

The Foreign Talents Issue in Singapore

Tinghao Yan *

Chengyi University College, Jimei University, Xiamen, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 202141021034@jmu.edu.cn

Abstract. This paper will analyze the foreign talent issue in Singapore from various perspectives. In the beginning, the paper will show the current Policy statements of Singapore government about the foreign talent issue. And demonstrate the advantage or potential problems of these statements. Next, base on the ethical issue to show the competition between native and foreigners, Benefits and challenges of foreign talent in Singapore A. Economic benefits and contributions B. Concerns about job displacement, wage stagnation, and social cohesion C. The debate over the impact of foreign talent on Singaporean society includes blue-and white-collar foreign employees. The paper will use consequentialisms and deontology to prove it. At last, some feasible solutions will be showed. Future outlook and challenges A. Sustainability and long-term implications of Singapore's foreign talent policy B. Balancing economic growth with social cohesion and local talent development C. The role of government, businesses, and citizens in shaping the future of Singapore's foreign talent landscape.

Keywords: Foreign talents; skills; ethical; challenges; solutions.

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, Singapore has transformed itself from a developing nation to a prosperous, high-income economy. This remarkable economic success has been driven by a combination of factors, including strategic planning, investment in education and infrastructure, and a business-friendly environment. However, one of the most important drivers of Singapore's success has been its ability to attract and retain foreign talent.

To maintain its position as a global hub for business and innovation, Singapore has implemented a range of policies to attract foreign talent to the country. These policies include providing generous financial incentives, offering visa and residency perks, and creating a welcoming environment for foreigners. As a result, Singapore has become one of the most diverse and cosmopolitan cities in the world, with a high percentage of foreign residents, particularly in the professional and managerial sectors.

While the influx of foreign talent has brought numerous benefits to Singapore, such as increased economic growth, innovation, and cultural exchange, it has also raised concerns among Singaporeans about the impact of foreign talent on their job prospects, wages, and social cohesion. In particular, some Singaporeans argue that the government's focus on attracting foreign talent has come at the expense of local workers, who may face greater competition for jobs and lower wages.

The issue of foreign talent has become a contentious topic in Singaporean society and politics, with debates about the optimal balance between attracting foreign talent and protecting the interests of Singaporean citizens. Some argue that Singapore's reliance on foreign talent is unsustainable in the long term, while others believe that continued investment in foreign talent is necessary for Singapore's continued success.

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to explore the factors driving Singapore's foreign talent policy, the impact of foreign talent on Singaporean society, and the debates surrounding the issue. Through this analysis, the paper will offer insights into the challenges and opportunities of managing foreign talent in a small, open economy like Singapore, and consider the implications for other countries facing similar challenges.

2. Current Situation of Foreign Talent Issue

In recent years, Singapore's foreign talent policy has come under increased scrutiny, both from within the country and from outside observers. Some have argued that Singapore's reliance on foreign talent is unsustainable in the long term, and that the country needs to focus more on developing its own talent pool. Others have criticized Singapore's foreign talent policy for favoring certain groups, such as high-skilled professionals, at the expense of other workers, such as low-skilled and manual laborers.

One particular area of concern has been the impact of foreign talent on wages and job opportunities for local workers. Some studies have suggested that the influx of foreign professionals has led to a widening income gap between the highest and lowest earners in Singapore, with some workers feeling that they are being left behind. There have also been concerns about a potential "brain drain" of Singaporean workers, as more of them choose to leave the country in search of better opportunities overseas.

Despite these concerns, the Singaporean government has continued to prioritize its foreign talent policy, seeing it as essential to the country's economic growth and competitiveness. However, the government has also recognized the need to address the challenges posed by foreign talent, and has introduced a range of measures aimed at ensuring that Singaporean workers are not disadvantaged. These measures include providing financial incentives to companies that hire local workers, increasing investment in education and training, and introducing policies aimed at encouraging Singaporeans to take up jobs in sectors that are currently dominated by foreign workers.

In conclusion, the issue of foreign talent in Singapore is a complex and multifaceted one, with both benefits and challenges. While the influx of foreign talent has helped Singapore to become a global hub for business and innovation, it has also raised concerns about the impact on local workers and social cohesion. Balancing these competing interests will be a key challenge for policymakers in the years ahead.

3. Challenges and Solutions

3.1. The Skillsfuture Movement

3.1.1 Explanation of skillsfuture movement

Skillsfuture is a national movement to provide Singaporeans with the opportunities to develop their fullest potential throughout life, regardless of their starting points. Through this movement, the skills, passion and contributions of every individual will drive Singapore's next phase of development towards an advanced economy and inclusive society.

No matter where you are in life – schooling years, early career, mid-career or silver years – you will find a variety of resources to help you attain mastery of skills. Skills mastery is more than having the right paper qualifications and being good at what you do currently; it is a mindset of continually striving towards greater excellence through knowledge, application and experience. With the help of the Future Economy Council, education and training providers, employers, unions – you can own a better future with skills mastery and lifelong learning. Your skills. Your asset. Your future [1].

3.1.2 Positive effects of skillsfuture movement

The advent of technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, automation, cloud computing, and the rising connectivity through the Internet and social media channels has initiated a period where the current technology is quickly becoming outdated. To gain customer insight and enhance their competitiveness, businesses must acquire new proficiencies to leverage technology effectively [2]. In order to keep up with this rapidly changing technology and innovation landscape, employees will need to be continuously trained and upgrade their skill sets to keep up with the changing needs of the industry.

Across the developing world, the relatively large group of unemployed youth represents economic potential, often referred to as the "youth dividend." The challenge is to ensure that the educational attainment of young people meets the needs of a growing sector of the economy. An adaptable education and training system is needed to ensure that the skills of those entering the labor market support the nation's economic strategy, including advanced technical skills.

Employers also report difficulty filling certain job roles, suggesting that there may be a demand-supply mismatch for labor skills. Policymakers concerned about structural unemployment and underemployment are looking for ways to ensure that the labor pool's skills match the needs of the economy. To meet these challenges, there is a need to move from a teaching-based system to a competency-based system. System that uses skills-based upgrading as the mainstream pathway. Technical colleges and polytechnics offer a strong brand of career- and technology-based education that prepares students to enter the job market upon graduation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in the way companies and individuals work to survive and adapt to public health and safety issues. The digitization of business processes, remote work, online interaction, and learning have enabled companies and employees worldwide to adopt new work arrangements, highlighting the evident power of technology. The utilization of technology by various companies during this period is facilitating the introduction of novel business models and the enhancement of employee skills, which may become the standard practice in the aftermath of the pandemic.

3.2. White-Collar and Blue-Collar Employees' Challenge

3.2.1 Internal-external challenges

The Singaporean government has actively sought to attract foreign talent to the country for several reasons. Firstly, Singapore has a small domestic market and a limited pool of skilled workers. The government believes that attracting foreign talent is necessary to help the country maintain its competitiveness and sustain economic growth.

Secondly, foreign talent is seen as a way to transfer knowledge and expertise to Singapore. By bringing in highly skilled professionals from around the world, Singapore can access new ideas and best practices that can help improve the country's industries and institutions.

However, the influx of foreign talent has also led to concerns among some Singaporeans, who worry that foreign workers are taking jobs away from locals and depressing wages. This is particularly true in the blue-collar sector, where foreign workers often fill low-wage jobs in construction, domestic work, and other industries.

In response to these concerns, the Singaporean government has introduced several policies to regulate the number of foreign workers in the country. The Fair Consideration Framework, for example, requires employers to give fair consideration to Singaporean job applicants before hiring foreign workers. The framework aims to ensure that Singaporeans have access to job opportunities and are not unfairly disadvantaged by the presence of foreign workers.

The government has also increased the qualifying salary for the Employment Pass, which is the main work visa for foreign professionals in Singapore. The increase is designed to ensure that foreign workers do not depress wages for local workers by being hired at lower salaries.

Despite these policies, the issue of foreign talent in Singapore remains a complex and controversial one. Some Singaporeans believe that the government should do more to protect local workers and ensure that they are not disadvantaged by the presence of foreign talent, while others argue that foreign workers are necessary for the country's economic growth and competitiveness [3].

3.2.2 Deontology and Consequentialism

Deontology and consequentialism are two contrasting ethical theories that evaluate the morality of an action. While consequentialism evaluates the rightness or wrongness of an action by analyzing its outcomes, deontology, on the other hand, evaluates the morality of an action based on the action itself, without considering its consequences. The consequentialist approach emphasizes that the best

course of action is one that yields the most favorable consequences, regardless of the means employed, which may include lying, stealing, or even taking the life of an innocent individual. In consequentialism, the morality of an action is solely determined by its consequences, and no actions are considered forbidden [4]. The table 1 will show the four-corner analysis in analyze foreign labor pressure.

Table 1. Four-corner analysis

	Consequentialism	Deontology
Do it	1.Foreign labor in Singapore to learn the local culture is conducive to the development of national culture. 2.Hiring foreign labor can expand a company's business to the world. 3.Foreign labor can create a good language environment for other employees of the company.	1. Foreign workers are often educated in different ways, helping to combine ideas to make businesses grow faster. 2. The cost of foreign labor recruitment may be higher due to institutional rules.
Don't do it	1. Foreign workers may have language problems in the course of their work. 2.Hiring foreign labor procedures and rules are very complicated. 3.Large differences in life and work concepts of foreign labor force may lead to conflicts.	1.Hiring foreign workers will reduce job opportunities for local workers. 2. Foreign labor often requires more benefits and privileges and is difficult to manage [5].

3.3. Feasible Solutions

3.3.1 Foster communication between locals and foreigners

This part can be divided into basic and advanced methods [6]. The basic solutions include sports events, community services and cultural festival. What I want to emphasize is the community services.

Community service refers to the activities of volunteering or participating in support for public welfare or social welfare causes in the community. In Singapore, community service is an important way to build social cohesion and social harmony, as well as a way to promote communication and understanding between locals and foreigners. It can take a variety of forms, including volunteering, volunteer work, fundraisers, environmental activism, pro bono activities, and more. For example, in community cleanups, locals and foreigners can work together to clean public places such as streets, parks and beaches. In volunteer activities, locals and foreigners can work together to help vulnerable groups, such as providing social support for the elderly and providing daily assistance for the disabled. In addition, community service can promote friendship and solidarity between locals and foreigners, creating connections of shared experiences and values, leading to a more harmonious and inclusive society.

The advanced solutions include language exchange programs, technology-enabled solutions and cultural exchange programs. What I want to emphasize is the technology solutions.

Technological solutions can provide some useful tools and platforms to facilitate communication and understanding between locals and foreigners. By using technological means, the barriers caused by cultural and language differences can be narrowed, making it easier for both parties to communicate and interact, thereby enhancing mutual understanding and respect.

Social Media Platforms: Social media platforms can provide a platform for locals and foreigners to communicate and share with each other. By creating dedicated social media accounts or pages, locals and foreigners can share their culture, life and thoughts, learn and communicate with each other.
Virtual communication platform: The virtual communication platform can provide a virtual communication environment for locals and foreigners. Through video conferences or chat rooms, the two parties can communicate and interact in real time. This way allows both parties to understand

each other's culture and habits more intuitively. Mobile applications: Mobile applications can provide various useful tools and services, such as language learning, cultural education, life services, etc. By using these applications, locals and foreigners can obtain information and services more conveniently and promote communication and understanding.

In conclusion, social events are an effective way to promote communication and understanding between locals and foreigners. In social activities, it is necessary to take into account the cultural background and personal preferences of the participants, provide food and drinks of various tastes, design various interactive activities and communication tools, arrange appropriate seats, etc., in order to create a pleasant and harmonious environment Communication environment. Through social activities, participants can better understand each other's culture and way of life, and enhance mutual understanding and respect [7].

3.3.2 Improve the fair consideration framework (FCF)

In Singapore, the Fair Consideration Framework (FCF) mandates that all employers must treat the local workforce equitably in employment opportunities. Discrimination based on non-job-related characteristics such as age, gender, nationality, or race is strictly prohibited.

Providing regular updates and statistics: A survey showed, Professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMET) are significantly more likely to find meaning and purpose in their work compared to clerical or service workers and cleaners and labourers. The government can provide regular updates and statistics to the public to demonstrate that the majority of PMET jobs are still held by local Singaporeans. This will help dispel any misconceptions about the impact of the foreign workforce on the local job market and show that the foreign workforce is meant to complement the local workforce, not replace it.

Improving transparency in the hiring process: The government can enforce existing frameworks, such as the Fair Consideration Framework, to ensure that local job seekers are given equal opportunities to apply for jobs. This includes requiring companies to advertise job ads on a local, government-supported job site, and to provide explanations for why a foreign worker was hired over a local one. This will increase transparency in the hiring process and help ensure that local workers are not unfairly disadvantaged [8].

3.3.3 Face state-owned enterprises (SOE) problems

Giving SOEs autonomy and accountability means giving them the freedom to make autonomous decisions and take risks, while holding them accountable for their actions and outcomes. Autonomy is important because it enables SOEs to respond more flexibly to market changes and take advantage of opportunities as they arise. It also fosters a culture of innovation and creativity, as employees are encouraged to think outside the box and come up with new ideas. However, autonomy must also be accompanied by accountability. This means that SOEs must be held accountable for their actions and performance, and must be transparent in their decision-making process. Accountability ensures that SOEs operate with integrity and fulfill their obligations to stakeholders such as shareholders, employees and the government.

Set clear performance goals and expectations for SOEs and regularly monitor their progress.

Establish a risk management framework that allows SOEs to take calculated risks while ensuring that they do not engage in reckless behaviors.

Encourage employees to be more involved in the decision-making process and provide them with the necessary training and resources to make informed decisions.

An independent supervisory agency shall be established to supervise and audit the operation of state-owned enterprises to ensure that they operate in accordance with the law.

China has a large number of state-owned enterprises in industries ranging from energy and transportation to telecommunications and finance [9]. These businesses face many challenges, including inefficiency, lack of innovation, and heavy government interference. They are generally immune to market forces and are not subject to the same degree of oversight and regulation as private companies. China Mobile Communications Corporation is China's largest telecommunications

company, providing services such as mobile phones and Internet access. It has been criticized for a lack of innovation and a slow response to market changes.

The biggest highlight of China state-owned enterprise reform in 2015 is to learn from Temasek's advanced state-owned capital operation model, which is the government-Temasek-enterprise three-tier supervision system. Its core lies in the three-tier structure of the government, state-owned assets operation platform, and enterprise. The government controls state-owned capital but does not directly manage the enterprise. The three-tier structure gives space to the enterprise and gives the government control, while respecting the laws of the market in micro-operations [10].

4. Conclusion

Singapore's foreign talent policy has been a subject of debate for years, with questions arising about its sustainability and long-term implications. In this paper, we explore the various perspectives on this issue, including the government, businesses, and citizens in shaping Singapore's foreign talent landscape.

Firstly, the government has played a crucial role in attracting foreign talent to Singapore. Singapore has implemented various policies to attract foreign talent, such as the Singapore Global Talent Visa (SGTV), which allows foreign talent to stay and work in Singapore for up to five years. However, the government has also faced criticism for not doing enough to prioritize the employment of Singaporeans over foreign talent. Critics argue that the influx of foreign talent is leading to wage stagnation and job displacement among Singaporeans.

Secondly, businesses in Singapore also play a significant role in attracting and retaining foreign talent. Many multinational corporations have set up regional headquarters in Singapore, which has created employment opportunities for both locals and foreign talent. However, businesses also need to take into account the long-term sustainability of their talent policies. They need to invest in developing local talent and ensuring that foreign talent complements the local workforce rather than replacing it.

Lastly, citizens of Singapore also play a role in shaping the future of Singapore's foreign talent landscape. As Singapore becomes more diverse, citizens need to embrace and adapt to different cultures and perspectives. They need to work collaboratively with foreign talent to create a sustainable and inclusive society that benefits everyone.

The foreign talent issue in Singapore is complex and multifaceted, with no easy solutions. The government, businesses, and citizens all have a role to play in shaping the future of Singapore's foreign talent landscape. A sustainable and inclusive approach to talent management will ensure that Singapore remains competitive in the global economy while creating opportunities for both locals and foreign talent. Singapore's harmonious, tolerant and pluralistic social environment is worthy of being studied by all countries.

References

- [1] Ang C W. Directory of SkillsFuture courses online. The Straits Times, Home B6. 2015, November 21.
- [2] Fung M. Developing a robust system for upskilling and reskilling the workforce: Lessons from the SkillsFuture movement in Singapore. In *Anticipating and Preparing for Emerging Skills and Jobs: Key Issues, Concerns, and Prospects*, 2020, 321-327. Singapore: Springer Singapore.
- [3] Kuo E C, Chen H T. Toward an information society: changing occupational structure in Singapore. *Asian Survey*, 1987, 355-370.
- [4] Mason E. WHAT IS CONSEQUENTIALISM? *Think*, 2009, 8(21): 19-28.
- [5] Kim S, Krishna A. When culture and ethics meet: Understanding the dynamics between cultural dimensions, moral orientations, moral inequity, and commitment in the context of corporate misconduct allegations. *Public Relations Review*, 2023, 49(1): 102289.

- [6] Fong P E, Lim L. Foreign labor and economic development in Singapore. *International migration review*, 1982, 16(3): 548-576.
- [7] Gomes C. Identity as a strategy for negotiating everyday life in transience: A case study of Asian foreign talent in Singapore. *Current Sociology*, 2019, 67(2): 225-249.
- [8] Yang H, Yang P, Zhan S. Immigration, population, and foreign workforce in Singapore: An overview of trends, policies, and issues. *HSSE Online*. 2017.
- [9] Xiong P, Tomasic R. Soft Law, State-Owned Enterprises and Dispute Resolution on PRC's Belt and Road-towards an Emerging Legal Order. *Hong Kong LJ*, 2019, 49: 1025.
- [10] Teo E C. Singapore–China Economic Collaboration 2.0. *The Singapore Economic Review*, 2021, 66(01): 207-217.