

ASSESSING SINGAPORE'S TALENT MIGRATION POLICY: EXPLORING ITS EFFECT AND EFFECTIVENESS

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Abstract. The Singaporean government is currently advocating for improved and more effective talent migration policies. However, recent studies indicate that numerous high-skilled migrants in Singapore encounter challenges related to precarious employment, temporary residence, and the risk of downward mobility. In light of this apparent conflict, the authors scrutinize the impact and efficacy of Singapore's recent talent migration policy to understand its effectiveness in achieving stated policy objectives. The authors conducted policy documents, analyzed the contents of mass media, and conducted semi-structured interviews. Findings reveal that although the recent policy has influenced migration flow, economy, and prosperity and has the power to produce results, it has proven ineffective in achieving certain stated policy objectives. This study contributes valuable insights to the existing literature on migration management and policy effectiveness, offering policy-makers and stakeholders a deeper understanding of the complexities and potential gaps in talent migration policies in Singapore.

Keywords: *immigration policy, policy effectiveness, Singapore, White Paper on Population.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *imigracijos politika; politikos veiksmingumas; Singapūras; Baltoji gyventojų knyga.*

Introduction

Immigration is a prominent policy priority for Singapore, driven by the constraints of its population size and natural resources. To tap the talents of the best individuals around the world, regardless of nationality, gender, ethnicity, or social background, Singapore has a diverse migration policy. Aiming to become a global hub for high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries, the country strategically invests in its local talent pool by attracting highly skilled transnational migrants.

Extensive literature affirms that Singapore's talent migration policy plays a key role in its development and national prosperity. These policies have markedly improved the quality of its talent pool, international competitiveness, and scientific and technological innovation capabilities. In the 2018 Global Talent Competitiveness Index, Singapore was ranked second globally, and first in Asia, closely following Switzerland. From 2000 to 2019, Singapore more than doubled its total number of research and development personnel (Liu 2022). Moreover, Singapore boasts an impressive adult literacy rate of 97.6%, with more than 70% of its educated residents proficient in two or more languages (Department of Statistics Singapore 2021). The presence of skilled human resources has significantly contributed to Singapore's economic progress, with the nation securing the eighth spot in the 2021 World Intellectual Property Organization Global Innovation Index. Singapore's gross domestic product (GDP) has remained stable at S\$315–345 billion annually since 2010, with GDP growth reported at 3.6% in 2022 (Ministry of Trade and Industry Singapore 2023). Overall, Singapore's immigration policy of attracting science, technology, and innovation talent has been a good example for many developing countries. As of June 2024, there were 3.64 million citizens and 0.54 million Permanent Residents (PRs). In total, there were 4.18 million residents. Non-resident, which include our foreign workforce across all pass types, dependents, and international students, totaled 1.86 million. Overall, Singapore's total population stood at 6.04 million (see Figure 1).

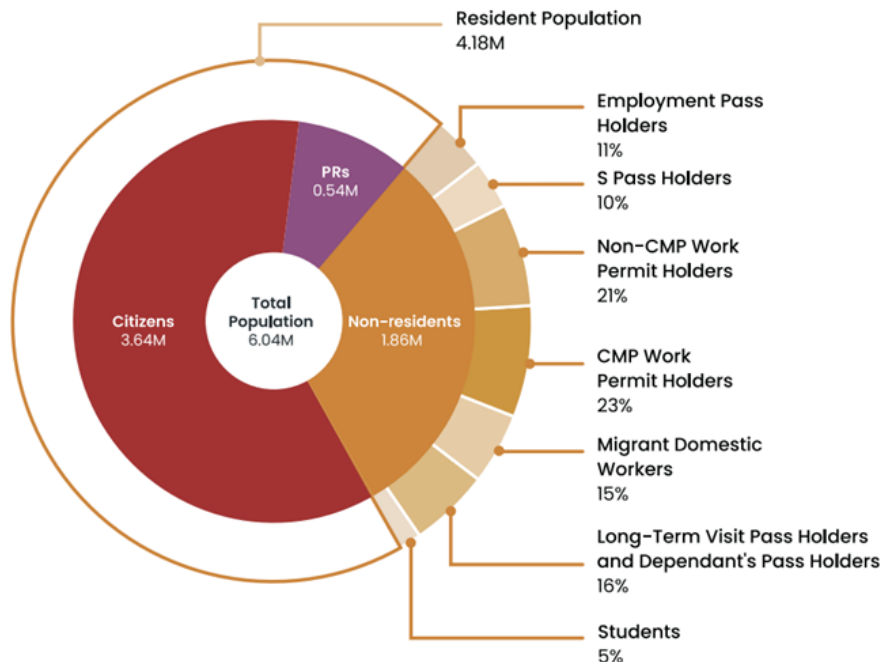


Figure 1. Singapore's total population as of June 2024

Source: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Manpower, Singapore

Several countries have adopted immigration policies similar to Singapore's. For example, Canada's Express Entry system also offers a temporary foreign worker program for industries that require low-skilled workers, opening up the possibility of permanent residence for certain categories. New Zealand's immigration policy also aims to attract skilled migrants through a points-based system by regulating the migration of low-skilled workers through temporary work visas, ensuring that such workers meet specific labor market needs. The UAE relies heavily on foreign labor and makes a clear distinction between skilled and low-skilled workers. While skilled migrants may have access to long-term residency, low-skilled workers tend to work on temporary contracts with limited rights, reflecting a model similar to Singapore's approach.

Despite Singapore's success in becoming a model for many developing countries in attracting talent, recent studies show the challenges faced by many highly skilled immigrants in the country. They face job insecurity and uncertain living conditions associated with precarious work, temporary accommodation, and the risk of downward mobility (Zhan and Zhou 2019, 1654–1672). Despite the government's repeated push to create meaningful migration outcomes for Singapore, an increasing sense of antagonism also exists among Singaporeans toward the government's migration management approach. The literature

notes unprecedented protests, xenophobia, and resentment among locals (Leong 2011, 559–572; Gomes 2013, 21–40) who perceive foreign talented immigrants, especially from mainland China, as insufficient and undesirable (Yang 2017, 29–45).

Recognizing the need for better and more effective talent migration policies, the Singaporean government adopted the White Paper for Population in 2013. Its main objective was to maintain a balance between the economy's need for immigrants, the sustainability of immigration, and social cohesion. However, despite the recent increase in investment in these goals, the effectiveness of these approaches to migration management remains unclear and debatable, given the challenges described above.

Hence, this study endeavors to elucidate the intricate and debated role of immigration policies in Singapore. Our focus lies in assessing and comprehending the effects and effectiveness of Singapore's most recent talent migration policy. Although policies may yield certain effects on migration flow, economy, and prosperity, they can still be perceived as ineffective in terms of achieving their intended policy objectives, such as maintaining and balancing the economy's need for immigrants, sustaining immigration, and social cohesion.

However, this does not mean that previous studies have overlooked the issue; rather, they have been characterized by fragmented information and ideas, leading to a lack of shared understanding of the problem. For example, while some studies examine recent investments in talent migration, such as changes in the protection of native workers and benefits granted to migrants upon entry, others investigate the sentiments and reactions of target populations resulting from these changes (Cerna and Chou 2023; Cerna 2008; Yeoh and Lam 2016). However, none of the existing studies examine the effects and effectiveness of such changes against policy aims, nor do they consider how encounters between implemented changes and target populations may or may not create potential sources of policy failure.

When seen this way, migration policies do not take a single and immutable form but rather transform as they move through their lifecycle (Czaika and de Haas 2013, 487–508; Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2023, 148–161). This implies that implemented changes can appear quite different from the legislated policy aims, and interactions between implemented changes and target populations can further widen the gap between aims and outcomes (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2023, 148–161). Thus, although the implemented policies might produce an effect, this effect might not be sufficient to satisfy the stated policy objectives or might be in the opposite direction of the intended effect.

The central argument of this study is that a comprehensive understanding of the effects and effectiveness of certain migration policies in terms of their ability to yield certain outputs or achieve policy aims necessitates an examination of both their development and implementation processes as well as interactions of such changes with downstream factors and target populations.

The main objectives of this study are to assess and have a comprehensive understanding of the effects and effectiveness of Singapore's talent migration policy framework. The

authors will do so by understanding trends in which Singapore's policy framework has emerged, the implementation processes of that policy framework, as well as interactions of implemented changes with target populations.

To achieve these objectives, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the development and implementation processes of Singapore's latest talent migration policy from 2013 to 2024?
- 2) How do skilled migrants respond to the migration dynamics in Singapore and act in response to them?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework employed in this paper is based on the “migration policy effects and effectiveness” framework of Czaika and de Haas (Czaika and De Haas 2013, 487–508). The authors contend that effectiveness pertains to “producing a decided or desired effect,” while an effect is the “power to bring about a result.” In simpler terms, a policy may have an effect, but that effect may be judged to be too small to achieve the stated policy goal or even contradict the intended effect. Thus, the authors set out to resolve a paradox in migration research by stating that “even if policies have a significant impact on migration, they are nevertheless often perceived as ineffective.”

According to Czaika and de Haas, this ineffectiveness occurs because of policy gaps and mutations that filter publicly stated objectives into concrete migration outcomes. The authors argue that migration policy does not take a single, unchanging form, but transforms throughout its life cycle. This means that the legislative policy may be very different from the public policy discourse that led to its creation, and the implemented policy may have even less similarity. Therefore, clarity on the “level”—public discourse, legislation, implementation, and policy outcomes—at which a specific policy is being assessed is crucial (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2023, 148–161).

By identifying this fourfold distinction, Czaika and de Haas identify three “immigration policy gaps”: the discursive gap, the implementation gap, and the efficacy gap. The authors argue that because each of these three gaps can be quite considerable when combined, they can amount to a wide gulf between policy discourses and policy practices.

The first component, the “discursive gap,” highlights the disparity between publicly stated policy rhetoric and the actual policy details laid out on paper. According to Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, while politicians may make broad statements about the need for better migration dynamics and sustainability such as “getting the balance just right—between national identity and cosmopolitan openness, between free market competition and social solidarity” (Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong 2014), the resulting policies themselves can often be more nuanced, specific, and varied (Castles 2004, 852–884).

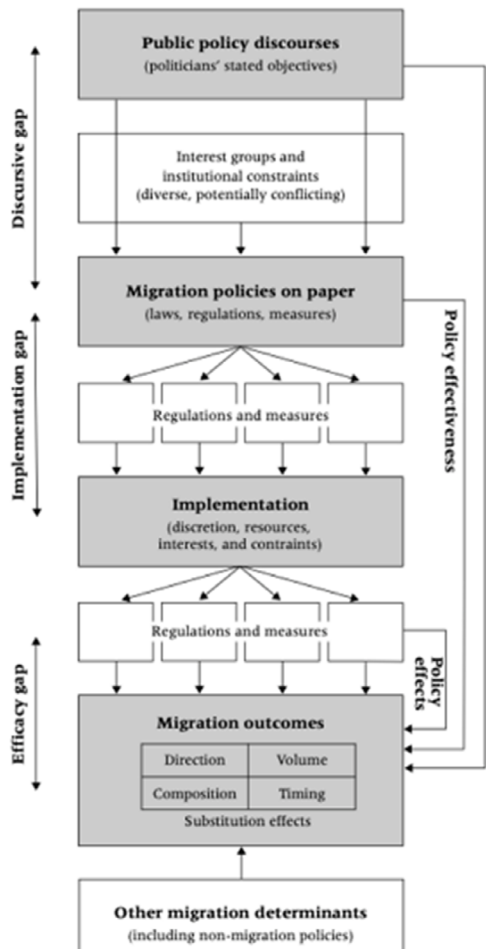
The second component, the “implementation gap,” refers to the mismatch between the policy objectives set out on paper and the concrete instruments for implementation.

Various factors, such as inconsistencies in governing documents, lack of financial and human resources, and ineffective enforcement capacity and incentive structures, can contribute to the inability to fully realize policy objectives.

The third and most downstream component is the “efficacy gap,” which explores how migrants themselves process and comprehend information and act upon it. According to Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, subjective factors come into play at this stage, making the outcomes less predictable. Castles views migration as a social process and emphasizes the importance of considering subjective factors in an analytical perspective, arguing that “migrants are not simply isolated individuals responding to market incentives and bureaucratic rules, but social beings who seek to achieve better outcomes for themselves and their families by actively shaping the migration process” (Castles 2004, 852–884). In other words, beyond politics, migrants actively perceive and act on the information they receive, thereby co-determining migration outcomes.

To address both research questions, the authors used the theoretical framework of Czaika and de Haas (see Figure 2). As the effectiveness of talent migration management in Singapore remains unclear and controversial despite the recent increase in attention and investment, this scheme allows for negative behavioral assumptions. However, limited policy action is not an automatic «policy failure.” Instead, Singapore’s immigration policy might be “ineffective” in meeting the stated policy aims of sustainability and social harmony.

Figure 2. Migration policy effects and effectiveness



To conclude, the conceptual framework of Czaika and de Haas has been widely used to evaluate programs and policy analyses across various migration areas. It is particularly relevant for exploring and assessing the complexities and contradictions in Singapore's migration policy and understanding the potential reasons behind the policy's perceived ineffectiveness. By applying this framework, this study aims to shed light on the effectiveness of Singapore's talent migration policy and its alignment with the policy objectives of sustainability and social harmony.

Methodology

Based on the characteristics outlined above, an exploratory case study approach was selected for this study. Although exploratory case studies are employed to gain a deeper understanding of a complex, unclear, or new phenomenon for which little or no systematic knowledge exists (Kumar 2018; Shields and Rangarajan 2013; van Thiel 2014), most research topics have the potential for “innovation” or ongoing “newness.” Despite the Singaporean migration management topic being well-researched and not entirely new, it still possesses the potential for novel insights. Thus, an exploratory case study has been particularly useful in assessing Singapore’s talent migration policy framework and exploring its effects and effectiveness.

The adoption of an exploratory research design does not imply that a study is purely inductive. Instead, despite the intention of obtaining inductive insights and exploring the contested role of Singapore’s talent migration policy, the study also incorporates prior assumptions and a theoretical approach that appeared most suitable and potentially insightful. Thus, this study also takes on an explanatory and theory-testing character.

As policy-level case studies can be characterized using multiple sources of evidence, the data collection methods for this study also included content analysis, document evaluation, and interviews with participants. To address research question 1, the authors analyzed the contents of mass media to identify the discrepancies between publicly stated discourses and actual migration policies in the form of laws. The aim was to uncover publicly stated discourses, but the authors did not use discourse analysis because discourse analysis studies underlying power dynamics, social structures, and ideologies. Thus, the content analysis was the most convenient—it helped us explore general trends and patterns in communication, such as recurring themes or topics, and compare them with policy as it is laid out on paper. The authors also conducted document evaluations to assess the gap between policies as documented on paper and their actual implementation. To answer research question 2, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews with participants to determine how migrants themselves process and comprehend the information they receive and act upon it, thereby co-determining policy outcomes.

Media is a primary tool used by governments to transmit and communicate their policy rhetoric. Thus, we conducted a qualitative content analysis of the media content. The sampling strategy for media content analysis sought relevance in terms of information, content, and insights it provided.

Purposive sampling involves selecting a media content that is the most relevant to our research. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which contents and information were selected because they provided the best insights to achieve study objectives.

Among the types of purposive sampling, we chose critical case sampling. Critical case sampling helped us to select a small number of important cases that are likely to “yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge” (Patton

2002). Therefore, we extracted a representative sample from sources such as the media center of the prime minister (Strategy Group Singapore), the Department of Statistics Singapore (<https://www.singstat.gov.sg>), and official news websites of the government from 2013 until 2023 that yield the most critical information.

Twenty participants who were current or former expatriate workers in Singapore were chosen for semi-structured interviews. The participants were university professors, workers of international organizations and multinational companies, and directors and employees of small private companies. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling strategy, specifically employing maximal variation sampling, a form of purposeful sampling that examines the problem from all available angles, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Etikan et al. 2015). Given the small sample pool, this sampling strategy enabled the selection of candidates across a broad spectrum relating to the study's topic, facilitating a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Thus, the authors sent out emails to these potential participants whose emails were found on the open corporate webpages. Initially, we sent the emails to thirty people, and among these thirty people, twenty agreed to participate. As mentioned earlier, participants were selected based on their diverse backgrounds in terms of their home country and profession. All participants have been working in Singapore already more than five years.

For the data analysis, the authors coded all the data retrieved from the media content, policy programs, and interviews following our research questions, which consequently became the section headings. Following this, a deductive analysis was conducted based on the postulations of policy effect and effectiveness theory. Although the deducted data helped to facilitate the exploration of the phenomenon, inductive analysis was also performed to further develop recurring themes that emerged from the content analyzed or perceptions reported.

The research presented in this paper is in accordance with international scientific ethical principles, meaning it strictly adheres to the principles and norms of scientific ethics, such as citing sources correctly, referring to the used literature indicating the authors, maintaining the standard of academic integrity and scientific honesty, and not allowing fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism of research results. The process and results of the study did not cause any physical, moral, or mental harm, including stress and discomfort, to participants (people or animals).

Results

What are the development and implementation processes of Singapore's latest talent migration policy?

The discursive gap

As mentioned earlier, a considerable gap might exist between official policy discourses expressed on media platforms and actual migration policies. Therefore, to identify potential discursive gaps, the authors first examined government bureaucrats' official speeches on the Population White Paper on the Strategy Group Singapore media platform.

An evaluation of these speeches from 2013 until the present reveals that the stated policy objectives in these speeches do not align with any previous policy rhetoric. For example, in the previous policy rhetoric, politicians mostly stressed the need for talented foreign migrants in Singapore, focusing on their relevant skillsets, experience, and expertise. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of moving beyond merely attracting talent to also retaining it. However, in the speech delivered by Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean at the Media Conference on the Population White Paper in 2013, a shift in emphasis can be observed. Instead of primarily stressing the need for talented foreign migrants, the Deputy Prime Minister emphasized the importance of achieving balance in Singapore's population policies. In his speech at the media conference in January 2013, the Deputy Prime Minister emphasized three main points for the sustainable population in Singapore: strengthening Singapore's core, creating good jobs for Singaporeans, and ensuring a high-quality living environment. Although the remarks made by the Deputy Prime Minister still acknowledge the intake of immigrants at a measured pace, he mostly stressed the significance of the Singaporean core.

Following this, in the Parliamentary Debate on Population White Paper in February 2013, Minister Grace Fu further specified policy objectives for sustaining a strong Singaporean core, encouraging marriage and parenthood, and calibrating the pace of immigration. According to the Minister's speech, while pursuing efforts to increase marriage and parenthood are priorities for the Singapore government, it acknowledges that improving birth rates can take time. Thus, the Minister addresses how immigration will continue in Singapore in the coming years, albeit at a slower rate.

Specifically, the Minister emphasized how Singapore reduced the number of permanent residencies (PRs) granted from a high of 79,000 in 2008 to an average of 29,000 in 2013 and how the government will control the number and length of stay of foreign talent in the future through a range of administrative measures, such as salaries, quotas, and comprehensive criteria. The Minister's speech also highlighted how Long-Term Visa Passes (LTVP) or LTVP+ will be granted to immigrants instead of PRs.

Singapore's former Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, during his meeting at Downing Street in London in March 2014, underlined how Singapore was seeking to offer a high-quality living and cultural environment at the crossroads of the East and West, stating that "Our city is our country. Hence, we must get the balance just right—between national identity and cosmopolitan openness, between free market competition and social solidarity." Overall, although the general discourse surrounding the White Paper on Population is to strike a balance between Singapore's core and immigrants, the content of speeches of

government bureaucrats has shifted toward performing well politically rather than having any meaningful or predictable impact on social harmony and the sustainability of immigration.

However, to capture the potential discursive gap, the authors further analyzed Singapore's immigration policy. Despite the White Paper on Population being an official address by the head of the Singapore state rather than a policy paper, it is the primary organizational basis of Singapore's public policy for immigration. In addition, the White Paper is the only document that lays out publicly stated policy objectives on paper because laws, rules, and regulations do not have any specific objectives and are considered instruments of implementation rather than policy papers. Thus, the authors analyzed the White Paper on Population 2013 as the primary policy to determine whether a gap exists between discourses expressed on media platforms and actual policies outlined on paper.

An assessment of this policy document suggests that although the narratives presented by government bureaucrats may appear to be influenced by political pressures, the actual policy objectives, as outlined on paper, aim to address the existing economic and demographic constraints of the island state. This policy paper outlines several primary goals, including the maintenance of a strong Singaporean core, the creation of favorable opportunities for Singaporeans, the promotion of a high-quality living environment, and the management of population trajectories.

The analysis of the section titled "MAINTAINING STRONG SINGAPOREAN CORE" reveals that while the government's primary objective is to encourage marriage and parenthood in Singapore to improve declining demographics, welcoming immigrants to Singapore is also crucial. The policy document indicates that 40% of Singaporeans marry non-Singaporeans each year, and the government aims to supplement the smaller cohort of younger Singaporeans with immigrants.

The section "CREATING GOOD OPPORTUNITIES FOR SINGAPOREANS" emphasizes the need for a significant number of foreign immigrants to complement the Singaporean core in the workforce. The projected slowdown in the growth rate of the Singaporean workforce necessitates skilled foreign immigrants to improve productivity. While the policy document acknowledges the increasing qualifications and education levels of the native Singaporean workforce, it also highlights the challenge of sustaining high productivity growth due to the slow growth rate of the local workforce. Therefore, in the "POPULATION TRAJECTORIES" section, the document describes plans to further increase the population to 6.5–6.9 million by 2030, of which 3.6–3.8 million (or 55%) are citizens, to prevent the country from aging.

Overall, although policy discourses expressed on media platforms emphasize the Singaporean core and more restrictive policies, the White Paper on Population mostly highlights the need for a significant number of foreign immigrants. The evidence suggests that Singapore's immigration policy objectives, as laid out in the document, have not become more restrictive than policy discourses suggest. Instead, the policy document mostly addresses the intake of skilled immigrants, which aligns with the capital's primary interest,

sustainability of immigration, and social cohesion. While this gap between official policy discourses expressed on media platforms and actual migration policies might not have many implications, the inconsistency of information can create diverse anticipations, rumors, complicated expectations, or tensions.

The implementation gap

While legislative policies are designed to address existing economic and demographic challenges of the island nation, specific implementation tools such as financial and human resources, enforcement capabilities, and incentive structures may lead to different outcomes. Thus, in order to examine potential discrepancies between the policy goals laid out on paper and the results of implementation, the authors first analyzed how instruments, such as the work pass system for highly skilled immigrants, admission mechanisms, and other laws, rules, and regulations, are calibrated to achieve the stated policy goals.

An analysis of the work pass system for talented immigrants revealed that the government has been consistent in aligning this system with its policy objectives over the last decade. The Employment of Foreign Manpower Act classifies immigrants as foreign talent and foreign workers, requiring all foreigners who intend to work in Singapore to hold a valid pass. Highly skilled migrants can enter Singapore through an Employment Pass (EP: P1, P2, or Q1) or as entrepreneurs through the EntrePass. Those admitted based on the EP or EntrePass must earn substantially more than foreign workers, earning a monthly salary of at least S\$5,000. Additionally, the salary threshold increases progressively with age, reaching S\$10,500 for those aged 45 years and above.

Recognizing the potential impact of excessive immigration on the economy and national culture (as stated in the White Paper on Population), the Singaporean government introduced a two-stage eligibility framework starting from September 1, 2023. In addition to meeting the qualifying salary (Stage 1), EP candidates are now also subject to a points-based Complementarity Assessment Framework (COMPASS). This discretion allows Singapore to assess the settlement capacity of candidates for immigration and select high-quality foreign professionals. According to the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, COMPASS provides businesses with greater clarity and certainty in manpower planning to address the issue of the slowing workforce growth rate in Singapore. COMPASS has four foundational criteria—salary, qualifications, diversity, and support for local employment—as well as two bonus criteria—skill bonus and strategic economic priorities bonus. EP applications are evaluated based on a holistic set of attributes, in which candidates must score from 0 to 20 for each category under COMPASS.

To better address concerns over job competition from foreigners and to protect the Singaporean core, the Singapore government implemented the Fair Consideration Framework (FCF) in 2013. In recent years, the FCF has facilitated the enforcement capacity of Singapore to improve its employment processes. In many cases, private companies and employers have considerable discretion in implementing policies. Thus, under the FCF,

job advertising requirements were introduced for all businesses, mandating that job listings must be posted on a local job advertising platform for a minimum of 28 consecutive days (previously 14 days) before an employer can hire an immigrant for the same position. Detailed guidelines were provided to ensure fair evaluation of all Singaporean applicants and to prevent discrimination against them. However, the FCF guidelines state that the advertisement may contain the phrase “Singaporeans only,” while phrases such as “EP holders preferred/desirable/only” and “Work Passes will be applied for successful candidates” should be avoided. While this leaves considerable room for subjective interpretation by immigrants, potentially leading to implementation gaps in terms of social harmony and sustainability of immigration, nevertheless, according to a statement from the Ministry of Manpower, the Singapore government has invested in human and financial resources and has tasked the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) to track and maintain a list of employers suspected of discriminatory employment practices. Employers with a “higher percentage” of foreign workers than their industry peers or those that had received complaints were placed on FCF’s watch list, prompting TAFEP to investigate their hiring procedures. Some organizations were removed from the list only after demonstrating a “strong commitment to improving their hiring practices” (Kamil 2020).

Regarding incentive structures and benefits for migrants upon entry, the Singapore government made significant changes to narrow access to PR. In response to the growing demand for fairness from native citizens, Singapore reduced the number of newly granted PRs from 79,167 in 2008 to 29,265 in 2010 and introduced differentiation measures. This seems to be due to housing and educational issues in the country. As migrants can own government-built public housing (HDB flats) after becoming citizens, and PRs can also purchase HDB resale flats, this triggered a feeling of unfairness among some native-born citizens (Zhan et al. 2020). The increasing number of children among newly naturalized citizens and PRs in the public school system also created a sense of unfairness among native-born citizens.

In terms of family unification, the Ministry of Manpower has increased the minimum monthly salary that EP holders must meet to apply for a Dependent Pass for legal spouses and unmarried children under the age of 21 (from S\$4,000 to S\$6,000). The salary threshold to apply for a long-term Visit Pass for parents has also increased from S\$3,000 to S\$9,000.

Overall, while the policy objectives as they are laid out on paper mostly address the intake of skilled immigrants, which aligns with the capital’s primary interest, sustainability of immigration, and social cohesion, the abovementioned instruments of implementation point in a different direction. Most of the instruments leave considerable room for subjective interpretation, creating a potential for social discrimination and problems with integration and social cohesion. In addition, while protecting the Singaporean core is important, the imposed restrictions could prove ineffective in attracting skilled immigrants in the future. Thus, to identify efficiency gaps and better understand why, how, and when migration management problems arise, we must examine the reasoning and actions of people on the ground.

How do skilled migrants respond to migration dynamics in Singapore and act upon them?

The efficacy gap

Finally, the efficacy gap refers to the extent to which the policy change, once implemented, can have a meaningful impact. To understand how immigration policy is experienced and influenced by those directly affected, the authors conducted interviews with skilled migrants who had already migrated to Singapore.

In general, most of the interviewed migrants had a clear idea of why they chose Singapore as a host country and how the processes worked to obtain employment passes. While some decided to migrate to Singapore based on recommendations from their relatives, most skilled migrants chose Singapore as their destination country for economic reasons. As one respondent explained:

People migrate to Singapore because, unlike many other countries, the corporate taxes in Singapore are very low. This allows for substantial savings when earning a good income.

All interviewed participants described obtaining employment passes to work in Singapore as being straightforward and clear. However, most skilled migrants interviewed believed that employment passes did not guarantee stability, and losing their jobs could result in them being asked to leave the country within 30 days. Most migrants also voiced that many companies in Singapore did not hire foreigners, and if they had to hire many foreigners, they would be under the FCF watchlist and pay additional taxes. Thus, the interviewed participants repeatedly voiced their concerns about being fired at any time with a minimal notice period. Therefore, obtaining PR and citizenship has become a priority for many migrants.

Regarding incentive structures in terms of PRs, citizenship, and family unification, the interviewed migrants encountered a lack of clear information on how these processes worked. Despite policy documents and speeches outlining the policy objectives and instruments for implementation, migrants felt uncertain about the mechanics of obtaining PRs and citizenship, especially regarding the criteria and the general likelihood of acceptance. As one respondent stated:

Despite the only requirement being an Employment Pass to obtain PR, the process is very difficult and unclear. It lacks transparency and meritocracy, as it is based on race. For example, an Indian intending to obtain PR must compete with other Indians, as each nationality has a limited number of spots. This is not official, but it is an unsaid rule.

Another respondent highlighted the absence of certain criteria for competing with other migrants of certain races:

The process seems arbitrary and dependent on the mood of migration officers, unlike countries such as Australia and Germany, which have clear point-based criteria.

Although skilled migrants were positive toward native citizens and expressed how Singaporeans were not hostile or racist toward migrants, they voiced their concerns about the lack of measures from the Singaporean government to integrate migrants and discussed how the state-imposed differentiation measures widened the gap between locals and migrants. One respondent asserted:

I would say native citizens have different discriminatory attitudes toward foreign migrants, depending on their country of origin. Migrants from developed Western countries are more likely to be accepted and embraced by native citizens, whereas those from countries such as China often face mild levels of discrimination.

Interviewees also felt that state-imposed differentiation measures were unfair and harmed integration. One respondent conveyed her sentiment, stating:

Public education is free in Singapore and of high quality. However, if I decide to have a child in Singapore, my children will not be able to attend public school. Instead, they will have to attend private schools. By contrast, Singaporean children, for example, attend public schools. This divide between locals and migrants is not conducive to the integration process. The Government of Singapore is not particularly interested in integrating migrants.

Conclusion

1. Findings illustrated that the Singaporean government aims to achieve a sustainable population. Specifically, the authors found that the policy document attempts to address the importance of skilled immigrants, which is the main interest of capital, the sustainability of immigration, and social cohesion. Although the policy objectives on paper are realistic and not detached from the concrete migration experiences of Singapore, the analysis of the implementation gap revealed how most of the instruments of implementation leave considerable room for subjective

interpretation, thereby creating potential for social discrimination and problems with integration.

2. The Government of Singapore had an unclear mechanism for granting PRs and citizenship and put differentiation measures in place, which restrict immigrants' access to public resources and ultimately hinder their integration. As a result, most of the interviewed participants did not stay in Singapore, and those who stayed planned to leave. Furthermore, only a few skilled migrants endorsed Singapore as a destination location, with some even advising against it.
3. The analysis demonstrated that Singapore's immigration policy did not take a singular, unchanging form but transformed throughout its lifecycle. In particular, the government of Singapore seems anxious in its economic planning and confused in its policy twists and turns—advocating nativism in public speeches while pursuing developmentalism that necessitated ever larger numbers of foreign workers in its documented policy (Dobbs and Loh 2019, 206–223). While the population scenario of 6.9 million by 2030 in the White Paper on Population created simmering tensions, xenophobia, and resentment among native citizens, instruments of implementation imposed restrictions on immigrants and inflicted differentiation.

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SINGAPŪRO TALENTŲ MIGRACIJOS POLITIKA: JOS POVEIKIO IR VEIKSMINGUMO VERTINIMAS

Anotacija. Singapūro vyriausybė šiuo metu pasisako už tobulesnę ir veiksmingesnę talentų migracijos politiką. Tačiau naujausi tyrimai rodo, kad daug aukštos kvalifikacijos migrantų Singapūre susiduria su sunkumais, susijusiais su nesaugiu darbu, laikinu gyvenimu ir kitomis problemomis. Atsižvelgdami į šį akivaizdų konfliktą, autoriai tiria naujausios Singapūro talentų migracijos politikos poveikį ir veiksmingumą, kad suprastų jos naudingumą siekiant nustatytų politikos tikslų. Tyrimo metu buvo išanalizuoti politikos dokumentai, žiniasklaidos priemonių turinys ir atlikti pusiau struktūruoti interviu. Išvados rodo, kad nors pastarojo meto politika turėjo įtakos migracijos srautams, ekonomikai ir gerovei, tačiau, ji pasirodė neveiksminga siekiant tam tikrų nustatytų politikos tikslų. Šis tyrimas suteikia vertingų įžvalgų apie migracijos valdymą ir politikos veiksmingumą, siūlydamas politikos formuotojams ir suinteresuotosioms šalims gilesnį supratimą apie talentų migracijos politikos Singapūre sudėtingumą ir galimas spragas.

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