Status

In the case of *Plazas Comunitarias*, while the Mexican government moved an existing adult education program into the U.S. in response to complaints from migrant advocates that Mexican immigrants to the U.S. were having trouble integrating into their new country. The Mexican government intended to provide adult basic education—

¹⁸¹ Interview. *TESDA*. Manila, Philippines. January 11, 2013

explaining that migrants need to learn English in order to integrate into U.S. society. However, it is impossible to learn English without being able to read and write in Spanish.¹⁸² The government's motivations were also based on the fact that Mexican migrants had a major economic impact in Mexico from their remittances back home. The Mexican government considered the education program as a way to reaffirm migrants' national identity and thus ensure that migrants will keep the tie with their home country. After its creation, *Plazas* also began to feel pressure from other sources. While the *Plazas* program was intended to educate Mexican immigrants, because of its accessibility to undocumented migrants, immigrants from other Latin American countries began to use the program to achieve their own goals of literacy and community.

In addition to these pressures, changes in U.S. immigration policy have also affected program objectives. As the details of immigration reform become apparent, undocumented Mexican and other Latin American immigrants have been looking to obtain the documentation necessary to achieve legal residency status. Many of these immigrants began to view the *Plazas* program—and its accompanying certificates—as a way to become more visible.

Lesson Summary

Each of the programs studied was created to fulfill a specific goal. Intentional or not, each has been connected to and affected by immigration politics, which are highly charged and volatile. In some cases, such as TESDA, political pressure altered slightly the program's original intent. In others, however, political pressure caused a complete shift in program goals, such as in the case of the

APTC. The nature of this pressure, as well as each program's ability to adapt through open design, affected the program's success at maintaining its original mission and credibility.

Conclusion

In order to facilitate the development and transfer of labor skills across international borders, a migration system needs to attach recognized value to skill. One way that program administrators can accomplish this goal is by creating partnerships in which all parties involved receive a concrete benefit, and these partnerships facilitate the merging of the various institutions involved in labor migration. The ability to adapt is a crucial characteristic of successful programs and is the direct result of deliberately open program design. Finally, each program—whether it intended to or not—operates in the politicized environment of immigration policy and is affected by the pressure that accompanies this controversial issue. Drawing on these five lessons, in the following section we specify five recommendations to assist policymakers in crafting programs that allow migrants to successfully transition to new labor markets.

¹⁸² Interview. *IME*. Mexico City, Mexico. January 23, 2013.



APTC Training Center for Carpentry in Suva, Fiji

Part IV: Recommendations

Recommendations

Drawing on the lessons gained in our assessment of the three cases, we have crafted a set of recommendations in order to guide policymakers as they design new transnational skill development programs. These recommendations are not to be considered independent of one another. Instead, they form a comprehensive set of best practices. Taken together, these recommendations can guide policymakers to design a functional migration skill development program that will ensure migrants' skills are visible and valued over the long run.

1. Design Training Programs to be Guided by the Principle of Creating Skill Value

New programs must be guided by the principle of creating skills that are valued by both migrants and employers, in order for migrants to access employment. Policymakers and program architects have previously focused on enhancing skill visibility across borders. While we agree with the prevailing

view that skill visibility is a crucial component of successful transnational skill development programs, achieving skill visibility is merely a requisite step towards creating skill value. To create skill value, programs must understand the needs of labor markets and gather and incorporate information from industry actors. Our cases demonstrate that focusing on industry needs, in addition to bilateral government cooperation, ensures that a certification program allows skilled workers both to migrate, as well as obtain employment in receiving countries.

2. Form Partnerships with Industry Representatives, Employers, and Migrant Support Organizations

Partnering with actors that already serve to connect migrants to employers is critical to a program's success. To maintain skill value throughout the life cycle of a program, program architects must identify and form relationships with industry actors—who can contribute information about the skills de-

manded in the labor market—as well as migrant support networks, that function on the supply side of the labor market. These two groups of actors comprise a symbiotic process of defining localized skill value.

Industry representatives that program architects could consult include chambers of commerce and industry associations. These groups provide timely information on valued skill competencies, changes in industry technology, and safety regulations. In partnering with employers and industry representatives, policymakers can gather information on the skills demanded by industry and directly incorporate these skills into the program curriculum.

Program architects can also form partnerships with recruitment agencies. While recruiters have access to information about industry demand, they still work on the supply side of the labor market by funneling skilled workers directly into employment. Recruiters understand and interact with the wider set of skills available in a local labor market and therefore can offer clear recommendations for how to better meet industry needs.

Partnerships must also be formed with migrant support organizations, which are often NGOs that provide migrants with both economic and non-economic skills useful to access employment and settle into a receiving country. We observed NGOs that directly train migrants in contextually relevant job-related skills. But these organizations also offer welfare services, such as legal advocacy, health, and education services. The security gained from these services is necessary for migrants' eventual entry into the labor market.

3. Identify and Merge Institutions, in both Sending and Receiving Contexts, that Reconcile Skill, Migration, and Employment

Although local labor market actors are crucial to a program's success, a program must also engage government and regulatory institutions in three specific areas: skill building and certification, migration, and industry. For a program to be successful, these institutions must be merged. Merging occurs when existing institutions in sending and receiving contexts reconcile and combine their norms, procedures, and rules to create new institutions that are relevant for both contexts.

Program architects must understand the structures that support interactions between national governments, as well as among the agencies within a particular government. If agencies regulating labor force qualifications shift policies or convert to a new safety standard without reporting it to migration officials, whole groups of incoming migrants may enter the labor market only to find their current skills obsolete or uncompetitive. This leads migrants to take jobs below their capabilities, contributing to the “brain waste” phenomenon.

Agencies within national government also must be aware of their roles and accountability within a country's labor migration system. Shifting labor qualifications in the receiving country must be communicated to labor officials in the sending country to prevent potential skill mismatch and ease skill transfer across borders. Program architects must also ensure that all stakeholders are present to collaborate and agree on the design of the system and possible new mutual-accountability systems. To functionally merge institutions, program architects must

also facilitate a frequently scheduled forum for open dialogue on terms of alignment.

4. Utilize an Open Design and Incorporate Feedback from Relevant Actors.

An open program design is an ideal tool for merging institutions because it provides mechanisms for the regular solicitation of information and an ongoing learning process. An open design ensures that partnerships are sustained and effective over the long run and that merged institutions continue to collaborate. A program design is “open” when program architects collect information from multiple actors and use that information to modify program activities or outcomes. The design is “open” because multiple actors, such as governments, migrants, industry actors, and advocacy groups, provide direct feedback or indirect information to program architects. Beyond simply acquiring this feedback, program architects must use the information to refine their programs in ways that allow them to respond to changing economic and political climates. Policymakers can further emphasize open design by creating rewards and incentives for on-going learning and adaptation.

5. Be Prepared to Accept and Adapt to Unpredictable Changes in Political Environments

An open design can help programs adapt to the unforeseen needs or demands of industry, regulatory bodies, and migrants. However, programs must also be prepared for changing political environments that may be supportive or antagonistic to particular objectives. Program architects should not resist these changes, but instead, be aware that the political environments of both sending and receiving contexts directly effect pro-

gram capabilities. Program architects should be prepared to shift goals, downsize operations, or adapt as needed. An open design provides the capacity to be responsive, but if actors are not aware of the impacts of political changes, this capacity to adapt may be wasted.

Conclusion

These policy recommendations derive from our inductive analysis of three case studies of migrant skill development programs in the Philippines, Australia and the Pacific Islands, and Mexico and the US. Our data show that successful programs go beyond increasing skill visibility to create skill value, the value of a particular set of abilities in the labor market. Skill value creation requires forming partnerships with industry representatives, recruiters, and migrant-advocacy organizations. Because local labor markets make up only a part of a complex transnational labor migration system, government institutions in the sending and receiving context must merge their processes and efforts to facilitate the flow of skilled migrants to and from labor markets. Open program design makes programs more responsive to emergent challenges and builds capacity for interlocutors to prepare for and respond to changes caused by shifting political pressures.

Our recommendations reflect the fundamental requirements of a functional, adaptable migration and skills development system, which is capable of meeting the emergent labor market needs of a rapidly changing global marketplace. We consider each of these recommendations to be necessary, but individually they are insufficient. Rather, they must all be applied together. As the cases illustrate, programs that implement only three or four of the recommenda-

tions are likely to be considered failures. In the postscript to this report, we apply each of these lessons and recommendations to a prospective program that aims to facilitate the migration of North African healthcare workers to the French healthcare industry, and argue that all five recommendations must be applied for the program to succeed.



Hôtel-Dieu Hospital, Assistance Publique Hôpitaux de Paris, France

Part V: Postscript

France

Lessons in Practice: Designing a Transnational Nursing Program between France and French-speaking Countries in North Africa

With its high quality and universal coverage, the French healthcare system is recognized as one of the best in the world. In 2012, France dedicated 11.9% of its GDP to healthcare, funding roughly 80% of all domestic healthcare costs.¹⁸³ In a 2000 assessment, the World Health Organization (WHO) found that France provided “close to [the] best overall healthcare” in the world¹⁸⁴ due to its high service quality and universal coverage. However, the system also presents many shortcomings in terms of efficiency and equitable access. These challenges are largely the result of labor shortages and imbalances in the nursing sector.

183 World Health Organization. “Countries: France.” Accessed May 3, 2013. <http://www.who.int/countries/fra/en/>

184 World Health Organization. “The World Health Report: Health Systems: Improving Performance.” 2000. Accessed May 3, 2013. <http://www.who.int/whr/2000/en/>

France’s 520,000 nurses and 450,000 nursing aides form the largest group of professionals in the health sector, constituting approximately half of the nation’s healthcare workforce in 2005.¹⁸⁵ Institutions employing nurses include public and private hospitals, retirement homes, communities, schools, temporary recruitment agencies, and private firms. Regional Health Agencies (ARS) assume the responsibility of workforce planning and oversight at the regional level.¹⁸⁶

France’s Ministry of Health (Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé), which designs national health policies and regulates healthcare expenditures, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, issues France’s exclusive nursing diploma, the *diplôme d’état*. The Ministry of

185 David Green and Benedict Irvine. “Healthcare Systems: France.” *Civitas* (2013). Accessed May 3, 2013 <http://www.civitas.org.uk/nhs/download/france.pdf>

186 Karine Chevreul, Isabelle Durand-Zaleski, Stéphane Bahrami, Cristina Hernández-Quevedo and Philipa Mladovsky. “France: Health system review.” *Health Systems in Transition* 12. No. 6 (2010): 1–291. Accessed May 3, 2013 http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/135809/E94856.pdf

Health also defines the curriculum utilized by French nurse-training institutions and sets an annual quota—numerous *clausus*—on the number of nurse candidates within a given region. At the end of the 3-year nurse-training program, a commission formed by members of the Ministry of Health, the training institution, and a senior nurse certifies that nursing students have acquired the ten competencies required to work in the profession. After this basic training, nurses can select between three optional specializations that include the operating room, pediatrics, and anesthesia. Once they have completed two years of clinical experience, the nurses qualify for self-employed status and work as private practitioners.

A national register for nurses (*répertoire Adeli*) controls the number of nurses that can work in each region.¹⁸⁷ Nurses must also register in the National Order of Nursing (*Ordre National des Infirmiers—ONI*), which was created in 2006 to regulate and control access to the profession. Nurses and labor unions have largely discredited the organization, and only 76,000 of the roughly 500,000 nurses currently practicing in France are registered with the ONI. Therefore, the Ministry of Health is currently re-evaluating ONI's role and relevance for the sector.¹⁸⁸

Despite a 3.2% growth rate in the number of nurses over the past two decades, nurses remain in high demand. France's 7.1 nurses per 1000 inhabitants (2006) lags behind that of neighboring European countries, and disparities in the geographic distribution of nurses heightens the severity of the shortage. Additionally, France's rapidly aging population has fueled a sharp increase in demand for nursing professionals, while an

187 Interview. Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé. Paris, France. March 21, 2013.

188 Ibid.

increase in the number of nurses retiring has contributed to a decrease in the number of practicing nurses.

These ongoing demographic shifts will exacerbate existing geographic and socioeconomic inequities in healthcare services.¹⁸⁹ Past attempts to address these challenges include the transfer of tasks from medical to other professionals—from nurses to nursing aids, for example—and incentives to attract health professionals to under-served areas. The government also increased the *numerus clausus* from 18,270 in 1999 to 30,000 in 2004 and 2005. These increases have failed to result in increased nurse enrollment due to the profession's low pay, long hours, and unpleasant tasks, which make it unattractive to eligible candidates.¹⁹⁰

Another attempt to address the nurse shortage has been to incorporate foreign nurses into the French labor force. However, foreign nurses who seek to practice in France face many limitations, including differences in nursing competencies, lack of experience, and language barriers.¹⁹¹ Only *diplôme d'état* holders and diploma holders from the EU, Switzerland and Andorra are authorized to practice nursing in France after they register with the ARS. Through a 2008 bilateral agreement between Québec and France on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications (*Arrangement de Reconnaissance Mutuelle—ARM*), holders of a *diplôme d'études collégiales* (DEC) from Québec are also authorized to practice in France. Other foreign nursing diplomas are currently not honored. In the past, the French government signed bilateral agreements with

189 David Green and Benedict Irvine. "Healthcare Systems: France." *Civitas* (2013). Accessed May 3, 2013 <http://www.civitas.org.uk/nhs/download/france.pdf>

190 Ibid.

191 Interview. *Institut de Formation Interhospitalier Théodore Simon*. Paris, France. March 20, 2013.

Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Germany and Belgium to recruit foreign nurses,¹⁹² however the European bilateral agreements were allowed to expire given new European Community efforts to harmonize skills and facilitate mobility within the region.¹⁹³

Foreign Nurses in the European Context

France's access to European nurses will improve with the upcoming standardization of the nursing profession at the European level.¹⁹⁴ In June 2013, EU Directive 36 will begin to facilitate the labor mobility of nurses across the continent.¹⁹⁵ European nurses that enter France prior to the passage of the directive, however, face France's rigorous authorization process, controlled by ARS and ONI. Domestic and international experts advise foreign-educated nurses to re-educate themselves in France rather than attempt to translate their foreign certificates, due to the challenges entailed in certificate authorization.¹⁹⁶ Difficulties in the authorization procedure stem from differences in the length of time required for nursing education among European countries, and the apparent inability of European health ministries to agree upon the requisite competencies for certification.¹⁹⁷ Directive 36 will overcome these obstacles by placing the onus of regula-

tion on the sending rather than the receiving country.¹⁹⁸

Given the imminent mobility of healthcare professionals, European governments have adopted selective policies to attract young, single, and high-skilled immigrants—a population readily found outside of Europe.¹⁹⁹ Despite European Commission projections that the EU will lack nearly 600,000 nurses and nursing aides by 2020,²⁰⁰ national-level policy makers describe the concept of labor importation as “sensitive,” and “politically delicate.”²⁰¹ These characterizations contradict the fact that bilateral agreements in several European countries have facilitated the domestic employment of healthcare workers from overseas.

Transnational nursing certifications that carefully allay political obstacles present one meaningful solution to the projected European nursing shortage. Given the importance of the French language requirement to practice nursing in France, Francophone North African countries are natural candidates for a transnational nursing program partnership to address the shortage of nurses in France. However, bringing nurses from outside the European Union to work in France requires the harmonization of nursing competencies and clinical training, and also, French government decrees that regulate the practice of the profession. In addition, the growing concerns regarding illegal

192 Gwenaëlle Le Breton-Lerouillois and Francis Montané. “Les médecins de nationalité européenne et extraeuropéenne en France.” *Conseil national de l'ordre des médecins* 40, (2007). Accessed May 3, 2013 http://www.conseil-national.medecin.fr/sites/default/files/etude40-1_0.pdf

193 Henri de Lary. “Bilateral Labor Agreements Concluded by France.” *Migration for Employment: Bilateral Agreements at a Crossroads*. OECD Publishing, (2005).

194 Interview. *European Federation of Nurses Associations*. Brussels, Belgium. March 20, 2013.

195 Ibid.

196 Interviews. Health First Europe and Institut de Formation Interhospitalier Théodore Simon. March, 2013.

197 Interviews. Health First Europe. Brussels, Belgium. *Institut de Formation Interhospitalier Théodore Simon*. Paris, France. March 2013.

198 Interview. *European Federation of Nurses Associations*. Brussels, Belgium. March 20, 2013.

199 Elena Jurado, Grete Brochmann and Jon Erik Dolvik. “Immigration, Work and Welfare: Towards an Integrated Approach.” *Europe's Immigration Challenge*. Policy Network, (2013).

200 European Health Forum Gastein. “Possible shortage of up to two million health care workers by 2020 – EU taking action to prevent impending crisis in providing health care.” October 8, 2010. Accessed May 3, 2013. <http://www.ehfg.org/681.html>

201 Interview. *European Federation of Nurses Associations*. Brussels, Belgium. March 20, 2013.

migration to France from North Africa present a challenge to this solution.²⁰²

Considerations for the Design of a French-North African Nurse-Training Program

Based on the recommendations presented in this report and given the nurse shortages France will face in the future, policymakers in France and Europe should focus on the following interrelated components to design a successful transnational skill development program with francophone countries in North Africa.

Focusing on Skill Value

In our research of the Philippines, Australia and the Pacific Islands, and Mexico and the U.S., we learned that functioning migration skill development programs make skills visible and valuable to employers. Our fieldwork suggests that making migrant nurses' skills visible in France will be a challenging process. Nursing skill visibility is only possible if migrants obtain a nursing *diplôme d'état*.²⁰³ Training schools must adhere to a training program defined by the Ministry of Health in order to demonstrate that graduates have the competencies required to work in the profession.

Furthermore, several government and training officials in France affirmed that nursing competencies in North Africa are not comparable with French or European competencies.²⁰⁴ For example, nursing school educa-

tors commented on several competencies that prevent Algerian and Tunisian nurses from acquiring the *diplôme d'état*. Such competencies include maintaining adequate hospital hygiene, controlling for nosocomial (hospital-acquired) infections, and demonstrating adequate writing skills in French.²⁰⁵ To ensure skill visibility, the nursing competencies of a transnational skill program must be identical to the French program.²⁰⁶ Even if a transnational program achieves skill visibility through a bilateral agreement, immigrant healthcare workers still face significant obstacles to making their skills valued in the French labor market. In fact, we found that French employers need an incentive to find migrant skills valuable.

Our fieldwork suggests that bilateral agreements created without input from employers may risk creating rules that do not align with employer incentives for hiring migrant labor. As a result, the new bilateral agreement rules—drafted with the intention to facilitate migrant employment—create obstacles that discourage employers from using migrant labor. For example, the Québec-France agreement on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications (ARM) achieved skill visibility for the nursing profession by ensuring the mutual recognition of the Québécois *diplôme d'études collégiales* (DEC) and the French *diplôme d'état*.²⁰⁷ However, this agreement imposed a cost on employers. In an effort to facilitate the adaptation of a migrant nurse to the French healthcare system, the agreement required an eligible nurse from Québec to complete a 75-day paid internship upon arrival in France.²⁰⁸ This requirement caused confu-

202 Sylvie Corbet. "France: Record Number Of Illegal Immigrants Expelled." *Huffington Post*. January 10, 2012. Accessed May 3, 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/10/france-illegal-immigrants_n_1197101.html

203 Interview. *Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé*. Paris, France. March 21, 2013.

204 Interviews. *Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé, Ordre National des Infirmiers and Institut de Formation Interhospitalier Théodore Simon*. Paris, France. March, 2013.

205 Interview. *Institut de Formation Interhospitalier Théodore Simon*. Paris, France. March 20, 2013.

206 Interview. *Ordre National des Infirmiers*. Paris, France. March 20, 2013.

207 Ibid.

208 Interview. *Conseil d'État*. Paris, France. March 22, 2013.

sion among French employers. A senior official reported that internships in France are often unpaid. The official elaborated, “A hospital director would say, 75 days of paid internship for a Québec nurse? I am not interested, I won’t pay.”²⁰⁹ A transnational program would need to avoid forcing employers to pay a “fee” in order to make visible skills valuable. Skills-based programs avoid this fate when migration rules align with employer incentives.

Forming Functional Partnerships

In our research we found that partnerships with employers and recruiters create transferable skill value. Developing functional partnerships requires mutual interest, constant interaction, and dedication. To ensure skill visibility, a French-North Africa nurse-training program would need to partner with the French Ministry of Health. Ministry officials, however, have expressed no interest in creating a mutual recognition agreement for nurses with other French-speaking countries beside Québec. “We are very open to international collaboration,” the officials explained. “We are not open at the moment because we have the labor we need in France. We cannot really say there is a shortage today.”²¹⁰

This explicit lack of interest represents a significant obstacle to developing a French-North Africa nursing program. The mutual interest of Jean Charest, former Premier of Québec, and French president Nicolas Sarkozy initiated the Québec-France negotiations that resulted in the ARM.²¹¹ President Sarkozy authorized the Conseil d’État to coordinate multi-year negotiations between

209 Interview. *Ordre National des Infirmiers*. Paris, France. March 20, 2013.

210 Interview. *Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé*. Paris, France. March 21, 2013.

211 Interview. *Conseil d’État*. Paris, France. March 22, 2013.

industry associations and professional orders, which represent the 26 professions covered under the agreement.²¹² These partnerships, however, did not extend to employers or recruiters, thus likely contributing to employers’ misunderstanding of the ARM.

Merging Institutional Contexts

We have learned that skills-based migration programs create visibility and value by harmonizing separate norms across receiving-country and sending-country institutional contexts. In the Québec-France ARM, merging meant agreeing on skill visibility and value when there was an obvious match. It did not mean creating new institutions that support skills-certification, migration and employment.

The ARM nursing competency harmonization process illustrates how merging skill-certification institutions work between France and Québec. An observer of process explained, “Between 2006 and 2010, the [National Order of Nursing] in France (ONI) worked with the Order in Québec to understand the level of competencies for French and Québécois nurses.” In France, “There is only one type of nurse, but in Québec there are several,” including the DEC and a clinical nurse specialization.²¹³ The Orders determined that competencies for Québec’s DEC were identical to France’s *diplôme d’état*. France’s interest in Québec’s identical competencies and innovative practices may explain their incentive to push through the 4-year negotiation with Québec. Merging skills-certification norms with Québec presented France an opportunity to benefit from an innovative nurse training system,

212 Ibid.

213 Interview. *Ordre National des Infirmiers*. Paris, France. March 20, 2013.

which North Africa is unable to offer since, as a senior French official noted, “nurses from Tunisia and North Africa do not have the same training level as the nurses from Québec.”²¹⁴ We learned that ONI is currently working to create a clinical nurse specialization, similar to that of Québec, in order to compensate French nurses for the additional responsibilities assigned to them as a result of the doctor shortage.²¹⁵

The ARM focuses on skill-certification and not on merging migration institutions across contexts. Unlike Québec, the French government does not travel to Québec to recruit nurses or prepare their travel and visa procedures.²¹⁶ Since the nursing agreement was signed in 2010, only 8 nurses²¹⁷ have migrated from Québec to France, compared to the 600 French nurses²¹⁸ who have migrated to Québec. Two of the nurses who migrated from Québec had to return in 2012 because the French government did not extend their temporary visas.²¹⁹ Finally, the lack of alignment with employer incentives to hire Québécois nurses under the Québec-France ARM, as we observed earlier, creates an obstacle to employ migrant labor.

Utilizing an Open Design

We learned that an open program design facilitates the process of merging institutional contexts, as it ensures that program architects incorporate input from multiple sources to design and modify programs. Whether a transnational skill development program

between North Africa and France would be open, depends on who would design and implement the program. Given the requisites needed to ensure migrant nurse skills visibility in France, the French Ministry of Health is the most eligible actor to design and implement such a program. However, we learned earlier that the Ministry is not interested in taking the lead on such an initiative. Furthermore, they are not open to recruiting Nurses from North Africa despite information available, such as acute nursing shortages in hospitals — including l'Assistance Publique-Hôpitaux de Paris²²⁰ — and the European Commission's prediction of a shortage of 600,000 nurses and nursing aides by 2020.²²¹

The fact that officials at the Ministry of Health are not using this information to design an intervention has implications for their capacity to respond to future health-care needs in France. Ministry developments, including the 2005 “decentralization of the response to health care by region,” which authorizes Regional Health Agencies (ARS) to adjust the quotas set by the Ministry based on employment demand,²²² provide some evidence of early steps to use input from other sources to modify policy. The recently launched reform to the national register for nurses (répertoire Adeli) is necessary to better “determine need and statistics on health professionals and future trends,” suggesting that even if “we [at the Ministry] are not in a position to demand more nurses, everything is possible!”²²³

214 Ibid.

215 Ibid.

216 Ibid.

217 Ibid.

218 Eric Yvan Lemay. “Explosion du nombre d’infirmières françaises.” *Le Journal de Montreal*. October 24, 2012. Accessed April 27, 2013. <http://www.journaldemontreal.com/2012/10/24/explosion-du-nombre-dinfirmieres-francaises>

219 Interview. *Ordre National des Infirmiers*. Paris, France. March 20, 2013.

220 Interview. *Assistance Publique-Hôpitaux de Paris*. Paris, France. March 22, 2013.

221 European Health Forum Gastein. “Possible shortage of up to two million health care workers by 2020 – EU taking action to prevent impending crisis in providing health care.” October 8, 2010. Accessed May 3, 2013. <http://www.ehfg.org/681.html>

222 Interview. *Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé*. Paris, France. March 21, 2013.

223 Ibid.

Adapting to Political Changes

Despite the European Union predictions regarding the future shortages of nurses in Europe, there is consensus among the officials we encountered that the nursing shortage is lessening.²²⁴ Nursing shortages in France, therefore, while important, are not urgent. As a result, the political pressure needed to push the Ministry of Health to create a transnational skill development program is insufficient. When discussing the interest of the Ministry of Health in creating new agreements similar to the Québec-France ARM, a Ministry official commented, “The accord with Québec was done to commemorate the creation of Québec; it was a done in a completely different context and had nothing to do with health needs, and it is for several professions.”²²⁵

We also noted earlier that the Québec-France bilateral agreement was largely the result of mutual commitment from former Premier of Québec Jean Charest and French President Nicolas Sarkozy.²²⁶ Given the absence of an urgent need to recruit foreign nurses and the current flow of illegal migrants from North Africa to France, it will currently be politically challenging for government officials to support a French-North Africa nurse-training program.²²⁷ In the absence of political pressure, any new program initiative would need to determine how long it would take to develop the aforementioned elements required to design a successful nurse skill development program between France and North Africa.

224 Interviews. *Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé, Ordre National des Infirmiers and Institut de Formation Interhospitalier Théodore Simon*. Paris, France. March, 2013.

225 Interview. *Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Santé*. Paris, France. March 21, 2013.

226 Interview. *Conseil d'État*. Paris, France. March 22, 2013.

227 Ibid.

Recommendations

The five interrelated lessons presented earlier—skill value, partnerships, merging institutional contexts, open design, and the effects of political pressure—provide a framework for the design of successful migration and skill development systems. The following section offers five recommendations for future architects of a migration nursing skill development program between francophone countries in North Africa and France. These recommendations are the same five that were drawn from the case studies and lessons presented in the previous section.

Be Guided by the Principle of Creating Skill Value

Our research revealed that achieving skill visibility is an important first step toward making skills valuable in different contexts. In order to harmonize nursing skills across the region, France needs to invest, exchange knowledge, and develop best practices to upgrade North African nurse training institutions to meet the standards of the health sector in France. This harmonization process should bring together training institutions, government agencies, policy actors, employers, and recruiters who are genuinely interested in the process from across France and North African countries. These efforts should aim to create an international alignment of nursing competencies that will increase North African migrant nurse skill value in France. To accomplish this task, the French Ministry of Health should identify relevant actors in North African countries to initiate conversations regarding possible bilateral agreements to ease the migration process for North African nurses.

Form Partnerships with Industry, Employers and Migrant Support Organizations

Identifying partners in the French Ministry of Health and the National Order of Nursing is critical for making North African nurse skills recognized, since these organizations regulate the practice of the nursing profession in France. Both organizations expressed interest in learning from global skill standardization practices and engaging in transnational technical capacity collaboration. Working with employers to align harmonized skills with current labor demand is also important. We see this as a good opportunity to target employers currently experiencing severe nursing shortages, such as such as hospitals in the Île-de-France region.²²⁸ Although partnerships in the planning phase should focus on industry, partnering with migrant-focused organizations will be crucial during the implementation phase of the program.

Identify and Merge the Efforts of Relevant Regulatory Bodies and Partners in both Receiving and Sending Contexts

To reconcile skill-building and certification, as well as migration and industry needs, across French and North African contexts, we recommend that program architects first identify key skill-certification and migration institutions and nursing employers in both contexts, and understand how these institutions currently function. Program architects should then facilitate open dialogue among these actors to align nursing competency standards, migration rules and employment incentives for North African nurses working in regions facing skill shortages in France.

²²⁸ Interview. *Assistance Publique-Hôpitaux de Paris*. Paris, France. March 22, 2013.

Maintain an Open Design and Incorporate Feedback from Relevant Actors

The French Ministry of Health relies primarily on internal data and information to supervise the supply of nursing professionals. The decentralization of the Ministry's oversight process through the creation of Regional Health Agencies (ARS), as well a potential reform to the national nursing register (Adeli), evidence the Ministry's interest in adding a certain degree of flexibility to the bureaucratic configuration of the health sector. Government agencies in France need to create more spaces to incorporate external information in an effort to make policy more responsive to changes in nursing demand.

Be Prepared to Accept and Adapt to Unpredictable Changes in Political Environments

France is experiencing two main political challenges for the design and implementation of a transnational certification program. First, there is no consensus on the existence of a skill shortage in the nursing sector in France. Second, the current flows of illegal migrants from North Africa have motivated French policymakers to adopt more conservative immigration policies. Program architects should focus on designing mechanisms to raise awareness of the decreasing supply of nursing professionals in the sector and build political will to respond to this demographic issue. Program architects should also anticipate possible shifts in the program's motivation in response to changes in the political environment.

These political challenges explain the lack of political incentives for French policymakers to design a transnational certification pro-

gram at this point in time. However, given the interest of industry actors and employers to incorporate new ways to improve the country's health sector, we believe that there is an opportunity for regional collaboration to increase nurse-competency and training standards in North Africa. Such collabora-

tion could evolve into a transnational skill certification program if there is consensus on how to address the demographic challenges that the European country could face in the future.

Conseil d'État (Council of State), Paris, France





Seashore, Fiji

Appendix: Acronyms Glossary

Acronyms Glossary

ACCI - Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

APTC - Australian-Pacific Technical College

ARM - Bilateral agreement on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications (Arrangement de Reconnaissance Mutuelle)

ARS - Regional Health Agency

AusAID - Australian Agency for International Development

CFO - Commission on Filipinos Overseas

DEC - Diplôme d'études collégiales

DFA - Department of Foreign Affairs

DIAC - Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Australia)

DIISRTE - Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education

DOH - Department of Health

DOLE - Department of Labor and Employment

ECA - East Coast Apprenticeships

ESL - English as a Second Language

FNU - Fiji National University

GED - General Education Diploma

HSW - Household Service Worker

IME - (Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior) Institute of Mexicans in the Exterior

INEA - (Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos) National Institute for Adult Education

NARS - Nurses Assigned in Rural Service

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

OFW - Overseas Filipino Worker

ONI - National Order of Nursing (Ordre National des Infirmiers)

OWWA - Overseas Workers Welfare Administration

PCME - (Programa para las Comunidades Mexicanas en el Exterior) Program for Mexican Communities Abroad

PDOS - Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar

PEOS - Pre-Employment Orientation Seminar

POEA - Philippine Overseas Employment Administration

POLO - Philippine Overseas Labor Office

SASACE - (Sistema de Acreditación y Seguimiento Automatizado para Comunidades en el Exterior) System of Accreditation and Automatic Monitoring for Communities in the Exterior

SOL - Skill Occupation List

SRE - Mexican Secretary for External Relations

SRE - (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores) Mexican Secretary for External Relations

TESDA - Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

TRA - Trades Recognition Australia

UVEA – (Unidad de Voluntarios para la Educación de los Adultos) Volunteer Unit for Adult Education

Onlooking Viti Levu, Fiji



Creating Valuable Skills:
A New Framework for Migration as Development Policy
May 2013



This is a consultation draft that is being finalized.



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