Toward Recognitive Justice with Immigrant's Prior Learning and Work Experience

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Outline

- Theoretical framework

- Mapping transnational migration

- Canadian immigration

- Devaluation of immigrants' prior learning and work experience

- Conclusion and implications

Theoretical Framework

- This analysis draws on notions of *recognitive justice*.
- Three categories of social justice: *distributive*, *retributive* and *recognitive* justice (Gale & Densmore, 2000).
  - *Distributive justice* is best known to us through the liberal-democratic principles of individual freedom and the equal distribution of material and social goods.
  - *Retributive justice* favours market-individualism and is based on the claim that individuals deserve and are entitled to differential rewards in accordance with their differential contributions to productive and competitive processes.
  - *Recognitive justice* provides an expanded understanding of justice that insists that we must rethink not only what we mean by social justice, but also to acknowledge the place of social and cultural groups within this.

The Focus

This talk focuses on emerging issues facing the devaluation of immigrants' prior learning and work experience in Canada and its implications for PLAR

Mapping Transnational Migration

- Migration: movement of populations from one place to another.
- Immigration refers to the movement of people from one country to another on a permanent basis.
- Many forms of migration: temporary worker, highly qualified specialist, entrepreneur, refugee, international student.
- Permanent migration (OECD, 2008)
  - 1956 – 1976: 790,000 persons per year
  - 1977 – 1990: 1.24 million per year
  - 1991 – 2003: 2.65 million per year
  - 2006: reached 4 million.
- The foreign-born population of OECD countries reached 12%.

Emerging Trends of Migration

- The globalization of migration
- The acceleration of migration
- The differentiation of migration
- The feminization of migration
- The politicization of migration
- The proliferation of migration transition
- The unidirectional "migration to" is now being replaced by "asynchronous, transversal, oscillating flows" (Cohen 2008, p. 123).

Canadian Immigration

- Canada is an immigrant society.
- Pre-1967: racial and national origin
- 1967: the immigration point system
- 1980s: business immigration program
- 1990s: highly skilled immigrants
- 2001- 2006: Canada accepted 1.1 million new immigrants.
- Census 2006: 19.8% were foreign born; 16.2% visible minorities

Canadian Immigration

- Among recent immigrants to Canada:
  - over half (51%) had a university degree – twice the proportion of degree holders among the Canadian-born population (20%).
  - among recent immigrants aged 25 to 64, many held doctoral (49%) and master's (40%) degrees (Statistics Canada, 2008).
- Many well-educated migrants have encountered difficulties in having their prior learning and work experience recognized.

Devaluation of Immigrant's Prior Learning and Work Experience

Basran and Zong (1998)

- 404 Indo- and Chinese-Canadian immigrant professionals in Vancouver

- 18.8 per cent worked as professionals

- Downward social mobility

- Main barriers: non-recognition or devaluation of their foreign credentials

- Professional associations: gatekeeper

Devaluation of Immigrant's Prior Learning and Work Experience

Krahn, Derwing, Mulder, and Wilkinson (2000)

- 525 refugees
- Unemployment and underemployment
- Contributing Factors: lack of recognition of prior learning and work experience; shortage of Canadian reference and work experience; English language difficulties; and employer discrimination
- professional associations often function as "labour market shelter"

Devaluation of Immigrant's Prior Learning and Work Experience

Mojab (1999): de-skilling immigrant women

- Advanced capitalism simultaneously creates and destroys jobs

- Immigrant women: potential source of manual labour

- Systemic racism and ethnicism: affects immigrants differently (Advanced countries vs. Third World countries)

- Only those with financial resources can afford the Canadianization of their experience.

Devaluation of Immigrant's Prior Learning and Work Experience

Guo and DeVoretz (2006)

- 322 PRC Chinese in Vancouver
- 72.5% have postsecondary education; 27% have master's or doctoral degrees
- Major difficulties:
    - Language difficulties
    - Lack of Canadian work experience
    - Chinese experience is not recognized
    - Chinese qualification is no recognized
    - Lack of social network
- Unemployment and underemployment, poor economic performance, downward social mobility

Pause and Reflection

- Why do such inequities occur in a democratic society like Canada where democratic principles are upheld and where immigrants are said to be welcome?

- What prevents us from moving forward?
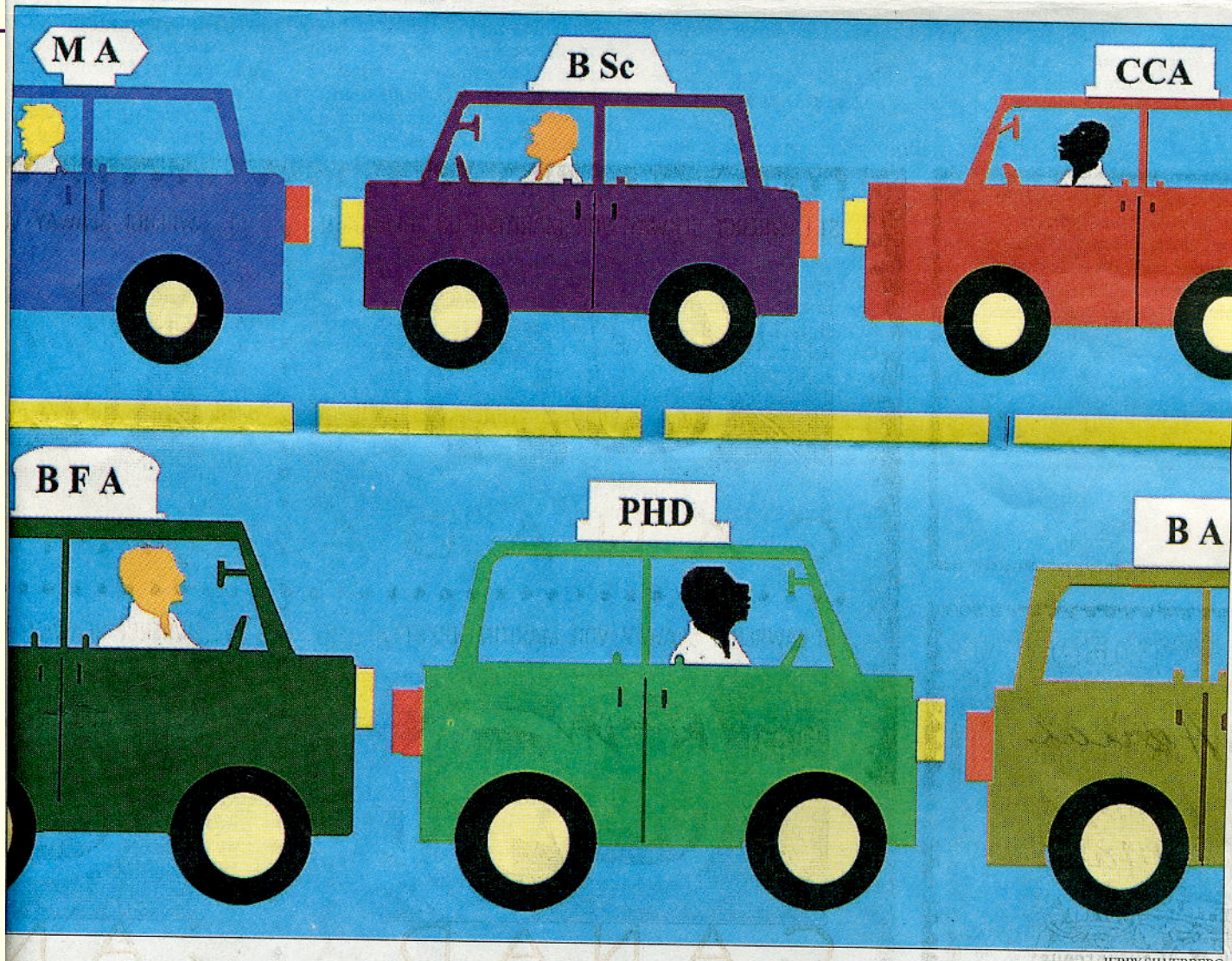
Tracing the Roots (Guo, 2009)

- Epistemological misperceptions of difference and knowledge
  - The deficit model of difference: International credentials and work experience are incompatible and inferior.
  - Knowledge is used as power to legitimize and privilege existing power regime and to keep out the undesirable.
- Ontological foundations of positivism & universalism
  - Positivistic measuring: Its value-free criteria
  - Liberal universality: Using a one-size-fits-all scale

Implications for PLAR

- PLAR is claimed by many educators as an alternative approach to understanding adult learning.

- PLAR is "potentially the most radical innovation" since the introduction of mass formal education during the 19th century (Thomas, 1998, p. 330).

- PLAR/APEL can act as 'a transformative social mechanism' and 'a means of social inclusion' (Whittaker, Cleary & Gallacher, 2002).

- It is evident that "R" is often missing from PLAR.

- To develop a critical awareness of this issue, it seems important to first overcome the "discourse of righteousness," because any critique of PLAR practice has been taken as "a critique of the principles of social justice underpinning that practice" (Harris, 2006, p. 8)

Toward Recognitive Justice in PLAR

- Recognitive justice seeks to balance freedom of mobility with protection, recognition and membership.

- It rejects the deficit model that seeks to assimilate migrants to the dominant social, cultural and educational norms of the host society.

- Alternatively, it proposes to build an inclusive PLAR that acknowledges and affirms cultural difference and diversity as positive and desirable assets.

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