

Occupational Change among Nigerian Immigrants living in the Netherlands

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Abstract

In this article, the term occupational change is used to refer to problems Nigerian skilled immigrants encounter in the Netherlands. Immigrants who may have had stable occupations or have attended higher education before migrating to the Netherlands face numerous difficulties including foreign qualification recognition, lack of Dutch language skills, and age factors in their search for jobs. They fall back to low cadre jobs as a way of survival in the Netherlands. I have explored the relationship between occupational change and stress among Nigerian immigrants who studied and worked in Nigeria before migrating to the Netherlands. First I argue that stress, which manifests as a result of occupational change amongst Nigerian immigrants in the Netherlands, is a clear reason for downward mobility amongst migrant children and their parents. Using the case of Nigerian skilled migrants in the Netherlands, I have designed a new framework that could be used to tackle issues of migrant occupational change as a result of foreign qualification recognition in host countries.

Keywords Occupational change, Stress, Skilled Migrants, Children, Social Isolation, Foreign Qualifications

Introduction

Over the years, I have had the pleasure of having informal group and individual discussions with Nigerian immigrants living in the Netherlands who work in low cadre sections of the economy but have high qualifications from their home countries. Discussions with mothers in particular in the Bijlmer area of Amsterdam Zuidoost regarding their occupational dreams and aspirations brought pain to my heart. Many of the women have experienced stress as a result of occupational change. Chidinma, a 39 year old qualified Nigerian nurse, came to the Netherlands in 2009 with her husband and three children, only to realise that she cannot work in the Netherlands as a nurse due to language barriers and qualification standard difference between the Netherlands and

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Nigeria¹. This made Chidinma channel her entire focus towards self-development, giving less time to the wellbeing of her children. She enrolled in a language school in the Bijlmer area of Amsterdam where she lives in a bid to attain the language requirement that is needed for her to attend nursing school in the Netherlands². On gaining admission, she applied for a student loan, only to be told that she was not eligible because she was above the age of thirty³. Chidinma did not give up; she registered for her course and combined a menial job with her studies. The stress of working and studying was unbearable for Chidinma; she could not cope with the stress. Consequently, she dropped out of the program⁴. Chidinma's case is not unique as there are hundreds of immigrant families with such issues. Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with Nigerian skilled immigrants in the Netherlands with foreign qualifications, this paper will highlight the difficulties this group of people faces. Barriers such as the lack of the Dutch language skills and unrecognised qualifications keep them out of the jobs for which they are qualified.

Being an immigrant in a foreign country is challenging. As Rath (1997) notes, one is faced with barriers such as language and unrecognised qualifications that will limit job opportunities in the host country. When combined with issues of depression, poverty and inadequate social support, one can begin to appreciate the magnitude of obstacles immigrants with stress face as a result of occupational change. Clearly, not all immigrants are affected by stress, or care less about the general wellbeing of their offspring. However, for the many that are affected, the challenge of losing their identity due to occupational change is overwhelming (McKee-Ryan et al. 2005). As a means of escaping the overwhelming realities that skilled immigrants face in host countries, low cadre jobs are inevitable (Kloosterman et al. 1998). This solution of falling back on low cadre jobs reproduces stress in the short run, which may lead to violence against themselves, spouses and children.

Background/Contextualisation

Economic motives are one of the primary reasons for human movements and are specifically influential in the case of Nigerian migration. Migration flows from Nigeria to countries beyond the region did not occur on a large scale until

¹ Formal Interview with Chidinma at her Bijlmer residence (July 7th 2015).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* at 28

⁴ *Ibid.* at 28

after independence in 1960. From the 1950s through the 1970s, Nigerians mainly migrated to the United Kingdom due to the legacy of colonial ties and for educational pursuits. Nigerian returnees of the 1960s and 1970s with valuable skills had access to civil service jobs or jobs in the private sectors of the Nigerian economy. As political tensions worsened, economic conditions in the late 1970s and 1980s escalated. Economic emigration from Nigeria to the United Kingdom extended to the United States. The Structural Adjustment Program of the mid-1980s also fueled emigration from Nigeria. Unlike previous emigrants who looked forward to returning to Nigeria after graduating, this set of migrants preferred never to return (Mberu 2005). Although less-skilled youth became a significant part of the emigration stream to countries such as Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland, Germany, France, Belgium and the Gulf states in the early 2000s, skilled Nigerians continued to emigrate for greener pastures via student and professional migration and the green card lottery (Mberu 2005). On average, more recent migrants to non-English speaking European countries are reported to work in informal or less-skilled sectors of the economy regardless of their skill-levels as a result of their lack of cultural capital such as language skills. Drawing from the case of Nigerian skilled immigrants in the Netherlands, the article aims to convey the effects of such a lack of cultural capital among Nigerian skilled immigrants in the Netherlands.

As Nigerians migrate to the Netherlands, they realise that higher education certificates need to be updated, Dutch language skills need to be developed to a proficient level and age is often an added barrier to such self-development for older migrants. Increased competence in Dutch increases descent job opportunities as reflected by the Surinamese skilled migrants who come from former Dutch colonies. The Surinamese are advantaged by what Oostindie (2011) refers to as “post-colonial bonus.” The post-colonial bonus avails the Dutch former colonies with the cultural capital such as knowledge of and familiarity with Dutch language and culture needed to integrate into Dutch society with ease. Nigerian immigrants do not have the post-colonial bonus of the Surinamese and are disadvantaged in the Dutch language skills. For Nigerian immigrants with foreign qualifications from their country of origin, migrating to the Netherlands ended their career goals and heightened their stress, as they lacked the cultural capital to integrate into Dutch society.

In general, Dutch authorities provide families or individuals, including Nigerian immigrants legally living in the Netherlands, with monthly social

assistance in the case where they earn below a certain threshold (SVB 2015). However, the system has failed to realise that not all groups of people have the same intentions or desires. Some people's problems need a solution that gets to the root of the matter. The case of Nigerian immigrants with foreign qualifications is a genuine one. The Dutch authorities, via an informal interview session with a social worker at DienstWerk en Inkomen (DWI 2015), a municipal organization in Amsterdam that assists low income people, does not support assisting people in general who are on social benefits and wish to attend higher education (Study in Holland 2015). According to the DWI social worker, as soon as studies of higher standards are mentioned, the person's social assistance will be in jeopardy because they chose the path of higher education (Study in Holland 2015). The social welfare organisations refuse to offer such people the assistance they need in fear that the money offered for their living expenses may instead be used for study expenses (Study in Holland 2015). It may be understandable for the government to exclude people on social benefit from having the right to ask for a tuition fee grant, but it may also harm people with serious intentions or motives. Nigerian immigrants with foreign qualifications who cannot pay their way through school, are vulnerable to stress as a result of occupational change⁵. The system does not unite technical and cultural fixes to solve such social problems. There is a Nigerian adage that says that a matured mother goat chewing grass in front of her offspring is indirectly teaching them the exact manner in which to chew (African Studies Centre Boston University 2015). The lesson implied is: what children grow up seeing is what they practice. It starts with proper parenting. If parents do not work, their children learn the same and they will grow up to rely on the government to take care of them, thus becoming non-productive citizens. This article, therefore, seeks to answer the question: What does it mean to lose one's occupational identity as a highly skilled immigrant with foreign qualifications who has the potential to do better?

Theoretical Framework

In this article, stress is regarded as a phenomenological concept as outlined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Stress in the context of immigrants seeking economic betterment is not just any experience but an experience that poses a threat to what is of the utmost importance to immigrants who voluntarily

⁵ Formal interview with Chinedu (13th July 2015); Formal interview with Ifeoma (19th July 2015); Formal interview with Dorothy (30th July 2015).

leave for foreign countries with the hope of making their economic situations better than they were in their home countries. Stress may lead to several different outcomes within a wide range of emotional or psychological states (Lazarus et al. 1985). Mental illness can be looked upon as one of many possible consequences of stress, as immigrants' high expectations in their countries of settlement may become hard to reach (Simich et al. 2006; Bhugra 2004). Hardship among immigrants opens doors to different mental health conditions that affect one's mood, thinking and behaviour. Examples of mental illness include aggression, depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addictive behaviors.

The effects of stress are disadvantageous in that they may include depression that, in turn, negatively affects victims' offspring. According to Richardson (2009) and Suto (2008), irrespective of heightened family and career responsibilities and demands, skilled migrants face a lack of social support in the new country that significantly affects skilled migrants' abilities to adapt, and may lead to lower work adjustment and downward career mobility (Peltokorpi and Froese 2009; Wang & Sangalang 2005).

Literature on skilled migrants' human capital has highlighted how immigrants' qualifications are underutilised in host countries (Turchick-Hakak et al. 2010; Zikic 2014). Authors such as Friedman & Krackhardt (1997) and Ibarra (1993) specifically point to skilled immigrants' incapacities of building relationships with high-status local contacts due to having lower-status and less useful networks in local business culture. It is not strange that skilled immigrants, especially immigrants from third world countries like Nigeria, face such problems. Drawing on cases of immigrants with foreign qualifications living in the Netherlands, it is clear that some groups face more stress than others when it comes to having their foreign qualifications recognised. For example, EU immigrants from Bulgaria who are not core western Europeans get their qualifications recognised in the Netherlands without having to carry out further studies or suffer other barriers that Nigerian immigrants with foreign qualifications experience.

State of the Art

Much has been written on the struggles of skilled immigrants finding suitable jobs in the labor market but few authors have addressed the effects of such struggles on African immigrants, their identity and their children. Oreopoulos (2011) has addressed the struggles of skilled immigrants in the labour market,

however, the effects of these struggles on immigrants' children and mental health is not addressed. As such, I seek to fill these gaps in the literature. The goal of this article is to explore the relationship between occupational change and stress among highly skilled immigrants with foreign qualifications who cannot find jobs that match their skills in the Netherlands. The article also advocates the need to support such immigrants so that they can meet the required standards in the Netherlands. I seek to suggest a solution to alleviate the effects of migrant stress that could potentially increase the upward movement of immigrants and their children and decrease domestic violence from adults towards their children so that, in the long run, there will also be a decreased burden on the welfare system.

The proposed solution suggests a combination of technical and cultural components (Layne 2000). This translates to providing immigrants who cannot find an appropriate job as a result of foreign qualifications with the necessary support to standardise their qualifications regardless of being on social welfare benefits. This should form a model. Merging these two models together will provide a holistic fix for skilled migrants vulnerable to stress. When these models are incorporated, it will no longer represent social assistance but would rather translate to Integral Social Assistance⁶. At least in this one area, acknowledgement of the suffering of this group and extra attention to their individual needs and not just their needs as a group are required.

Methodology

In preparing this article, I administered surveys and conducted formal interviews among Nigerian immigrants living in the Bijlmer area of the Netherlands. I targeted those hit by occupational change crisis and those who

⁶ Integral Social Assistance is a phrase I coined to show that people's needs are not uniform as laid down rules. There are people with desires other than the currently prescribed solutions to social problems. People may need money to survive but some may also deserve money to progress with and fulfill their already established career goals in a new country. In practice, Integral Social Assistance will involve organisations that work with government grants to provide immigrants with foreign qualifications with the tuition fees they need for studies in the Netherlands so that they may not be at risk of stress. Those who already suffer the risk will also benefit from Integral Social Assistance. It will get to the root cause and provide ways to alleviate the problem, which will wad off the vicious cycle of poverty that exists for such immigrants in the Netherlands.

managed to escape it. The objective of the surveys and interviews was to determine the influence of occupational change on the wellbeing of the immigrants and their families in the Netherlands. Specifically, I wanted to determine how the issues of career change deter the upward movement of immigrants in their host country. The questionnaire sought responses from the Nigerian immigrants in relation to five major issues: (1) past occupational history before migrating to the Netherlands; (2) current job and socio-economic status; (3) marital status/family life, including any experience with domestic abuse; (4) view on stress; (5) experiences on government response to their challenges. I selected participants via my own social networks like church, acquaintances, families and friends. Part I of this article examines how occupational change spurs stress amongst immigrants with foreign qualifications in the Netherlands. It unmask the effects of stress as a result of occupational change on immigrants and their children and highlights lessons to be drawn from the occupational change, that is; what does it really mean to be stressed in one's country of settlement⁷? Part II proposes a series of solutions that combine technical and cultural fixes to better protect adult immigrants in their pursuit for qualification standardisation plans in the Netherlands⁸. This combined model focuses on approaching the requirements and wellbeing of immigrants who are in need of standardising their education, so that they can meet employment requirements in the Netherlands.

Part I: Findings: Occupational Change Attributes: Depression, Poorly Mentored Children, Stress, Social Isolation, Violence, No Sense of Belonging

Precious⁹ was a banker in Zenith bank, one of Nigeria's leading banks (Zenith Bank Nigeria 2015). She studied accounting in the university and graduated with a second-class honors degree¹⁰. She married her Nigerian husband long stationed in the Netherlands¹¹. On settling in the Netherlands, Precious, tried to find new job in the banking sector with her certificate and previous work experience, but she was denied access¹². The HR advisor of one of the banks she solicited for a job told her of the need to upgrade her bachelor's degree in accounting to at least a master's degree in accounting or any business related

⁷ See infra Part I

⁸ See infra Part II

⁹ Formal interview with Precious (1ST of July 2015).

¹⁰ Infra 48.

¹¹Ibid. at 31

¹² Ibid. at 31

degree¹³. In the year during which this was happening, precious had already turned 30, and she was therefore not eligible for study grants¹⁴. She consequently enrolled in university without any state assistance. She faced the most difficult time of her life. There were no extra funds to see her through university. Her husband's salary was not enough to cater for her studies and domestic bills at the same time. Precious got a job at a breakfast café as a cleaner where she tried to combine work and study. The stress of combining the two landed her in the hospital with chronic muscle ache. She dropped out of her course. Precious confessed to have avoided all her banker friends in Nigeria, especially the ones that advised her not to leave her good job in Nigeria. She suffered serious depression from not being able to get through higher education in the Netherlands because of the finances needed. Her career goal took another turn. When she gave birth to her first baby, she did not bother informing friends back home in Nigeria, she feared that they would ask her when maternity leave would be over. She recounts dropping her newborn child on the ground by mistake due to the depression and stress. She felt like sleeping all the time¹⁵.

Toochi's experience echoes Precious' story. She was a qualified lawyer in a well-known firm in Rivers State, Nigeria¹⁶. On migrating to the Netherlands, she lacked the funds to allow her to upgrade her qualification. As a low-income single mother on social benefit, she sought to ask for extra welfare assistance to enable her to pay tuition fees. She was told she was not eligible for social assistance for higher education because the social help fund is designed to assist only people with low income and not people intending to take up studies. The irony of it all is that social benefits can be combined with other training that will land people on low cadre jobs in the Netherlands. Depression took a better part of Toochi, the other part of her that managed to survive the crisis of stress set up an informal restaurant specialising in Nigerian delicacies, so as to save up for her studies. Events carried over and she ended up not being able to save enough money for her studies. She suffered from not being able to practice law in the Netherlands. Lowering her standards to a common informal chef to save up for her studies heightened her occupational stress.

¹³ Ibid. at 31

¹⁴ See *Infra* 8

¹⁵ Ibid. at 31

¹⁶ Live History Interview with Toochi (4th July 2015)

Depression, which according Gabriel et al. (2013) can lead to emotional stress, actually led Tooichi to a point of emotional instability. She contemplated harming herself¹⁷. She shared with me how she lived a good life in Nigeria as a lawyer. The social welfare system in the Netherlands does not provide for low-income immigrants with foreign education qualifications, who aim to attend higher education but lack the funds. Tooichi remained on social benefits but could not be a mentor for her children because of the emotional damage resulting from the stress of the occupation change she suffered¹⁸. She was traumatised to the extent that she cared less about the academic stance of her children.

France (54 years) is another Nigerian immigrant who has experienced a similar saga of stress as the result of occupation change. France is a qualified civil engineer from the University of Lagos, Nigeria. He is married with children. He also lacked the financial tools to upgrade his qualification to match the Dutch standard. As a result of this, he suffered depression that led him to occasional wife battering. He also confessed to having done illicit jobs, such as drug trafficking and pick pocketing in Amsterdam 'Central' for extra money to send to his parents who had gone through difficult times to finance his university education in Nigeria. He recounts how his son's teacher complained that his son beat up his friends at school on various occasions. France's behavior towards his son's mother could be the reason behind his son's behaviour. As emphasised by Humphreys & Mullender (2000) and Fantuzzo & Mohr (1999), children learn very quickly. The boy might have picked up these habits from his mentor father's actions at home. According to France, he is not surprised that his son refused to attend university after his secondary education. He began an apprenticeship as a plumber, yet, he was not good at it. To date, France and his entire family are a burden on the social benefit system in the Netherlands¹⁹.

Violence is one consequence of occupational change amongst immigrants, however there are other serious consequences such as poorly mentored children who are not well integrated in society (Levendosky et al. 2000). According to Chau et al. (2014) and Suárez-Orozco (2009), it is evident that children from poor homes are less likely to enjoy proactive, innovative and

¹⁷Infra 48

¹⁸ Ibid. at 44

¹⁹ Ibid. at 53

good mentored upbringing as seen in France's case. Children whose parents suffer depression are not motivated at home to strive for academic excellence (Price et al.1998). Parents do not inspire their children due to the circumstances they find themselves in; they see their children equally as they see themselves. Such immigrants feel that as they cannot succeed in their pursuit of a decent career, how will it be possible for their children to do otherwise? This may lead to fewer migrant children making it to higher education in the Netherlands in the long-term. Therefore, the issue at hand must not be taken for granted.

Nonye Eze, one of the interviewees²⁰, is a forty five year old Nigerian trained dentist with two children. She recounted how her ex-husband tried the American trend of Nigerian men marrying Nigerian medical professional women and exporting them to the US for money-making (Information Nigeria 2014; Punch Nigeria 2015). He thought Nonye would easily find a job just like other US exported brides²¹. Unfortunately, it was not as he thought. Nonye had to meet strict requirements before she could practice dentistry in the Netherlands. Nonye's ex-husband was patient in the beginning to see if she could meet the necessary requirements, but after the expenses of Nonye's intended studies including Dutch language school were calculated, her ex-husband realised that he could not afford her education and simultaneously care for the home. It did not take long before she was thrown out of the house. According to Nonye, the reason for her ex-husband's action was that she added more of a burden to his already stressed bank account. He is currently married to a nurse from a Surinamese background.

I must acknowledge that Nonye was lucky to have not lost her life in the saga. It is obvious that Nonye's husband prided himself with highly skilled women as evident in the case of him marrying and bringing Nonye all the way from Nigeria to the Netherlands, only to leave her with two young children. He was not patient enough to see Nonye through school because of the finances involved. Nonye did not have a choice other than to fall back to social welfare benefit, to enable her take care of her children²².

Similarly, Chinedu Ikpoenyi, a 38 year-old man who was a practicing lawyer in Nigeria, also suffered the pressure and trauma of stress as a result of

²⁰ Formal interview with Nonye (10th of July 2015)

²¹ See Infra 128

²²See Infra 128

occupational change in the Netherlands²³. He confessed to me that at a point, all he wanted was an opportunity to attend university in the Netherlands, even if it meant studying a course that is less stringent like professional courses. His top goal in life was to at least satisfy his occupational and educational ambition. Unfortunately, the Netherlands welfare system centers on technical fixes (group fix as seen in Layne 2000), which exclude individual considerations (cultural fixes) when solving social problems. Chengdu's occupation and ambition came to a standstill because of the cost of tuition fees. When I asked him what he currently does for a living, he says he works at a factory where his frustrations are aggravated on a daily basis. He told me about his part-time job in a factory with other immigrants who have not attended school or university in their whole lives. According to Chinedu they have all become the same people in reality for if this were not the case, he as a trained lawyer would not be working with them at the factory²⁴. Chinedu's case appears to be the downward career mobility experience that is practically ignored in the Dutch society.

Ifeoma left her job as a secondary school teacher in Nigeria, only to realise that her occupation was on the path of no return in the Netherlands²⁵. As a 39 year old immigrant with the ambition to become a math teacher in the Netherlands, there were no funds to support her study plans. She ended up getting a job as a cleaner during the week and a hairdresser in the weekend. She recounts how she was affected by occupational stress; she got so frustrated to the extent that she did not socialise with friends (see Paul and Moser 2009 on the same issue).

Dorothy, a 37 year old single mother of one, managed to successfully complete her business and management degree via funds her parents gathered back home in Nigeria²⁶. They sold their piece of farmland to pay for her tuition. During my discussion with her, she talked of how challenging it was to get the fees to pay for her university education as a single mother on *bijstaand* (social assistance). Her parent's financial assistance allowed her to achieve her goals. Today, her entire family is reaping the benefits of her university qualification from the Netherlands, which according to Benham (1974) is the reward for education. She has a well-paid job at a bank in Utrecht. She also highlighted the other benefits of attending university, which are immeasurable. When I asked

²³ Formal interview with Chinedu (13th July 2015)

²⁴ Formal interview with Chinedu (13th July 2015)

²⁵ Formal interview with Ifeoma (19th July 2015)

²⁶ Formal interview with Dorothy (30th July 2015)

her of the benefits, she was quick to mention economic independence and confidence to function in Dutch society (Baum and Payea 2005). She also told me that she is now able to take better care of her child.

A clear observation of Dorothy at the grocery shop on a day I trailed her truly revealed that she is well integrated and confident in Dutch society (Groenendijk 2004). Her self-confidence was reflected in the way she behaved. I paid close attention to the way she spoke to the supermarket attendant with respect and humility. Her behavior will indeed inspire her child to grow to become a good role model within Dutch society. Achieving higher education in the Netherlands is indeed responsible for making her who she has presently become (Desai and Alva 1998).

This article is indeed a wakeup call for the Dutch society. The effect on children who come from such homes may be victimisation and vulnerability to illicit businesses and activities (Edelson 1999; Fantuzzo & Mohr 1999). This also explains the stigma of failure that Precious the banker feared and Subramanian and Kumar (2009) have discussed in detail.

Part II: Conclusion and Discussions: How Integral Social Assistance Model can curb Stress among Immigrants in the Netherlands

Like the saying goes, charity begins at home (Idioms 2015). A child growing up with parents that are depressed as a result of stress caused by occupational change in host country that could well be avoided will live to believe that higher education is a waste of time. Bradshaw et al. (2007) have ascertained that the wellbeing of children is paramount in the Netherlands and therefore it does not seem ideal to ignore children in this case. Ideally, children of skilled immigrants are supposed to have academic confidence as children of educated parents but due to the trauma of occupational change stress, most immigrant children in this situation suffer poor academic performance (Whitehead & Iman 2005). This goes to show that parents also have a contribution to make to the wellbeing of their children (Mazzucato & Schans 2011). Integral Social Assistance²⁷ (combining technical fix and cultural fix) will go a long way to improve the life of vulnerable migrant families. From the formal interviews conducted with Nigerian immigrants in the Netherlands²⁸, findings show that

²⁷ See Infra 39

²⁸ Formal interview with Precious (1ST Of July 2015); Formal Interview with Toochee (4th July 2015); Formal interview with France (9th July 2015); Formal interview with Chinedu (13th July

households solely headed by women are hit the hardest in terms of stress. Women interviewed all pointed to one problem: the difficulty of running a home alone and doing various jobs to pay or save for tuition fees (The Guardian 2012). Women are more pressurised and vulnerable to family matters, such as finding a way to generate income to live on (Schrover 2006). However, none of the interviewees of the article mentioned that it was too late for them to return to the university to make up for what is required to be able to upgrade their foreign qualifications in the Netherlands²⁹. One common confession among respondents with stress conditions is that they isolate themselves from colleagues and families (Liem & Liem 1988; Halleröd & Larsson 2008; Bolton & Oatley 1987). Some also avoid successful Nigerian immigrants in the Netherlands for the fear that they would tell people back home that they are no longer what they were in Nigeria, that they have experienced a loss of identity as a result of occupational change.

The welfare of skilled immigrants working in jobs for which they are over-qualified can be improved considerably if people like Chinedu, who have foreign education qualifications, are given Integral Social Assistance (ISA) to take a step further from the norm. This will lead to more immigrants integrating positively in the Netherlands. Chinedu has the potential to live a better life in the Netherlands but due to the lack of support and finances he needed to upgrade his degree to EU standards, he gave up on his dreams. Ifeoma Adibe was also affected by the technical fix system of the Netherlands. The model of solving social problems did not pay attention to her goals as an individual. There is a need to be aware of the requirements of families such as those researched in this article that have a bright future but cannot excel in their country of settlement due to the stress of finding employment in lower-level jobs. Stress as a result of occupational change, which compels its victims to suffer depression and isolation and subsequently leads to emotional and financial trauma, is inevitable in this case. Adopting an Integral Social Assistance model as earlier proposed would serve as a viable option which could potentially combat both the more severe and the less drastic

2015); Formal interview with Ifeoma (19th July 2015); Formal interview with Dorothy (30th July 2015)

²⁹ Formal interview with Precious and Chidinma (1ST Of July 2015); Formal Interview with Tooichi (4th July 2015); Formal interview with France (9th July 2015); Formal interview with Chinedu (13th July 2015); Formal interview with Ifeoma (19th July 2015); Formal interview with Dorothy (30th July 2015); Formal interview with Dorothy (30th July 2015)

consequences of stress as a result of occupational change among skilled immigrants from third world countries. Drawing from the case of Dorothy, the article has shown that the benefits of working in jobs for which immigrants are qualified brings out the best in them in host countries and reduces their chances of mental health conditions. In the Netherlands, achieving the goals of the Integral Social Assistance model is not so difficult, as the amenities already in place would enable a smooth implementation of the model. For instance, the day-care system in the Netherlands provides subsidies for students with low income regardless of age to be able to take their children to daycare (Rijksoverheid 2015). Language schools are also subsidised by municipalities for immigrants with low income who are willing to learn the Dutch language (ROCVA 2015). Another good amenity provided by the government is Nuffic's responsibility to manage and accredit foreign certificates (Nuffic 2015). If this were not the case, critics would be quick to point out the need to verify the originality of immigrants' qualification certificates. With such services provided by authorities in the Netherlands, highly skilled immigrants will not face many obstacles in standardising their foreign qualifications in the Netherlands.

It is no doubt that the effects of stress as a result of occupational change are disastrous, thus the government needs to strive hard on this issue. The Netherlands can learn from the Nigerian immigrants interviewed and observed in this article so that immigrants with foreign qualifications wishing to return to studying in the hope of securing a higher-level job can achieve their goals through the Integral Social Assistance model. The model is designed to deal with the stress crises that result from occupational change and may compel immigrants to suffer depression and isolation and lead to emotional and financial trauma.

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