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SUBDIRECCIÓN GENERAL
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PARALLEL SESSION B.

MAKING A BETTER USE OF EXISTING SKILLS HOW TO STRIKE THE BALANCE BETWEEN SPECIFIC AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Tuesday, 2 December, 10:45/12:15

Questions for discussion

What are the main impediments for a better use of the skills of resident migrants and newcomers and how can these impediments be overcome?

What can be done to remedy the under-representation of immigrants and their offsprings in effective general policies, both from the side of immigrants and of services providers and employers?

How can specific policies be evaluated and their cost-effectiveness enhanced?



KEY IDEAS

What are the main impediments for a better use of the skills of resident migrants and newcomers and how can these impediments be overcome?

Nowadays there is a global race for talent. Many OECD countries have established specific programs in order to attract high qualified foreigners. However, it is also necessary to adopt programs to retain talent and to maximize the potential of the foreigners already residing in the country. Nevertheless, as it usually happens in migration issues, this is easier said than done.

There are still barriers and obstacles for a better use of the skills of migrants:

1. MIGRATION REGULATIONS

First of all, the visa and permit regulation. The possibility for migrants to change their status, e.g. from a student visa to a work permit or an entrepreneur visa can make immigration systems more flexible and facilitate to maximize their potential contribution to economic growth.

- According to this approach, the new Spanish law on support to entrepreneurs and their internalisation has established a flexible framework for resident migrants to obtain the entrepreneur visa. This is crucial for international students and graduates from business



schools and it is a good example of the importance of the coordination of migration policies and other policies like education.

In the same way, it is also important to facilitate the access to the market for the partner of the migrants and their descendants. According to OECD International Migration Database, family migration is the main component of international migration flows. Labour migration programs aimed to respond to labour market needs and other economic reasons. Migrants coming by the means of these programs are supposed to have an easier employability than migrants coming by means of family programs. In these cases, a higher effort could be required to integrate them in labour market.

- For Spain and other OECD countries one of the most demanding challenges for the next years will be the integration in the labour market of the descendants of migrants, many of them being already nationals. Education acts as the basic mechanism for integrating migrant children. In Spain, schooling is compulsory and free for all children under 16 years regardless of their administrative status. Certification of the education of their children is a requirement for the renewal of the permits of migrant parents.

Nevertheless migration regulations are a necessary but not sufficient condition for a better use of migrant skills.

2. RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS

Skills are a critical asset for individuals, business and societies. Therefore, governments worldwide must facilitate skills recognition. At the same time,



skills shall connect with the labour market. That is the reason why matching skills and professional requirements has become a high-priority concern.

But it is not possible to achieve this goal without a close communication between all the stakeholders involved at national, regional and international level in both public and private sectors.

At national level, governments must establish a cross-cutting vision and work to associate labour, training, education and economic fields, determining needs and establishing synergies, using mobility as a key factor of competitiveness, economic growth and social development.

This internal coordination at national level needs to be complemented by a constant and fluid communication with private sector and associations. Employers know their needs better than anyone else and competent authorities must also use this information to elaborate a holistic policy.

At regional and international levels, as diplomas and skills requirements vary significantly across countries, collaboration on mutual recognition of credentials and qualifications becomes a relevant aspect to work on, taking into account not only educational skills but also working skills.

- As a good practise, I can mention the impulse given for Spanish authorities to Professional Skills Certificates. These certificates are the formal instrument of accreditation the professional skills acquired on training schemes or through work experience or non-formal training



methods. In the last three years more than 8.500 migrants have received a Professional Skill Certificate.

3. LANGUAGE

The knowledge of the language is absolutely central to the integration of foreign nationals.

- In Spain, language training is included in the integrated reception programmes financially supported by the SGIE and implemented by NGO. In Spain, knowledge of the language is not a prior requirement for the issue of the first residence permit. However language proficiency is considered during the renewal of the permits and it is a condition for the acquisition of citizenship. So, the obligation to learn the language is progressive.

4. NON DISCRIMINATION

The fight against discrimination is fundamental to make better use of the skills of migrants and to achieve a better social cohesion. Several research studies show that cultural diversity adds value to companies, boost the possibilities of capturing talent, improves the organisational culture and increases the number of customers with minimal economic cost.

- In Spain, as example of good practices, two diversity management projects have been implemented, one in 2011 for big companies



(GESDI), the latter in 2014 for SME. (GESDIMEP). Business organisation, trade unions, NGO, self-employed association, chamber of commerce, public administration and universities are the main agents for the successful dissemination of Cultural Diversity management. Some models of good practices being implemented by some Spanish companies are:

- “blind CV selection process”
- diversity training
- suggestion box
- supplier diversification –halal or Kosher-
- establishing intercultural teams

What can be done to remedy the under-representation of immigrants and their offsprings in effective general policies, both from the side of immigrants and of services providers and employers?

Employment is one of the key areas for improving the integration of migrants in their host society, so active employment policies should be mentioned as one of the basic pillars of integration policy.

The design of these active employment policies should take into account the needs of job seekers and the professional requirement of business, paying particular attention to groups with more objective difficulties finding employment. When designing active employment actions policy makers should find a balance between the necessity to avoid migrant under-representation in these actions and the trade-off of positive discrimination (like the potential increase of xenophobia).



- In Spain, migrants were largely occupied in sectors strongly hit by the great recession like services and real estate construction. Moreover there was a high rate of low-skilled migrants. One of the bigger concerns of the Government has been and is still how to increase their employability while avoiding social exclusion and the risk of xenophobia. At the same time hiring non-resident foreign nationals has been limited and priority is given to foreign nationals already residing in the country. Also, measures to ease the situation of unemployment migrants have been implemented aiming to facilitate the renewal of their residence permits and allowing them to stay and look for a job.

In Spain, the foreign-born community participates in and benefits from the active employment policies **under the same conditions as nationals.** In 2013 a total of 249.025 foreign nationals benefited from actions related to active employment policies, accounting 11% of all beneficiaries.

How can specific policies be evaluated and their cost-effectiveness enhanced?

In relation to the latter question we are looking forward to studying good practices implemented in other countries.

In Spain specific programmes have been evaluated taking into account only the **outputs of the actions** but now we are considering how to evaluate the **outcomes of the programmes.**



We have been evaluated using indicators like:

- Number of persons assisted by our integration measures.
- Number of projects supported.
- Capacity of our reception accommodation infrastructure.
- Number of measures and tools put in place for the integration of foreigners.
- Number of cooperation projects with other countries.

We are now trying to **define accurate and reliable indicators of the real impact of the specific policies.**

We are considering projects for evaluating not only “quantity” indicators, but the most important fact: Are our policies really helping migrants to improve their integration in our societies?

The OECD could play a key role in this challenge.