Beyond the Stories: Beneath Foreign Credential Recognition in Canada

by

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ABSTRACT

Issues of recognition and assessment of international credentials within Canada can be traced back decades to the early stages of the influx of international credentials into the country. Although methods to address these resulting issues have continued through the years, recurring issues related to the recognition of foreign credentials are repeatedly highlighted and lamented over. Therefore, this study analyzes attempts to address these issues through public policies such as the most recent pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework, intended to facilitate the assessment and recognition of international credentials across Canada. Using a pragmatic research paradigm, this study undertakes an analysis of public policies at the national, provincial and trans-provincial level to discover current approaches toward foreign credential recognition in Canada and how they are addressing the issues that are frequently raised regarding credential recognition and assessment. The study found that while more can still be done, substantial attempts have been made in addressing issues around the recognition of international credentials. However, a skew towards race as the key variable in issues of foreign credential recognition, although important, often overshadows a number of other critical factors that are just as or perhaps more important to consider in the credential recognition landscape.

PREFACE

This thesis is an original work by Chisom Okonkwo. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

DEDICATION

To all those who often wonder what lies beneath, those who hear stories of monsters in the dark and still choose to walk down dark paths.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Since Canada opened its doors wider in the 1960s to immigration beyond certain targeted countries, a diverse range of people have flocked to Canada with the intention of making it their permanent home. The opening of immigration to Canada from varied countries was the result of a shift in immigration policy to demonstrate a preference for highly educated individuals. The 1960s and early 1970s spawned a time of unprecedented diversity for Canada through the opening of Canadian immigration to countries and individuals beyond the borders of Europe (Boyd & Vickers, 2000; Statistics Canada, 2005). By way of a new immigration process meant to favour skills and education over race and country of origin, Canada beckoned to people from all over the world to come and make Canada their new home (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2004). Data collected by CIC (2004), from 1994 to 2003, reflect this preference for highly educated immigrants in the steady increase in the number of newcomers to Canada with Bachelor's degree at minimum. By 2008, approximately 45% of new Canadian immigrants had university degrees, which was more than twice the percentage over a decade earlier (Houle & Yssaad, 2010). However, the apparent preference for highly educated newcomers did not easily translate into the recognition and integration of their international credentials into the Canadian labour system. Thus, began the issues of recognition and assessment of international credentials within Canada for those who possessed such credentials and the authorities responsible for foreign credential assessment and recognition.

Social, economic and personal problems that arose due to the difficulties of having people who were unable to work because of unrecognized foreign credentials created a public policy issue that required the attention of the government. Various approaches to improve foreign credential

assessment and recognition have been undertaken over the years with varying degrees of success. Methods of dealing with international credential assessment and recognition issues have continued in the past decade. A recent method of addressing such credential concerns has come in the form of a pan-Canadian framework sponsored by Ministers of Education from the provinces and territories of Canada. Through the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) recently introduced the pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework (QAF); a tool designed at the national level to facilitate the assessment of international credentials across Canada (CICIC, 2012a). The term national, as used here and subsequently in this study, is in reference to all the provinces and territories of Canada. The QAF is a result of the Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Academic Credential Assessment, a three-phase project undertaken by CICIC (2012b) with the support of CMEC due to the recognition of the detrimental social and economic effects of non-recognition of qualifications of educated newcomers to Canada. The question however remains: How is this new tool addressing the issues that have been previously and are still are being raised regarding foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada? This question is what my study aims to address.

Study Purpose

In light of the above question, my study analyzes the public policies put forth by national and provincial governments to address the issues surrounding foreign credential assessment and recognition in Canada. Public policy as used here, and throughout this thesis, refers to "a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems" (p. 35), guides to action, frameworks or plans (Pal, 2014). Public policy is a complex term that is often defined in a number of ways. The various definitions are more similar than they are different, but depending on the description or definition, emphasis is placed on particular

aspects of public policy. I use the definition above in this study because it captures important elements for understanding public policy including intentionality, choice, method, interrelatedness, multidimensionality and multiple actors. Public policies, whether they are a guide to action or inaction involve a measure of contemplation that leads to the choice to plan to act or not act on multi-faceted and often inter-related issues that have an effect in the public domain (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Although, there are multiple actors involved in public policy, it is important to emphasize that public policies come from public authorities, which are institutions that have the legitimate authority to impose or enforce such policies (Pal, 2014). These institutions are usually a form of government or linked to government. Thomas Dye's (2010) definition of public policy is explicit in the naming of public policy as a government endeavour. The term policy is also often used to describe a variety of things. However, the effect of public policy on the public, in the public domain and on public problems is a way of distinguishing public policy from organizational policies or policies made in the private domain. When given a closer look, definitions of public policy demonstrate the complexity associated with public policy due to the various elements of public policy, internal and external constraints of public authorities, as well as the very complicated nature of public problems. These variables all present challenges in the analysis of policy, which the field of policy analysis aims to deal with methodically.

To analyze public policies related to foreign credential assessment and recognition in Canada, the QAF along with other documents from various orders of Canadian government will be the public policy documents under analysis in this study. This study is a policy analysis of the result of the multiyear and multiphase Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Academic Credential Assessment project in order to ascertain its potential for effectively dealing with issues and criticisms of the foreign credential assessment and recognition process in Canada. To further

this inquiry, I also examine public policies at the provincial and trans-provincial level in order to get an idea of how various provincial and trans-provincial policies approach international credential recognition and assessment. These policy documents under study capture institutional discussions in the area of international credentials. They are outcomes of institutional conversations in which institutions/organizations speak to each other, provinces speak to each other and the various levels of governments speak to each other on a matter that has effects at all governmental levels and in the public domain. Additionally, these documents provide an avenue for listening to public authorities and those in positions of authority talking to each other about foreign credentials within and outside of Canada.

In turning attention to institutional discourses through policy analysis as described above, this study is shining a flashlight on a systemic dimension underlying the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. There are other aspects, such as the experiential, that contribute to the overall picture of foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada. The experiential lens captures discussions at more individual and personal levels and would comprise a more detailed look at experiencing credential assessment and/or recognition. However, this study is focused on the systemic and not the experiential. This study is concerned with the system and its processes, with particular attention to efficiency and effectiveness in addressing issues and concerns. This concentration stems from and connects to the prior question on the workings of the QAF and the questions guiding this study.

The central question of this study is: What are current approaches toward foreign credential assessment and recognition in Canada and can they be effective or sufficient at addressing the needs and criticisms previously raised on this matter? To further focus my research, the study is also guided by the following additional questions:

i)   What is the discourse around foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada?

ii)   What are some issues and criticisms of foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada?

iii) How are some of these issues and criticisms being addressed by public policies?

iv)   What is the ideal scenario for foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada? Is it realistic, achievable or impossible?

v)   What is the interplay between race, merit and foreign credential recognition in Canada?

Rationale and Significance

There are a number of reasons for the pursuit and relevance of this study. First, various scholars including Li (2001), Bauder (2003), Grant and Nadin (2007) and Guo (2009) have identified the issues and barriers faced by newcomers to Canada who desire to have their international credentials recognized. The need for governmental intervention to ensure a better approach and better results is often mentioned as a solution in these and various other related studies. However, I have yet to discover a detailed scholarly analysis of any governmental actions in response to foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada. Consequently, this study aims to address this gap.

Secondly, pursuing this study can serve as a feedback mechanism to the authorities responsible for dealing with foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada. It also moves the scholarly approach in the foreign credential recognition and assessment area beyond that of solely problem identification to the provision of constructive criticism and tangible actions that the government can be called to act on.

Thirdly, this study can influence policies, policy research and practices in the foreign credential recognition and assessment landscape. The analysis within this study is intended to be

of interest to various stakeholders and scholars interested in the area of foreign credential recognition and assessment. For scholars and researchers, my hope is that the findings and analysis of this study serve to generate and inspire more scholarly interest and research into creative and pragmatic solutions for handling a problem of such policy significance. I also hope that it generates more deliberative discussions on this issue. For stakeholders, including credential assessment organizations and professionals, the contents of this study may be of interest in the assessment of their procedures, approaches or engagement in the area of foreign credential recognition and assessment. Additionally, I hope that for policy analysts, the approach is this study can inspire more policy approaches that marry theory, research and practice in designing, implementing and evaluating policy solutions within bureaucratic organizations.

Many stories regarding foreign credential assessment and recognition in Canada exist, ranging from positive to negative and in between, in terms of experiences and outcomes. However, the most popular stories are the ones that depict an overly prejudicial system that is said to reduce those with advanced degrees to somewhat unrecognizable versions of their well-educated selves. These are the stories of the highly educated taxi driver or janitor, whose credentials were not recognized because of what they look like. These are the stories that attribute credential assessment or recognition outcomes to racial or ethnic backgrounds and emphasize these factors as significant in the process. I heard many of these types of stories, while observing different results from the range of individuals around me. The way they looked did not appear to matter, that is, in the way that the popular stories suggested. Therefore, my curiosity was piqued regarding the discrepancy between what I heard and what I saw. It seemed that the popular stories, were the ones that overly emphasized the negative and made the process seem unusually scary, especially for those who had not even begun the process. The stories seemed debilitating, but I wondered if they really needed

to be so in accurately representing the process. Hence, for those who are affected by the foreign credential assessment and recognition processes - but are otherwise removed from this process - I hope that this study shines a new light onto a process that has significant implications for their professional and/or personal lives.

Relevant/Key Terms

The following terms are defined below as they are specific to the topic at hand and need to be differentiated for better understanding of the ensuing discussion:

- Foreign Credential Recognition is a term used to describe the process of verifying the education, skills, training and experience obtained in another country against the standards established in Canada for that occupation or sector (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada [HRSDC], 2010).

- Foreign credential assessment is a term used here to describe the evaluation of academic credentials as part of the process of foreign credential recognition.

- Accreditation is a term used here to refer to the process through which recognition is granted by the relevant authorities to confirm that standards of education established by professional authorities have been met (CICIC, 2013).

Organization of study

Seven chapters comprise this study, which are organized as follows. This first chapter introduces the study, provides some context for the topic, describes the purpose of the study, guiding research questions, the study's rationale and significance and defines some relevant terms for reader. The second chapter, through a literature review, provides an overview of issues regarding foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada. The third chapter uses social theory as a lens to explore credentials in society. The fourth chapter details the methodology

through which the purpose and questions of this study will be addressed, including the philosophical framework and research design. In the fifth chapter, some background on foreign credential recognition in Canada is provided. The sixth and seventh chapters deal with selected foreign credential policies and procedures at various levels. Policy goals and evaluation criteria are discussed in the eight chapter. The ninth chapter concludes the thesis with a summary of the analysis and study findings.

With some context on the questions that led me to this thesis, the purpose of this study and its significance now outlined in this chapter, the next chapter will proceed with a look at some issues pertaining to the recognition and assessment of foreign credentials in Canada.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide insight into the public policy issues surrounding the recognition of foreign credentials in Canada through a review of relevant research. This includes providing an overview of the foreign credential recognition (FCR) landscape in Canada and a summary of noted issues from the surveyed literature. To unravel this information in this chapter, I examine research on international credential recognition and assessment as well as on immigration and settlement in Canada in order to identify specific issues that have been presented over the years pertaining to FCR in Canada. The review examines academic scholarly articles as well as policy documents and reports in order to get a broad perspective of the subject matter.

The majority of the scholarly research found and reviewed were from articles and studies on labour market, labour mobility, human capital, employability and earnings of people with foreign qualifications rather than on the actual processes of FCR. Thus, while a significant number of studies have been done on the issue of FCR in Canada, few are focused on the processes of credential recognition and assessment. In addition, a very limited number of these studies were in fact scholarly! As the area of FCR is a public policy issue that is under governmental jurisdiction, the literature search also included searches on federal, provincial and related government sites for select working documents, policy documents and related reports. Documents that were written as a result of studies or research conducted in association with academics were considered in order to assist me with obtaining a scholarly perspective. These policy documents and reports were also included as a way of determining if governmental organizations were aware of issues around international credentials raised via scholarly research. An awareness of such issues could assist in assessing the impact of scholarly research on policies and procedures in the area of FCR.

Given the aforementioned situation encountered when searching for appropriate scholarly documents, the research used in this literature review was vetted and selected on the basis of the following general criteria: relevancy, currency, accessibility and credibility. For the policy documents, the author's credentials were researched and where specific information could not be found on the author, I ensured that the document was published by Canadian national or provincial government organizations or their affiliates and that the contents of the article enhanced the discussion surrounding foreign credential recognition and assessment. Articles were deemed current if they were dated within the past two decades, although some highly relevant and frequently referenced papers outside of that time frame were also included. Relevancy was determined based on the relatedness of the study to enriched discussions and questions on the topic at hand. The review is structured on common themes in the literature around issues and barriers in the recognition and assessment of foreign credentials in Canada.

Issues in foreign credential recognition and assessment

Insufficient information before and after arrival in Canada

A common issue found in the literature surveyed pertained to the dearth of information that immigrants are aware of prior to immigrating, which results in unexpected and unwelcome surprises upon arrival into Canada and the desire to enter the labour market or pursue further education. Mata (1999) identified poor information as the first major barrier faced by immigrants at the beginning of the immigration process, well before they set foot in Canada. Similarly, the Alberta Task Force on the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications (Alberta, 1992) acknowledged that a limited availability of accurate, timely and complete information was a recurring problem in the course of their research on the recognition of foreign qualifications in the province. Frequent among the articles reviewed, including Calleja & Alnwick (2000), Sangster (2001) and Wayland

(2006) was the observation that most of the immigrants to Canada were extremely unaware of the certification and credentialing processes that they would have to undergo to be employed in Canada, especially within regulated occupations such as nursing, teaching, engineering, medicine and other such fields. In his interviews of employers on their views and experiences with the recognition and assessment of the credentials of internationally trained workers, Sangster (2001) reported that several of the interviewed employers were expressly concerned with immigrants leaving their countries without accurate information on the certification and (re)credentialing processes that they would have to undergo upon arrival in Canada. These employers indicated that immigrants should be made aware of these processes and provided counselling on this issue before immigration so that they would have a realistic idea of what to expect if they choose to immigrate to Canada. Such counselling would also allow them to make the necessary preparations so as to avoid disillusionment.

Furthermore, given the differences in international credential evaluation for regulated and non-regulated professions, readily available information on the process required for professional occupations and who the appropriate contact agency for credential assessment may help to prepare newcomers to Canada. A number of immigrants appear incredibly surprised when they arrive and first learn of the procedures required in order to practice their trained profession. Greater pre-arrival preparedness and awareness, including pre-screening by professional and regulatory bodies, pre-arrival assessment of credentials as well as increased accessibility to simple, accurate and frequently updated information sources available for immigrations were key policy recommendations proposed towards making improvements in FCR in Canada and British Columbia in particular (Business Council of British Columbia, 2006). Perhaps, providing such information ahead of time can make for more informed immigration decisions on the part of

immigrants and can help alleviate the employability issues that arise from having an unrecognized credential.

Lack of a coordinated, regulated and consistent approach

There is no universal national organization in Canada that undertakes the process of foreign credential recognition and assessment. Within the country, the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (2012b) reports that there are seven academic credential assessment services, about 400 different regulatory bodies and more than 300 accredited postsecondary institutions that are all involved in the evaluation of credentials in some way. The various Canadian provinces are individually responsible for handling the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials entering their respective jurisdictions (McDade, 1988). However, within each province, multiple players in addition to the provincial government, such as professional organizations, regulatory bodies, post-secondary institutions, and assessment agencies are also all involved in one way or another in the process of having an international credential assessed and/or recognized. Some of these organizations were formed as an attempt to streamline the process of foreign credential assessment within a province upon increased migration to the provinces and complaints of non-recognition of credentials by Canadian newcomers. For example, in the early nineties in Alberta, several immigrant serving agencies within Alberta, in addition to regulatory and professional bodies, school boards and post-secondary institutions were all involved in FCR (Alberta, 1992). However, at that time, only the immigrant agencies, through various methods and processes, could serve newcomers who needed their credentials evaluated for employment purposes. Hence, the assigned task force put forth a recommendation for a centralized assessment centre that would function primarily as a FCR service (Alberta, 1992). This assessment centre eventually evolved into what is known today as the International Qualifications Assessment

Service (IQAS). In contrast to the several agencies that existed then, currently, only one government body, IQAS, assesses credentials for employment, although regulatory bodies, professional bodies and post-secondary institutions still play a role in aspects of FCR.

Although each province bears the responsibility of handling FCR because education and the regulation of professions fall under provincial authority, the federal government also has some involvement in the FCR process. The federal government has a vested interest in this issue as immigration, which is the process that largely results in the arrival of immigrants with foreign credentials, falls under federal authority. In addition, FCR is important to achieving the economic goals of immigration for which skilled immigrants were permitted to immigrate to Canada in the first place. Thus, McDade (1988) argued that the failure of recognizing foreign credentials of immigrants is an undermining of the goals and objectives of federal immigration policy to enhance Canada's prosperity through the contributions of a highly skilled immigrant workforce. Unemployment, low income rates and earnings gaps between immigrants and Canadian-born workers are some of the outcomes attributed to non-recognition of foreign credentials (Boyd, 1992; Derwing & Krahn, 2008; Reitz, 2007), which led to the setting aside of funding specifically for addressing the issue of FCR (Human Resources and Social Development Canada [HRSDC], 2004). Due to the importance of FCR to Canada's economic growth and development, through the labour market retention and utilization of immigrants to Canada, it has received attention as an area that requires work on a national scale (Hawthorne & Wong, 2011).

An attempt to recognize and assess foreign credentials in order to assist with skill shortages led to the development of procedures for assessment (Wayland, 2006). However, various governmental, professional, regulatory and educational institutions or organizations developed these procedures independently, leading to the creation of a complex maze of requirements that

were difficult for newcomers to navigate. This lack of coordination also provided inconsistencies and variations in assessment outcomes, an outcome which has been identified as a major barrier to labour mobility within Canada (Grady & Macmillan, 2007) and which contributes to making the process a frustrating one for individuals who were unfamiliar with the system (Guo, 2009). The number of independent actors involved as well as the differences in processes and outcomes of assessment and recognition within and across provinces and even within the same occupations nationally point to the uncoordinated and inconsistent approach to FCR (Houle & Yssad, 2010; McDade, 1988; Tillman, 2004). Challenges and frustrations that arise from having a multitude of organizations involved in the foreign credential recognition process were echoed by Guo (2009) and Andersson and Guo (2009) who insist that the lack of a coordinated approach to FCR, including variations in the credentialing process and certification standards by the different institutions and organizations are to blame for the differences and inconsistencies in credential assessment results. Foreign credential recognition outcomes vary provincially, with the highest rates of recognition found in the Atlantic provinces, followed by Quebec and Ontario where foreign credentials have a better chance of recognition than in British Colombia and Alberta (Houle & Yssad, 2010).

For regulated professions that have separate professional or regulatory bodies, studies such as Li (2001), Bauder (2003) and Basran and Zong (1998) have noted that the process of recognition of international credentials can be an especially long, arduous and unfair process where those with foreign credentials are required to complete additional requirements in order to meet certain standards set within Canada. Although these individuals may be recognized as having a postsecondary qualification by general credential assessment agencies, that qualification on its own is not considered sufficient to work in the corresponding profession. The assessment and

recognition of the credential for employment within the profession typically lies with the regulatory organization responsible for that profession. Consequently, scenarios have occurred where individuals are confused because on one hand they are told that they have a post-secondary degree, but on the other, they are told that they cannot work in said field. A clearer articulation of the credential evaluation process and some sort of coordination between general assessment organizations and regulatory bodies can help with remedying this issue, so that for example, when an internationally educated teacher intends to teach in Canada, he/she is sent directly to the regulatory body for teachers for credential assessment instead of being put through general assessment agencies.

Guo (2009) highlighted the absence of a national and organized approach involving complex interactions with several participants as a major barrier in FCR in Canada. In a call for government intervention to stop the alienation of immigrants and to make the credential evaluation process more transparent and equitable, a key suggestion by Guo (2009) is for federal and provincial governments to make regulatory bodies accountable for the (mis)treatment of immigrants who seek to have their credentials assessed. However, the issue here may not be so much about the lack of regulation and accountability as much as it is related to a lack of enforcement of regulations and an unclear identification of who is accountable and responsible for monitoring the process.

Racialization of knowledge and negative attitudes towards difference

Guo (2009) sees the process surrounding the recognition and non-recognition of foreign credentials as a political one disguised as acts of oppression and disregard for difference. I initially encountered the idea of democratic racism in Guo's (2009) article where he describes this concept as the simultaneous presence of negative attitudes and behaviours towards immigrants alongside

democratic principles of justice, fairness and equality. This idea is rooted in the history of Canadian immigration where immigrants of Anglo-Saxon and European descent were initially preferred to those of other racial origins. Prior to 1967 when a point system was introduced to select immigrants on the basis of their education, skills and resources rather than their racial or religious backgrounds, the preference was for European settlers to immigrate to Canada (Andersson & Guo, 2009; Guo, 2009). The point system allowed for a more diverse group of immigrants, but the social and political construction of immigrants as negatively different, undesirable necessities and incompatible with the social and cultural framework of Canada still remained, resulting in democratic racism (Guo, 2009).

Although Guo (2009) and Andersson and Guo (2009) raise valid points in the area of foreign credentials, I noticed that both articles cited similar sources. This may be a result of the previously mentioned limited amount of information in the subject area. Nevertheless, using a wide and diverse range of literature to support and discuss viewpoints provides essential and valuable reinforcement to the matter being deliberated on. A diversity of relevant literature and a wide range of sources also helps prevent the easy dismissal of the proposed ideas as being solely based on personal opinion without evidence grounded in academic or scholarly research.

Other perspectives exist regarding the negative perceptions of difference observed in the discussions on international credential evaluation. Girard and Bauder (2007) explain this disregard for difference as an attempt to reproduce the social and cultural integrity of professional regulatory organizations. Focusing specifically on the regulatory body for engineers in Ontario, Girard and Bauder (2007) drew upon Bourdieu's notion of institutional cultural capital and habitus in explaining the devaluation of foreign academic credentials. They indicated that although paper credentials can be used to attest to an individual's educational qualifications, many professions

maintain an underlying set of criteria that act as tacit requirements that can be used to exclude or marginalize those who do not have them. These characteristics are typically shared by individuals who are already members of the group and excluding those who do not have it from becoming part of the organization works to reproduce the social division of labour (Girard & Bauder, 2007). In contrast to Guo's (2009) mostly racially based explanation, Girard and Bauder's (2007) cultural capital and habitus explanation as to why exclusion and devaluation of foreign credentials can occur appears more likely and convincing in today's context because of the relationship to social closure and the subtlety with which social preservation and reproduction of labour can occur. While race is a variable in issues of foreign credential recognition, it is not the only variable. Additionally, while racism is not absent in society, it is not as blatant as it was in previous decades. It seems incomplete to explain the non-recognition of credentials as *solely* based on racism and discrimination especially when individuals from various minority groups with Canadian credentials do not have the same issues as their foreign-educated counterparts. This suggests that there is more to the issues in foreign credential recognition that extend beyond racism or perhaps have less to do with racism than is often suggested.

Though speaking with regards to the employment and earning potentials of Canadian immigrants, studies by Pendakur and Pendakur (1998; 2002) and Reitz (2007) indicate that it would not be diligent to conclude that racial disadvantages exclusively explain the exclusion and devaluation of foreign credentials for Canadian immigrants. Even Li (2001), a heavily referenced author in topic of foreign qualifications recognition, noted that resolving all the issues with foreign credential recognition would only account for half of the income difference observed among visible-minority immigrants. Pendakur and Pendakur (2002) particularly mention other issues such as language difficulties that can greatly affect the employment experiences of immigrants with

foreign credentials, but not necessarily affect Canadian born and educated minorities. Along similar lines, after their research produced results that indicated that foreign education was an acute disadvantage to visible minority immigrants from developing countries in comparison to other immigrant groups, Buzdugan and Halli (2009) pointed out the importance of differentiating between a lack of recognition of foreign credentials and a devaluation of foreign credentials in distinguishing between racial discrimination and foreign education devaluation Consequently, they proposed the argument that immigrants of Caucasian descent may also experience a devaluing of their credentials, whereas visible minority immigrants experience non-recognition of their education.

Conclusion

Issues of FCR in Canada have been raised and lamented over repeatedly for many decades. Although attempts have been made to address these issues, recent literature still points to recurring issues and shows that most immigrants still have difficulties with having their credentials recognized. The ideal scenario for those with foreign credentials is to have their credentials valued similarly to where the credentials were originally obtained. This ideal appears to consist of a scenario where applicants, particularly immigrants, with foreign credentials are properly informed on the transferability of their credentials into the Canadian system, are aware of the requirements and processes to getting their credentials recognized, are able to have their credentials properly evaluated without discrimination due to race or country of origin and are able to use their recognized credentials across the country.

Without discounting that race may have a role to play - even an important role -, there is a compelling argument that it is the difference of the credential itself, its corresponding associations and the traits, rather than the characteristic of the individual bearing the credential that may have

a greater influence on the devaluation of the credential. To illustrate, a look at most college and university campuses in Canada will reveal a variety of students from various racial and/or ethnic backgrounds, a good number of whom proceed to graduate with a Canadian post-secondary credential. These individuals from various backgrounds have their credentials recognized by virtue of having completed them in Canada. Their racial or ethnic background does not affect the validity or accreditation of their credential obtained in Canada. These individuals possess a Canadian credential that by virtue of being completed in Canada is recognized and acceptable regardless of their race or ethnicity. Scenarios like this contribute to the suggestion that there is more beyond racism or a person's racial background that explains the difficulty or inability of having foreign credentials recognized and that the credential itself may have a role to play. However, a notable observation was highlighted by both Grant and Nadin (2007) and Basran and Zong (1998), who in their respective studies pertaining to minorities with foreign credentials, found that most of their study participants attributed the problems they encountered with having their credentials recognized by employers to discrimination. This observation provides room for further inquiry into the relationship between race and the recognition of international credentials, but more important to this study, it brings up the importance of perceptions of difference in race, credentials or otherwise to the recognition of foreign qualifications in Canada.

While there is a tendency towards race-based explanations for foreign credential devaluation or non-recognition, there are other important factors such as the nature of the credential, forms of social closure and capital, that are equally important and sometimes more important than just race-based explanations. However, race or ethno-culturally based critiques are still important to consider. Nevertheless, further exploration of other additional factors as well as the technical nature of foreign credential recognition and assessment is necessary. Relying solely

on race in explaining FCR issues in Canada ignores agency, the notions of social, cultural and human capital, social closure and the possibility of navigating social contexts in a beneficial manner. These aspects of social theory in relation to credentials will be further explored in the following chapter. Let us examine what social theory has to say about credentials.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL THEORIES OF CREDENTIALS

Although this thesis focuses on foreign credentials, credentials in general have certain characteristics which do not disappear regardless of whether or not the credentials in question are foreign. These characteristics are often so prevalent that they are considered ordinary and routine, but sometimes a closer look reveals that behind their ordinariness is something interesting. Credentials by their nature are complex or intricate when it comes to what they mean, represent and how they are utilized. Despite being seemingly ordinary, credentials and their characteristics are not always so straightforward. Social theory, as an approach through which closer attention can be paid to subtleties and the mundane within society, serves as a good lens through which to explore the concept of credentials in society. Social theory has provided various theories that greatly contribute to the field of education and educational discourse, which also makes it suitable for examining credentials within the context of this thesis. Thus, in this chapter, I will be looking at what social theory has to say about credentials. This background is important to help situate credentials in preparation for further discussion that occurs in this study. Social closure, social and cultural capital are the particular social theories through which I will examine credentials in this chapter but first I will look at another capital theory that has relevance to the social theories of credentials.

Credentials and Human Capital

A credential is seen as a qualification, document, certificate or achievement that attests to one's educational or other accomplishments. Typically, credentials are used as a formal means of verifying an individual's educational studies and resulting degree(s). Most often, credentials are used as a form of verification for employment or for pursuing further studies. This connection

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between the knowledge and skills that an educational credential represents and the economic value that such a credential can bring for an individual is a link to the relationship between credentials and human capital. Human capital has roots in economic and labour theory but also has notable linkages to social theorizing, particularly around education.

Human capital is explained to be the skills, knowledge and capabilities of a workforce of an organization or a country's population and the networks that the people in the workforce or population have developed to facilitate their innovation and productivity (Blair, 2011). Becker (1993) considers education and training as the most important investments in human capital because they produce increased earnings for those who undertake such investments. This view of education as an investment is rooted in human capital theory, which has its origins traced to Adam Smith, Gary Becker, Theodore Schultz and Jacob Mincer (Blair, 2011; Hartog & Maassen van den Brink, 2007; Walters, 2004). Human capital theory suggests that education, as a result of schooling, provides a means through which individuals acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for increasing their earnings and productivity (Becker, 1993). Correspondingly, these skills and knowledge enable successful employment of individuals who possess them and allows them to be productive and functional members of society (Walters, 2004). Such reasoning can serve as encouragement towards the pursuit of education for its beneficial returns. As such, this thought of education as an investment often factors in when making decisions about educational pursuits.

The human capital view of education as an investment that yields economic benefits is demonstrable in a number of instances. Human capital theory does provide useful insights on education and the role it plays in the labour market. However, in other instances, the human capital view is unable to be fully demonstrated or cannot be seen at all. Thus, there has to be more to this seemingly causal relationship between education and increased productivity and earnings as

suggested by human capital theory. Sometimes, the perspective of human capital theory does not adequately explain certain scenarios in the education and increased economic benefit sphere. The case of international credentials is one instance where there are several questions regarding the causal relationship between education and productivity or economic gain. An individual who possesses an international or foreign credential has made an investment in education. The credential they hold serves as a demonstration of the completion of a certain educational program. However, this investment does not always yield the expected economic benefits. When it comes to the recognition of the foreign credential, it may or may not be valued in the same way as the international credential would in its source country. When an international credential is not recognized, it does not always mean that the credential holder is not seen to have completed an educational program. Sometimes, the credential is not recognized because it is said to not meet certain criteria required of a similar credential in the country where recognition is sought. In this scenario, it can be argued that although the credential is not recognized in the same way that it would be in its source country, it can still serve as a demonstration of having completed an education program. Therefore, it can serve as a means for economic benefit, through employment, for employers seeking to hire those that have generally completed an educational program or a degree. These employers are not looking for a specific degree, just that the individual has completed a post-secondary program. However, there is a question around whether the credential holder would have received the same or more financial benefits if their credential was viewed the same as it was in the country where it was completed. There is also another question regarding why there are certain variations in benefits received from investing in education. Sometimes, credentials are able to provide their bearer with similar economic benefits regardless of where the individual is located. Conversely, there are times when the return on educational investments

varies a lot. The point to be made here is that there can be notable variations in economic returns when it comes to educational credentials, particularly foreign credentials. Furthermore, human capital theory does not appear to account for the variety of outcomes that can be observed when it comes to dealing with international credentials and their recognition or portability across various places. The inability of human capital described to explain situations where there are correlations between investments in education and limited economic benefits is one of the many reasons why it has been criticized and alternative theories and explanations offered for the relationship between educational credentials and economic/financial benefits.

Amongst its many criticisms, human capital theory has been criticized for reducing humans to a commodity (Tan, 2014), ignoring the relevance of class and class conflict in labour market events (Bowles & Gintis, 1975), ignoring the influence of individual attributes or capabilities (Smith, 1990) and for ignoring the influence of social, cultural, structural and other more qualitative variables in determining the effect of education on earnings. Generally, human capital theory has faced a lot of criticism because it relies on consistently rational human behavior in humans and does not consider factors that may vary or preclude such behavior (Tan, 2014). Such perfectly consistent human behavior is also is unrealistic because it is not representative of how humans behave in real life. All these areas of critique raise questions and offer valuable insights into human capital theory. However, I will focus slightly more on an area of critique that deals with human capital theory's assertion that it is the education of an individual that provides the knowledge and skills that enables higher incomes. Another perspective on this assertion argues that education is not necessarily the reason for the higher incomes. Rather, education works as a mechanism for screening or sorting for particular characteristics that an individual already has. Education produces more productivity and higher wages, but not because it imparts the necessary

skills; instead, it is because it helps in screening more able or desirable workers from less able or desirable workers (Chattopadhay, 2012; Tan, 2014). This alternative explanation is referred to as the screening hypothesis or signaling theory (Chattopadhay, 2012; Tan, 2014). According to the signaling theory, education, obtained through schooling, selects and classifies students according to their natural talents, which can be demonstrated by their academic success or lack thereof. Proof of academic success is embodied in a credential, which helps employers decide on the employment potential of an individual. In this way, education works as a screening device for employers to determine potential employees with desirable qualities. Innate qualities such as hard work, diligence and motivation are necessary for successful completing an educational program. Employers value such qualities in future employees for many reasons, including the ability of such traits to be useful in work performance. Therefore, education and the credential that demonstrates it serves a way for employers to determine which candidates possess these positive productivity-enhancing characteristics (Chattopadhay, 2012). Credentials therefore function as a means of closure by separating those who possess certain factors from those that do not. This function of credentials as a closure-inducing mechanism will be further explored in the following sections of this chapter.

Credentials and Social Closure

Credentials by their very nature of ascribing certain academic, professional or other attributes are exclusionary in nature. Social closure deals with the mechanisms and practices of exclusion and monopolization (Murphy, 1988). When directed specifically at credentials, it is referred to as credential closure. Those who do not possess credentials are excluded from access and belonging to opportunities, groups, jobs, careers and other things that those who do possess credentials have access to. Within the credentialed group, there also exists exclusion whereby those

with specific credentials have access to or can do certain things because of the credential they possess. For example, physicians, by virtue of their qualifications in the form of a medical degree, can provide specific medical care to humans while those without a medical degree cannot do so. In fact, in many places it is illegal to provide medical services as a physician without being authorized to do so through the appropriate legislative authorities. A similar idea applies to architects, engineers and other specialized professions where it is mandatory to possess the necessary qualification in order to legally function as a member of that credentialed group.

However, the exclusionary nature of credentials is not only because some people have credentials and some people do not. The prominence of an educational credential and its ability to hold such exclusionary capabilities in society is tied to deeper social explanations which are not examined when the cause is simply assigned to the possession of a credential. Credentials as a means of exclusionary social closure have been brought to the fore in contemporary society by the work of theorists such as Frank Parkin and Randall Collins. A key feature in the discussion of credential closure among Parkin and Collins is their varying explanations of credential closure, which creates different meanings upon analysis. In his critique of conceptions of closure theorists Murphy (1988) highlighted these different definitions by Parkin and Collins, and stressed the importance of clearing the ambiguity surrounding the meaning of credential closure in order to make a stronger theory.

Collins (1979) largely views credential closure as the requirement of any educational diploma for employment purposes. Parkin (1979) on the other hand, views credential closure as both legally supported monopolies and the extravagant use of credentials as a form of control over access to significant positions in the division of labour. These different views of credential closure by Collins and Parkin can affect the interpretation of the reason for closure and the outcome of

closure. Exploring the notion of a requirement for an educational diploma as the reason for closure can simply rest the blame on the possession of a certificate attesting to one's educational qualifications, without delving further into why a mere piece of paper carries the weight it does in society. A resolution on the ambiguity of conceptions of credential closure and the reason behind this closure is necessary since studying the concept of closure from Collins' or Parkin's standpoint alone can yield very different conclusions.

There is a range of mechanisms that institute credential closure well before the credential is earned and far sooner that the requirement of a credential for employment purposes. A lot of these mechanisms operate at almost inconspicuous levels and are a part of everyday society, so they can be easily glossed over. Thus, I suggest that credential closure arises not just because of the requirement for a credential, the possession of one or because of the legal powers ascribed to that credential. Instead, credential closure occurs due to the type of credential, its exclusivity and the social implications of possessing such a credential. Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital offers a foundation that can contribute to explanations regarding the social reasons behind credential closure. Therefore, with a particular focus on Collins' ideas of credential closure and Bourdieu's social and cultural capital, the aforementioned alternative rationale for credential closure is explored below. First, a deeper exploration of Collins' viewpoint on credential closure will ensue, followed by an elaboration of Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital.

Origins of credential closure

Credential closure, also referred to as credentialism, springs from Weber's closure theory, but focuses on the specifics surrounding credentials and their closure-inducing nature. Closure theory suggests that a group of individuals work to actively retain positions of power and control for their kind. Credential closure, according to Collins (1979), suggests that these monopolies are

created on the basis of educational credential requirements which act as barriers to those who do not have them.

Credential closure is rooted in Max Weber's theorizing on closure, in which he views formal education as being able to create exclusive status groups in the same way that race and ethnicity can (Weber, 1978). Murphy (1986) describes Weber's view on closure as a process of group monopolization of advantages by sealing off opportunities to other groups deemed to be mediocre and unqualified. Conversely, contemporary social-closure is seen to have originated from Frank Parkin's criticisms of Marxist class theory (Morrow & Torres, 1995). Parkin (1979) describes social closure according to Weber as the process by which groups try to maximize their rewards by limiting access to resources and opportunities to a select few. He discusses social closure as existing in exclusionary and usurpatory forms (Parkin 1979). Credential closure is viewed as an exclusionary form of closure, which Parkin (1979), describes as the form of closure that aims to attain privileges at the expense of other groups. On the other hand, Murphy (1988) considers Randall Collins to be the theorist that has produced the most extensive analysis and writings on credential closure. Parkin, Collins and Murphy have all produced interesting work in the area of social closure generally and credential closure specifically, thus, they are considered to be contemporary social closure theorists or neo-Weberians. Collins' views on credential closure are the focus in this discussion because of his singular view of credential requirements as being the source of closure in his analysis of credential closure.

Credential closure according to Collins

Collins holds a broad view of credential closure or credentialism as being the requirement for formal educational credentials for certain positions within organizations (Collins, 1979; Murphy, 1988). He contends that educational requirements serve as a barrier within

organizations, which helps to maintain the manual and non-manual divide in organizations (Collins, 1979). The non-manual category includes managerial and professional positions which have higher education credential requirements than other occupational levels (Collins, 1979). Manual labourers were most likely to come from lower status backgrounds in society and not have the required advanced credentials; consequently, they were unable to get promoted to higher level managerial positions (Collins, 1979). School dropouts, who were mostly from low and working class families, were viewed by employers as lacking desirable qualities for employment because they did not complete their education; thus, they could also only get menial jobs (Collins, 1979). Consequently, these menial jobs consisted of a large number of low or non-educated working class individuals who could not move up the class ladder or gain wealth through employment because they lacked the required education credentials. For these reasons, Collins views educational credential requirements as a means of stratification and compares it to other stratifying concepts such as race and social class because they work to keep members of a certain social group in a privileged position which allows them to carve out monopolies for themselves (Collins, 1979, 1988). By allowing for the formation of group monopolies, Collins (1979) indicates that education serves as a "cultural basis of group formation" (p. 11). At the same time, lower class groups are confined to menial positions within an organization and are unable to attain the perks that a higher position would afford.

From Collins' viewpoint, the stratifying effects of credentials are emphasized by the lack of correlation between the skill requirements for the high level positions and the education required for these positions. He argues that although job hierarchy is assumed to be tied to higher levels of skills which are only obtained through higher educational credentials, this is not the case as evidence - in the form of comparison of workers - does not show that a relationship exists between

education and job performance (Collins, 1979). He also points to other evidence which suggests that people do not learn much from school anyway and states that skills required for particular positions are learned on the job and not in school (Collins, 1979, 1971). Therefore, he advocates that it is not the case that higher levels of education provide an individual with the necessary skills to perform a job better than someone who does not have the same credentials. Besides not teaching job performance skills, Collins (1979, 1971) indicates that educational requirements are not related to individual employee productivity and schooling works more to socialize individuals instead of teaching applicable skills. In this way, credentials are tied to class in order to exclude members of lower classes, who do not have advanced credentials, from upper level employment positions.

People with power at the managerial level exert the power of "closure" through the monopolization of positions in an organization and by establishing the educational requirements for hiring new recruits to the organization. Collins (1979) noted the rarity of finding current managers who were previously in manual positions, as new managerial positions were filled by people from other managerial, professional or high level positions. Access to the monopolized positions is limited to those who have an acceptable educational credential. In order for someone from a non-managerial type position to gain access to a managerial position, they must have certain academic requirements which would be difficult for skilled workers to obtain without having to quit their jobs and return to school (Collins, 1979). Such obstacles constructed from the prerequisite for degrees or diplomas in order to hold certain positions in an organization account for Collins view of credential closure as being caused by educational credential requirements. However, Brown (1995) criticizes Collins' theory for making linear associations between work and credential requirements, without incorporating the changing employment scene and the effects of technological innovation on the nature of work requirements.

Limitations that restrict access to the higher level positions in organizations, which Collins talks about, are not solely tied to credentials. In contemporary society, where there are a substantial amount of credentials, closure is still experienced by those who have academic credentials in accessing certain types and levels of jobs. If academic credentials were the single cause of the closure described within organizations, it should follow that increased credentials would prompt a decrease in exclusionary closure. However, this is not the case. Should the idea of educational credential requirements be removed, restrictions and monopolies would still exist because they are closely tied to the social order and relationships in society which influence where a group or individual is positioned within this social realm.

Social and Cultural capital

The social nature of the sources of credential closure can be explored in depth through Pierre Bourdieu's theory on the forms of capital. Social capital and cultural capital are the specific capitals that can be utilized in examining the power behind educational credentials. Bourdieu utilized cultural capital and social capital in his explanation of social reproduction of class in society. Cultural capital describes features such as knowledge of and familiarity with dominant cultural codes, signals and practices which are passed on by virtue of a cultural heritage which embodies these features (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Such cultural capital affords its bearers with an inside knowledge of how things work in society and equips them with tools that allow for successful navigation of society in order to achieve their goals. Cultural capital could include linguistic competence in the language of the dominant culture, which allows for identification with that culture to those who belong and do not belong to it. In a situation where your first impression counts, being linguistically well versed in a particular culture can yield opportunities that would be otherwise unavailable.

Social backgrounds can also determine the amount of cultural capital an individual has access to. Typically, children from higher social classes or backgrounds have more cultural capital than those from lower class structures. Cultural capital can exist in an objectified or institutionalized state and can be exchanged for economic capital in either of these states (Bourdieu, 1986). In its objectified state, cultural capital can be manifested in knowledge of works of art and literature which can be worth a fortune in material terms. Knowing how to appropriate these works of art and literature in such a way that utilizes them to their full worth and extent, requires cultural capital in order to generate economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In the institutionalized state, cultural capital can be validated by the conferring of academic qualifications which attest to the possession of a certain type and amount of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Bellamy, 1994).

Social capital goes hand in hand with cultural capital in continuing class reproduction in Bourdieu's works. Bourdieu (1986) explains social capital as follows:

> The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (p. 248)

Social capital is linked to networks of connections and relationships which provide its members with benefits and profits in the form of economic or other capital. Reproducing and maintaining social capital requires dedicating time and energy to sociability in order to continually reaffirm relationships which can accrue more social capital that can be converted to higher status and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, these networks are not automatically instituted, as is

case with a family network; rather, an active effort at institution is made through strategies that seek to establish social relationships that are useful and long lasting.

The importance of networks, backgrounds, class and connections, which are building blocks in the creation and maintenance of cultural and social capital, are significant in credential closure. This is because these concepts help in the production and sustenance of monopolies on the pretext of educational credentials. Without the presence of social and cultural capital and their accompanying benefits as described by Bourdieu (1986), educational credential requirements on their own would not be able to produce and maintain the exclusionary type of closure that they do. Now, that post-secondary education is more accessible to a wider audience, leading to an abundance of credentials, the credential closure in existence today cannot be wholly attributed to a requirement for them for employment purposes.

Credential closure, social capital and cultural capital

Bourdieu (1973) implicates academic institutions in perpetuating class reproduction because the culture that is transmitted and rewarded in educational institutions is the culture of the dominant class. Students who are already familiar with the dominant cultural codes quickly and easily adapt to the academic environment and are well-prepared to excel. Cultural capital is not explicitly taught in schools, therefore, students who are not already familiar with the dominant culture and its practices have a harder time adjusting (Bourdieu, 1973). However, if they become familiar with the dominant cultural codes, they can also tap into the benefits it affords.

While post-secondary education may be more attainable today than it was years ago, an inside knowledge of post-secondary programs and how to utilize them to the best advantage or where to get the right information and accessories that do not explicitly come with a credential, but can be subtly infused throughout the post-secondary education experience, comes relatively

easily with the "right" type and amount of social and cultural capital. As Bellamy (1994) notes, cultural capital can inform one of valuable types of academic qualifications to pursue. Thus, cultural capital can be an invaluable source of information regarding degrees than can lead to lucrative positions or how to market your degree and brand yourself, so that you can reach great heights with the credential that you hold. Although two individuals can have the same access to higher education, differences in cultural capital and the network of social capital can affect the educational experience and further opportunities of both individuals at varying levels.

Furthermore, cultural and social capital can be so informative to the extent of offering perspectives that allow students to make decisions that will be more beneficial in the long-term than any monetary gains that can be obtained in the immediate future. For instance, in the pursuit of summer student jobs, cultural and social capital allows individuals to determine what future employers might want from having a personal or other social relationship with someone in the desired field. Such connections can provide a student with information and experience that will favourably distinguish them from others when applying for a job. Hence, although many individuals have access to an education, their inherent familiarity with cultural signals and normative codes as well as their social relationships can affect the amount of closure that each individual will encounter at a later period. Similarly, with respect to foreign credential recognition, cultural and social capital can be useful to someone with an international credential in terms of providing knowledge on how to market your credential to employers, how to get sufficient work experience, how to navigate the process of getting your credential recognized and so much other useful information that can be quite helpful when trying to obtain recognition of or utilize a foreign credential. When one can have access and take advantage of such information, their chances of

being able to fully utilize their international credentials greatly increases and is not entirely dependent on what racial background they possess.

Closure and exclusivity

An interesting question to ponder is whether a credential creates exclusivity or whether a pre-existing exclusivity of a program or position creates the need for a credential to maintain the exclusivity? In thinking about which one produces the other or whether one can exist without the other, the idea that credentialing and exclusivity often go hand in hand comes to mind. However, a more fascinating idea concerns the varying levels of closure and exclusivity that can be garnered from different types of educational credentials.

Differences in social and cultural capital offer different levels of closure and exclusivity for the source of academic credentials. For example, the varying level of closure and exclusivity can be seen in the number and types of opportunities available with a law degree from Harvard, Yale or Princeton, which are considered very high tiered schools versus the opportunities afforded by a low tier school. Although there has been a lot of lamenting about the state of the law profession in the United States in recent news (Harper, 2015; Horn, 2016; Koba, 2013), what many people may not realize is that graduates of top tier law schools such as Harvard and Yale hardly have as many problems with getting placed after graduation, compared to counterparts in what are considered low tier schools (Lubin, 2013; McEntee, 2016). This is likely because of the cultural capital and the networks and connections of social capitals afforded them by their Harvard degree. Although law degrees are available at a variety of different institutions, the degrees from very prominent institutions add an additional level of closure that affects other law degree holders that are not from said prominent institutions. In this situation, having a credential is not the source of closure; instead it is the type and source of credential possessed that forms the basis for closure.

Credentials from highly-regarded institutions have this ability for closure because of the prestige and exclusivity attached to the institutions that offer them. Subsequently, these institutions confer such "privileges" to their graduates; essentially setting them up with a tremendous amount of useful social and cultural capital. The esteem reserved for these institutions comes from and is sustained by the perspectives of a significant proportion of society.

Closure, connotations and ideology

Collins (1979) points out that the emphasis on educational credentials is more often seen in organizations that value cultural socialization and in large national bureaucracies. Being culturally socialized means that one is aware of the cultural and normative codes of a society and practices them. Organizations that value cultural socialization can be said to value cohesion and to resent dissent; they value employees who share the dominant culture of the society in which they exist. Students in professional programs are typically socialized according to the popular or dominant culture present in their society. Even if they do not entirely subscribe to the dominant culture, they are aware of it and know how to use it to their advantage.

Familiarity with normative codes is often rewarded by society, and higher education can facilitate familiarity with normative codes and provide a wider network of social and cultural capital. Consequently, it can be argued that it is the social and cultural capital obtained by being exposed to the networks in professional programs and in higher education in general that makes a credential valuable enough to produce closure. Without having been in a university environment, one may not be very familiar with the cultural and social nuances which transfer over to the working world. Members of legal, educational, engineering and health professions often consider others outside of their respective fields as being woefully unfamiliar with the culture and expectations in the field even though they may be highly educated in a different field. It still

remains that unless you have the specific credential and have been socialized into the culture of the profession, you are not accorded the same insider privileges.

The notion that the credential alone does not provide closure is also seen in the instance of professionals who for whatever reason, have chosen to forgo practicing in the profession they were trained in. For example, a lawyer who has decided to not get called to the bar or who has been called to the bar, but has never practiced in the legal field is seen as somewhat of an outsider, even though they have the educational credential that allows them to be a lawyer. Due to the fact that they have not practiced as a lawyer, they are seen as out of touch and unfamiliar with the culture of the legal profession. So, although they may have held high level positions in a different field, they typically cannot automatically transfer to a high level litigation position or a position that places them as singularly responsible for a medium to large legal firm. New lawyers who have only been with the firm for a few years are often not given this type of opportunity either. A similar analogy can be constructed for almost all professional programs.

Hence, the cultural and social capital encountered in the training and subsequent practice of a profession serves as a form of closure. This is in line with Bourdieu's (1973) explanation of the socialization function of school. Bourdieu suggests that schools promote social reproduction by teaching and practicing methods that belonged to the dominant class. This cultural socialization is converted to economic capital with the conference of an educational degree. Thus, an employer knows that along with their degree, an employee has acquired certain cultural nuances that are beneficial and somewhat unavailable without formal education. A credential without that inbuilt code and attachment to social status is not going to be viewed with as much importance in society.

Credentials, Closure, Capital and Foreign Credential Recognition

The above discussion on social closure and capital highlights a few things with respect to matters of FCR. It demonstrates that credentials by their very nature are exclusionary even when the credentials originate within the same country. A credential from a different place such as an international credential is subject to the general exclusionary nature of credentials. In addition to the general exclusionary characteristics of credentials, international credentials are subject to other exclusions because they are from different systems that may have different social contexts, approaches and ideologies than the credentials from the domestic country. All of this contributes to issues in the recognition of foreign credentials that are not just because the credentials are foreign.

By focusing on specific methodologies of evaluation and structured assessment processes that speak directly about the credential itself and not the social characteristics that it carries, foreign credential recognition processes in Canada attempt to determine equivalencies to Canadian credentials without value-laden conceptions that unstructured or value-laden assessments may do. This might also explain why countries with similar educational structures tend to more easily recognize each other's credentials, due to the fact that they already share similarities in educational systems and structures. On the other hand, countries that do not share such similarities tend to have a more difficult time being recognized. These countries with similar or identical educational systems and structures may be common to a particular race or races, thus making it seem like those of a certain race get their qualifications accepted and others do not. However, in actuality, it is likely because of the similarities in education systems and other aspects of the countries that make the credentials more transferable not necessarily the race of those who live in those countries.

Additionally, the social and cultural capital that one obtains from exposure to certain networks and nuances from cultural socializations that occur when attending a post-secondary institution differs depending on what country the institution is located in. The experiences of exchange and international students lend to support to the presence of varying social and cultural contexts and capital depending on where on is studying. We experience this variety of context at different levels when we travel to different parts of the world or encounter people and communities from different social and/or cultural backgrounds than ourselves. The difference in an educational context is the credential that serves as evidence of being exposed to or having participated in whatever context was present at the institution where you attended. There are other types of evidence of participation and/or exposure present in other situations outside of education, but that is best left for a different thesis.

Conclusion

Credential closure is not limited to the requirement of a credential for the purpose of obtaining a position in an organization. As discussed above, exclusivity and societal perceptions have a greater hand in the creation of closure than credentials alone. An exploration of Collins' theory on credential closure details the perspectives and experiences that led to his conclusion of degree or diploma requirements being the reason behind credential closure. However, in today's society when educational credentials are in abundance, closure that limits access to positions within organizations still exists, showing that the reasons for closure have to do with a bit more than the requirement for credentials. It also shows that issues related to the recognition of foreign credentials are not only because the credentials are foreign. The type of credential an individual possesses, their knowledge of what degree or diploma to pursue, knowing how to maximally utilize the degree, demand and supply and ideologies in society can ultimately create obstacles which can

create closure even though an individual possess an advanced degree, a domestic or international credentials. Consequently, reasons for credential closure run a bit deeper and are tied to the way modern society is constructed.

An analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's theories on social and cultural capital assists in the explanation of the layered basis for credential closure. Bourdieu's social and cultural capitals, which affect the ease and ability of an individual to successfully navigate their way through society in order to achieve their goal, is the proverbial 'icing on the cake' when it comes to credential closure. Credentials may initiate closure by legitimizing the presence of social and cultural capital, but in the absence of credentials, these capitals will still exist and a different way of validating their presence will be employed.

As the examples above have shown, credential closure occurs within the same country, within educational fields and both for those who have educational credentials and for those who do not. The social aspects at play within credential closure may be part of the reason why FCR processes in Canada are structured and focused on tangible ways of demonstrating equivalencies to domestic credentials. Such focus on structure and tangibility helps to avoid the complicated and messy facets that social aspects lend to credentials. However, as indicated by the review of literature regarding the recognition of foreign credentials in Canada, there are issues with achieving the ideal scenario where every credential is valued just as it would be in its originating country.

To achieve the ideal or preferred scenario, a look at the processes surrounding FCR is necessary. The literature on FCR has largely focused on the issues generated by a faulty system, the related arising outcomes and has called for government intervention into the process, but has not focused on an analysis of governmental responses and the specific processes of credential

recognition. Thus, this thesis will examine in more detail the government's approach to FCR in Canada in the form of the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), which is intended to deal with concerns that have been raised over the years around the inconsistency of structured recognition and portability of foreign credentials within Canada. Before launching into this examination, I will detail in the next chapter how I intend to do so and answer the guiding questions of this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to explore and understand recent public policy responses to the issues and criticisms of foreign credential recognition (FCR) in Canada. This exploration involves an understanding of the discourse and issues around FCR in Canada and a look at policy responses to the problems of credential recognition as well as the feasibility and effectiveness of such responses. In addition, I aim to discover what the ideal scenario for FCR in Canada is and whether or not this ideal scenario is realistic and achievable. An examination and understanding of these areas is necessary in order to put the information and knowledge gleaned from this exploration to good use in informing future policies. To address the purpose of this study, tackle my research questions and delve deeper into the subject of foreign qualifications recognition and assessment, I describe the methodological plan that informs my approach. The description of my methodological plan details the method or process of inquiry that I undertook in attending to the purpose of this study and the questions I aim to answer. Thus, in this chapter, I will outline the philosophical framework that informs my research design, methods and overall approach to this study.

Philosophical Paradigm

In the context of research, paradigms can be described as belief systems or worldviews - ways of looking at, experiencing or thinking about the world - which consist of certain philosophical assumptions that influence and steer thinking and action (Mertens, 2010; Morgan, 2007). Research paradigms typically specify basic beliefs around axiology, ontology, epistemology and methodology. Thus, philosophical paradigms or worldviews are important to research because they inform the strategies, action plans and methods underlying the researcher's approach to an issue or idea.

This study takes an interdisciplinary approach to policy analysis through a largely pragmatic paradigm lens (Mertens, 2010). My work is fitting for this pragmatic lens where the nature of the research questions guides the approaches to be used rather than the paradigm specifically dictating a particular approach to addressing the research question or issue at hand. The focus is on the questions worth asking, which then inform the selection of the most appropriate methods for answering the questions (Morgan, 2007). As opposed to the research method being the most important factor in guiding the research process, the problem at hand is most important and any and all approaches necessary for understanding and addressing the problem are utilized (Creswell, 2014). Pragmatists are more concerned with usefulness or practicality and solutions to problems. Their goal is to find valuable points of connection (Mertens, 2010).

In embracing the pragmatic paradigm, I ascribe to the existence of a single reality with unique individual interpretations and the desire for knowledge acquisition based on its use for particular purposes. Given the purpose of this study, the specific nature of my research questions and their importance to the intended outcome of being practical and useable in informing public policy approaches to FCR in Canada, the pragmatic approach best reflects my researcher worldview. Pragmatism links theory and praxis and carefully considers real contexts and the results of actions in such contexts to guide its approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). For this study, the pragmatic lens has meant that the nature of the questions I have around FCR in Canada have driven the approaches that I select in order to study and better understand issues and questions. Applying a pragmatic lens in this study also means that utility and practicality are important guiding characteristics in examining responses and making recommendations or proposing solutions.

In undertaking this study, I also acknowledge the effect of my personal experiences and encounters on my research choices: my decision to study this particular topic, my research questions and the choices regarding how I would research this topic. Within the epistemology of the pragmatic paradigm, pragmatists are not constricted to position themselves as distanced observers or relational or socially and historically contextualized researchers (Mertens, 2010). Instead, a pragmatist is free to study what they find valuable and interesting and uses the results in ways that provide positive results within their value system (Mertens, 2010). Consequently, although my experiences related to foreign credential recognition can be said to be a part of the motivation behind this study, these experiences are only a small part of my motivation. Those experiences, as motivation, are greatly overshadowed by the desire to understand the overwhelming difference in outcomes that most people around me have had with foreign credential recognition in contrast with the popular narrative of discrimination as an explanation for unfavourable outcomes in credential assessment and recognition. This does not mean that discrimination does not exist at all nor does it rule out the roles that direct or indirect discrimination may play. The need to introduce another story to the book of credential recognition, a story that does not kill agency before it has had a chance to be exercised, that does not predict outcomes based on one-dimensional narratives that may hold true for a number of reasons and not one particularly deterministic and limiting narrative is a major motivator. Additionally, I am motivated by the desire to analyze attempts to address an issue in order to understand their effectiveness or ineffectiveness and provide possible solutions for improvement, instead of increasing the number of complaints and criticisms to the existing body of research. My desire is to analyze the very responses and interventions that have been called on to deal with the FCR problems, in order to

determine the cause(s) of the problem and what, if anything, can be done to deal with said problems.

Qualitative Research

The nature of my research questions around seeking an understanding of the credential recognition process in Canada, along with its issues and policy responses, coupled with my pragmatic approach led to the selection of a qualitative research method for this study. The desire to explore and understand these issues and their current policy solutions within specific related and interconnected contexts, necessitated the use of qualitative research for a deeper understanding. Qualitative research methods are well suited to research that attempts to provide a detailed description of a specific program, practice or setting (Mertens, 2010). As Merriam (1998) points out, qualitative research has a goal of eliciting understanding and meaning via the researcher, who functions as the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data. Qualitative research consists of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible, thus it involves an interpretive approach that seeks to make sense of or interpret phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens, 2010).

Interpretivist qualitative research aims to understand a particular context and uses multiple perspectives to facilitate a better understanding of a particular context or situation (Willis & Nilakanta, 2007). Interpretive methods are based on the assumption that we live in a world in which there are multiple interpretations of phenomena (Yanow, 2000). The idea of multiple perspectives fits in nicely with the ontological belief of pragmatic research that individuals have their own unique interpretations of reality. Acknowledging a variety of perspectives in interpretive methodology recognizes the multiple constructions of reality that people have, which usually means that different people have different perspectives and perceptions of the world.

Consequently, a better understanding of a situation necessitates the inclusion of a variety of perspectives. In policy analysis, an interpretive approach involves focusing on the meanings that policies have for a wide range of relevant audiences as well as the values, feelings or beliefs they express and on the processes through which these meanings are communicated to and received by various audiences (Yanow, 2000). Since methods of data collection and the data sources used can influence the meaning and understanding produced by a study, using multiple data sources is encouraged in order to capture various perspectives (Willis & Nilakanta, 2007).

Research Design

Policy Analysis as a conceptual/theoretical foundation

The conceptual foundation guiding this study is policy analysis. A number of definitions exist about what policy analysis is, but for this chapter, I will focus on the most applicable and readily understandable versions. Policy analysis is simply defined by Pal (2014) as "the disciplined application of intellect to public problems" (p. 15). Pal's definition reflects Dunn's (2008) description of policy analysis as a multidisciplinary process intended to produce, critically assess and communicate information that is useful for understanding and improving policies. Thus, a key component of policy analysis is that it yields advice that informs various public policy decisions, which makes it a suitable theoretical framework from which to undertake this study. The usefulness or practicality of policy analysis is emphasized by Weimer and Vining (2011) whose definition of policy analysis as "client-oriented advice relevant to public decisions and informed by social values" (p. 24) is intended to stress the importance of social values to the policy analysis purpose of developing practical approaches to problems.

These explanations of policy analysis indicate that it involves a combination of social scientific research and practical approaches to research in order to elicit understanding and produce

solutions. Policy analysis is disciplined in that it is grounded in a systematic and multidisciplinary method that enables researchers or policy analysts to deal with social issues in a suitable scientific framework that can assist those who make public policy decisions (Graham, 1988; Pal, 2014). While an aim of policy analysis is to advise, that aim is not the sole rationale for its use in this study; rather policy analysis is used because of its ability to undertake systematic, methodological research in order to understand public policy problems and offer viable solutions and/or alternatives. This practical and methodological approach is necessary in order to consider complex social human problems within an environment that is not idealistic in terms of being free of constraints. The multidisciplinary nature of policy analysis mentioned above comes from the fact that it draws on a variety of fields in social and behavioural sciences including social and political philosophy, economics, ethics and decision analysis to name a few (Pal, 2014). Its methodology can be rooted in either of the disciplines on which it draws from, but a focus on the issue at hand versus the specific discipline in which the issue may be based is the focal point. Being systematic comes from policy analysis logically proceeding through a set of clearly defined stages or steps in order to arrive at a conclusion (Pal, 2014).

A policy analysis typically involves an identification and understanding of the policy problem as well as the recommendation and evaluation of solutions. The process of policy analysis is structured around asking and answering questions regarding the nature of the policy problem, what is trying to be achieved, how it will go about being addressed and how being successful or unsuccessful at achieving the aims are determined (Pal, 2014). The policy analysis framework utilized in this study is heavily based on the pragmatic public policy analysis method described by Clemons and McBeth (2001). In practice and application, this framework also relies on some

aspects of policy analysis identified in Weimer and Vining's (2011) problem and solution analysis approach as well as Pal's (2014) analysis of policy through policy arguments. Clemons and McBeth's (2001) pragmatic policy analysis method involves:

- Defining the problem and determining its causes,

- Establishing criteria for evaluating policy alternatives,

- Creating policy alternatives,

- Evaluating policy alternatives and making policy recommendations and finally;

- Evaluating the adopted policy.

This method fits with the basic tenets of pragmatic policy development, which involves problem finding and problem solving (Crump, 1992). Problem definition or issue identification in a policy analysis is crucial to the rest of the policy analysis process. The way in which a problem is defined often shapes the way the problem is handled throughout the policy process (Birkland, 2011). Identifying the wrong issue or not articulating it properly could derail the rest of the policy process, thus care and attention should be paid to understanding the issue. However, problem definition is no easy feat. Public policy problems are often interdependent, subjective, artificial and dynamic, meaning that they do not exist in isolation, are open to multiple interpretations, do not exist without the individuals or groups who define them and are constantly changing (Clemons & McBeth, 2001; Dunn, 2008). Thus, it is difficult to have unanimous agreement on the definition of a particular policy problem. However, forming an understanding of the nature of the problem and its context helps with problem definition. Clemons and McBeth (2001) recommend proceeding by determining the location, history, and general background of the problem, followed by clearly defining and operationalizing associated terms and identifying individuals or groups who have an interest in the issue along with what their values and interests are.

For this study, the application of Clemons and McBeth's (2001) method of policy analysis will involve a clear identification and definition of the problem or problems for which policy responses, such as the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), were intended to address. A background, context and history surrounding the issue of foreign credential recognition and the policy responses to this issue are useful here for proper problem definition. Based on the context of the issue, I will develop criteria for evaluating the existing policy responses and any proposed alternatives. These evaluation criteria will be derived from policy goals. Policy goals are the objectives that a particular public policy is intended to accomplish (Pal, 2014). Goals are used to evaluate alternative policies and are typically normative and reflective of human values (Weimer & Vining, 2011). Since values can affect what goals a policy is intended to accomplish, it is important to consider the interests and views of a diversity of stakeholders while establishing criteria (Clemons & McBeth, 2011). Having an understanding of the policy problem prior to establishing evaluation criteria allows for the identification of goals or criteria that are particularly relevant to the policy issue under analysis. Thus, determining the aims or goals behind the QAF and other alternative policies will help create the criteria on which the policies can be assessed. The same evaluation criteria will be applied to all policies for consistent evaluation, unless otherwise stated. To establish evaluation criteria for policies, it is necessary to consider policy goals as well as the desires of all stakeholders who have an interest in the issue at hand.

Existing policy proposals, policies from other jurisdictions as well as generic policy solutions can all work as sources for developing policy alternatives (Weimer & Vining, 2011). Alternative policy responses will be derived from a best practices search, which explores how other jurisdictions have dealt with the issue of foreign credential recognition. Since education is a provincial responsibility in Canada, this study will be examining provincial policy responses to

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the FCR issue and will be identifying any different policy approaches or best practices as a source of policy alternatives. Next, is evaluating the policies against the previously established criteria and making policy recommendations based on the evaluations as well as the entire policy analysis process. Hence, the adaptation of the approaches from Clemons and McBeth (2001), Pal (2014) and Weimer and Vining (2011) to create the policy analysis framework for this study can be summarized as follows: issue identification and definition, identification of policy responses (existing and alternative policy responses), determination of evaluation criteria based on policy goals, evaluation of identified policies and finally, making a policy recommendation.
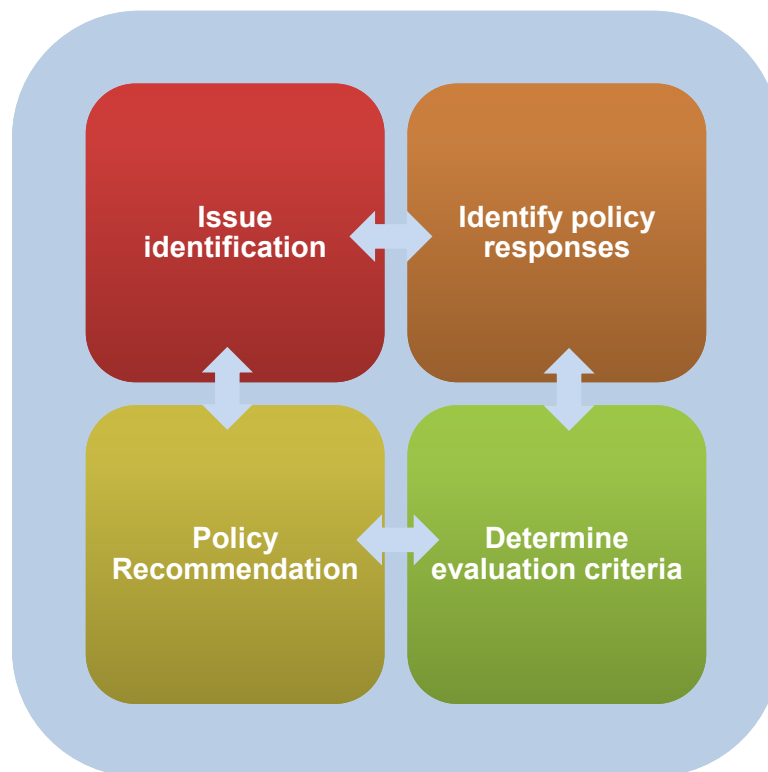

Figure 4.1. Applied method of policy analysis

Although this process appears to be sequential, proceeding from one step to the next, that is not necessarily the case. Each step does feed into each other, but not always in a sequential manner. For example, determining the criteria upon which to evaluate identified policy responses may

reveal that a review of identified policy alternatives may need to revised or removed. Doing policy analysis in this way, where linear and non-linear modes are employed can ultimately make for a better analysis (Weimer & Vining, 2011). In practice, policy analysis is not clean and logical; thus, policy analysis methods serve as a blueprint to guide analysis and prevent overlooking an important step (Clemons & McBeth, 2001).

Critical Policy Analysis

Although deliberate and systematic, recognizing that policy analysis is not necessarily value free and often requires asking deeper questions about societal issues and how they are handled, calls for the application of the critical dimension to this study. When used in education policy settings, critical policy analysis focuses on the following concerns that necessitate its inclusion in the analysis to be carried out within this study. Fundamental concerns of a critical approach to policy analysis include paying attention to the following: differences in policy rhetoric and reality, the root and development of the policy, power distributions, social stratification as it relates to policy effects on privileged and unequal relationships; and finally, non-dominant group resistance to oppression (Diem, Young, Welton, Mansfield Lee, 2014). Traditional approaches to policy analysis can be limiting by relying on the same framework for conducting policy analysis rather than choosing epistemologies and methodologies that are most suitable for analyzing the policy issue in question (Diem et al., 2014).

In the public policy context, the citizens or interest groups that have their demands or values turned into public policy hold power by influencing the development of policies that reflect their values (Clemons & McBeth, 2001). In a democracy, citizens hold the most influential power over a government. From a citizen's perspective, governments are democratically elected to address public problems and provide public services in the public interest (Pal, 2014). However, citizens

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have various views, values and interpretation of issues, which often leads to value conflicts. Value conflicts occur when there are differing definitions of social facts (Clemons & McBeth, 2001). As Clemons & McBeth describe (2001), objective and subjective conditions are the focal points in value conflict theory. The objective condition is an empirical fact, such as an observation that a country's population is growing, while the subjective condition is the various perceptions of the objective condition by groups or individuals with different values or interests. Given the presence of different groups with differing interests and values, and the ability of citizens and interest groups to influence public policies, value conflicts are bound to occur when there are social or policy problems. Therefore, the critical piece of critical policy analysis refers to analyzing policy while acknowledging the importance of context, group values, and the contentious nature of defining problems and proposing solutions (Diem et al., 2014).

Case Study

Case studies are a common method of data collection used in qualitative research. As a data collection method, case study is a strategy that involves the systematic gathering of information about a particular occurrence, object, or setting in order to allow for an effective description, understanding and explanation of it (Berg, 2009). Typically, the researcher who utilizes case study as a data collection method is interested in a process or a population of cases, not just an individual case in isolation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The use of case studies in research is not dictated by a specific methodology; instead, the object under study defines the use of case study as a data collection mechanism (Mertens, 2010; Stake, 2005). Case study allows for the examination of simple or complex phenomenon and can take a narrow or broad focus on the examination of the phenomenon. The ultimate purpose of a case study is to provide an in-depth exploration, with very rich and detailed information on the particular object under study (Berg,

2009; Merriam, 1998); thus, case studies are most useful at providing a firsthand understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2006). Besides enabling the discovery of useful information, another advantage of the case study method is that because of its focus on providing holistic descriptions and explanations, it allows the researcher to capture nuances, patterns and subtle underlying elements that may be overlooked in other data collection methods (Berg, 2009). These benefits of the case study in providing rich information to facilitate understanding of a particular issue is why I have employed it as a data collection method in this study. As a data collection method, it enables the collection of in-depth data and information on public policy responses to FCR in Canada. Additionally, it allows for an understanding of the processes involved in the existence of FCR in Canada as well as attempts to address it. Therefore, for this study, I apply the case study method to collect rich data regarding public policy responses to FCR in Canada.

Data Sources

The primary data sources for this study are official policy documents. Documents are considered to be useful sources of data in qualitative research (Mertens, 2010). They can provide context, background and historical insight for the phenomena under review, which is useful for a researcher (Bowen, 2009). Information contained in documents may also reveal additional questions that are worth asking, may provide a means of tracking change and development and may be analyzed as a means of verifying findings (Bowen, 2009). Most importantly, though, documents are very effective at providing data when events have already occurred and can no longer be observed (Bowen, 2009). For these reasons, as well as, the fact that public policies typically exist in a documented format, official policy documents serve as a primary data source for this study.

The policy documents specifically under consideration in this study are FCR policies at a

national, provincial and trans-provincial level. At the national level, the policy document is the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF). Regulatory bodies, professional associations, apprenticeship offices and employers set the requirements and procedures for credential assessment and recognition (CICIC, 2015a). Thus, unlike the national QAF, there is not one official policy document at the provincial level that lays out a specific policy or policies on FCR. Consequently, for this study, I will be examining a number of documents from these organizations involved in determining the credential assessment and recognition requirements. At the provincial level, I will focus on the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia - provinces that have historically been popular settling locations for immigrants and other individuals with international credentials. According to the National Household Survey, in 2011, British Columbia and Ontario were the top two provinces where the highest proportion of adults with international post-secondary credentials resided (Statistics Canada, 2013). Examining all the provinces and territories in Canada would be a very daunting task for this study, given its level of detail. Therefore, looking at two provinces that have a large number of newcomers with international credentials that require assessment and recognition will help provide a range of useful information of the Canadian foreign credential landscape. In addition, the major recognized and provincially recommended credential organizations in these two provinces are members of a larger organization of credential assessment agencies across Canada whose members ascribe to the same quality standards for evaluating international credentials. More details on this and other FCR matters pertaining to British Columbia and Ontario will be discussed in the sixth chapter of this study.

At the trans-provincial level, I will be examining various documents from the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA Canada) and Engineers Canada, both of which are the

national organizations of the accounting and engineering professions, and have provincial and/or territorial constituent bodies. In addition to their trans-provincial nature, I have chosen to study these two professions because of the depth, accessibility and clarity of applicable information they have to offer when compared to other professions. Even though engineering and accounting are very specific professions, distinct from other professions, they have similarities with other professions, including being regulated professions that require particular designations in other to legally practice within Canada. In addition, while there are professional requirements for each profession, there are some general requirements that they have in common, such as the need for an appropriate post-secondary level credential or for fluency in at least one of the official languages of Canada. Therefore, although engineering and accounting are only two of the many professions within the country, a closer look at the processes within these professions can still provide insight into how regulated professions often handle the recognition and assessment of foreign credentials.

Document analysis

Given that most of the data and information to be used in the analysis exist in written form, the primary methodology for analysis that will be employed in this study is document analysis. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents that involves examining, interpreting and synthesizing the data contained within a particular document(s) in order to make meaning and gain understanding (Bowen, 2009). The procedure for document analysis involves finding, selecting, appraising and synthesizing the data contained within the documents (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, document analysis is not merely putting a series of excerpts from printed material together in order to convey whatever idea comes to mind. Rather as Bowen (2009) notes, document analysis is a process of evaluating documents in such a way that produces empirical knowledge and develops understanding while the researcher aims for a balance of

objectivity and sensitivity in the process. In this way, document analysis yields rich and detailed information in a readily available manner.

The process of document analysis to be used is intended to be a deliberate, thorough and systematic one that will meaningfully contribute to the understanding and evaluation of the approach to FCR in Canada. Besides the fact that my data exist in written form, I chose document analysis as a methodology because of its ability to provide empirical data for my research in an unobtrusive and nonreactive manner (Bowen, 2009; Mertens, 2010). This is important because I aim to analyze the information intentionally presented via public policy on foreign credentials. The main intention is to explore policy responses to FCR, and to examine their feasibility and effectiveness through policy analysis. Additionally, the ability of document analysis to offer background and context to an issue, suggest the need for additional questioning or investigation and provide a method for tracking change and development as highlighted by Bowen (2009) is another key reason for selecting this methodology. In applying document analysis to this study in alignment with Bowen's advice, the original purpose of the document and its intended audience are considered in the process of making meaning and gaining understanding of certain FCR policies in Canada.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is often described as a combination of a range of critical approaches. It is noted to be rooted in critical linguistics, have no single homogenous version and is mostly associated with the works of Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun van Djik (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Simpson & Mayr, 2010). CDA is both a theory and a method and is used as way to understand the relationship between language and society (Rogers, 2011). It is used in both ways in this study, although it is mostly drawn on as a method. As a theoretical framework,

CDA serves as a critical theory of the social world in describing, interpreting and explaining the relationship between language and discourse in the construction and representation of the social world (Rogers, 2011). It provides a means to explore the relationships between discursive practices, events and texts and broader sociocultural structures, relations and processes (Taylor, 2004). As a method, CDA provides a model of how to do discourse analysis as seen in Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse analysis.

This three-dimensional model is a reflection of Fairclough's view of CDA as it draws from a variety of disciplines (Fairclough, 2007; Taylor, 2004). Fairclough (2013) described CDA as an interdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements as well as an analysis of the internal relations of discourse and the linguistic social order it is part of. Analysis of discourse in text or other forms is solely not what CDA is. Text is used in a broad way to refer to written and printed texts as well as spoken words and can mean any instance whereby language is used (Fairclough, 2003). Although Fairclough (2013) acknowledges the importance of linguistic text analysis in CDA, he views CDA more as a "systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process" (Fairclough, 2013, p. 10), of which analysis of text is only a portion of this systematic process. This view is reflected in Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which views discourse analysis as consisting of text analysis, discourse practice and social practice. This is the CDA approach primarily employed in this study.

The text analysis dimension is a linguistic analysis of the text and is a part of an analysis of the semantic, grammatical and lexical portions of discourse, also known as the internal relations of text (Fairclough, 2003; Simpson & Mayr, 2010). Discourse practice focuses on examining the

Text analysis: linguistic analysis of text

Discourse Practice: production, distribution, consumption

Social Practice: macro social analysis
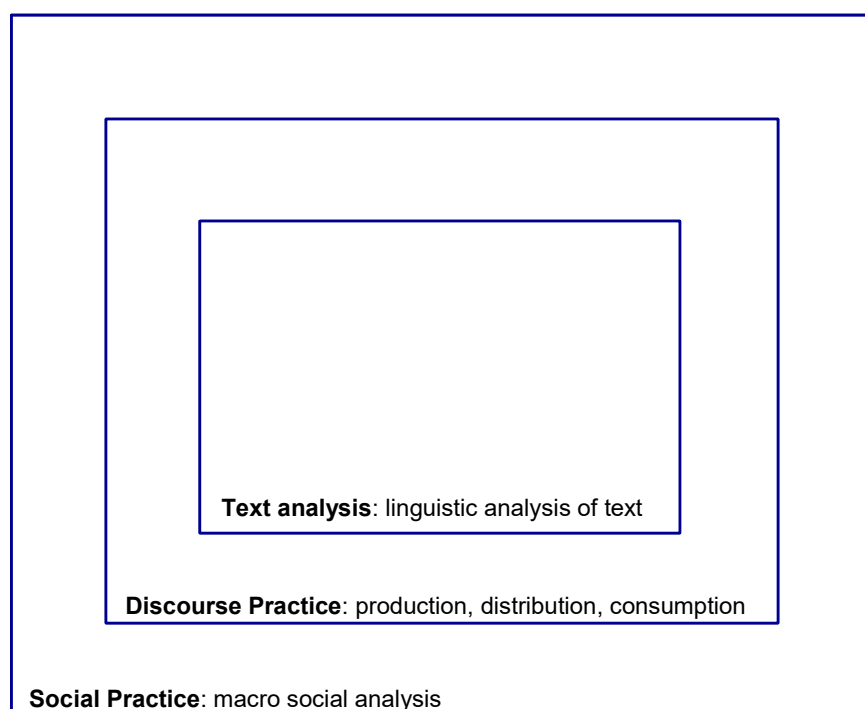
Figure 4.2. Critical Discourse Analysis (adapted from Simpson & Mayr, 2010)

production, distribution and consumption processes of a text in society and the social practice dimension is a macro level approach that pays attention to the broader issues, social structures and social events that influence the discourse and are important for its social analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Simpson & Mayr, 2010). CDA addresses social problems through analysis that seeks to locate social problems and analyze how discourse either works to construct the issue or is historically constructed by the issue (Rogers, 2011). Intertextuality is a concept that describes the connections of particular discourses to other discourses that were produced earlier, later or simultaneously (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Simpson & Mayr, 2010). The intertextuality of discourse in CDA emphasizes the importance of context, which includes sociocultural knowledge and intertextuality, in the understanding of discourse. Thus, CDA insists on analysis of context to inform the understanding of the language in discourse (Rogers, 2011).

I use CDA as a conceptual and analytic tool in this thesis to incorporate the sociocultural context and the intertextuality of the discourse around FCR in Canada. The discourse around FCR

in Canada incorporates a variety of areas (such as labour, immigration, economics, education, cultural and political studies) that are connected and influence or affect each other. CDA in policy analysis also allows for a deeper analysis of the language in the discourse around policy approaches to FCR. CDA is also employed because of its ability to produce agency by operating constructively. CDA operates constructively through providing tools for discerning how discourse represents the social and natural world, particular interests and can reproduce or sustain power structures (Luke, 1995). This constructive nature generates agency by showing points at which influences can or cannot be made as well as teaching one how to navigate the context in which they exist for personal, social or community good (Luke, 1995).

Data analysis

Data analysis in this study will be informed by strategies in policy analysis and critical discourse analysis. As this study is an examination of policy responses to FCR in Canada, an analysis of policy documents that contained policy responses to the recognition of foreign credentials in Canada was necessary. These policy documents, earlier identified, will be examined using document analysis guided by critical discourse analysis. Since the policies under review exist in document format, and thus serve as the data source, document analysis was selected as a suitable procedure. The policy documents will be analyzed in a manner that aligns with the adapted Clemons and McBeth (2001) pragmatic policy analysis method described above. The main analysis technique is document analysis guided by elements of Fairclough's (2013) critical discourse analysis. The first stage of analysis involves a thorough review of the official policy documents and an identification of applicable sections to the purpose of this research. The next stage of analysis involves a more detailed reading and examination of the policy documents to extract information that would help provide history and context for the issue of FCR in Canada,

determine stakeholders for the issue and their potential interests and values determine policy goals and establish evaluation criteria. Similar analysis of the documents also occurs to extract information for generating policy alternatives such as best practices, policy similarities and differences in the area of FCR. Finally, the QAF and the established policy alternatives are assessed and a policy recommendation made.

Keeping Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse analysis in mind, from a macro to micro level view in this research study, the social practice dimension will be explored by delving into the context of FCR in Canada, the discourse practice dimension is dealt with through an analysis of policy texts at a national, provincial and trans-provincial level paying attention to the production, distribution and consumption of these texts. Text analysis entails a deeper reading of sections of the policy documents to determine important actors and actions in advancing the policy approaches aimed at dealing with issues of FCR.

Ethics

This study did not involve human subjects and thus did not have to go through an ethics committee. Nevertheless, ethical conflicts can arise in the course of work as a policy analyst. Policy analysis, whether rational, utilitarian, based on applied science or otherwise is hardly value neutral (Hawkesworth, 1988; Stone, 2012). The normative aspect of policy analysis unveils the necessity for ethics in policy research and in resolving ethical dilemmas that policy analysts may face in the course of their work (Hawkesworth, 1988). In such cases, where ethical conflicts are impending and as a general guide in policy analysis, Weimer and Vining (2011) suggest some ethical principles for policy analysis. This ethos includes explicit recognition of the obligation to protect the basic rights of others, to support constitutionally described democratic processes and to promote analytical and personal integrity. As noted by many scholars, including Spicker (2006),

policy analysis in itself is an ethical activity because it affects and has implications for people. Policy analysis and its relationship to ethics is important because public policy, which is often the result of policy analysis, generally affects the public in some manner. As a result, ethical issues such as democracy, accountability and diligence amongst others come into play. Along similar lines as Weimer and Vining (2011), Spicker (2006) also indicates primary ethical principles for policy analysis which include beneficence – the requirement for a policy to be beneficial, do some good and not do harm, analyst responsibilities around trust, confidentiality reliability, and not abusing power. Policy analysts often operate within constrained environments, as such working through a guided process, considering intended and unintended consequences of their work, sharing policy implications and providing advice that facilitates better policy making are all suggested principles that come up in the discussion around ethics and policy analysis. These principles, in addition to modesty around the predictive power of analysis, are to guide analysis and evaluations, while allowing for tolerance of how difficult value conflicts are chosen to be resolved (Weimer & Vining, 2011).

Limitations

There are a number of strengths and advantages to using the approaches and methods described in this chapter. However, no research methodology is absolutely free of limitations. Case study research can offer a rich, thick description of an issue, but the information can be so rich and the time to devote to a complete and detailed analysis of the issue is limited (Merriam, 1998). Even when time is not a limiting factor, in the case of policy analysis intended to produce recommendations to policy makers, the amount and volume of information a case study can produce can be too much. Thus, the information still needs to be broken down and succinctly articulated for busy policy makers with competing priorities. It may also need to be condensed or

broken down into smaller pieces for general consumption. However, capturing these small pieces separately can also precipitate the danger of thinking of the case study outlined as the entire picture of a phenomenon instead of a piece of the entire picture. Further information on the issue of the recognition of foreign credentials in general and the issue of FCR in Canada specifically, exists outside of the focus of this study. This study particularly focuses on issues of foreign credentials in Canada and policy attempts to address noted issues in line with the research and guiding questions of this thesis. Hence, it is important to note that the contents of this study are mostly defined by the focus of the data and context outlined earlier in this chapter.

The policy documents used here were primarily produced for specific organizational reasons and not entirely for research purposes. Therefore, the documents are likely more aligned with organizational priorities, rather than research priorities (Bowen, 2009). Consequently, the study documents capture institutional conversations, not individual intentions in the discourse on FCR in Canada. Additionally, FCR discourse in Canada and public policies associated with it go beyond the conversations and insights that can be gleaned from just policy documents. However, given that a primary purpose of this study is to analyze policy responses, it is still suitable to use the policy documents mentioned, with an acknowledgement that the documents do not capture the entire conversation around credential recognition and assessment in Canada.

Conclusion
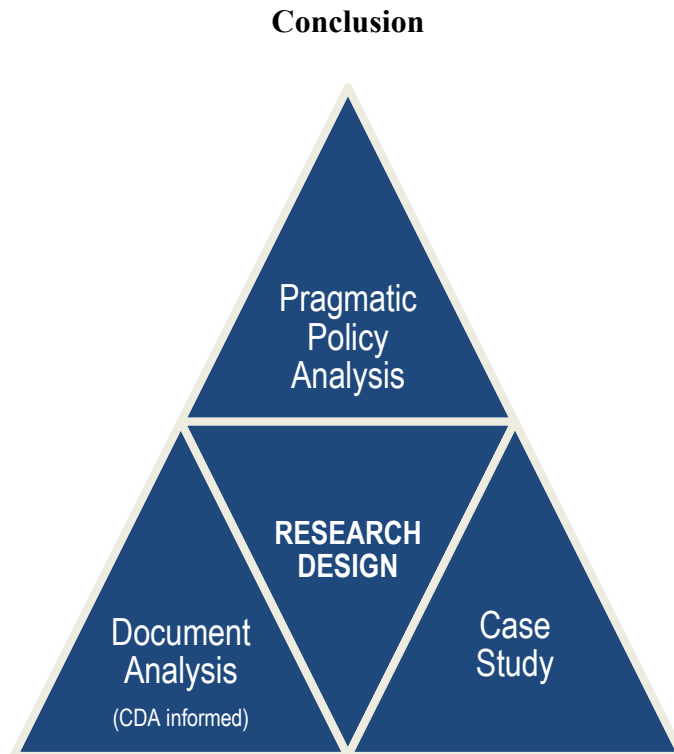
Figure 4.3. Research Design

  This study is based on a critical pragmatic qualitative research. The research design employed is consistent with the ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological underpinnings of the pragmatic research paradigm where the purpose is the pursuit of knowledge for specific reasons. Through detailed inquiry, examining context, discourse, history, as well as the power of credentials among other things, this study gets behind the scenes of the FCR landscape in Canada and employs a critical lens. Policy analysis with a critical lens is the primary conceptual foundation of this case study research. Document analysis informed by elements of CDA is the method of analysis to be applied in understanding the policy responses to the problems of credential recognition in Canada. An important part of this analysis is comprehending the nature, history and background of the problem, which the next chapter will undertake.

CHAPTER FIVE

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

In this chapter, I will provide some context and background to foreign credential recognition (FCR) in Canada in order to learn about the history of credential recognition Canada and to identify the problem or problems for which recent policy documents such as the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) were created to address. The chapter is arranged such that a refresher of the definition of key terms or process is at the beginning, which helps with understanding subsequent sections of the chapter that discuss the history of FCR. Together with the earlier chapter on public policy issues, this chapter will give further insight into the history and context of foreign credential recognition in Canada.

Foreign credential recognition is often called by various names including foreign qualification recognition, international credential recognition international credential recognition and foreign/international credential assessment among others. Foreign credential recognition is the process of verification of education, skills, training and experience obtained in another country against the standards established in Canada (HRSDC, 2010). Since new comers to Canada are coming from countries other than Canada, they often have to go through the credential recognition process. However, sometimes, Canadian citizens, who may not necessarily be new to Canada, also have to undergo the credential recognition process if their education was completed outside of Canada. Likewise, some temporary residents, visitors or immigrants to Canada who have obtained their educational credentials within Canada, do not need to have their credential assessed or recognized in order to use it in Canada. Thus, when credentials originate outside of Canada, there is likely a requirement to have the credentials assessed in order to utilize them within Canada.

The issue of credential recognition is not limited to immigrants or newcomers to Canada who have obtained their credentials outside of Canada. Each of the provinces and territories of Canada are responsible for accrediting and licensing individuals to various regulated occupations such as Nursing, Accounting, Pharmacy and others. Thus, when an individual from a regulated profession moves to a different province or territory, their qualifications will need to be recognized by that province and they have to apply for this to occur. A major difference between this scenario and that of internationally obtained credential is that most regulatory bodies abide by labour mobility agreement and/or have reciprocal agreements between provinces, which allows someone with credentials from one province or territory to more readily have their credentials recognized in a different province or territory. Due to the training or educational institution being situated and accredited in Canada, programs and credentials can be easily verified and information is easily accessible so that the provincial authorities or regulatory bodies can establish reciprocal agreements that mutually recognize credentials obtained within Canada. Mata (1999) wrote of interprovincial barriers that reduced mobility of professional services within Canada, when drawing attention to the fact that non-recognition of credentials in Canada is not only an immigrant problem. This thesis is focused on international credential recognition within Canada and not on recognition or mobility of credentials obtained in Canada across provinces; therefore, the thesis will not discuss this aspect of credential recognition in detail. However, in the context of credential recognition in Canada, it is important to note that for credentials obtained within the country, there also exits a recognition process that appeared to be a huge barrier years ago (Mata, 1999) and may still have some issues currently. This speaks to the added complexity of credential recognition in general.

Foreign Credential Recognition and Immigration

Discussions regarding foreign credential recognition rarely occur without the mention of immigration or detailed conversations about immigrants. Given that Canadian history and development is closely tied to immigration, which brought about new Canadians with international credentials, it is often impossible to separate these two topics. From the British North American Act declaration of Canada as a country in 1867 to recent times, immigration has fuelled the population growth of Canada. There are many notable individuals in the Canadian context who were immigrants to Canada. For example, Prime Minister, Sir John Alexander Macdonald, was an immigrant child upon his arrival to Canada; he was born in Scotland (Government of Canada, 2011). The trend of Canadian population growth through immigration has continued till present times. For the past two decades, migratory increase has been the source for population growth in Canada and this is projected to remain the case for the coming years (Bohnert, Chagnon & Dion, 2015). Although immigration as a source of Canadian population growth no longer appears extraordinary due to its frequency, immigration history in Canada remains noteworthy. The history of Canadian immigration is a tie that often links discussions on foreign credentials to immigration.

Initially, immigration to Canada was selectively based on race and country of origin. During that time, preference was largely given to people from the United Kingdom, Western Europe and the United States to immigrate to Canada (Knowles, 2007). Head taxes, landing taxes, bilateral restriction agreements and travel restrictions were all measures utilized to restrict the immigration of individuals outside of the preferential group to Canada (Goutor, 2007; Knowles, 2007). Economic growth and a requirement for labour soon widened the scope of preferred migrants to Canada to also include the rest of Europe. Slowly, but eventually, the Canadian government at the time yielded to human rights pressure to end ethnic and racial barriers to

Canadian immigration. Under Tom Kent, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Manpower starting in 1966, major reforms in the form of the point system for immigration began to take shape (Knowles, 2007).

The points system was developed as an immigration selection method that would allow for an immigration process independent of race and ethnicity. Thus, in 1967, the points system was incorporated into immigration regulations as well as the elimination of discrimination based on nationality or race (Knowles, 2007). The removal of race and ethnicity as selection criteria for immigration Canada has continued to recent Canadian immigration policies. The points system assigned points towards qualifying for immigration based on age, experience, employability, occupational demand and education (Green & Green, 1995). The education and occupation of an individual applying for immigration to Canada took on a significant level of importance with the introduction of the points systems. Furthermore, the association of educational credentials with chances at qualifying for immigration to Canada, in addition to the desire of the Canadian government to attract highly skilled individuals that could gain successful employment within Canada is a notable reason for the connection of immigration to FCR in Canada. This suggests that some immigrants who have qualified for immigration to Canada are also having problems with using those credentials within Canada due to their non-recognition. Needless to say, the social and economic impacts of the issues with FCR are not one to be ignored. Mata (1999) lists macro-economic costs and race relations tensions as some impacts that cannot be ignored.

Federal and provincial governments recognize the importance of addressing the issues with FCR and have made attempts through public policies to address some of these issues. The review of literature conducted above and statistics that show the employment challenges due to

the non-recognition of foreign credentials warrant a look at the policy responses to addressing these FCR issues.

Credentials, Human Capital and Immigration

Human capital, economic value and labour needs have played significant roles in Canadian immigration policies. The point system of migration that was introduced in 1967 relied heavily on elements of human capital and still does. Human capital was the basis for selection of economic immigrants throughout the 1990s and early 2000s (Picou, Hou & Qiu, 2014). Education was one of the human capital factors given increased importance in the introduction of the point system and the shift away from race and ethnicity as immigration selection criteria. Work experience and language were other human capital attributes considered in the immigration changes of the 1990s (Picou, Hou & Qiu, 2014). The Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP), which still exists as a current immigration class in Canada, requires education in addition to work experience and knowledge of one or both official Canadian languages in order to be eligible to apply under this class (Government of Canada, 2015a). Through the FSWP and the Federal Skilled Trades Program, individuals with foreign credentials can qualify to immigrate to Canada. A considerable number of new comers have immigrated to Canada under economic classes such as the FSWP and FSTP program, which consider foreign credentials in the determination of immigration eligibility. Between 1990 and 2011, the number of Canadian immigrants with a degree rose from 18% to 42% (Picou, Hou & Qiu, 2014). This suggests that a number of immigrants in these classes were deemed qualified to immigrate to Canada based on their credentials. Since the foreign educational credentials of new comers to Canada were of significance in order to qualify to immigrate to Canada, especially under the immigration class, it is often perplexing to newcomers to Canada, that these same credentials can sometimes go unrecognized or take a long process in order to be

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recognized. Within this situation lies the origin of some of the frustrations that individuals with international credentials experience when having to go through with foreign credential recognition.

On the other hand, it is also understandable that due to variations in educational systems across the world, as well as licensing and regulatory processes required of certain occupations, moving from one educational system or country to another would necessitate some process of accreditation or validation of skills within the educational context of the new country. Therefore, until the requirement for validation of international credentials no longer exists (international mobility of educational credentials across borders and foreign labour markets is more of a norm than an exception) and credentials are freely and readily accepted across borders, a possible solution to mitigating some of the issues associated with FCR is making the recognition process as smooth and efficient as possible. This can be done by examining some of policy responses to the issue of FCR in Canada. The link between FCR, Canadian immigration and human capital credential helps to paint a picture of the history and context of FCR in Canada. The long history of FCR to immigration, the resulting social and economic implications, the urgency of addressing the issues and how credentials are viewed in society demonstrate a somewhat complicated context that shines light on the issue previously described and the need for attention to governmental responses.

Stakeholders in Foreign Credential Recognition

Stakeholders are individuals or groups or organizations that have a stake in an issue and are affected by the issue and how it is handled. Stakeholder analysis in the context of policy analysis is used to determine the values and interests of stakeholders and can provide insight into a policy problem and what policies may or may not be acceptable to stakeholder (Clemons & McBeth, 2001). It is a policy research tool that can be used to identify stakeholder power, interest an

influence on a particular policy issue (Brugha & Varvasovszky, 2000). The identification of stakeholders is often an important preliminary step in stakeholder analysis and is useful in determining the context of foreign credential recognition. Identifying the stakeholders in the FCR landscape helps determine who has a vested interest in FCR and who would be affected by it. Noting the stakeholders, not only comes in useful when trying to locate or contextualize the FCR problem, it also helps in the policy evaluation stage to know who the policies will and may affect in terms of determining features such as policy impact and effectiveness. When stakeholder analysis is used in this way in the policy field, it is used in a retrospective dimension that aids the understanding of the policy context and processes (Brugha & Varvasovsky, 2000). As its own research tool that comprises of a series of steps, a detailed stakeholder analysis is better attended to through future research. However, in this chapter, I will identify some key stakeholders in the realm of Canadian FCR as well as their interests and relationship to the recognition of international credentials.

In the FCR landscape in Canada, there are a number of important stakeholders including the provincial and federal governments, regulatory and professional associations, post-secondary institutions, credential assessment organizations as well as newcomers to Canada, immigrants and Canadians with international credentials. There are numerous stakeholders involved in FCR, which contributes to its complexity and difficulties (Elgersma, 2004; Fernandez, 2008). All of these stakeholders have vested interests in FCR and related policies for various reasons. The federal government has a stake in the FCR context in Canada due to its responsibility with immigration and the Canadian economy overall. Immigration predominantly lies within federal jurisdiction with the provincial government having some role to play, thus the proper settlement and success of immigrants to Canada would be an area of concern. Federal departments related to citizenship

and immigration often have interests in foreign credential recognition within Canada and are involved in some way in the process such as in information dissemination as demonstrated by the establishment of the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) in 2007 (Government of Canada, 2013). Another area of interest on the part of the federal government is on an economic side. As various authors and researchers such as Li (2001), Mata (1999), Houle and Ysaad (2010), Reitz (2001) and Reitz (2005) have pointed out, there are economic costs to having a highly skilled immigrant workforce that are unable to use their credentials within Canada and are unable to participate in the Canadian labour market fully because their credentials are unrecognized or not accredited by the necessary organization(s). Besides the negative impact such a scenario has on the economy, there are also impacts on potential immigrants to Canada and perhaps Canada's ability to attract the highly skilled immigrants it desires. This impact may not be so great because the economic class of immigrant is quite selective in itself. However, the unhappiness and unpleasant experiences of newcomers to Canada that are experiencing difficulties with having their credentials recognized is likely being shared with others who are considering or are in the process of moving or returning to Canada with their foreign credentials. At best, this could serve as a cautionary tale for those yet to come with their international credentials, but it could also serve as a deterrent for those who do not want to risk going through a lengthy immigration process only to find that their credentials may not be recognized for employment in the field in which they were educated. As the federal government is interested in attracting and utilizing a skilled immigrant population and is concerned with their successful settlement, they do have an interest in effective credential recognition processes in Canada.

With education falling in the constitutional jurisdiction of provincial governments, credential recognition, foreign or domestic, falls squarely within provincial oversight. The

recognition of foreign credentials for regulated professions is a provincial responsibility that is carried out through provincially authorized regulatory bodies that are also aligned with their national equivalents. Within the FCR landscape across Canada, the role of provincial governments varies between being the licensing organization for professional practice within the province, as is the case with elementary and secondary teacher licensing in Alberta, authorizing the licensing and regulation of certain occupation to regulatory associations, to being information providers on credential recognition within the province. Consequently, provincial governments certainly have a stake and involvement in foreign credential recognition as it has impacts on their provincial accountabilities. All Canadian provinces provide some level of information and/or direction regarding foreign credential recognition within their province. Provincial governments also often carry the leadership role in facilitating information sharing within and across stakeholders such as regulatory organizations and professional associations, ensuring adherence to intergovernmental principles of FCR, supporting immigrant settlement organizations with the aim of successful settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada some of which may have international credentials. The active and substantial role of provincial governments in FCR can be also be seen from the involvement of all Canadian provinces and territories in the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) through the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC), Canada. CICIC is a body that provides information on credential recognition to individuals and organizations and is a unit of CMEC, Canada. The Council of Ministers of Education is an intergovernmental body founded in 1967 by ministers of education in Canada to provide leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels, (CMEC, n.d.). Its membership comprises all the provinces and territories within Canada. CICIC has a major role to play in the recognition of international credentials in Canada, but this will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Figure 5.1. Stakeholders in FCR

Licensing and regulatory bodies are another set of stakeholders in the FCR arena. Within

Canada, there are regulated and non-regulated occupations. Regulated occupations are occupations

controlled by provincial, territorial and/or federal laws and are governed by regulatory bodies

(CICIC, 2015a). Regulatory bodies are therefore legislatively authorized to govern such regulated

occupations. Non-regulated occupations are occupations for which there are no legal requirements

or restrictions in terms of licensing, certification or registration (CICIC, 2015a). Occupations such

as medicine, engineering and nursing are regulated occupations with corresponding regulatory

bodies and occupations such as retail merchandizing, are non-regulated occupations. Some skilled

trades also fall into the realm of regulated occupations requiring licensing or registration as well

as governmental oversight through legislation (CICIC, 2015a). A major difference between regulatory bodies and professional associations is that regulatory bodies have their regulatory authority through governmental legislation and this is not necessarily the case or a requirement for professional associations.

Employers are also stakeholders in the foreign credential recognition process as they rely on the evaluation reports to determine if an applicant's educational credentials meet the standards required for the job. Most of the major of post-secondary institutions in Canada conduct their own assessment of international credentials for admission to the institution or for other institutional purposes. However, some other post-secondary institutions utilize third-party credential assessment organizations in for their assessments. In these ways, post-secondary institutions are also stakeholder as international credential evaluators and as users of foreign credential assessments.

A last but not least stakeholder group in the foreign credential landscape is newcomers to Canada or Canadian residents with international credentials. This group of individuals has a vested interest in credential assessment within Canada as that is a process that they are required to go through in order to participate in the workforce, gain access to the labour market or pursue further studies.

Conclusion

History and context is important for detailed discussions on the topic of foreign credential recognition in Canada and understanding what issues policy documents such as the Quality Assurance Framework are intended to address. Although issues of foreign credential recognition are often linked to newcomers or immigrants to Canada, the provincial recognition requirements in regulated occupations for individuals with Canadian credentials is one indication that credential

recognition matters is not limited to Canadian newcomers or immigrants. The frequent linkage of immigration and foreign credential recognition lies in Canada's immigration history, when at some point, educational credentials began being used as qualifying criteria for immigration. This move towards using educational credentials as qualifying criteria was to enable immigration policies and processes independent of race and ethnicity, as was previously the case. Human capital, economic value and labour needs became important in Canadian immigration policies as an alternative to race based selection, which opened the door to the immigration of more diverse people to Canada. Educational credentials, by serving as an attestation of one's educational accomplishments and human capital, were increasingly important in the shift away from race and ethnicity towards human capital factors in Canada's immigration processes. Canadian immigration history, its relationship to FCR and the economic and social implications that arose from having a significant number of individuals with international credentials help paint a picture of the complicated context of FCR in Canada. Adding to this complexity is the number of important stakeholders in matters related to FCR in Canada. Such stakeholders range from federal and provincial governments to individuals who possess international credentials. All of the stakeholders in FCR have some related and distinct interests in issues of FCR as indicated above.

The significance of issues related to FCR has prompted public policy responses in an attempt to address and resolve FCR problems at various points in the complicated web of FCR. A fairly recent policy approach at the national level has been the Quality Assurance Framework, which was developed to assist with tackling concerns related to the recognition of international credentials across the country. Follow along as details regarding this Framework are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL FOREIGN CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION POLICIES

This chapter and the next will be focused on foreign credential recognition polices at various levels – national, provincial and trans-provincial. These policies will serve as the information source for the discussion and analysis to occur in the subsequent chapters. In this chapter, I will be examining the foreign credential recognition policies at the national and provincial levels. At the national level, I will be looking at the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials, also known as the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). At the provincial level, I will be looking at documents from the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia. The goal of this chapter is to give an overview of the contents of the QAF and provincial foreign credential recognition policies from British Columbia and Ontario. I will begin with an overview of the QAF, including the processes surrounding its development as it relates to the recognition and assessment of international credentials.

A brief history of the Quality Assurance Framework

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), led the development of the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials, which is often referred to as the Quality Assurance Framework. Contributions from and consultations with academic institutions, regulatory bodies, professional associations, credential assessment agencies, immigrant serving organizations, as well as federal provincial and territorial governments were noted as invaluable in the creation of the QAF (CICIC, 2012a). The work that led to the eventual development of the QAF derived from some initial work between the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC), CICIC and the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC). These organizations received

funding to undertake research on the development of pan-Canadian quality standards for the assessment of international credentials, with the aim of harmonizing the credential recognition practice in Canada (Johnson, 2009). This research served to lay the foundation for a set of pan-Canadian policy and practice standards that would guide the work of all credential assessment bodies (Johnson, 2009). The eventual overall goal of this initial work was to help with the integration of newcomers to Canada into the Canadian workforce by improving the consistency and portability of their academic credentials in regulated and unregulated professions across Canada (CICIC, 2012a). The project rolled out as a multi-phase project beginning with an environmental scan of the academic credential assessment landscape across Canada.

The first phase of the project, a fact-finding environmental scan beginning in 2007, aimed to get a better understanding of the Canadian credential assessment situation and identify opportunities for harmonization and cooperation (Johnson, 2009). Objectives of the study were to describe the existing credential evaluation processes, suggest improvements for the consistency and portability of credential assessments and identify mechanisms for sharing policies and practices across the Canadian assessment community (Johnson, 2009). Portability and consistency were both emphasized as important central elements to the research in the first phase. Consistency of evaluation policies and practices was noted as a critical first step in achieving portability of credentials across Canada. In the context of the project, portability referred to the ease with which information pertaining to a person's international credentials can be transferred and recognized by various groups across Canada (Johnson, 2009). The description of portability also included the acceptance or use of an assessment completed by one assessment body by a different credential assessment body, but not limited to only the portability of the product of a final assessment. Components of the evaluation process, such as verified and authenticated international credentials,

being accepted or utilized by different credential assessment bodies across Canada would also count towards achieving portability with respect to foreign credential assessment and recognition. Results from this first phase of the project revealed the existence of some differences in credential assessment practices largely due to the lack of a common standard and the assessment practices being driven by the nature of the organization, including individual organizational assessment policies and methodologies (CICIC, 2012b). Other factors that contributed to the inconsistencies in credential assessment include the complexity of the assessment, resource availability, variations in assessment terminology and focus from assessment bodies as well as the provincial or territorial location of the assessment service (CICIC, 2012b).

The second phase of the project began in 2010 and built on the findings from the first phase. Based on the recommendations made in phase 1 of the project, phase 2 initiated foundational activities for the establishment of policy and practice standards to guide the work of all academic credential assessment organizations (CICIC, 2012b). Thus, according to CICIC (2012b), areas of focus for the second phase of the project included exploring the creation of a mechanism to facilitate sharing of practices and methodologies in the credential assessment community as well as the development of a pan-Canadian QAF that would serve as a reference tool for all credential assessment bodies. The reference tool was designed to enable mutual recognition of foreign credential assessment practices in Canada, thus, leading to improved consistency and portability of international assessments across Canada (CICIC, 2012b). To garner buy-in from the academic credential assessment community for the above work and ensure that the needs and specifications of all credential assessment organization would be reflected in the end product, CICIC (2012b) worked closely with interested members from this community in the development of the reference tools and practice standards. The idea behind the creation of pan-Canadian policy and practice

standards for the assessment of academic credentials is that a national standard that all credential recognition bodies adhere to will help with eliminating the variations in credential assessment outcomes and help improve the consistency and portability of foreign credentials across Canada.

The Quality Assurance Framework – An Overview

According to its authors, the QAF is a guiding-principle document, collaboratively developed with educational institutions, professional regulatory authorities and academic credential assessments organizations (CICIC, 2015b). The project to develop the QAF was intended to assist with the integration of new immigrants and individuals with international credentials into Canadian society by facilitating access to postsecondary institutions, trades, professions and the overall labour market through improving the consistency and portability of international credentials across the country. In line with this intention, the primary goal of the QAF is promoting the consistency and portability of assessments conducted by different organizations in Canada (CICIC, 2015b). The QAF is noted to be non-prescriptive, respectful of organizational autonomy, and gives emphasis to fundamental principles including competency standards for credential assessors, information sharing and collaboration among organizations as well as integrity and transparency in the assessment process (CICIC, 2015b).

There are five components to the QAF: quality assurance, scope, objectives, fundamental principles, framework adherence and management (CICIC, 2012a). Fundamental principles are themed under competency, collaboration, process integrity, feedback and transparency. Competency speaks to continued improvement of academic credential assessment services through requiring standards of competency for individual assessors and organizations to attain in providing high-quality assessment services. Collaboration deals with improving quality through sustained sharing of information and practices among organizations that assess international credentials.

Process integrity refers to measures applied to current practices to reduce faults and defects, which has an immediate impact on quality improvement and consistency of outcomes. The principle of process integrity also includes the recognition of the value of feedback in creating better processes. Feedback, which is another separate principle, identifies the importance of validation through feedback in improving quality and consistency in credential assessment. Lastly, transparency, the final principle, addresses the necessity for quality assurance practices to be known and publicly accessible in order to provide assurance to users and the general public.

An appendix to the QAF is the Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice in the assessment of International Academic Credentials (Code of Practice). According to CICIC (2012a), this document is an integral part of the QAF. The Code of Practice lists 41 principles and recommendations to which all organizations that adhere to the QAF subscribe to. All members of the ACESC adhere to the QAF via their membership in that group. The principles in the Code of Practice are based on the General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials – a document prepared years ago by CICIC and the provincial international credential assessment agencies in Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec (Provincial Assessment Committee, 1998; CICIC, 2012a). The Guiding Principles are in turn connected to the Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications document, which is linked to the Lisbon Recognition Convention – an agreement to which Canada is a signatory (CICIC, 2012a; CICIC, 2015b). Through these connections the Code of Practice is linked to good practice models developed in other parts of the world, which CICIC (2012a) notes is important in recognition of the globalization of markets and increasing labour mobility across the globe.

Given that the provinces and territories in Canada have jurisdictional responsibility and oversight on education and the differences in the education systems across the country, the QAF acknowledges the autonomy of the jurisdictions, but also the need for fairness and credibility in assessing in international academic credentials, the need for consistency and portability of assessments completed by the necessary organizations, and the benefits of working together to examine issues related to the assessment of international academic credentials (CICIC, 2012a). The often-reiterated objectives of the QAF are for it to serve as a tool for achieving more consistency in foreign credential assessment and increased portability of these assessments across Canada. More consistency and portability of international credentials across Canada also means more consistency in foreign credential recognition and portability across the country.

Provinces, Territories and Foreign Credential Recognition

Provinces have a great say in foreign credential recognition because it is an education issue and they have the responsibility of overseeing education matters within their provinces and territories. Within each province and territory, there are various organizations such as regulatory bodies, academic institutions and credential assessment agencies involved in doing and setting requirements for FCR. As such, most provinces do not have a single overarching document similar to the QAF that lays out the specific policy or set of policies in handling the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. However, there are guiding and advisory documents related to foreign credential assessment as well as specific recognized credential assessment agencies considered the go-to in FCR within specific provinces and territories. These provincial documents as well as those by the relevant organizations will serve as the data and information sources for my study. I will be examining policy documents from the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario. These provinces are known to attract a good number of Canadian newcomers looking for

a province to settle in and have long histories of immigrant settlement. Thus, with the large number of newcomers with international credentials, it is not unreasonable to expect that some intentional efforts have been directed towards the assessment and recognition of credentials for the new settlers in these provinces.

Foreign Credential Recognition and Ontario

Like most other Canadian provincial and territorial governments, the Government of Ontario does not have a universal policy document for foreign credential recognition and assessment. The numbers of agencies, organizations and stakeholders involved in the foreign credential assessment and recognition landscape likely has a lot to do with the absence or inability of the provincial and territorial governments to only have a single guiding policy. However, in Ontario, there are a number of other policy documents that provide an insight into Ontario's approach to the assessment and recognition of international credentials. These policy documents come from Ontario credential assessment agencies and from the Office of the Fairness Commissioner, Ontario.

The Fair Access Act

The Office of the Fairness Commissioner works to ensure the transparency, objectivity, impartiality and fairness of registration practices within certain regulated professions in Ontario (Ontario. Fairness Commissioner, 2015). As part of its mandate, the Ontario Office of the Fairness Commissioner assesses and reviews the registration practices of 15 non-health professions and 22 compulsory trades and monitors the activities of some qualification assessment agencies (Ontario. Fairness Commissioner, 2015). There are other regulatory bodies to which the Fair Access Act does not apply. These regulatory bodies have other guiding legislation that they adhere to, such as the Regulated Health Professions Act for health professions. Although the Fairness Commissioner

states that its mandate does not include assisting internationally trained and educated individuals (Ontario. Fairness Commissioner, 2015), it inadvertently helps with the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials by ensuring that the regulatory bodies under its purview follow the principles of transparency, objectiveness, impartiality and fairness for its applicants. Through the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades, the Ontario Fairness Commissioner (2015) lays out the responsibilities of regulatory bodies in fulfilling the aforementioned principles. The purpose of the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act ([Fair Access Act], 2006) is to help make sure that regulated professions and those applying for registration to regulated professions are governed by transparent, objective, impartial and fair practices. Registration practices set out in the Fair Access Act are referred to as the Fair Registration Practices Code. This code details specific duties regarding registration practices including the requirement to provide information on required documents, registration practices, length of time for the registration process, registration requirements and alternative ways of meeting these requirements to applicants or individuals intending to apply for registration. Other requirements include timely assessment decisions and responses, provision of internal review or appeal mechanisms, appropriate training for individuals doing the assessments as well as a requirement to ensure that if third parties are used for assessment, they assess in a manner aligned with the four principles mentioned earlier. The Fairness Commissioner (Ontario. Fairness Commissioner, 2015) monitors third party agencies or organizations that regulated professions use for the assessment of qualifications of their applicants, to ensure that those assessments are based on regulated profession obligations set out in the Fair Access Act. To ensure compliance with the Fair Access Act, the Fairness Commissioner requires an audit of registration practices of regulated

professions under its oversight, every three years or as specified and reports to the Minister on registration practices for regulated professions.

Credential assessment organizations

Besides the regulatory bodies, Ontario has three recognized credential assessment organizations – World Education Services (WES) Canada, International Credential Assessment Service (ICAS) of Canada and the Comparative Education Service (CES) based out of the University of Toronto. These 3 organizations are recognized through membership with the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC), which is a group comprised of credential assessment services across Canada. Membership with ACESC comes after a credential assessment agency undergoes a self-evaluation of its assessment procedures, personnel qualifications, reference materials and methods of documentation among other things (ACESC, 2012). In addition, to qualify as a member of ACESC, organizations must demonstrate compliance with membership terms and established quality standards and must agree to continue maintaining these quality standards (ACESC, 2012). The QAF is a mechanism of quality assurance, which ACESC requires all its members to adhere to. In addition to abiding by membership terms, all Alliance members must sign a declaration of adherence to the QAF (ACESC, 2012). ACESC can be thought of as a professional association of sorts for credential assessment agencies. Membership with ACESC is used as a method of quality assurance and recognition of a credential assessment agency. Therefore, most of the provincially recommended credential assessment organizations are members of ACESC.

WES is a widely recognizable credential assessment agency with both American and Canadian branches. It provides credential assessment to assist immigrants, students and job seekers with getting their credentials recognized by employers, institutions and regulatory bodies. It often

offers reports, training services and provides research related to international credential assessment, which also lends to its wide recognition. In addition to being an ACESC member and being recognized by the Ontario Government, WES also has federal recognition through being one of the credential assessment organization authorized by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to provide educational credential assessments for immigrants to Canada. In looking for policies regarding credential assessment from WES, I did not find any explicit policy document in this regard. However, through exploring the WES website, I was able to gather some information on their approach to credential assessment. WES Canada (2016) has a significant number and wide variety of clients including professional associations, regulatory bodies, educational institutions, employers and municipal, provincial and federal government departments. It has a 4-step evaluation process which begins from submitting an application, proceeds to submitting of required documents, followed by the assessment by WES and ending with the receipt of an evaluation report (WES, 2016). Prior to submitting an application to WES Canada, applicants can see what documents they will be required to submit in order to get an assessment done.

The Comparative Education Service (CES) is similar to WES Canada in a number of ways despite being a separate organization. Like WES Canada, CES is a member of ACESC and is recognized by the Ontario and federal governments to provide credential assessment services. It provides credential assessment services for immigrants, students, job seekers, employers, educational institutions and generally to anyone seeking to have their international credentials assessed for similar purposes. However, CES, does not assess apprenticeship or vocational training and non-formal, non-academic qualifications (University of Toronto, 2016).

The International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS) is another credential assessment organization in Ontario similar to WES and CES. It assesses international credentials

for individuals, employers and organizations that may require an assessment of foreign credentials. ICAS is also an ACESC member and is recognized by the provincial and federal governments to provide foreign credential assessment recognition services. ICAS (2016) provides varied types of assessment reports ranging from a general assessment report to others with more comprehensive details on the international secondary and/or post-secondary education completed. ICAS, WES and CES are different organizations that offer similar services with regards to credential recognition in Ontario. They all follow a similar quality assurance process and have provincial and federal recognition. Therefore, these organizations present choice in selection of organizations in Ontario that can assess an individual's international credentials for various purposes.

Through membership with ACESC, WES Canada, CES and ICES are affiliated with the Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (Recommendation). Membership with ACESC requires adherence to the QAF, which has a section known as the Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice in the Assessment of International Academic Credentials that is very similar to the Recommendation. The Recommendation is an internationally recognized document that codifies established best practices and improvements for the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. It can also be considered an underlying policy or principle to the credential assessment practices of these organizations. Given that the QAF's Code of Good Practice is largely based on the General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials, which is linked to the Recommendation, the similarity between these two documents is not surprising. However, the extent of the similarity between all of these documents is quite far-reaching. A more detailed comparison of these three documents may be useful to determine what differences exist between them. Within the Recommendation (UNESCO & Council of Europe, 2010), assessment criteria are stated as written with the intention of increasing

the consistency of procedures in foreign qualification recognition such that similar cases are considered in reasonably similar ways, with the acknowledgement that some flexibility is necessary. The recommended criteria and procedures are also indicated to encourage transparency. Providing information on procedures and criteria for assessment, typical length of time required for assessment, examples of typical recognition cases and/or a comparison of other education systems are some assessment procedures contained in the Recommendation. When it comes to assessment criteria, the Recommendation (UNESCO & Council of Europe, 2010) encourages consideration of the status of the institution awarding the international credential and any higher education quality assurance systems or processes established within the country where the credential is from. Paying attention to past practices in similar recognition cases is also encouraged to ensure consistency in recognition practices. With past practices functioning as guides in assessment practices, changes in practice are to be justified. The relative position and function of a foreign credential compared to other credentials within the same foreign educational system should also be considered when assessing the credential in a different country and education system. Granting recognition of foreign credentials is generally encouraged unless substantial differences between the recognition sought and the foreign credential can be demonstrated. Such substantial differences include differences in learning outcomes, differences in access to further activities, differences in program and institutional quality.

Foreign Credential Recognition and British Columbia

Similar to Ontario, the province of British Columbia also does not have a universal policy document for foreign credential recognition and assessment. In British Columbia, the provincial government considers Foreign Qualification Recognition (FQR), in other words, FCR, the responsibility of regulators, but ensures the fairness, consistency, transparency and effectiveness

of the FQR process through the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training (British Columbia. Welcome BC, 2016). According to the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training (British Columbia, 2012), British Columbia delegates the authority for regulating over 280 occupations to 67 regulatory bodies within the province. The provincial government (British Columbia. Welcome BC, 2016) provides information on the assessment process for applicants looking to work in a regulated profession. The steps are contacting the relevant regulatory body, completing and submitting an application form and necessary documentation, undergoing a credential assessment, cooperating with regulatory authorities, paying required fees and finally, but just as important as the previous steps, being patient as timing for the certification process can sometimes take an extended period of time.

To provide some help or direction to the regulatory bodies in their assessment of foreign credentials, the BC government developed a best practices guide for regulators. The guide titled Best Practices for Regulatory Bodies: Foreign Qualifications Recognition (British Columbia. Welcome BC, 2016) was developed to support regulatory bodies in FQR and assist them with improving their FQR practices, with the eventual goal of improving assessment outcomes for internationally educated individuals. The Best Practices guide makes recommendations on information and assessment, an online self-assessment tool, pre-arrival assessment, communication with applicants, upgrading skills, assessment tools and processes, internal reviews and working with other jurisdictions. Within these areas, the suggestions were mostly on making information readily available, clear and easily understandable as well as making it possible for applicants to access assessment information before arrival, if possible, and during the assessment process. Other suggestions within the Best Practices document were related to encouraging cultural diversity training for assessment staff, reviewing assessment tools, undergoing internal reviews of

assessment and recognition processes and exploring partnerships with other jurisdictions to share information on foreign credential assessment outcomes and potential mutual recognition agreements.

In 2012, British Columbia undertook a review of FQR in the province in an attempt to help internationally trained or educated individuals within the province. This review involved an investigation of FQR barriers experienced by immigrants for nine high-demand occupations and five key trades (British Columbia, 2012). The occupations were chosen based on statistical data showing future occupations that would be in demand in BC (British Columbia, 2012). A summary report of the review (British Columbia, 2012) highlighted the recommendations arising from the review as key for supporting those with international credentials towards fully utilizing their skills in the Canadian workplace and increasing the number of skilled immigrants who choose to work and live in British Columbia. The recommendations were also to help with improving the time, ease and efficacy of international qualifications, skills and experience recognition. Some recommended actions from the review included developing tools to provide information on recognition expectations and enhanced labour market possibilities for immigrants, expanding pre-arrival assessment options, supporting and expanding relevant occupational language testing and training, defining expected outcomes of Canadian work experience and identifying alternative ways of achieving those outcomes.

For those individuals whose education is in a non-regulated field or those not looking to work in a regulated profession with their foreign credentials, credential recognition by a regulatory body is not necessary or mandatory. However, individuals with international credentials are often encouraged to have their credential assessed so that employers have an idea of how their credentials translate in Canada. In British Columbia (British Columbia. Welcome BC, 2016), such

individuals are encouraged to check with potential employers whether or not they would like to see the results of their foreign credential assessment. In that case, these individuals with international credentials can turn to the International Credential Education Service in British Columbia (ICES) for an assessment of their foreign credentials.

The ICES is a credential assessment agency within the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) and is similar to WES, ICAS and CES in Ontario. It was established in 1995, with initial funding from the British Columbia provincial government and works to help people get the recognition needed to pursue their career and/or education in Canada (BCIT, 2015). In addition to provincial recognition and federal government recognition as a designated Educational Credential Assessment Provider for Canadian immigration, ICES is also a founding member of ACESC, along with IQAS Alberta, the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion in Quebec and CICIC via CMEC (BCIT, 2015; ACESC, 2012). ICES evaluates international credentials to determine comparable levels in British Columbia and Canadian terms. It provides evaluation reports for education, employment, licensing and registration purposes to employers, regulatory and licensing bodies, educational institutions, government departments, immigration organizations and generally anyone looking for a credential assessment. Credential assessment reports provided by ICES are noted to be advisory in nature and do not supplant assessments required by professional or trade associations or for admission to educational institutions, rather the reports are meant to support and facilitate admission or hiring decisions made by these associations, regulatory bodies, employers and institutions (BCIT, 2015). As an ACESC member, ICES also ascribes to the QAF. The assessment process for ICES involves submitting an application and the required documents. However, ICES provides three kinds of evaluation reports – basic, comprehensive and supplemental report. At the time of this study, ICES (BCIT, 2015)

estimates a processing time of four weeks from receipt of all required documents for basic evaluation assessments and seven weeks from receipt of all required documents for comprehensive evaluation assessments. These timelines are stressed to be estimates not a guarantee. Prior to submitting an application, interested people are also able to see what documents are required of them based on the country where their credential is from on the ICES website.

Conclusion

In this chapter, some insight into the findings from the policy documents under review was provided. Foreign credential recognition policies and procedures were uncovered at the national level in the QAF. At the provincial level, policies and process from two provinces – Ontario and British Columbia – were examined. There are many similarities between all of the policies at the national and provincial level, which all aim to improve the assessment and recognition process for foreign credentials in Canada. These policies are part of the public policy approaches that are being used to guide FCR in Canada so that some of the issues highlighted in previous chapters are addressed. These policies also have an interconnectedness with each other and a connection to the foreign credential recognition and assessment processes at an international level, which makes it possible for policies and processes in Canada to keep up with international standards in foreign credential recognition and assessment. Being connected to policies at various levels is beneficial because it means that the practices in Canada will be aligned with practices and standards in various places across the globe, thus setting the stage for easier mobility of credentials across the borders of those countries that follow these international standards and practices. For example, adhering to international standards and practices in FCR helps set the stage for recognition agreements between organizations and/or countries since the parties involved know that they are using similar or identical policies and procedures when recognizing or assessing credentials.

British Columbia	Ontario
No single universal policy for foreign credential recognition	No single universal policy for foreign credential recognition
Delegates credential recognition authority for some professions to various regulatory bodies	Delegates credential recognition authority for some professions to various regulatory bodies
Best practices guide for regulators – Best Practices for Regulatory Bodies: Foreign Qualifications Recognition	Fair Access Act for specific professions and trades
Identified values for FCR – fairness, consistency, transparency, effectiveness	Identified values for FCR – transparency, objectiveness, impartiality, fairness
One recognized credential organizations - ICES	Three recognized credential organizations – WES Canada, CES, ICAS

Table 6.1. Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR): British Columbia and Ontario

The policies above have been somewhat general in nature and apply to a variety of foreign credential recognition scenarios. The broad nature of these policies allows for their ability to be applied and adapted to a specific situation of international credential recognition. The next chapter will go deeper into the policy levels to explore what policies look like the closer they get to specific credential recognition areas, such as in the trans-provincial level.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TRANS-PROVINCIAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN CREDENTIALS

At the national and provincial levels, accountabilities with respect to foreign credential recognition are quite distinct, careful attention is paid so as to not overstep boundaries. Within the national and provincial divide, there are certain professional organizations that exist across the national and provincial boundaries as one organization with various components. For these organizations, having a national organization with affiliated provincial organizations facilitates connections and an element of uniformity across the country. The separate provincial and territorial organizations allow the organization to adhere to any distinct provincial requirements, processes, procedures and policies while being able to link to other provincial and territorial organizations and a unifying national organization. I refer to the organizations of professions structured in this way as trans-provincial organizations. These trans-provincial organizations are the subject of this chapter. Since these organizations cut across national and provincial boundaries, the trans-provincial level is important to examine in order to get the broader picture of the Canadian international credential assessment and recognition landscape. The previous chapter set the stage by looking at specifics at the provincial level. In this chapter, focused on the trans-provincial level, I will be looking at international credential recognition policies and procedures of two particular trans-provincial organizations from the accounting and engineering professions.

In addition to being trans-provincial organizations structured as described above, availability and accessibility of information particular to the handling of international academic credentials was an important criteria in considering which professions and corresponding trans-provincial organizations to study for this thesis. I selected to study trans-provincial organizations

related to accounting and engineering because of the readily accessible and in-depth information both had on international credential recognition for their respective professions at the national and provincial levels. The ability of these organizations to provide rich and detailed information related to FCR was a deciding factor, since this would greatly allow for effective study and analysis of the focus of this thesis. I will begin with the accounting profession and then proceed to the engineering profession. In the sections that follow below, information related to the accounting profession may appear to be more detailed and voluminous relative to information about the engineering profession. This is due to the multiple professional designations housed under the accounting profession in Canada and the various requirements for each designation. On the other hand, the engineering profession deals with a single credential or designation in comparison.

The Accounting Profession

Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) Canada is the national organization for the accounting profession in Canada. It was established in 2013 to support a unified accounting profession within Canada under the Canadian Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) designation (CPA Canada, 2016). CPA Canada is governed by a Board of Directors from various provinces and is led by an executive team (CPA Canada, 2016). One of the key activities of CPA Canada is to help with the assessment of academic and professional qualifications of internationally educated individuals looking to become certified accountants within Canada under the CPA designation. CPA Canada offers bridging programs and alternate careers paths to help internationally educated individuals towards interim steps and short term careers achievements on the way towards full CPA certification.

In Canada, the Chartered Professional Accountant profession is organized nationally, through CPA Canada, and provincially, through the various provincial regulatory accounting

bodies such as CPA Alberta, CPA British Columbia, CPA Newfoundland and Labrador, Institute of Chartered Accountants of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut and the Chartered Accountants of Nova Scotia to name a few. Membership within CPA Canada is not given by CPA Canada itself; rather membership is through admission by one of the provincial and territorial accounting bodies (CPA Canada, 2016). These provincial or territorial bodies are the qualifying and regulatory bodies for both Canadian and internationally educated or designated accountants (CPA Canada, 2016). They have the authority and responsibility to admit members as well as to determine practice requirements and disciplinary measures for their students and members (CPA Canada, 2016). The national and provincial organizations of the profession and the relationship of the provincial bodies to the national is why organizations such as CPA are referred to as trans-provincial bodies in this study, thus acknowledging the fact that although the profession is provincially regulated, the provincial regulatory bodies are connected to each other via a national organization and in the case of the accounting profession a national designation.

Only Canadian accountancy designations, such as the CPA, CA-Chartered Accountant, CGA-Certified General Accountant or CMA-Certified Management Accountant are recognized within Canada. There is currently an initiative to unify all of the previously mentioned accounting designations under just the CPA designation. For an individual with an international accounting credential, the designation they would be currently seeking for recognition in Canada is the CPA. Once the CPA has been obtained in a particular province or territory, it is fully portable across the country (CPA Canada, 2016). This means that once a foreign accounting credential or education is recognized in one province or territory and the CPA is awarded to the individual, that individual can use that designation for admission to other provincial accounting bodies across Canada.

Alberta	CPA Alberta
British Columbia	CPA British Columbia
Manitoba	CPA Manitoba
New Brunswick	CPA New Brunswick
Newfoundland and Labrador	CPA Newfoundland and Labrador
Northwest Territories	Institute of Chartered Accountants of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut
	Certified Management Accountants of Northwest Territories and Nunavut
	Certified General Accountants of the Northwest Territories/Nunavut
Nova Scotia	Chartered Accountants of Nova Scotia
	Certified Management Accountants of Nova Scotia
	Certified General Accountants Association of Nova Scotia
Nunavut	Institute of Chartered Accountants of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut
	Certified Management Accountants of Northwest Territories and Nunavut
	Certified General Accountants of the Northwest Territories/Nunavut
Ontario	CPA Ontario
Prince Edward Island	CPA Prince Edward Island
Quebec	Ordre des comptables professionnels agréés du Québec (CPA)
Saskatchewan	CPA Saskatchewan
Yukon	CPA British Columbia

Table 7.1. Provincial and regional accounting bodies (CPA Canada, 2016)

The requirements for obtaining the CPA designation are the same for all applicants, but there are variations in the pathway and documents required to obtain this designation depending on one's educational background, employment history and membership in certain international accounting bodies with agreements and/or Memoranda of Understanding. Some international accounting bodies have Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA) or Reciprocal Membership Agreements (RMA) with CPA Canada or the three legacy accounting bodies (CA, CGA and CMA) that are now unifying under the CPA designation (CPA Canada, 2016). If an individual belongs to one of these international accounting bodies, the process to becoming a Canadian CPA generally involves completing and submitting the necessary applications detailing membership and experience information, registering with the provincial body where you intend to live in Canada and meeting the practical experience and/or course requirements. Specific details on the process can vary depending on if one is looking at a CA, CGA or CMA mutual or reciprocal agreement.

As a member of an international accounting body with an MRA or RMA, when applying for the CPA in designation, an individual must demonstrate that their membership was obtained by completing the qualification requirements for that body, not through a recognition agreement between that accounting body and another one. Hence, membership in an international body with an MRA or RMA through any means other than completing the international accounting body's requirements is not acceptable. Internationally educated individuals in the accounting profession who are not members of an accounting body with an MRA or RMA within Canada have to undergo a full assessment of their credentials by the provincial or territorial regulatory body where they want to become a member. Although the requirements to obtaining a CPA designation remain the same whether domestically or internationally educated, without recognized mutual or reciprocal agreements, internationally trained individuals are not automatically eligible for exemptions from any education or examination requirements on the path to a Canadian CPA (CPA Canada, 2016). For such individuals, the process to obtaining a CPA designation begins with an application and submission of academic and professional documents to the provincial or territorial regulatory body. Official international credentials and transcripts are required for assessment, after which the provincial/territorial body determines if one qualifies for a CPA or how they can qualify for a CPA. For all CPA applications and assessments, Canadian official language requirements apply. Therefore, documents must be provided in English and/or French depending on the region where an individual is applying for certification or recognition (CPA Canada, 2016).

A bridging program of sorts in the form of the Advanced Certificate in Accounting and Finance (ACAF) program is also presented as an option for internationally trained accountants looking to work in Canada. The ACAF is a nationally recognized intermediate accounting and finance certificate in Canada (CPA Canada, 2016). Internationally educated accountants who are

eligible for exemptions from technical courses or who are credited for some of the coursework may be able to complete the ACAF in as little as six months. According to CPA Canada (2016), with the ACAF, internationally educated accountants that may not immediately qualify for the CPA designation, can work in the accounting field, obtain experience in the Canadian job market and eventually transition to the CPA designation if desired. Through the initial assessment of their academic and professional credential, internationally educated graduates can get advanced standing in the ACAF, which allows for completion in less than the amount of time it would take someone without any prior recognized coursework.

Engineers Canada

In Canada, the engineering profession is a regulated one and a licence is required to legally practice as an engineer. Provincial and territorial regulatory bodies exist to regulate the practice of engineering within each province and territory. Engineers Canada is the national organization of these provincial and territorial engineering regulatory and licensing associations. Like with the accounting profession, this national and provincial organization of the engineering profession and the relationship of the provincial bodies to the national is why I consider Engineers Canada a trans-provincial organization in this study. Among its many functions, some of the relevant roles of Engineers Canada include the accreditation of undergraduate degree programs, development of professional practice and qualifications guidelines and facilitation of international and interprovincial labour mobility (Engineers Canada, 2016a). Among the Engineers Canada Board are representatives of the provincial and territorial regulatory bodies. Engineers Canada (2016a) refers to the provincial and territorial engineering regulatory bodies as constituent associations which it exists to support. These provincial and territorial bodies grant the licences for practicing as an engineer and not Engineers Canada. There is no national engineering licence in Canada;

therefore, licensing by one of the professional associations is necessary in order to professionally practice as an engineer in Canada. Engineers who are licensed to practice in a particular province or territory receive the Professional Engineer (P.Eng.) licence and title.

Alberta	Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA)
British Columbia	Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEGBC)
Manitoba	Engineers Geoscientists Manitoba
New Brunswick	Engineers and Geoscientists New Brunswick
Newfoundland and Labrador	Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland and Labrador (PEGNL)
Northwest Territories	Northwest Territories and Nunavut Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists (NAPEG)
Nova Scotia	Engineers Nova Scotia
Nunavut	Northwest Territories and Nunavut Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists (NAPEG)
Ontario	Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO)
Prince Edward Island	Engineers PEI
Quebec	Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec (OIQ)
Saskatchewan	Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan (APEGS)
Yukon	Association of Professional Engineers of Yukon (APEY)

Table 7.2. Provincial and territorial engineering associations (Engineers Canada, 2016)

There are five areas from which criteria must be met in order to successfully obtain a licence to practice engineering in Canada – academics, work experience, professionalism and ethics, good character, language (Engineers Canada, 2016a). To meet the academics requirement, applicants to the profession require a degree from an Engineers Canada Accreditation Board (ECAB) program, or an equivalent credential. Passing the Professional Practice Exam (PPE) will meet the professionalism and ethics criteria and proficiency in English or French is needed for the language requirement depending on the province or territory where the applicant is seeking licensure. Applicable work experience and good character round out the five criteria. The process for applying for professional engineering licensure as an engineer with international credentials involves a number of steps, which reflect the five criteria noted above. Timelines for completion

of the application process could take up to a year, according to Engineers Canada (2016b), or an additional two to five years depending on if additional requirements are determined to be necessary. Generally, the process involves the completion and submission of an application, submission of necessary documents, academic assessment, work experience and references assessment, language competency assessment, character assessment and the mandatory Professional Practice Examination (Engineers Canada, 2016b).

Engineers Canada has created an Academic Information Tool that helps applicants determine if the education they completed is sufficient prior to beginning the application process for licensing. This tool allows individuals to enter information regarding their credential such as the country of completion, name of the institution, degree title and year of completion, after which they can press a key to get information on where the program they completed stands in comparison to a Canadian engineering degree. If the program is deemed comparable, the individual would still need to proceed with the application process, have their educational and other credentials formally assessed by a provincial or territorial body and write any necessary qualifying examinations prior to being eligible for a licence. The specific academic documents required depend on the provincial or territorial association one has applied to obtain licensure from although documents that verify the successful completion of an ECAB accredited program or equivalent will be a standard requirement (Engineers Canada, 2016b). Work experiences may be considered as waivers for certain academic examinations, but what is deemed as acceptable work experience is determined by the provincial/territorial association on an individual basis (Engineers Canada, 2016b). As part of the licensing process, a minimum of four years of engineering work experience is required in all regions in Canada except for Quebec, where the minimum requirement is three years (Engineers Canada, 2016b). The work experience requirement allows regulatory bodies to ensure familiarity

with Canadian engineering practices, codes and standards as well as cultural, business and technical practices for working in Canada as a professional engineer (Engineers Canada, 2016b). The formats for documenting work experience vary by province/territory and each province/territory completes the work experience assessment (Engineers Canada, 2016b). Official language requirements also apply to future Canadian engineers who must be fluent in English or French depending on the province or territory.

To further facilitate the mobility and recognition of international credentials, there are some international arrangements in place for the engineering profession. One of these arrangements is an international agreement first signed in 1989 and known as the Washington Accord. The Washington Accord is an agreement between specific agencies in charge of the accreditation or recognition of tertiary-level engineering qualifications in 18 countries, who work together to assist the mobility of engineering professionals (Engineers Canada, 2016a; International Engineering Alliance, 2016). The Accord was put in place by its signatories, in recognition of the comparability of their approaches to accrediting engineering programs with aim of facilitating faster reviews of academic credentials of an engineer applying with an accreditation from a signatory licensing/regulatory organization (Engineers Canada, 2016a). This is an example where having comparable approaches to credential accreditation and recognition was beneficial to the parties. Engineers Canada (2016) has five Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) with specific organizations in Australia, France, Hong Kong-China, Ireland, and Texas-United States. However, it is still up to the provincial regulatory bodies to acknowledge these agreements. According to Engineers Canada (2016a), there is some variation of adoption and recognition of these agreements by the provincial bodies. Another international agreement that provides a basis for country-specific mutual recognition agreements for professional qualifications, including engineers is the

Accounting	Engineering
National organization – Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA)	National organization – Engineers Canada
Certification and/or admission is only available at the provincial or territorial regulatory body	Licensure and/or admission is only available at the provincial or territorial regulatory body
Application and submission of relevant documents is required for licensure	Application and submission of relevant documents required for licensure
Language proficiency required	Language proficiency required
Assessment of credentials and necessary professional requirements	Assessment of credentials and necessary professional requirements
Identified values for FCR – fairness, consistency, transparency, effectiveness	Identified values for FCR – transparency, objectiveness, impartiality, fairness
One recognized credential organizations - ICES	Three recognized credential organizations – WES Canada, CES, ICAS

Table 7.3. Foreign Credential Recognition Approaches: Accounting and Engineering

Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union (Engineers Canada, 2016). Two other international registers to which Engineers Canada (2016a) is a signatory to are the International Professional Engineers Agreement (IPEA) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Engineers Competence Agreement (APECEA). Engineers listed on these registers may be subject to faster reviews and recognition of their engineering credentials because to be listed on these registers, they have been reviewed and accepted based on an international standard of professional competence set by the signatories to the agreements (Engineering Canada, 2016a). The international standard of competence is based on academic credentials, number of years of experience, licensure in the home country, continual professional development, adherence to a jurisdictional code of conduct, and references from other professional engineers regarding the individual's experience and competence. These international agreements and registers make provisions for enabling the mobility and recognition of engineers from participating agencies and countries to have their credentials assessed and recognized more quickly. However, provincial regulatory or licensing organizations still get the final say in the uptake and application of these agreements. Engineers Canada sets the stage, but it is up to the provincial bodies to decide whether or not to get on the stage.

Conclusion

Comparing and contrasting the accounting and engineering professions above, through looking at the trans-provincial nature of these professions, does not reveal significant differences in the foreign credential recognition approaches of both professions. For each profession, the credential recognition process generally involves completing and submitting an application, submitting necessary documents (academic credentials, work experience documents, references), meeting official language requirements, having requirements assessed and writing an examination. The differences for both professions tend to be in the specific requirements and are more occupation specific rather than process specific. For example, the number of years of practical or work experience varies for each profession, although each look for work experience as part of the recognition process. Another key similarity between both professions is the role of the provincial regulatory bodies. Despite being trans-provincial professions with national and provincial or territorial bodies, the licensing authority resides with the provincial or territorial regulatory organizations. The national organizations do not automatically offer memberships or issue licenses. Admission, certification and/or licensure happen at the provincial or territorial levels, which is consistent with the jurisdictional authority that the provinces and territories have over education in Canada.

Within both professions, the requirements and standards necessary to obtain the corresponding professional designation is the same regardless of whether an applicant is educated or born within or outside of Canada. Those applicants from within Canada are more successful at being accredited and receiving their professional designations because their education within Canada is tailored to meet regulatory requirements. However, this is not often the case for those with foreign credentials. Academic qualifications in countries are almost often tailored to meet the

professional requirements for that occupation in that country and not necessarily for another country. For instance, a nurse in one country is almost always being trained to be a nurse in that particular country and not in another one. The global nature of the world does influence education systems across the world, so in some countries and post-secondary institutions, including Canada and Canadian institutions, thought is given to preparing students to be able to work in other countries and having qualifications that facilitate this. This perspective is not the norm in all places and even when it is applied, there is a form of accreditation that applicants have to go through or an agreement in place that has prior recognition of the individual's educational credentials. Having mutual recognition or other sorts of agreements between countries does not mean that the standard required for accreditation in Canada is lowered. Instead, when agreements are set in place, that prior work of evaluating the educational system and structure in the signatory countries has occurred. Based on this evaluation, a determination is made as to whether mutual recognition or some other type of recognition is possible. Canada also has to consider the provincial and territorial requirements in setting up confirmed agreements. With education credentials and accreditation residing within provincial and territorial authority, the provinces and territories have a significant say in the recognition of foreign credentials. This nature of provincial or territorial accreditation is the reason why although the national bodies of some professions sign on to international recognition agreements, the applicant still has to go through application to and/or assessment by a provincial/territorial regulatory body. The importance of jurisdictional responsibility for education by Canadian provinces and territories will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION

The analysis presented in this chapter focuses on the foreign credential recognition (FCR) and assessment policies in the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario, CPA Canada and Engineers Canada. These policies will be analyzed individually and in comparison with each other on order to determine how they deal with some of the previously identified issues of foreign credential recognition and assessment. Criteria from overarching goals will guide the analysis that follows below. Some of the policies were specifically tailored for regulated professions while some applied more broadly. Thus, in the interest of comparing such policies created with some differences in intention and audience, overarching policy goals that allow for the study all of these policies individually and in comparison with each other despite their variations were necessary.

Establishing policy goals

Policy goals, as mentioned in a previous chapter, are objectives that a particular public policy intends to achieve. When speaking of public policy as government driven, Howlett (2011) describes policy goals as basic aims and expectations governments have in choosing to or not to pursue a certain course of action. Weimer and Vining (2011) emphasized a distinction between goals and policies. According to them, goals are a reflection of human values; values that as humans, we want to encourage. On the other hand, policies are strategies for encouraging or promoting said goals; they are concrete actions towards achieving goals (Weimer & Vining, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that policy goals indicate what a policy sets out to accomplish and policies denote how the goals are to be accomplished. As goals reflect human values, and values are subjective, goals can vary according to the stakeholders, groups or individuals involved in their

development or establishment. Hence, it is wise to obtain a cross-section of perspectives on a problem when carrying out policy analysis.

The evaluation criteria utilized in the study are derived from policy goals gleaned from the issues and discussions in the literature review of this study. The literature review examined relevant research on international credential assessment and recognition in Canada to get some insights on the public policy issues surrounding the recognition and assessment of foreign credentials in Canada. In addition to the insight provided by the research literature, examining the policies and procedures presented in the previous chapters which detail organizational and governmental approaches to handling issues of FCR, contributed to the evaluation criteria selected. The QAF was also used as a source for policy goals because it is a policy made at the national level with the intention of harmonizing credential recognition practices across Canada. Furthermore, by virtue of being sponsored by the Ministers of Education across Canada, the QAF can be said to be the one policy endorsed by all the provinces and territories in the country. Through that lens, the more specific policies can be analyzed to determine their alignment with the objectives of the QAF.

While the sources from which the criteria were developed are particular, they are also necessary for consideration as they play a significant role in the policy responses to the issues and criticisms of FCR in Canada. Exploring and understanding these policy responses is the aim of this particular study. As the criteria for analysis are further developed in this chapter, the evaluation criteria as well as the rational for their consideration will be presented. Accordingly, the subsequent parts of this chapter will begin with introducing and detailing the evaluation criteria that will be applied to each of the policies discussed at the national, provincial and trans-provincial levels. Afterwards, an analysis of each of the policies based on these criteria will follow.

Evaluation Criteria

Consistency

Consistency here refers to any attempt at uniformity or standardization of approach to foreign credential assessment across the country. There are a large number of institutions, organizations and bodies involved in credential assessment within Canada. Each of these groups also has to abide by the educational requirements and standards in the province or territory where they exist, since education is the authority of the provinces and territories in Canada. Given the number of players involved in the credential assessment and recognition space, a consistent approach to how assessment and recognition is carried out would be helpful to those seeking to have their credentials assessed in Canada. This would enable assessment for recognition, employment, academic and other specific purposes to have outcomes that are quite similar regardless of where within the country a credential is assessed.

In determining consistency for the policies and procedures in this study, a few factors were to be considered. First, the role, process and areas of responsibility for jurisdictions, that is the provinces and territories, were identified. In all cases, the provincial/territorial authority for education affairs was in place, but it was important to note if there were any universal guidelines that were subscribed to. Variations in requirements for a specific province or territory were also considered because having requirements that were unique to a particular province could indicate an approach that may not be consistent. Involvements with any of the six credential assessment agencies in Canada that are members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluations Services of Canada (ACESC) were also another consideration because those agencies adhere to the QAF, and utilize similar assessment approaches, which makes for more consistency. Those assessment agencies also have a quality assurance process in place through the QAF. Following an established

assessment methodology, national or international agreement also helps with promoting a level of consistency and was also paid attention to when looking at consistency of approach in the policies. Finally, the sharing of official documents between organizations or assessment bodies is something else that can speak to consistency in the sense that similar documents could be accepted between organizations. This would suggest that assessments are being based on the same documents regardless of the location of the assessment.

Portability

Portability refers to the ease of transferring an international credential from one region to another in the country. Again, with provinces and territories maintaining oversight over education, certain standards and requirements may vary. So, whether an international credential recognized in one province or territory transfers to another can speak to how portable or transferrable foreign credential recognition is within Canada. Good portability of credentials bears well for a more organized and coordinated approach to international credential recognition across the country. It would also help address the variations in FCR that were reported as a concern in the literature review.

In analyzing each of the policies for portability measures or approaches, the absence or presence of mutual recognition agreements within the country for international credentials was looked at. Such mutual recognition agreements would mean the ability to utilize an assessed and recognized foreign credential in another province or territory without necessarily having to undergo the entire recognition and assessment process all over again. If no mutual recognition agreements are in place, transferability of a recognized credential was also considered. For example, in the case of regulated professions, if an internationally educated architect receives a licence to practice in one province, are they able to receive an equivalent licence upon moving to

a different region in Canada? Whether specific additional requirements were required in a certain province/territory was also something to note, as additional requirements could indicate that portability may not be automatic or may require additional steps.

Information availability

A limited availability of information on FCR in Canada was often cited as a major obstacle for immigrants to Canada. Unawareness of the process and its requirements upon arrival of newcomers with international credentials to Canada has been raised as a significant surprise factor to the immigration process. Consequently, readily available information on the assessment and recognition process was another criterion on which the FCR policies were compared. Having access to relevant information would increase knowledge of the process for those with international credentials and allow for planning on how to navigate the process.

Factors such as availability and accessibility of information regardless of location were important for consideration when evaluating the policies. The ability to get to required information independent of where they were located was important in order to allow immigrants to get a sense of what might be involved in getting their credential assessed prior to arriving in the country. It would also be helpful for planning or choosing a particular province/territory to settle in when one can access procedures and requirements. The kind of information available is also something to note as irrelevant information is not helpful. Therefore, information on the assessment and/or recognition process, required documentation, length of time for the process and any additional notable steps such as examinations or language requirements were all the kinds of information that the policies and procedures were evaluated on.

Policy Goals and Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Framework

The principles of the QAF are obvious in their promotion of consistency, portability and information availability. Through its principles, code of practice and tools of self-evaluation and adherence, the QAF aims to facilitate processes and exchanges of information that move organizations involved in credential assessment toward getting to know each other's practices better and moving towards similar practices through quality improvement and feedback. The principles and Code of Good Practice of the QAF provide specific measures, recommendations and procedures to promote consistency of approach and portability of credentials across the country. A requirement of the QAF is for credential assessing organizations to have current and historical reference material on the education systems of various countries and to be members of national and international credential databases and associations. This is to help promote familiarity with international credentials and knowledge of guidelines in assessment practices, which helps with consistent practices in these organizations. The QAF also has recommendations for competencies of credential assessors with the aim of promoting consistency and portability. Regarding information availability, the QAF expects organizations that adhere to it to provide information on the assessment and recognition process including required documents, application procedures, timelines and cost. Another important requirement for adherence with the QAF deals with compliance with the Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice in the Assessment of International Credentials. This document is closely linked to the Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications, which is discussed next in this chapter. Hence, the following discussion under the Recommendation will also apply to QAF.

Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications

Consistency is a goal that is explicit within the Recommendation. The assessment criteria and procedural recommendations are developed with the intention of increasing the consistency of assessment procedures in the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. In the Recommendation, recognition authorities and credential assessment organizations are encouraged to develop an inventory of typical recognition cases and a comparative overview of the education within their country and other education systems or credentials as a way to make recognition decisions consistent. Paying attention to past practices in credential recognition and assessment is also a practice that is encouraged to ensure consistency. Similar cases are to be taken into account and past practices on such cases are to serve as a guide when dealing with a new case that is similar to one from before. If there are to be deviations from past practices in a similar case, the Recommendation indicates that such changes in practice should be justified. By encouraging using previous similar cases as a reference and providing justifications for changes to approaches in similar cases, those involved in assessment and/or recognition of credentials can produce consistent outcomes for similar cases or reasonable explanations when differences arise. Keeping a record of assessments, referring to them and comparing new and previous cases could result in the consistency of approaches and outcomes, particularly for similar credentials or credentials from particular periods.

For achieving consistent approaches on a national level in Canada, most or all organizations involved in the assessment of credentials would have to ascribe to the criteria, procedures and recommendations provided in the Recommendation. As it turns out, the major credential assessment organizations in Canada do ascribe to the Recommendation, which bodes well for consistency. However, unless there is a sharing of practices between these organizations,

it is difficult to determine if the procedures and criteria mentioned are applied in the same or similar manner across organizations. Also, regulatory bodies and other organizations involved in credential assessment are not necessarily bound to adhering to the Recommendation. Thus, their practices and procedures may differ from what is set out in the Recommendation. That being said, the contents of the Recommendation could very well be considered standard process in the foreign credential assessment and recognition landscape. Therefore, it may be widely utilized, even if not openly ascribed to.

In the Recommendation, consistency of procedures and criteria is important to ensure that similar cases are handled similarly in different regions. Thus, consistency is intended to assist with dealing with credentials similarly in different places. This does not necessarily translate into portability of credentials, although it assists with generating similar credential outcomes in different places. Mutual recognition agreements or arrangements are not specified within the contents of the Recommendation, neither are measures specifically targeted towards having a recognized foreign credential automatically transferred to a different region. Mutual recognition agreements between regions likely exist beyond the Recommendation, but such types of arrangements are not specifically mentioned within this document.

A specific section of the Recommendation is dedicated to providing guidelines on providing information to applicants. Assessment and recognition authorities are urged to publish standardized information on assessment procedure and criteria for international qualifications. Such information is to be provided not just to applicants, but anyone making initial inquiries about the assessment on their foreign credential. Organizations involved in foreign credential recognition and/or assessment are also asked to provide informal advice to applicants seeking to have their credentials assessed in order to assist them with the process. The inventory of usual recognition

cases mentioned earlier, is also something that is encouraged to be shared with applicants if possible, with the disclaimer that it is only a guide and not a guarantee as all applications are individually assessed. Additionally, prompt processing of assessment applications is encouraged and information on how long an application for assessment or recognition would take to be completed is to be provided to applicants. With all these stipulations set out in the document, it can be reasonably said that the Recommendation does promote and encourage practices that make information on the assessment and recognition process readily available to applicants.

Something else of note within the Recommendation is on how documents requiring translations should be handled. The Recommendation asks for careful consideration to be given to translation requirements, such that perhaps only key documents are required to be translated and documents in certain foreign or non-national languages may be accepted without the need for translation. The handling of translations in this manner is meant to make the process more manageable for applicants, but it leads to the question of what happens when official translations are not required and a particular set of documents are useful for the assessment of a foreign credential. Certain standard documents such as an institution's calendar and list of course descriptions from a particular year may not be necessary to be required of all applicants from that particular institution and from that same year. However, documents that may not be considered key documents can also be sources of useful information in an assessment or recognition. Thus, care should be given in determining what is and is not to be translated. While the intention is to make things easier for applicants, it would not be helpful for an applicant if a crucial or helpful piece of information was missed because of trying to make a process easier.

The Fair Access to Regulatory Professions and Compulsory Trades Act

Within the Ontario Fair Access Act, the obligation to provide objective, transparent, impartial and fair registration practices can be considered an attempt towards achieving consistency in credential recognition. While the Act does not explicitly state that it applies to the assessment of international qualifications, it mentions qualifications generally, which would include both foreign and domestic qualifications. Being bound by and putting in place practices that align with the aforementioned principles promotes a streamlined approach to practices for the regulatory bodies to which the Act applies. The requirements for the assessment of qualifications in accordance with the principles above, both when the assessment is being done by the regulatory body or via an external party, also drives towards consistency of approach to the handling of international credentials. Another feature of the Fair Access Act that contributes to achieving consistency is the requirement to ensure that individuals assessing qualifications have appropriate training in any special considerations applicable to the assessment of applications for registration. Through the Fairness Commissioner, the Act enables the monitoring of third parties that assess qualifications on behalf of regulatory body to ensure that their assessments are in compliance with the Act and its regulations. Often, policies are criticized for having no substantial provisions for enforcement, but in the case of the Fairness Act, there is a requirement to provide a report on the implementation and effectiveness of the Act and its regulations as well as a requirement for an audit of registration practices and compliance with the Act for the regulatory bodies. Reports that provide information on compliance with the Act can also be made available to the public. Providing false or misleading information regarding compliance or failing to comply with directives from the Fairness Commissioner are some examples of offences under the Fair Access Act. Such offences can come with repercussions of payment of a fine of up to $50,000 for an

individual or up to $100,000 for a corporation. Therefore, in addition to offering guidelines that contribute to consistency in assessment and recognition, this Act also provides enforcement measures as well as consequences for non-compliance with the directions set out in the Act.

The Ontario Fair Access Act (2006) applies to professions in 15 regulatory bodies and to trades under the Ontario College of Trades. However, there are 40 regulatory bodies in Ontario, of which 26 are for health professions and the rest are for varied disciplines (Ontario Regulators for Access Consortium, 2016). Thus there are number of regulated professions and regulatory bodies that are not obligated to abide by the Fair Access Act. The 26 regulated health professions and their corresponding regulatory bodies, to which the Fair Access Act does not apply, have a separate Act - the Regulated Health Professions Act (Ontario. Fairness Commissioner, 2015). Within this Act there is the requirement/obligation for transparent, objective, impartial and fair registration practices and it includes similar requirements to the Fair Access Act regarding the assessment of qualifications either by the regulatory body or a third party assessment agency/organization and the role of the Fairness Commissioner in that regard (Ontario. Fairness Commissioner, 2015). The rest of the regulated professions may have other pieces of legislation similar to the Regulated Health Professions Act and the Fair Access Act, to help with the abiding to the principles of fairness, in the registration practices and some oversight of credential assessment. The question of consistency arises from this fact that different pieces of legislation apply to different types of regulated occupations and how consistency of registration or assessment approaches are handled for the diversity of regulated professions within one province. There is also the question of whether consistency of approach is a feasible objective to be achieved given the differences that exist within each of these regulated occupations. For example, accounting and pharmacy are both regulated professions in Ontario, but both have different professional requirements and are different by the

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very nature of the field and subject matter. These differences are likely to have implications on what the registration requirements for each of the professions are as well as how the credential and education for each profession can be assessed.

Within the Act, there are no specific features that can be said to contribute to portability of credentials from Ontario to another region in Canada. However, since this Act was written to guide regulatory bodies within the province of Ontario, it is not surprising that explicit factors for portability of credentials are not mentioned. With respect to information availability and accessibility, the Fair Registration Practices Code within the Fair Access Act details specific requirements regarding the provision of information to and communication with applicants. Regulated professions are mandated to provide information about regulation practices, timelines and requirements for registration along with a statement on which requirements can be satisfied through acceptable alternate means. Additionally, under the Fair Registration Practices Code, regulated professions are obligated to communicate with applicants in a timely manner regarding registration decisions. The Code notes that information is to be provided to persons who are either applying or intending to apply for registration in the regulated profession. It seems that location is not a limit to obtaining information on registration within a regulated profession under the Fair Access Act. Hence, interested individuals can access information regarding their international educational credentials prior to embarking on arriving or living in Ontario, Canada. While the regulatory bodies are obligated to provide the above information, the form, depth and detailed nature of the information provided may vary depending on the regulatory body. The accessibility of the information may also vary. For some bodies, such information is readily available on their websites, but for others this may not be the case. Regardless, for professions bound by the Fair Access Act, there is an obligation to provide information to applying or interested applicants.

British Columbia Provincial Policies

In terms of consistency, the documents from the British Columbia provincial government, through the WelcomeBC portal, indicate that recognition processes can greatly vary between occupations and what works in one occupation may not work in the other. Most of policies and procedures I found where focused on making the assessment and recognition process more efficient and effective as well as easier for applicants to navigate. A significant number of best practices for the regulatory bodies were directed at making information available in a manner that is accessible and easy to navigate. For example, all necessary information that an applicant or a potential applicant would need to know is to be located in a single location and written in plain language so that it can be easily understood by internationally trained applicants who may not be very fluent in the English language. Having a summary of the assessment process available on the website along with information on where and how to start with the assessment process is also a demonstration of the importance placed on providing information to interested or affected people.

A focus on helping immigrants complete as much of the process as they can prior to arriving in Canada was also evident in the recommended practices. Regulatory bodies were also to review their processes on foreign credential recognition to determine areas of improvement, streamlining or trends that may suggest where applicants with foreign credentials may require assistance. Partnerships, collaborations and mutual recognition agreements with other jurisdictions were also encouraged to help with improving foreign credential recognition outcomes. Such partnerships make for better portability of credentials between jurisdictions, especially if jurisdictions are actively working together and/or have recognition agreements in place. Supporting the regulatory bodies to which regulatory authority is granted is one way of ensuring that the assessment and recognition processes run relatively smoothly. This working relationship

between the province and the regulatory bodies is gleaned from the policies and directives provided on the provincial websites and how the process is structured. Therefore, in the province of British Columbia, a closer look at the policies within the individual regulatory bodies should provide greater insight on the detailed workings of the credential assessment process.

Chartered Professional Accountants Canada and Engineers Canada

Within these two professions, the provincial and territorial regulatory bodies bear the responsibility of admitting and assessing new members and have jurisdictional authority for certification (accounting) and licensing (engineering). Consistency in approach relies heavily on the individual regulatory bodies applying national and international guidelines in the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. Portability of credentials also relies significantly on how the provincial and territorial bodies handle domestic and international credentials. Accordingly, it is equally important for the regulatory bodies to have information that is easily accessible to all those who seek to apply for certification or licensure in their professions. To get a sense of how the policy goals related to consistency, portability and information availability work in the context of trans-provincial organizations, I undertook a comparison of individual regulatory bodies of the engineering and accounting professions in British Columbia and Ontario. As these two provinces and professions were examined for their foreign credential recognition policies and procedures at the provincial and trans-provincial levels, it was apt to extend a more detailed look to the two provinces and the two professions. To do this comparison, I looked at the Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia, Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario, the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia and Professional Engineers Ontario.

Accounting in British Columbia

The Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia (CPABC) is the provincial organization responsible for the certification and regulation of the accounting profession in British Columbia. To use the Charted Professional Accountant (CPA) designation in BC, membership with the CPABC is required (CPABC, 2016). Requirements for obtaining the CPA designation in British Columbia are the same as noted by CPA Canada. These requirements are the same for all applicants regardless of foreign or domestic credentials. The process involves applying and submitting the necessary documents for an assessment of qualifications towards entry into the CPA Professional Education Program, which leads to the CPA designation. The application process is also the same for both applicants with domestic or international credentials, but the type of documents required may differ. For example, for applicants with international degrees, a degree report from a credential assessment agency that is part of the Alliance of Credential evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) is required (CPABC, 2016). This additional document is not required for those who have completed their credentials within Canada. CPABC considers all the Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) and Reciprocal Membership Agreements (RMAs) noted by CPA Canada. It has specific application forms for those applying with a MRA or RMA in place. Applicants with recognized international designations under these agreements may be eligible for exemptions from some requirements for the CPA or Chartered Accountant (CA) designation. International applicants without formal agreements may be eligible for advanced standing in the requirements for obtaining the CPA designation.

Applicants with CPA designations from another provincial or territorial accounting regulatory body are required to submit an application for membership with CPABC. I could not find an explicit mention that members in good standing from other provinces and territories would

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be admitted into CPABC, as is the case with CPA Ontario. However, it appears that applicants from other Canadian jurisdictions are not required to submit transcripts or documents for work experience verification. The process for such applicants involves verification of the applicant's standing in the other provincial or territorial organization. This process implies that unless an applicant is not in good standing and/or has been the subject of disciplinary, criminal or similar matters, they are most likely to be admitted to the CPABC by having this designation from another Canadian jurisdiction.

Accounting in Ontario

The Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario (CPA Ontario) is the provincial organization responsible for the certification and regulation of the accounting profession in Ontario. The Fair Access Act (2006) applies to CPA Ontario, who complies with it and submits the necessary reports to the Ontario Fairness Commissioner (CPA Ontario, 2016). Only members of CPA Ontario can use the CPA and/or CA accounting designations in Ontario (CPA Ontario, 2016). Requirements for obtaining CPA certification in Ontario are similar to that described by CPA Canada and in British Columbia. Certification requirements are not dependent on whether one has domestic or international credentials. However, how those requirements are met and the assessment process for determining that those requirements are met can vary depending on the source of one's credential, their educational background and work experiences as well as their membership status in another Canadian jurisdiction. For example, the CPA designation requires the completion of coursework in specific subject areas. Applicants who have attended a CPA accredited post-secondary program automatically complete the required coursework as part of their program. Therefore, when applying for the CPA designation, these applicants will not be required to complete this particular prerequisite coursework. On the other hand, those who have completed

a different post-secondary program without those prerequisite courses will have to complete the prerequisite coursework in the required subject areas when applying for the CPA designation. A similar example would apply for those with international credentials who may or may not have completed the required prerequisite coursework. The way in which international applicants can meet the CPA designation requirements in Canada can vary depending on the nature and type of credentials one has and how these credentials fulfill the designation requirements.

CPA Ontario considers all the Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) and Reciprocal Membership Agreements (RMAs) noted by CPA Canada and has specific application processes and requirements for MRAs and MRAs. Applicants without such agreements can apply and will have their international credentials assessed by CPA Ontario in order to determine if requirements for CPA designation have been met. Members of other Canadian provincial or territorial regulatory accounting bodies in good standing with their regulatory body can apply for membership and be admitted to CPA Ontario (CPA Ontario, 2016).

Engineering in British Columbia

The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEGC) is the provincial regulatory body for the engineering profession in British Columbia. In British Columbia, the foreign credential recognition process is similar to that described by Engineering Canada, which involves meeting academic, experience, law and ethics, language and good character requirements. This corresponds to five criteria noted at the national level to be mandatory for licensure. There are no distinctions in requirements for licensure of applicants with domestic or international credentials. Details of the academic and work experience areas are similar, with British Columbia having the minimum four years of work experience requirement noted at the national level. In assessing academic requirements for registrations as a professional

engineer, British Columbia will consider the presence of mutual recognition agreements with Engineers Canada, including the Washington Accord, in determining whether or not an exemption from academic examinations towards becoming a professional engineer is possible.

The APEGBC (2016) has an online self-assessment tool to assist internationally educated individuals with determining how their experience and qualifications may compare to the requirements for registration as a professional engineer in British Columbia through registration with APEGBC and what to expect during the process of having their qualifications reviewed. The self-assessment tool works by asking questions on education and work experience, and subsequently providing information on how such qualifications will likely be assessed by APEGBC. The British Columbia provincial government through the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training was involved in the partnership to develop the self-assessment tool (APEGBC, 2016).

Engineering in Ontario

Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) is the provincial engineering association responsible for regulating the engineering profession in Ontario. The Fair Access Act (2006) applies to the PEO, who complies with it (PEO, 2013). In Ontario, the requirements are also similar to that at the national level and touch on the five criteria area of academics, work experience, professionalism and ethics, good character, language. International Engineering graduates are directed to the Engineers Canada website for more detailed information on getting licensed. The requirements for getting licensed are the same regardless of domestic or international credentials and just like BC, the details of the academic and work experience requirements are the same with the minimum four year work experience requirement. Although the language requirement is not explicitly mentioned by the PEO on their website, there is a legislative requirement for the PEO to

ensure that all applicants for an engineering license are able to demonstrate proficiency in the English Language (Office of the Fairness Commissioner, 2007; Ontario, 2009). Applicants can submit applications for licensure regardless of citizenship and even before immigrating to Canada.

Applicants who have a P.Eng. licence from another Canadian engineering association and are in good standing in that association also have an easier time with the licensing process, as they are not required to submit transcripts or write the Professional Practice Exam in order to be licensed in Ontario (PEO, 2013). Professional Engineers Ontario (2013) will also consider mutual recognition agreements with Engineers Canada in determining exemptions from technical examinations that are required to meet academic requirements for those who have completed a program that is not accredited by the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board. The mutual recognition agreements considered are specific agreements that have been recognized by the PEO. A recognized mutual recognition agreement does not automatically afford exemptions from certain requirements in the licensure process; rather it helps determine the equivalency of the completed academic program in meeting the requirements/standards for the profession in Ontario, Canada.

Discussion

The policies that have been described in this study generally fall in two categories. The first category deals with broad policies that are meant to guide the overall approaches to credential recognition and assessment. The second category deals with more specialized versions of the broader policies, tailored to particular scenarios. Another way to describe the policies is to think of the broad policies as overarching guidelines and the other category as the application of those guidelines to a variety of professional, academic and other credential recognition settings. The Quality Assurance Framework, the Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications, the Fair Access Act and other provincial policies regarding

the recognition of foreign credentials are broad policies that apply to the practice of assessing and recognizing foreign credentials in Canada. At the trans-provincial level, the principles behind these broader policies are applied to the assessment and recognition of credentials within the requirements of particular professions.

Although, I have described these policies as belonging to separate categories, the difference between them lies in their customization for a particular profession, not in the intention of the policy. The policy principles and the goals remain the same. That is why the policy goals described within those broad policies were still applicable to the policies and procedures for the engineering and accounting professions as described above. It is necessary to highlight the rationale behind this distinction I have made because the distinction does not mean that the purpose of the policies changes; instead it is the manner in which they are applied that may vary. This is important to note because seeing that these policies at various levels work in concert with and build on each other is essential for addressing policy issues related to foreign credential recognition at various levels. Foreign credential recognition affects a number of economic, social and other areas, which exist at all levels be it national, provincial/territorial or municipal and it has wide-reaching public policy implications. Consequently, comprehensive and specific implications at all levels where FCR policies can have implications should be considered in the making of policies to address FCR. It is also necessary for policies to address FCR issues to complement or at least work well with each other at the national and provincial levels to prevent anomalies and difficulties that can arise due to policy incompatibilities or contradictions.

Policy Goals	Engineering		Accounting	
	National		**National**	
	Articulates national guidelines for regulatory practices, subject to provincial or territorial requirements		Supports both global accounting standards and setting domestic standards	
	Assists with developing consistent exam requirements in the provinces and territories		Develops the CPA certification program and the qualifying common final examination	
Consistency — **Following a universal or somewhat standard process** — **Notable province specific requirement**	**Provincial**		**Provincial**	
	BC	**ON**	**BC**	**ON**
	Requirements for licensure are similar to that noted by national organization	Requirements for licensure are similar to that noted by national organization Complies with the Fair Access Act	Requirements for licensure are similar to that noted by national organization	Requirements for licensure are similar to that noted by national organization Complies with the Fair Access Act
	National		**National**	
	Facilitates national labour mobility for professional engineers		Facilitates a unified Canadian accounting designation	
Portability — **Recognition and reciprocal agreements** — **Transferability from other Canadian jurisdictions**	**Provincial**		**Provincial**	
	BC	**ON**	**BC**	**ON**
	Considers Engineers Canada mutual recognition agreements Membership in another provincial or territorial association facilitates membership with national organization	Considers Engineers Canada mutual recognition agreements Membership in another provincial or territorial association facilitates membership with national organization	Considers all mutual recognition and reciprocal membership agreements noted by national organization Membership in another provincial or territorial association facilitates membership with APEGBC	Considers all mutual recognition and reciprocal membership agreements noted by national organization Membership in another provincial or territorial association facilitates membership with PEO
	National		**National**	
	Online access to an overview of licensing requirements and process, provincial/territorial associations and a self-assessment tool		Articulates certification requirements and pathways that are subject to jurisdictional regulation	
Information availability — **Readily accessible and useful information on the process and requirements independent of location**	**Provincial**		**Provincial**	
	BC	**ON**	**BC**	**ON**
	Online access to detailed licensing and application information including a self-assessment tool, fees, timelines, application status	Application for licensure can begin prior to immigration Online access to detailed licensing and application information including fees, timelines, application status	Online access to detailed certification and application information including fees, timelines and application results	Online access to detailed certification and application information including fees and timelines

Table 8.1. Policy Goals and Evaluation

Provincial jurisdiction over education is an important piece in the quest to continuous improvements in the foreign credential recognition landscape, including successfully achieving the policy goals of consistency of process and portability of credentials. As the findings above demonstrate, even when there is a national organization, provincial responsibility over education means that the provinces and territories still have to maintain the responsibility of recognizing an international credential. Provincial and territorial bodies must have a way in which to engage with

each other and share their approaches to ensure alignment with the national organization, each other and a convergence of their practices. Although education in Canada falls within provincial or territorial jurisdiction, a national dimension is also necessary to achieving a measure of cohesion and coordination between the distinct provinces and territories that make up Canada. Policy approaches to FCR cannot occur in isolation without considering the wider context, since doing so will likely result in negative implications. A national and provincial/territorial approach to handling FCR policy issues is necessary for consistency, portability and sustainability of any improvements. The QAF attempts to facilitate this national and provincial/territorial approach, but problems can arise if not all provinces or territories are on board.

Currently, abiding by the QAF is optional, which means that should a jurisdiction not adhere to its principles or to similar principles, there is cause for concern. The optionality of the QAF also means that there are limited options for regularly enforcing compliance. So, in cases where QAF principles are not be complied with to the extent that they should be, there are limitations on how to ensure a consistent level of compliance. The Fair Access Act from Ontario was good at building in compliance and accountability measures to ensure that the registration practices of the professions it applied to were continually adhering to the principles of transparency, objectivity, impartiality and fairness. A similar sort of compliance and accountability approach would be beneficial to sustaining the goals that the QAF aims to address. Creating the QAF through the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) was a good way to bring all the provinces and territories together in working towards common goals for foreign credential recognition. Having the governmental authorities responsible for education in their respective jurisdictions present and involved at the table that created the QAF was a good approach to getting everyone involved and building support, given that the responsibility for education and as a result,

foreign credential recognition lies with each of the provincial and territorial governments. In addition, working through CMEC was probably the closest mechanism for getting national level collaboration on matters of FCR in Canada, where there is no federal jurisdiction over education. However, more attention needs to be paid to commitment to the principles of the QAF to ensure continued adherence to them and sustainability in achieving the QAF's goal of pan-Canadian approach to continued improvements in international academic credential assessment. As it currently stands, the authority of the QAF comes from the organizations that adhere to its vision and there is no obligation to adhere to its principles. CMEC acts as sponsor to facilitate the commitment from organizations to adhere to the QAF. This means some credential assessment organizations can choose to not commit or decide to opt out and carry on assessments in whatever way they choose and there is nothing that binds them to the QAF to preclude non-adherence or opting out. A lack of such preventative measures leads to inconsistencies in credential recognition and assessment standards, which in turn affects the portability of credentials. Should this happen it would have significant implications for all the work that has been done in facilitating consistency of assessment, portability of credentials and information availability. Such great risk warrants a risk prevention strategy that works hard to prevent this from happen. Perhaps through CMEC, the provinces can indicate firm commitment to adherence and require the same of all international academic credential assessment organizations.

Regarding the ideal scenario for FCR in Canada, where all credentials are valued as they were in their original countries, differences in educational structures and systems suggest that this ideal is not feasible unless there are no longer notable differences in education systems all over the world. However, there are components of the ideal scenario which are attainable. These involve a scenario where applicants, particularly immigrants to Canada with foreign credentials, are properly

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informed on the transferability of their credentials into the Canadian system, are aware of the requirements and processes to getting their credentials recognized, are able to have their credentials properly evaluated without discrimination due to race or country of origin and are able to use their recognized credentials across the country. All the policies discussed above are focused on policy goals that promote access to beneficial information for all applicants, consistency of assessment and recognition processes, mobility of credentials across national and international bodies without focusing on characteristics that enable discrimination based on an individual's race. The assessment and recognition process are structured to rely on the credentials themselves and specific methods of assessing them, not on value-laden conceptions of the credential or characteristics of the credential holder, to determine equivalencies to Canadian credentials.

It is worth noting that in credential assessment and recognition, the standards and requirements for a qualification or designation are generally the same for everyone in a particular profession, regardless of whether they are domestic or foreign trained. The differences lie in how those standards or requirements are met. For individuals with the applicable Canadian credentials, the requirements for accreditation are already established within the country and educational requirements for being able to professionally practice are built in to the post-secondary institutions across the country. Variations may seem to appear in the recognition and assessment of foreign credentials due to similarities in education systems or in explicit arrangements made between certain agencies, organizations and countries. The standards and the educational requirements do not change in these or other instances. Having a similar education system makes it easier for the assessment and verification of academic and other requirements to take place and be approved as opposed to having vastly different educational requirements. Factors such as whether or not the profession is a regulated profession also come in to play as to how the accreditation process occurs

as well as the outcome. For example, in some countries, teaching is not a regulated profession or you may not need a teaching license in order to teach at the elementary and secondary levels. In certain countries, an individual can teach as a subject matter expert in elementary or secondary schools without the need for a teaching certificate. An individual with a post-graduate, master's or doctoral degree in chemistry may be allowed to teach in the secondary school system as a subject matter expert. However, in Canada, subject matter expertise on its own is not sufficient for obtaining a teaching license to teach at the kindergarten to grade 12 levels. Pedagogical training, in addition to subject matter expertise where required, is needed in order to qualify one to teach at the kindergarten to grade 12 levels. This difference may be enough to produce different outcomes in foreign credential recognition. Credential recognition processes for individuals that are educated in a country with an education system that has similar requirements for teachers at the elementary and secondary levels will likely find little or no differences in the outcomes of the process. Whereas, those individuals educated in countries with vastly different requirements for teachers, such as no requirement for pedagogical training, will find quite different outcomes from the recognition process and may not qualify to be teachers in Canada because of not meeting the standard of pedagogical training.

Across both provinces, both professions and their respective national organizations examined in this study, the findings above show that there is a good level consistency of recognition processes, portability of recognized credentials and lots of beneficial information available to applicants looking to apply for recognition of their international credentials. This level of consistency, portability and information availability in these professions, the drive towards these policy goals in the national, provincial and trans-provincial policies often makes me wonder if the issue with foreign credential recognition is that credentials are not being recognized instead of the

processes being fatally flawed. Looking at the foreign credential recognition and assessment processes as I have done in this study reveals that while not perfect, strides have been made to addressing problems that prevent the recognition of foreign credentials. However, it seems that when credentials are not recognized an often-cited answer to this is a discriminatory or racist system that is personalized to target individuals or groups of individuals. From this perspective, when a credential is not recognized, it is thought to have more to do with the individual and their characteristics rather than their credential and how it compares to the standards that have been set for a particular qualification or profession.

The findings of this study indicate that when it comes to the process of credential recognition processes in Canada, it is the origin of the credential and not the origin of the individual bearing the credential that seems most relevant to the recognition process. This point is important for the argument of race and discrimination playing a role in the recognition of foreign credential. Thus, someone from Country X can obtain their education from Country Y which has an education system that is more consistent with Canada's and have a different result from someone from the same country (Country X) who obtained there education from within Country X. The country of origin of a credential matters in determining what education system the credential was obtained from for the purpose of verifying it against standards set up in Canada for that profession or qualification. This differentiation does not mean that there is no racism or racial discrimination, but it does mean that the process is not set up to be deliberately racist or discriminatory as some stories around FCR in Canada may suggest. With the assessment and recognition process largely focused on demonstrable factors and not value-laden factors that can be arbitrarily determined, it would actually be very difficult to deny accreditation or recognition on solely racist reasons. These stories often emphasize racism and discrimination as root causes of outcomes in credential

recognition rather than looking a little deeper to uncover reasons why differences in FCR outcomes exist. This perspective, which can serve as a detractor and caution to those who are not familiar with foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada, is often behind a number of foreign credential recognition stories such as that of the taxi-cab driving immigrant with an advanced degree who has been discriminated against for where they are from and how they look or the well-educated individual from another country who is doing a menial job because his credentials were not acceptable for race-based discriminatory reasons. The problem with such stories that suggest that race is the biggest obstacle to overcome in foreign credential recognition is that they are deterministic and often discourage individuals who have no other means of verifying such stories from trying to have their credentials assessed. These stories destroy a sense of agency because they suggest that unless you can change your race or find a non-racist person to assess your credentials, your outcome is bound to be terrible. As far as I know, it is not very feasible to change your racial or ethnic background, thus, different stories and narrative are important for credential recognition to capture the diversity and possibility of outcomes in foreign credential recognition in Canada.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

Study Summary and conclusions

Plenty has been written and said about the problems of foreign credential recognition in Canada. Various levels of government have an interest in addressing these issues and government interventions have been often been requested to help resolve problems arising from the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials in Canada. This thesis analyzed these governmental interventions in the form of public policies related to FCR at the national and provincial levels and in-between these levels. The central question of this thesis is: what are current approaches toward foreign credential assessment and recognition in Canada and can they be effective or sufficient at addressing the needs and criticisms previously raised on this matter? The thesis was also guided by the following additional questions:

i) What is the discourse around foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada?

ii) What are some issues and criticisms of foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada?

iii) How are some of these issues and criticisms being addressed by public policies?

iv) What is the ideal scenario for foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada? Is it realistic, achievable or impossible?

v) What is the interplay between race, merit and foreign credential recognition in Canada?

To address the purpose of my study and further tackle my research questions, I used a research methodology based on a critical pragmatic qualitative research. The research design employed was consistent a pragmatic research paradigm where the purpose is the pursuit of knowledge for specific reasons. Policy analysis with a critical lens was the primary conceptual foundation of this

case study research. Document analysis informed by elements of Critical Discourse Analysis was the method of analysis applied in understanding the policy responses to the problems of credential recognition in Canada.

Regarding the discourse around foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada, the study identified discourse around frustrations with the foreign credential recognition processes by applicants with international credentials, a sense of racism and discrimination in Canadian FCR, a lack of governmental interventions to help prevent unfair and inconsistent practices and an overall complicated picture of FCR with multiple stakeholders with varied interests. Through a literature review, FCR discourse showed that key issues in foreign credential recognition and assessment in Canada pertained to insufficiency of information applicants received before and after arrival in Canada, a lack of a coordinated and consistent approach to FCR within the country and negative attitudes towards difference, which manifested as racism and discrimination towards those with foreign credentials. The ideal scenario for those with foreign credentials was discovered to consist of a scenario where applicants, particularly immigrants, with foreign credentials are properly informed on the transferability of their credentials into the Canadian system, are aware of the requirements and processes to getting their credentials recognized, are able to have their credentials properly evaluated without discrimination due to race or country of origin and are able to use their recognized credentials across the country. The overall idea would be where those with foreign credentials have their credentials valued similarly to where the credentials were originally obtained. Differences in educational systems and structures suggest that this ideal is likely unachievable for as long as there are different academic and professional requirements for various credentials all over the world.

The literature review provided an initial glimpse at the idea that although race is a variable in issues of FCR, it is not the only variable and it would be lacking to explain the problems with or non-recognition of foreign credentials on racism and discrimination alone. Without discounting that race may have a role to play, the argument that it is the difference of the credential, its corresponding associations and the traits that are perceived to accompany the credential that may have a greater influence on the devaluation of the credential was hard to ignore. In addition, relying solely on race in explaining FCR issues in Canada ignores agency, the notions of social and cultural capital, social closure and the possibility of navigating social contexts in a beneficial manner. Therefore, I examined what these aspects of social theory had to say about credentials.

Looking at social theories of credentials elaborated on some closure inducing characteristics of credentials, some of which go beyond the credential itself. The type of credential an individual possesses, their knowledge of what degree or diploma to pursue, knowing how to maximally utilize the degree, demand and supply and ideologies in society can ultimately create obstacles which can create closure even though an individual possess an advanced degree, a domestic or international credential. Pierre Bourdieu's theories on social and cultural capital assisted in the explanation of the layered basis for credential closure and the social aspects at play. These social aspects at play within credential closure are possibly part of the reason why FCR processes in Canada are structured to focus on tangible ways of demonstrating equivalencies and prevent the complicated and messy facets that social aspects lend to credentials. An understanding of the nature, history and background of the problem was useful in the analysis that followed. Historical ties of international credentials to immigration and human capital helped the complicated picture of foreign credential recognition in Canada along with its multiple stakeholder with varied interests

Study findings uncovered various policies at the national provincial/territorial and trans-provincial levels designed to deal with problems to FCR. Comparing and contrasting the policies revealed many similarities between all of the policies at the various levels, which all aim to improve the assessment and recognition processes for foreign credentials in Canada by providing guidelines and in some cases accountability mechanisms. There are broad policies to provide guidelines and tailored policies that are customized to particular occupations and qualifications. Provinces and territories are heavily relied on in addressing FCR issues due to their jurisdictional authority of education, which is the field where international credential recognition and assessment lie. However, this reliance does not mean acting without acknowledging the wider context of credential recognition beyond a specific province or territory.

Study findings also revealed that while much has been done in terms of public policy approaches for FCR in Canada, attention must be paid to important components that are a necessary for continuing and sustaining improvements to FCR processes in Canada. The recommendations that follow will address these components.

Study Recommendations

In the making of or review of public policies related to FCR, it is important to consider the variety of contexts that the policies can affect as well as the contexts that can affect the policies. Foreign credential recognition affects socioeconomic areas which traverse various governmental and non-governmental boundaries. Therefore, a systems approach should be utilized in policy approaches to FCR, so that policies at all level work together to address issues; rather than against each other. Further to this, it is important for provincial and territorial bodies to have a way in which to engage with each other and share their approaches to ensure alignment across jurisdictional boundaries. In regulated professions the existence of national and provincial bodies as trans-provincial

organizations provides a way to achieve this. However, there are numerous other unregulated occupations that would benefit greatly from having a mechanism for continually sharing of information and best practices to be applied in the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. The QAF aims to facilitate such sharing of information and ideas, but falls short in compliance and accountability mechanisms. Part of this has to do with the structure of the education system in Canada, where each province and territory is responsible for education matters within their jurisdiction. However, a closer look at leveraging the Council of Ministers of Education Canada, who is already a sponsor for the Quality Assurance Framework, to drive firmer commitment and less optional adherence will go a long way in ensuring compliance with QAF requirements as well as achieving and sustaining the QAF's goal of harmonized credential recognition practices across Canada.

Future Research and Concluding Remarks

The documents used for this study largely capture institutional conversations, which are a subset of the discourse in the foreign credential recognition landscape. Therefore, further research could tackle a deeper dive into other subsets of the landscape which will help to capture a wider conversation around credential recognition and assessment in Canada. A detailed stakeholder analysis of stakeholders in the FCR field, including interviews and a comprehensive analysis of their interests would also be a great addition to FCR research in Canada. These suggestions are not exhaustive and are intended to identify the kinds of questions that arose in the course of this study and to point out that there is still much to be done in Canadian FCR research.

This study has delved into conversations regarding FCR which may differ from more widely known conversations on this matter. It suggests that race may be second, third or last place in the explanation of foreign credential recognition outcomes because it is not always and not often

the front-runner in the list of culprits. This idea is necessary to introduce another story to the book of credential recognition, a story that does not kill agency before it has had a chance to be exercised, that does not predict outcomes based on one-dimensional narratives that may hold true for a number of reasons and not one particularly deterministic and limiting narrative. While race is not non-existent and there may not be a perfect solution to problems faced by those with international credentials, conversations that highlight and examine multiple angles help lead towards multi-faceted solutions to a complicated problem. I encourage researchers, policy makers, students and anyone with an ounce of interest to go beyond the stories and take different approaches and different lenses at exploring issues and proposed solutions to foreign credential recognition in Canada.

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