

Chapter 2

Immigration and Integration Policy in Singapore

Immigrant-receiving governments set rules to control the volume, duration of stay, skill composition, and ethnic, racial, and geographical origin of the migrants they receive (for details, see Hammar 1985; Weiner 1993; Joppke 1999; Zolberg 1999; Hollifield 2000; Debrah 2002; Koslowski 2005; Boswell 2007; Rahman and Ullah 2012). The role that receiving countries play in migration control needs to be understood in context and in all its complexity (Rahman and Ullah 2012). Theories of international migration have primarily focused on non-state actors in explaining the causes and perpetuation of international migration (Hollifield 2000). However, there is evidence that states devise rules of entry and exit for potential migrants in order to control their borders and ensure sovereignty and security. As well as devising rules revolving around issues of control and security, states also develop policies to incorporate immigrants into their society and economy. Since the 1980s, work on the politics of international migration has tended to “bring the state back in” to social-scientific analyses of migration (Hollifield 2000: 137). While the present book accentuates the importance of sociological and economic variables in the analysis of labour migration, it also acknowledges the importance of the state in migration control, and therefore elaborates on its role in regulating the volume and composition of population movements across international borders.

The study of migration policy has principally advanced in the context of Western countries (Hammar 1985; Giugni and Passy 2006; Boswell 2007; Castles and Miller 2009). Broadly, Western migration policy can be divided into a twofold classification: (i) immigration control or regulation policy (the rules and procedures governing the selection and admission of foreigners), and (ii) immigrant policy (the conditions provided to resident immigrants such as work and housing conditions, welfare provisions, and educational opportunities) (Hammar 1985: 7–9; Meyers 2000, 2002). While migration control policy is highly relevant in Asian migrant-receiving countries, immigrant policy is not a topic of much discussion in this region (Rahman and Ullah 2012). This is because Asian migration policies are informed and shaped by three basic principles: limited settlement; limited scope for citizenship; and limited scope for national culture and identity modification in

response to external influences (Castles 2001: 197; see also Piper 2004; Chan and Abdullah 1999; Skeldon 1997; Seol and Skrentny 2009).

Given the primacy of migration control policy in Asia, this chapter principally addresses the rules and procedures governing the selection and admission of different categories of foreigners in Singapore. The discussion is divided into eight sections: (i) immigration research and analysis in Singapore, (ii) nature of migration policy, (iii) broader features of immigration policy, (iv) classes of non-resident population, (v) administrative and legal frameworks, (vi) specific policies targeting semi-skilled foreign workers, (vii) pathways of professional, skilled, and semi-skilled foreigners, and (viii) integration of immigrants and emigrants into Singapore society.

Immigration Research in Singapore

Singapore was a British trading port established by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819, gaining its independence in 1965. Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father of modern Singapore, performed a miracle transforming Singapore from one of the poorest countries in the 1960s to being among the most advanced today. This visionary leader pursued a class-based migration policy to welcome immigrants of different skill levels since the 1960s. It is thanks to Lee Kuan Yew, one of the great transformational leaders of our times, and his vision that Singapore is as welcoming to immigrants today as it was 50 years ago. Brenda Yeoh, an eminent migration scholar from Singapore, notes that “the history and fortunes of Singapore have been closely intertwined with migrants and migration” (Yeoh 2007: 1). We can broadly identify two waves of immigration into Singapore: pre-independence migration, which was principally for permanent settlement, and post-independence migration, which is largely for temporary work. Broadly, Singapore’s citizens and permanent residents (PR) are referred to as *residents*, while holders of various employment passes, work permits, and other categories of short- and long-term passes are referred to as *non-residents*. Table 2.1 presents the growth of the resident and non-resident populations, and Fig. 2.1 provides a detailed breakdown of non-resident population in Singapore.¹ Despite various policy measures, the share of non-resident population is increasing every year. This is because Singapore has faced two troubling trends since the 1990s: a rapidly ageing population, and an extremely low reproduction rate. As a result, immigration policy has become a key strategy to tackle the demographic challenge and ensure continued economic prosperity. Against this backdrop, this chapter examines the immigration policies that Singapore pursues to select, admit, retain, and integrate foreigners into Singapore society.

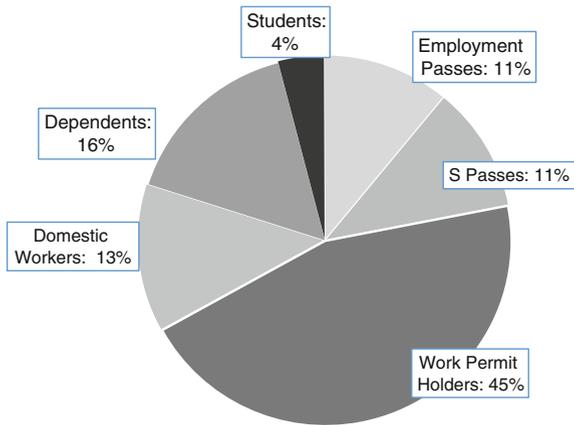
¹The data on the distribution of the non-resident population is compiled from Population in Brief, an annual publication by the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD) that provides key updates and trends on Singapore’s population landscape. See the website of the NPTD on the Singapore government portal: <http://www.nptd.gov.sg/Portals/0/Homepage/Highlights/population-in-brief-2015.pdf>.

Table 2.1 Total population of Singapore, as of 2015 ('000)

Categories	2004	2009	2012	2013	2014	2015
Citizens	3057.1	3200.7	3285.1	3313.5	3343	3375
Permanent Residents (PR)	356.2	533.2	533.1	531.2	527.7	527.7
Total resident population	3413.3	3733.9	3818.2	3844.8	3807.7	3902.7
Non-resident population	753.4	1253.7	1494.2	1554.4	1599.0	1632.3
Total population	4166.7	4987.6	5312.4	5399.2	5469.7	5535

Source Various Issues of Population in Brief, published by National Population and Talent Division (NPTD), Singapore

Fig. 2.1 Distribution of non-resident population in Singapore (1.63 million)



It is important to note that managing migration, as Doornik et al. (2005) suggest, is “metaphorically akin to walking a tightrope”, because the government has to try to keep the domestic population’s aspirations and economic needs in balance. Singapore’s government makes every effort to increase public awareness about the growing importance of immigration for Singapore’s economy and society. For instance, Lee Kuan Yew, the chief architect in harnessing social cohesion and in engineering an economic miracle, commented that foreigners add dynamism to Singapore, which cannot afford to remain static in a changing and globalized world (*Straits Times*, 23 April 2007). In his National Day Rally speech in August 2006, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong made it clear that Singapore needs foreign manpower for economic growth and prosperity. The reason for hiring foreign manpower should be principally seen from an economic point of view, i.e., the gap between a limited pool of local labour and a high rate of employment creation. Academic studies have also discussed the reason for hiring foreign manpower in greater detail (for details, see Pang and Lim 1982; Chew and Chew 1995; Wong 1997; Hui 1997; Low 2002). In this context, Singapore has devised a sophisticated migration policy, based on a ‘demand-driven system’, to allow regular circulation of foreign labour.

There is a lack of published data on certain aspects of immigration which are deemed ‘confidential and politically sensitive’ (Low 2002). However, there is a

“greater expression by way of policy and strategy than quantitative empirical evidence” (Low 2002: 96). In Singapore, migration has been constantly debated by academics and policy-makers, and scrutinized by local universities and different ministries in the form of delegating funds for research, workshops, and the establishment of migration clusters in the universities. The significance of, and demand for, foreign manpower, in conjunction with other pertinent issues such as immigration, foreign talent, dual citizenship, assimilation, and integration, often hogs the headlines of the *Straits Times*, the leading English daily of Singapore. All these have contributed to the development of scholarly debate on this crucial and expanding field. While it is not feasible here to offer an individual treatment of all major works that deal with migration in Singapore, I provide a brief overview of the trends in migration research and discourse in Singapore.

I begin with Pang Eng Fong, one of the pioneering migration scholars in Singapore, whose work on immigration in Singapore dates back to 1976. Pang’s works have discussed migration, public policy, and social development in Singapore (Pang 1976, 1979). One of his major works on migration was published with Linda Lim in 1982, and focused largely on foreign labour and economic development in Singapore (Pang and Lim 1982). Two years later, in response to Pang and Lim’s work, Stahl published detailed empirical findings pertaining to the benefits and costs of foreign labour and other migration related issues in Singapore (Stahl 1984). In the migration literature, one can identify an emphasis on cost-benefit analysis of foreign labour import, along with other broader issues, e.g., the philosophy behind immigration policy, imbalance between labour supply and employment creation, evolution of foreign labour policy, and implications of use of foreign labour (Pang 1991, 1992, 1994; Sullivan et al. 1992; Toh 1993; Low 1995; Chew and Chew 1995; Chiew 1995; Wong 1997; Hui 1997; Yap 1999, 2001).

Since the 1990s, in conjunction with all these relevant issues, research on emigration orientation and emigration of Singaporeans (Tan and Chiew 1995; Low 1995; Hui 1998; Tan 2005; Leong 2007), foreign talent (Low 2002; Hui 2002; Yeoh and Huang 2003; Koh 2003; Poon 2003), irregular migration (Sullivan et al. 1992), foreign construction workers (Ofori 1997; Ofori and Debrah 1998; Debrah and Ofori 2001), Thai labour migration (Wong 2000; Pattana 2005), and Bangladeshi labour migration (Foo 1999; Rahman 2003; Rahman and Lian 2005; Lian and Rahman 2006; Rahman and Yeoh 2008; Bal 2013), has dominated the migration scholarship in Singapore. Besides this, a variety of issues on international migration in Singapore have been discussed, such as the comparative study of migration policies (Ruppert 1999; Chan and Abdullah 1999; Ruhs 2002; Yoo et al. 2004; Seol 2005), Chinese-Malaysian transmigration (Lam and Yeoh 2004), and the relationship between foreign manpower policy and population policy (Wong 1996, 1997).

With the ‘feminization of migration’ in Asia in the 1990s, scholars like Brenda Yeoh, Shirlena Huang, and others have addressed the different aspects of gender migration in Singapore and beyond (Yeoh and Khoo 1998; Yeoh et al. 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004; Noor 2005). In addition, other works, which are not immediately associated with foreign manpower but are broadly linked to immigration matters, like diaspora, transnationalism, multiculturalism, national identity, nation-building,

and citizenship, have further contributed to the enrichment of our understanding of immigration in Singapore (Sandhu 1969; Hill and Lian 1995; Yeoh and Kong 1996; Kong 1999; Chua 2003; Yahya and Kaur 2010; Rai 2004, 2014; Elaine 2008, 2009).

Despite the abundance of research on the dynamics of migration, there is not a high level of academic awareness concerning foreign manpower policy in relation to its management, especially the finely tuned micro-aspects of policy. The management of foreign manpower is vital for any labour-importing country, as failure to ensure efficacy in the achievement of labour migration policies and programme goals often generates a range of unintended consequences, like xenophobia, the politicization of migration, irregular migration, and eventually cessation of labour migration programmes altogether (see Marmora 1999; Castles and Miller 1998; Lian and Rahman 2006). Therefore, this study examines foreign manpower policy and its implementation mechanisms, to highlight the importance of careful and comprehensive policy and transparent management.

Nature of Immigration Policy

Broadly, international labour migration policies can be divided into supply-driven and demand-driven systems. A supply-driven system is widely employed in the developed countries to invite foreigners (immigrants) to live and work permanently. Classic immigrant countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand) traditionally follow a supply-driven migration policy in order to attract highly skilled professionals in science, engineering, health, and information technology. This model of migration policy favours immigration of the highly skilled, usually for permanent settlement (for details, see Koslowski 2005; Yoo et al. 2004; Boeri et al. 2012). Two selective migration models that are often noted in the literature are the Canadian ‘human capital’ model based on a point system, and the Australian ‘neo-corporatist’ model based on a point system with extensive business and labour participation. These two migration policy models are basically supply-driven systems. In the supply-driven system, potential migrants introduce themselves into the host countries’ screening processes on the basis of some objective criteria, and the host countries select the best-quality foreign workforce from the pool of potential immigrants. Foreigners with sufficient points are chosen to immigrate with the permits for residency and work. The supply-driven system is skills-biased, in the sense that it excludes low-skilled manpower from developing countries. Notably, this system contributes to brain-drain from developing countries.

A demand-driven system is widely followed in order to serve temporary needs for foreign manpower, and such a migration model is widely practised in developing economies. However, some form of demand-driven immigration model is also found in developed countries, including those where a supply-driven immigration model is widely employed, to hire foreign workers temporarily to fulfil short-term manpower needs, such as temporary foreign worker programmes for short stays of lower skilled migrant workers (farm workers and in-home

caregivers); in Canada and the US, for instance, there is a market-oriented, demand-driven model based primarily on employer selection of migrants (H-1B visa category). In the demand-driven system, employers from the host countries play a vital role in the overall process of introducing foreign workers, both skilled and unskilled, to the host governments for approval. In general, employers use recruiting agencies to hire the right workers from overseas. Recruiting agents contact their counterparts in emigration countries to find interested individuals.

Once recruiting agents in host countries find the right migrants with the necessary skills and experiences, they inform the original employers who engage in official procedures like visa application, air tickets, and so on, and upon approval from the government they bring in foreign workers for temporary appointment. The demand-driven system is based on “the logic that employers are in the ideal position to make the best decisions on the economic contribution of foreign labour” (Yoo et al. 2004). Singapore, as well as some other labour-importing countries, follows the demand-driven system, albeit with some variations (Rahman and Ullah 2012). Singapore’s demand-driven system serves both parties—employers and migrants. On one hand, it is efficient in satisfying the needs of employers, and therefore is capable of generating higher benefits for the host country. On the other hand, it is economically beneficial for the migrants and their home countries, because it engenders remittances which are sent direct to the migrant families. More importantly, it opens up opportunities for even low-skilled migrants from developing economies to earn skills and relevant working experience in host countries and employ these skills and experience upon return.

Broader Features of Immigration Policy in Singapore

This section provides a broader overview of migration policy in Singapore. I identified seven interwoven, underlying features in migration policy in major host countries in East and Southeast Asia (Rahman 2012). They offer insights into how migration policy making is linked to other broader issues in the society. The subsections describe how these features are particularly relevant to the understanding of the edifice of migration policy in Singapore. They are as follows: (i) controlling demand for migrants, (ii) transience and disposability, (iii) development of a recruitment industry, (iv) curbing irregular migration, (v) gendered migration policy, (vi) ethnicized migration policy, and (vii) educationally channelled labour mobility. I elaborate these features of Singapore’s migration policy with some examples.

(i) *Controlling Demand: Work Permit, Quota and Levy Scheme*

The labour shortage has created a strong demand for foreign workers in Singapore. However, the demand for labour has not automatically resulted in a supply of labour, because policy-makers have put in place mechanisms to evaluate to what extent such shortages should be filled by foreign labour and

how this labour should be channelled into different sectors of the economy. Current policies categorize migrant workers into two broad groups: highly skilled and unskilled (the latter comprising semi-skilled and unskilled including domestic workers). The emphasis is on control and ‘flexibility’ in response to local labour market fluctuations. We find the use of three mechanisms to regulate the need for foreign semi-skilled and unskilled labour: (i) ‘work permits’, (ii) quotas and ceilings, and (iii) the employment stabilization fee called a ‘levy’ (Chan and Abdullah 1999; Martin et al. 2006; Castes and Miller 2009; Rahman and Ullah 2012).

A work permit (WP) is issued to each foreign worker with contract length, name of employer, and sector of the economy. The duration of stay or contract length is limited, usually from one to three years, and renewal is usually subject to availability of jobs and approval from the concerned authority. There is often limited opportunity for mobility across sectors and employers. Through ceilings, Singapore puts a cap on the intake and use of foreign workers. The dependency ceiling regulates the proportion of foreigners to local workers. The third control measure is the ‘levy’. Employers have economic incentives to use foreign workers, who can be hired at low costs and paid lower wages than local (national) workers. This may cause unemployment and dissatisfaction at the lower rung of local labour force. To protect the jobs of low-skilled local workers, the levy is introduced. It increases the cost of employing foreign workers and, by implication, discourages employers from becoming over-dependent on foreign labour.

The control mechanisms discussed above do not apply to skilled and professional migrants, who enjoy more favourable terms and conditions. With rapid globalization and the increasing importance of the knowledge-based economy, Singapore is competing with other states to attract the best and brightest talents (Yahya and Kaur 2010). Singapore has crafted a separate set of policies on a competitive basis to tap the skilled and professional migrants from around the world such as: (i) permission to bring dependents in country, (ii) occupational mobility and better terms and conditions of employments, (iii) limited scale of permanent residence status and citizenship after a few years of residency.

(ii) ***Transience and Disposability***

In devising the admission policy for foreign labour, one important consideration is whether to prioritize temporary labour migration or permanent migration through specified migration channels that may lead to a secure residence status and permanent settlement. However, Singapore finds the solution to labour shortages in a temporary migration programme. Temporary migration policies are devised on the principle of rotation, that is, each migrant worker is invited for a short period and forced to depart once their permit expires. The doors to permanent settlement, such as marriage with locals, family reunion (bringing family members from home countries), unlimited extension of visas, sectoral mobility, and option for employer

changes, are typically closed to lower-skilled migrant workers. Although labour migration is seen as a temporary response to labour shortages, the phenomena of temporary migration or the demand for cheap and disposable labour is permanent in the country, leading to a situation of ‘permanently temporary’. Given the lower costs of hiring temporary migrants and the higher benefits that such labour generates for the country, Singapore has adopted a policy of ‘circular migration’. In this circular migration, migrants who earn skills in specific occupations, and comply with local rules and regulations, may stay longer after they finish their contracts—subject to availability of jobs. Migrants working for extended periods are generally allowed to take leave for home visits. The positive side of this policy measure is that the fear of permanent settlement in the receiving countries and the fear of losing nationals, skills, and remittances in the sending countries are minimal, leading to win-win situations for both parties. Migrants get jobs with higher wages compared to those in their country of origin, and an opportunity to continue a foreign job for an extended period. For instance, a migrant with multiple skills can work up to 22 years in the construction sector of Singapore.

(iii) ***The Recruitment Industry***

The recruitment industry for low-skilled labour has flourished throughout the migrant-receiving countries in Asia. Most labour recruitment takes place through the help of two key players: agencies and migrant networks. Singapore has around 1100 recruiting agencies serving the demand for male and female migrant labour in the country. Recruiting agents in both sending and receiving countries work in collaboration with each other and contribute to the placement of labour across countries. The recruitment of skilled and professional migration is conducted through channels other than through registered recruiting agencies for low-skilled foreign labour. Skilled migration is seen more as an individual-level initiative to enter the international job market. Since Singapore pursues a favourable policy towards foreign skilled and professional migrants, employers often offer privileged salary packages to encourage relocation in Singapore.

(iv) ***State Concerns and Policy Measures for Irregular Migration***

Terms such as ‘illegal’, ‘undocumented’, ‘unauthorized’, and ‘irregular’ have been used to describe migrant workers without a valid visa, WP, or other necessary documents (Battistella and Asis 2003). ‘Irregular’ is the current term in use by migrants’ rights advocates. The term ‘illegal’ is generally used strictly in the legal sense, classifying migrant workers as criminals. The other terms are relatively neutral. While irregular migration is a widespread problem in other countries in the region, irregular migration in Singapore is minimal. However, this relative success should be understood in the light of policy measures undertaken to address irregular migration problem. Some of the policy measures implemented include penalties for irregular workers,

employer sanctions, security bonds, and fingerprint and biometric identification cards. When someone becomes ‘irregular’ for any reason, they are expected to leave the country immediately. Nonconformity to rules often meets first a financial penalty, then imprisonment, and finally deportation. To prevent employers from employing irregular migrants, receiving countries in the region have adopted policy measures called ‘employer sections’. These measures range from a heavy financial penalty, up to incarceration. When a migrant worker cannot engage in work because of his or her irregular status, the motivation for irregular stay is expected to diminish. In this sense, employer section is an effective policy measure to reduce the size of irregular migration. Additionally, Singapore has introduced a ‘security bond’ of SG \$5000 in the form of insurance/banker’s guarantee to all employers of foreign workers except those of Malaysian origin (Devasahayam 2010). The security bond is signed between the employer and the Government; the foreign worker is not required to pay the security deposit. Under the pretext of losing the security bond, employers play a proactive role in two areas: (i) taking care of the well-being of migrant workers, and (ii) ensuring their authorized repatriation after cancellation or end of WP.²

As a part of the latest ‘migration securitization drive’ (Bourbeau 2011), Singapore has introduced fingerprinting or digital photo-taking measures. This latest security measure has further limited irregular migration. The expanding bank of fingerprints and digital photos held by the immigration department can easily deter former irregular migrants when they attempt to enter the country a second time, prompting immediate action against their irregular entry. Additionally, Singapore offers ID cards that help to detect irregular migrants. Such biometric ID cards cannot be tampered with or easily forged, leading to precarious stays and even limited access to services like medical care, contributing to diminishing interests in irregular movement and stays.

(v) ***Gendered Migration Policy***

Intra-regional migration in Asia is a gendered phenomenon: both male and female migrants move across borders to join foreign labour markets. However, substantial barriers exist to regulate cross-border gendered mobility, both at the labour-receiving end through restrictive admission policies, and at the labour-sending end through the policy of selective deployment. As a result, migration is encouraged with respect to certain destinations or jobs and discouraged from others (Momsen 1999; Piper 2003). Nicola Piper argues that migration policies affect men and women differently, and for three principal reasons: the concentration of men and women based on gender-segregated labour markets; gendered socioeconomic power structures;

²For details, see Ministry of Manpower, Singapore government website, www.mom.gov.sg.

and socio-cultural definitions of appropriate roles in destination as well as origin countries (Piper 2006: 139). Migrant workers have differential access to legal protection depending on whether they are male or female, and this is principally attributed to the gendered segregated labour market in the host country (Yeoh and Huang 1999; Tam 1999). Male migrants have generally more access to legal mechanisms and can have more successful recourse to justice than female migrants (domestic workers), because of their easier access to other workers and legal bodies. Since male migrants engage by default in the production sector, they are protected by employment acts and are entitled to benefits like other workers. Female migrants who are working in relative seclusion in the domestic sector are not fully considered 'workers'. Therefore, they are often deprived of the benefits and privileges associated with the status of 'official worker'.

Policy towards medical surveillance is an area where the state often imposes gender-differentiated patterns. All foreign workers, including domestic workers, are required to undergo a medical examination and be certified fit by authorized medical practitioners. There are extra measures for female migrant workers which monitor whether they are in the process of procreation. While foreign male workers and locals may get away with 'transgressive acts of procreation' (Huang and Yeoh 2003), female workers (domestic workers) face severe consequences, including the loss of their jobs and repatriation. However, in spite of this negative implication of health screening, there are also some positive implications of the medical surveillance bestowed on them. Ahsan Ullah argues that females are more vulnerable to deadly and communicable diseases, and that the provision of medical surveillance can help detect these diseases and so encourage preventive measures (Ullah 2010). Recent cases of tuberculosis (TB) among domestic workers in Singapore are a case in point.³ It is also important to note that the financial burden of medical tests is put on employers, not on the domestic workers.

The gendered nature of migration policy is also reflected in the ways in which the labour of male and female workers is valued by the receiving states. Huang and Yeoh argue that foreign workers in low-end occupations such as construction can upgrade their skills and thus switch from unskilled to a semi-skilled or even skilled category over time (Huang and Yeoh 2003). The reward for acquiring or upgrading skills is reflected not only in monthly salaries but also in the levy rates that each employer is required to pay for their foreign workers. Employers of female workers, especially domestic workers, are also required to pay a levy. However, since domestic work is seen as informal/reproductive work, the levy for a domestic worker is often at

³Health screening good enough?: My maid has TB and now my son and I have it too, Letter from Noorlina Senin, *The Today* (Singapore), 31 May 2010.

a flat rate. There is little scope for an official upgrading of skill status and official recognition of productivity. This hinders their bargaining power and limits salary increases in the long run.

(vi) ***Ethnicized Migration Policy***

Preferences for co-ethnic migrants residing outside national territories offer important new perspectives on nationhood, non-discriminatory norms, and trans-nationality in Asia (Skrentny et al. 2007). In East and Southeast Asia, there is clearly a preference for co-ethnics in the areas of return migration and naturalization, co-ethnic investors, students, and temporary migrants. In Singapore, there is a preference for co-ethnics in certain sectors of the economy, but the preferences are organized on the basis of country of origin rather than explicitly ethnic grounds. For example, migrants from countries such as Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea enjoy preferential treatment in Singapore as regards employment in certain economic sectors, compared to those from non-traditional source (NTS) countries like Indonesia, Bangladesh, and India.

(vii) ***Educationally channelled labour policy***

International education is used as a mechanism to attract skilled labour in the developed countries (for details, see OECD 2010; Liu-Farrer 2009; Gribble 2008; Birrell and Perry 2009; Brooks and Waters 2011). The most recent data show that the OECD countries received between 2 and 2.5 million international students, which corresponds to about 84% of all students studying abroad (OECD 2010: 41–24). In most OECD countries, favourable policy measures are undertaken to entice international students and retain them in their labour markets (for details, see OECD 2010). In other words, international education has emerged as a de facto channel of skilled migration in the developed world. To capture the overlapping trends of international student migration and labour mobility, Liu-Farrer even uses the term “educationally channelled international labour mobility” (Liu-Farrer 2009: 179). This is taking place largely in the context of what the OECD calls ‘two-step migration’, by which migrants are first invited as international students and then in a second step retained as highly skilled long-term workers (OECD 2010: 41).

Singapore is one of the top foreign student destination countries in Asia. Traditionally, Asian students who looked to English-speaking Western countries for higher education are now increasingly turning to Singapore. However, the appeal of Singapore’s education has gone beyond the region and now more and more students are coming from other parts of the world. There were roughly 95,000 foreign students in 2010, and Singapore’s education blueprint aims to attract 150,000 foreign students by 2015.⁴ Supported

⁴Singapore scores high marks as education hub, *Weekend Mail*, 15 December 2007; Singapore attracting fewer foreign students, Sandra Davie, *Straits Times*, 11 November 2010.

by a government-led initiative to capture a slice of global student migration, Singapore has managed to woo more than 16 of the world's leading schools to set up campuses⁵ and the number of foreign schools is going up every year. Singapore has devised policies to retain international graduates following the completion of their studies. Many foreign students consider education in Singapore a stepping stone to permanent residency and subsequent citizenship because of its relatively open immigration policy. Internship programmes offered by various industries in collaboration with universities for science, engineering, and business students further provide incentives to stay and facilitate the incorporation of foreigners in the local labour market. On the whole, foreign student policies in Singapore have become more of a tool in the international competition for high-level skills.

Classes of Non-resident Foreign Manpower in Singapore

As mentioned earlier, Singapore's population can broadly be grouped into the resident population and non-resident population (Table 2.1). Over one-third of the population of Singapore is classed as non-resident. Figure 2.1 provides a broad classification of the non-resident population in Singapore. Prior to September 1998, non-residents were divided into two main categories: employment pass holders, who were skilled professional and managerial workers; and work permit holders, who were low-skilled migrant workers. However, the work pass system that came into effect in 1998 provides a three-tiered migration scheme: Classes P, Q, and R. The three major classes are each divided into two sub-categories, for a total of six classification levels (i.e., P1 and P2, Q1 and Q2, and R1 and R2). However, with effect from July 2004, a new category of work pass, namely the S Pass, has been introduced to replace the Q2 pass of Q Class. Presently, major work passes consist of the Employment Pass (EP), S Pass, Personalized Employment Pass (PEP), and WP. Professionals are offered the EP and skilled and semi-skilled foreigners are offered the S pass and WPs (Table 2.2). In addition to these major groups of foreigners, there are also other groups such as trainees and students, and family members. In this section, I describe various groups of non-resident population and the specific policies that allow different groups to enter, work, stay in, or leave the country.

⁵Ibid.

Table 2.2 Major classes of foreign manpower and immigration passes in Singapore

Pass type		Eligible foreigners	Additional features
(1) Professionals	Employment Pass (EP)	Foreign professionals, managers and executives who hold acceptable degrees, professional qualifications and relevant experiences Minimum salary: candidates need to earn at least S\$3300 a month Family visas: eligible for dependent visas if earn at least S\$400 in a month and long-term visit visas for parents if earn at least S\$8000 in a month The duration of the pass is as follows: First-time candidates: up to 2 years Renewable: up to 3 years	Eligible to apply for permanent residency and citizenship EP is granted for particular employer and prior permission is needed for the change of employer. However, PEP holder is not tied to any employer No restrictions on nationality
	EntrePass	Eligible foreign entrepreneurs wanting to start and operate a new business in Singapore. Passes for family: available for certain family members Duration of pass: up to 1 year and renewable	Company must have at least S\$50,000 in paid-up-capital
	Personalized Employment Pass (PEP)	High-earning existing EP holders or overseas foreign professionals Minimum salary: For current EP holders S\$12,000 a month; For overseas professionals S\$18,000 a month	The PEP offers greater flexibility than an EP
(2) Skilled and semi-skilled workers	S pass	Mid-level personnel; candidates need to earn at least S\$2200 a month and meet the assessment criteria. Offered for up to 2 years and renewable and eligible for dependent passes (spouse and children) if earn a fixed monthly salary of at least \$4000 in a month	Employers are subject to a <i>quota</i> and <i>levy</i> for S pass employees Employers must provide medical insurance
	WP for foreign worker (WP)	Semi-skilled foreign workers in the constructive, manufacturing, marine, process or services sector. Minimum age: 18 years. WP is offered for up to	Sector requirements, including approved source countries, security bond (S\$5000), quota and levy Employer must provide medical insurance

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

Pass type	Eligible foreigners	Additional features
	2 years but renewable; total duration of stay in Singapore: up to 18 years if holding R1 pass and 10 years if holding R2 pass	Acceptable housing
	WP for foreign domestic worker (WP)	Foreign domestic workers to work in Singapore. Age must be between 23 and 50 years at the time of application. Minimum 8 years of formal education with a recognized certificate
	WP for confinement nanny	Approved source countries, security bond and levy requirements Medical and personal accident insurance Every 6 monthly medical examinations
		Malaysian confinement nannies to work in Singapore for up to 16 weeks starting from the birth of the employer's child
		Non-renewable and levy payable; the confinement nanny must be a Malaysian and between 23 and 65 years old
(3) Trainees and students	Training EP	Foreign professionals undergoing practical training. Candidates must earn at least S\$3000 a month
	Work holiday programme	Students and graduates aged 18–25 who want to work and holiday in Singapore for up to 6 months
	Training WP	Trainee EP for foreign students or trainees
		The work Holiday programme has a capacity of 2000 applicants at any one time
		Semi-skilled foreign trainees or students undergoing practical training in Singapore for up to 6 months
		Employers are subject to quota and levy
(4) Family members	Dependent's pass	Spouse and children of eligible EP or S pass holders. Spouse and unmarried children under 21 years. Dependents can work if they get a letter of consent to work in Singapore if they find a job
	Long-term visit pass	Fixed month salary of S \$4000 If family members are not eligible for a dependent pass, they might qualify for a long-term visit pass
	Letter of consent	Parents, common-law spouses, step children or handicapped children of eligible EP or S pass holders
		Parents only for those earning a fixed monthly salary of at least S\$8000
		Eligible long-term visit pass holders and dependent pass holders who want to work in Singapore
		One must have a job offer from an employer

Compiled from information found on Singapore MOM website, www.mom.gov.sg

Employment Pass (EP) and Special (S) Pass for Professional and Skilled Foreign Manpower

Singapore has a relatively open door policy for skilled and professional foreign manpower (Table 2.2). EP passes are issued to foreigners who hold professional qualifications and are seeking to work in a professional, managerial, or administrative capacity. They are also issued on a case-by-case basis to investors and entrepreneurs who can contribute to the economy of Singapore, as well as to persons of exceptional ability in the arts, sciences, and business. The large gap between the EP and the WP means that it is difficult for some companies to bring in middle-level manpower, resulting in unfilled demand in some industries for such middle-level skills sets, which local manpower has not been able to meet. With the S pass, employers will have access to middle-level talent, such as specialized workers and technicians from any country. The S pass is offered foreigners whose monthly basic salary is currently at least S\$2200. The S pass is issued taking into account multiple criteria, including salary, educational qualifications, skills, and job type and work experience. EP and S pass holders can apply for permanent residency. Thus, migration policy is also a component of the population policy.

Recruitment of skilled and professional foreign manpower is relatively easy and direct. Once employers find a suitable candidate, they apply to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) for an EP on behalf of the prospective employee. The passes are offered on the basis of objective criteria as discussed above. In addition to these regular work passes, there are also some special passes that fall under the EP category, e.g., the Short-Term EP, Training Visit Pass, EntrePass (EP for Entrepreneurs), Dependent Pass or Letter of Consent, and Long-Term Social Visit Pass. An EP holder is eligible to apply for Dependent Passes for his/her spouse and for unmarried or legally adopted children under 21 years of age. An EP holder may apply for Long-Term Social Visit Passes for his/her parents, parents-in-law, step children, spouse, handicapped children, and unmarried daughters aged above 21 years.

In addition to traditional employment passes, Singapore has introduced the PEP to facilitate the contributions of global talent to Singapore. Currently, the issue of an EP is tied to a specific employer. Any change of employer requires a fresh application. If an EP holder leaves his employer, his EP is cancelled and he must leave Singapore within a short time unless he finds a new job. The new PEP is not tied to any employer and is granted on the strength of an EP holder's individual merits. A PEP holder is entitled to remain in Singapore for up to six months in between jobs to seek new employment opportunities. The PEP is valid for five years and is non-renewable. EP holders are allowed to marry locals or bring their immediate 'dependents' to Singapore. Hui (1992) argues that Singapore's immigration policy towards the skilled and professional foreign manpower may be regarded as liberal. The economic motivation for this liberal policy is to "capitalise on the benefits of savings in human capital investments and to facilitate technology transfers" (Hui 1998: 208–209). The professional and managerial workers are usually referred to as

‘foreign talent’ in both government and public discourse (Yeoh 2004: 8), and the latest state strategy has been to make Singapore a ‘talent capital’ where industries can find the skills and expertise for their activities (Low 2002: 110). The International Manpower Division of MOM is engaged in attracting international talent, as well as Singaporean talent working or studying overseas, through the international network known as ‘Contact Singapore’.

Most recently, there have been some changes in hiring professionals and skilled foreigners. If we compare the recruitment procedures for Singapore’s foreign manpower with other immigrant countries such as Canada where citizens and PRs are given priority over foreigners, Singapore from the outset has pursued an open policy for hiring foreigners with higher professional backgrounds. As a result, local Singaporeans have faced tough competition with foreigners. Recently, however, Singapore has introduced the Fair Consideration Framework (FCF) to strengthen the Singaporean core in the workforce. Effective from 2014, employers who are hiring professional and skilled foreigners (EP application) are required to advertise their job vacancies on the jobs bank, especially on particular jobs bank websites. The advertisements need to run for at least 14 calendar days. Employers also need to put in place fair employment, hiring, and staff development practices that are open, merit-based, and non-discriminatory. However, after the advertising period, the firm can hire the most qualified candidates, regardless of nationality.⁶ Thus, open job advertising in particular jobs bank benefits both Singaporean job seekers and employers. However, the recruitment of low-skilled foreigners remains unaffected since competition is minimal—such jobs are sought after by few Singaporeans.

Work Permit (WP) for Semi-skilled Foreign Manpower

Before 1968, no unskilled workers were permitted to enter Singapore to work (Low 1995). After 1968, unskilled foreign labour flowed into Singapore in significant numbers, as a result of rapidly growing wage employment opportunities (Stahl 1986: 37). Hui (1997) identifies three contributory factors for the sustained demand for low-skilled foreign manpower in Singapore: (a) tight domestic labour supply, (b) an increasingly qualified workforce (one in three hold post-secondary qualifications), and finally (c) a general aversion among Singaporeans to jobs that are considered dirty, dangerous, and demeaning. The government’s policy on low-skilled workers is comparatively restrictive and has remained committed to ensuring that “low-skilled foreign manpower is managed as a temporary and controlled phenomenon” (Yeoh 2004: 19). In other words, the low-skilled foreign

⁶Retrieved from Singapore Ministry of Manpower website: see <http://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/fair-consideration-framework/Pages/fair-consideration-framework.aspx#sthash.gwH4vsJL.dpuf>.

workers are “relegated to the most transient of categories—subject to the ‘use and discard’ philosophy” (Yeoh et al. 2000: 151).

In 1981 it was announced that foreign workers would be phased out by 1991 (Hui 1992). However, it was soon realized that reliance on foreign labour was indispensable for sustained economic growth (Hui 1992). Presently, the emphasis has shifted from complete independence from foreign workers to issues like monitoring inflow, increasing productivity, and fine-tuning restrictions to moderate demand (Hui 1997). Low-skilled foreign workers who wish to work in Singapore are offered the WP. Within this category of pass, there are two subgroups: R1 and R2. R1 is issued to skilled foreign workers who possess at least a SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) qualification or its equivalent, or a National Technical Certificate Grade 3 (Practical) or other suitable qualifications. R2 is issued to unskilled foreign workers. Foreign workers are required to carry their WP cards with them for identification at all times. Foreign workers who fail to carry their WP card are liable to have their WP cancelled, and be repatriated and barred from employment in Singapore. Employers are not allowed to retain their workers’ WP cards, and those who do so may be debarred from employing foreign workers (Table 2.2).

Administrative and Legal Frameworks for Managing Foreigners

Migration policy needs adequate governance through the harmonization of demands, expectations, objectives, and implementation. Marmora (1999: 238) suggests that one of the important conditions of good migration governance is ‘efficacy’ in the achievement of migration policies and programme goals. He suggests that three fundamental tools support efficacy: (a) awareness of the migration process, (b) setting realistic objectives, and (c) administrative efficiency. Awareness of the migration process involves analysis of migration patterns, causes, features, and consequences. Marmora maintains that realism implies harmonization between strategies, actions, norms, and available means of enforcement, while administrative efficiency ensures execution of international migration policies and programmes. Singapore has developed a transparent administration and formulated comprehensive legislation to ensure such efficacy in the management of migration.

The MOM manages foreign manpower in Singapore. It is responsible for devising and implementing foreign manpower policy in Singapore. Within MOM, there are two divisions in charge of foreign manpower issues in Singapore: the Work Pass Division and the Foreign Manpower Management Division (FMMD). The objectives of the Work Pass Division are to develop an efficient, effective, and dynamic foreign manpower admission framework which caters to the needs of the Singapore economy. It facilitates and regulates the employment of foreign nationals by administering three types of Work Passes, discussed in the next section. The

Work Pass Division comprises the WP and EP Departments. The WP Department serves low-skilled foreign manpower, while the EP Department serves highly skilled foreign manpower.

On the other hand, the FMMD is in charge of the welfare of foreign workers during their working stint in Singapore. The FMMD works closely with the other departments within the Ministry, in particular the Foreign Manpower Employment Division, Occupational Safety and Health Division, Labour Relations Division, and Corporate Communications Department. The core functions of FMMD include: (a) management and protection of foreign manpower, (b) professionalism of the employment agency industry, and (c) strengthening of enforcement capabilities. The FMMD is structured around four departments: (a) the Employment Inspectorate Department, which seeks to foster effective management of foreign manpower, through policing, in partnership with other enforcement agencies and the business community; (b) the Policy and Regulations Department, which focuses on drafting and implementing policies for the division's management of foreign manpower; (c) the Well-Being Management Department, which focuses on the management and protection of foreign manpower; and (d) the Corporate Management Department, which supports the entire division in the area of office management.

Singapore has introduced several laws for the effective management of the employment of foreign manpower over the last few decades. Some of the relevant legislation includes the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA), Immigration Act, Employment Agencies Act, Employment of Foreign Workers (levy order), Employment of Foreign Workers (Fees) regulation, WP (consolidation) notification, Employment of foreign workers (security measures at workplace) notification. The MOM has been taking various steps to moderate the inflow and raise the quality of foreign human resources in Singapore. The latest amendments to the EFMA, which took effect from 2012, enhance the government's ability to ensure the integrity of the work pass framework. The amendments bolster the efforts to create sustainable and inclusive growth and ensure Singaporeans remain at the core of the workforce, ensure employers pay for the true costs of hiring foreign workers, create a level playing field for law-abiding employers, and stem the worst abuses against foreign workers.⁷ While this legislation provides the legal framework for regulating the import, management, and return of foreign manpower, the administrative structure ensures the execution of foreign worker policies and programmes. Both contribute to the efficient management of foreign manpower in Singapore.

⁷Retrieved from Singapore Ministry of Manpower website.

Specific Policies Targeting Semi-skilled Foreign Workers

Semi-skilled foreign workers constitute the bulk of the foreign population in Singapore (Fig. 2.4). I describe various micro-aspects of policies for semi-skilled foreign workers below.

(i) *Selection of Migrant Workers*

Singapore places priority on personal traits, especially skills and age, when it hires low-skilled foreign workers including domestic workers. Singapore has always encouraged the import of skilled migrant workers, even in the bottom-rung jobs, and has therefore favoured skilled migrant workers over unskilled ones. The Basic Skills Certificate (BSC) and SEC (Skills Evaluation Certificate) schemes were implemented in 1998 to raise the skills levels of the construction workforce. The BSC and SEC are certificates issued to NTS workers who have passed the required skills tests in their home country. The scheme sets a minimum skill standard (BSC) as an entry criterion for workers from NTS countries. In the case of foreign domestic workers, they must be at least 23 (up to 50) years old. In addition, they have to produce recognized educational certificates as documentary proof that they have had a minimum of eight years of formal education. With effect from 1 April 2005, all first-time foreign domestic workers are required to pass a written test within three working days of their arrival in Singapore. Foreign domestic workers who fail to pass the test within three working days are not issued a WP and must be repatriated (Foreign Domestic Worker Entry Test). Until recently, skills upgrading was available for male unskilled workers in different sectors. However, the government has recently introduced skills upgrading opportunities for foreign domestic workers in the area of elderly care. The Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Skills Training (FAST) is conducting an elementary course on elderly care for foreign domestic workers.

(ii) *Approved Source Countries and sectors of economy*

From 1968 until the late 1970s, unskilled foreign workers were recruited mainly from neighbouring Malaysia, which is referred to as a traditional source (TS) country for Singapore. Owing to its geopolitical location and historical and ethnic links, Singapore privileges Malaysian nationals for work. In the late 1970s it was difficult to recruit unskilled labour from Malaysia. As a result, administrative measures were taken in 1978 to facilitate the limited importation of unskilled labour from NTS countries, which are Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand. In addition, Singapore hires low-skilled foreign workers from two other sources: North Asian sources (NAS), which are Hong Kong (HKSAR passport), Macau, South Korea, and Taiwan; and People's Republic of China (PRC). Presently, the four sources—TS, NTS, NAS, and PRC—provide the low-skilled labour needed by Singapore.

While low-skilled workers from Malaysia are allowed to work in construction, manufacturing, marine, process, and services sectors, the NTS workers are generally allowed to work only in the construction, shipbuilding, and harbour craft industries. In other words, they are not usually allowed to work in services and manufacturing sectors. Low-skilled migrants from NAS countries and PRC are allowed to work in construction and almost all other non-construction sectors. The preference for low-skilled workers from TS, NAS, or PRC, over NTS, is probably a cultural consideration. There exists a fear among policy-makers that the presence of a large foreign worker population, whose culture and work ethos are distinctly different from those of the local workforce, may create social problems. The approved sources for foreign domestic workers are Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh. PRC and NAS nationals are not permitted to work in the domestic service sector. The exclusion of PRC and NAS nationals is probably due to the perceived fear of family disruption.

(iii) ***Foreign Worker Levy Scheme***

In the 1980s, Singapore devised a new immigration policy to control the inflow of foreign workers using a 'levy' price mechanism (Chew and Chew 1992; Fong 1992, 1993; Chew 1995). The levy puts a price on the employment of a foreign worker. The levy is paid monthly by the employer for each foreign worker employed, including domestic workers, and it is payable for the period the temporary WP is valid. It serves to moderate demand for foreign workers and to narrow the wage gap between local and foreign workers. The levy was first introduced in 1980, when a flat rate of S \$230 was imposed on non-Malaysian workers employed in the construction sector (Hui 1992). The levy scheme was enlarged in 1982 to encompass all NTS workers and Malaysian block permit construction workers (Toh 1993: 5). Singapore has imposed a two-tier levy since 1992 (Low 1994: 254). In this two-tier system, the levy for a skilled worker is lower than that of an unskilled worker, which affirms Singapore's priority for comparatively skilled workers, even in the low-skilled foreign manpower category.

(iv) ***Dependency Ceiling***

Singapore introduced a dependency ceiling as an instrument to regulate the employment of foreign workers in 1987 (Toh 1993: 6). The dependency ceiling stipulates the proportion of foreign workers a firm can hire. Currently, all sectors except domestic service have a dependency ceiling. This prevents employers from relying too heavily on foreign workers at the expense of local employment. The ceiling has varied with economic conditions. For instance, in November 1988, to discourage employers from depending too heavily on foreign workers, the government reduced the maximum percentage of foreign workers in a firm from 50 to 40% (Pang 1994). Foreign workers hired above the existing dependency ceiling pay a higher levy. The higher levy goes towards ensuring that companies make

judicious use of foreign workers, and also narrows the wage gap between local and foreign workers.

(v) ***Employment Agencies***

As discussed earlier, Singapore has adopted a demand-driven system to hire low-skilled foreign workers, in which the process of introducing foreign workers begins when employers in Singapore request permission to employ foreign workers. In accordance with the Employment Agencies Act, Singapore allows licensed employment agencies to import and manage foreign workforces on behalf of employers. In addition to residency status in Singapore and the possession of the Certificate of Employment Agencies (CEA), the applicants for licensed employment agencies must furnish a security deposit of S\$20,000 in the form of a banker's guarantee and must not have any record of previous court convictions (particularly under the Women's Charter, Children and Young Persons Act, Penal Code, Employment Agencies Act, and Employment of Foreign Workers Act). These strict measures help to ensure transparency in the recruitment process. There are around 1300 licensed recruiting agents to serve employers in Singapore.

(vi) ***Man-Year Entitlements***

The Man-Year Entitlement (MYE) allocation system is a WP allocation system for construction workers from the NTS countries and the PRC. The allocation formula has been used since April 1998, and each year there have been cutbacks. The number of foreign workers permitted to work in any construction project is determined by the MYE allocation formula. In general, when a project is higher in value, the contractor can hire more foreign workers. For example, if his entitlement is 100 'man-years', then he may have 100 men on one-year contracts, or 50 men on two-year contracts. The main contractor is allocated 'man-years' for a project. He can then distribute the MYEs to his subcontractors. MYEs are then converted into one or two-year WPs. The system is designed to give the main contractors better control over the allocation of foreign workers and greater responsibilities over foreign worker management by their subcontractors.

(vii) ***Responsibility of Employers***

During a foreign worker's employment in Singapore, the employer is generally responsible for: (a) paying the foreign worker levy; (b) arranging for the worker to be certified medically fit and free from contagious diseases and drug addition by a Singapore-registered doctor, when requested by the Controller of WPs; (c) ensuring that the worker does not engage in any form of freelancing arrangements or self-employment; (d) providing basic terms and conditions of employment as stipulated in the Employment Act; (e) resolving all employment-related disputes with the worker amicably; (f) providing workman's compensation for the worker; and (g) sending the worker to a safety

orientation course, if the worker is a construction worker.⁸ For a non-Malaysian worker, the employer is also responsible for (a) the upkeep, maintenance, and cost of the worker's eventual repatriation; (b) providing adequate housing; (c) putting up a S\$5000 security bond; and (d) buying a personal accident insurance with a minimum coverage of S\$10,000, if the worker is a foreign domestic worker. The employer should ensure the worker's welfare and interests are well looked after. These include non-statutory requirements such as proper orientation, medical care, hospitalization expenses, and providing for the worker's social and recreational needs.

(viii) ***Termination of Work permit (WP)***

Singapore follows strict rules to reduce the social and economic costs of using foreign manpower, and violation of these rules may result in the cancellation of the WP and immediate repatriation. The WP Division of MOM revokes a worker's permit when he or she violates WP provisions. The violations include: (a) changing job or engaging in occupations other than those specified in the WP; (b) engaging or participating in any business or behaving as a self-employed person; (c) deserting the workplace; (d) becoming pregnant (in the case of domestic workers), contracting venereal diseases or being certified by a Singapore registered doctor as medically unfit; (e) marrying a Singaporean without the prior approval of the Controller. The foreign worker is obliged to return his or her WP and leave Singapore within seven days of the termination of service. However, foreign workers who have pending salary or compensation claims or are required as prosecution witnesses are usually issued special passes by the Ministry for a limited period, to allow them to remain in Singapore. They are also allowed to work during this period.

(ix) ***Prevention of Irregular Migration***

Unlike other host countries in the region, Singapore is relatively free from irregular labour migrants, due to the government's strong crackdown on irregular employment. Singapore has enacted several laws to penalize irregular migrants, users (employers of irregular migrants), and human smugglers. The Employment of Foreign Workers Act came into effect in 1991 and puts a check on illegal migrants, by punishing employers caught employing foreigners illegally (Toh 1993). Under the Employment of Foreign Workers Act, any person caught employing foreigners without valid permits is liable to be charged in court. A first-time offender faces a minimum fine, equivalent to two years of the foreign worker levy, and a maximum fine of up to four years' levy for each foreign worker, or imprisonment of up to one year, or both. Besides stepping up enforcement actions, the Ministry has also intensified its efforts to educate employers and foreign workers on employment and immigration rules and regulations, so that they can play their part to minimize such offences.

⁸Retrieved from Ministry of Manpower, Singapore, on the 9th March 2015 website: www.mom.gov.sg.

Pathways of Professional, Skilled, and Semi-skilled Foreigners

Singapore’s foreigner employment policy is linked to its population policy: that is, a limited number from the non-resident population is regularly offered PR status and later citizenship. However, the option for PR is not open to all categories of foreign manpower; only the professional and skilled foreigners are encouraged to apply for PR status. The criteria for offering permanent residency are not publicly known; however, it is broadly believed that potential for economic contribution, demography, duration of stay in Singapore, and cultural compatibility are considered when permanent residency is offered to a non-resident foreigner. Since the number of applications for potential permanent residency is several times higher than the numbers of new PRs that government is willing to accept annually, many applications for permanent residences are turned down, especially so in the last few years. During its peak, nearly 80,000 non-resident foreigners were offered permanent residencies in 2008. There is no annual quota for offering permanent residences and citizenships to foreigners. At present, roughly 25,000–40,000 foreigners are offered permanent residencies in a year (Fig. 2.2).

The journey from permanent residence to citizenship is even more restrictive. A few years after receiving permanent residency, PRs who are willing to take up Singaporean citizenship are encouraged to apply. There are always more applicants for citizenship than the numbers of new citizens that the government is willing to accept annually. As a result, a limited number of PRs are accepted as citizens. At present, roughly 15,000–25,000 PRs are offered citizenships in a year. Professionals and skilled foreigners who could not become PRs or do not want to be PRs are eligible to work on extensions of current EP and S passes, assuming that they have regular jobs in Singapore. If they lose their jobs they are asked to leave. Figure 2.3 provides the pathways of professionals and skilled foreigners in Singapore. On the other hand, the future of low-skilled foreigners is straightforward; they are hired to work for a definite period and upon the expiry of WPs they are to return to their country of origin (Fig. 2.4). However, they are encouraged to earn multiple skills and work in Singapore for up to 22 years. However, this extended stay is subject to the availability of jobs.

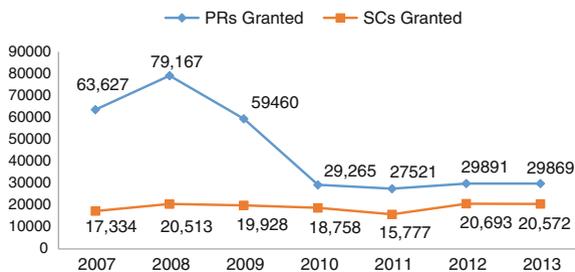


Fig. 2.2 Number of Singapore citizens and permanent residents granted, 2007–2013

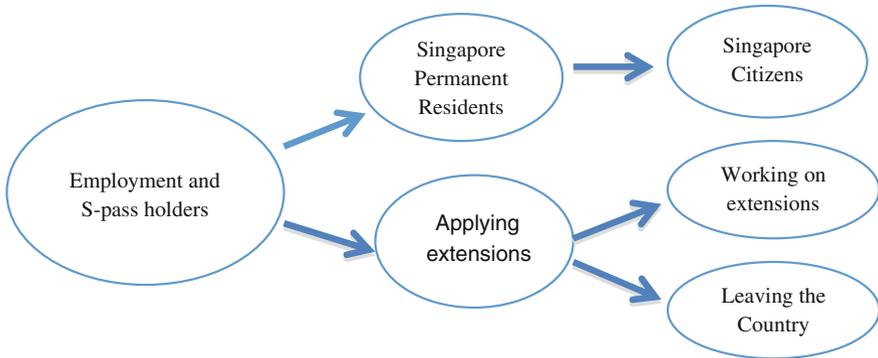


Fig. 2.3 Pathways of professional and skilled migrants in Singapore

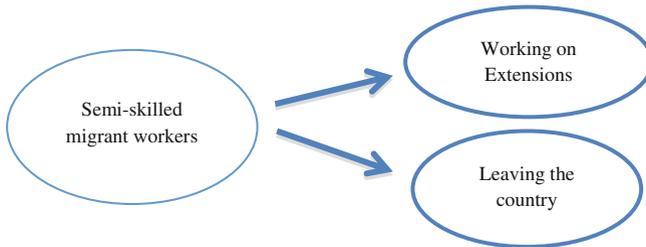


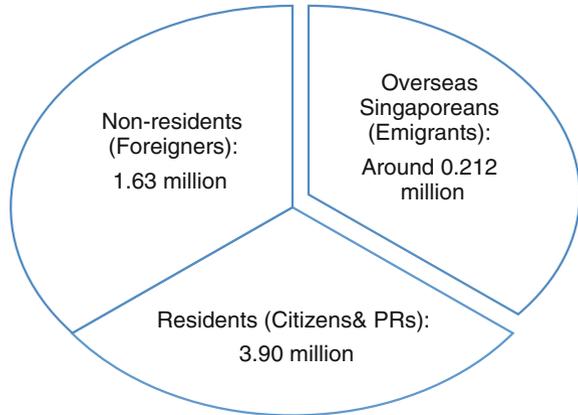
Fig. 2.4 Pathways of semi-skilled migrant workers in Singapore

Integration of Immigrants and Emigrants into the Singapore Society

In addition to the two troubling trends noted earlier—that is, a rapidly ageing population and an extremely low reproduction rate—Singapore also faces another worrying trend, which is the emigration of its nationals. According to a recent report, over 212,000 Singapore citizens or nearly 6.3% of the citizen population are living overseas and the proportion of overseas Singaporean population is increasing every year (Fig. 2.5).⁹ Opening the doors to immigrants and wooing overseas Singaporeans home remain the key strategies to tackle the population challenge and ensure continued economic prosperity in the country. However, it is important to note that Singapore has also taken various strategies to encourage Singaporean couples to have more babies, and a few billion dollars are spent on pro-family and procreation programs annually—but such programmes have not produced the desired outcomes over the years. As a result, Singapore seems to have focused more

⁹Population in Brief, 2014: <http://www.nptd.gov.sg/portals/0/homepage/highlights/population-in-brief-2014.pdf>.

Fig. 2.5 Non-residents, residents and overseas Singaporeans



on immigration and emigration in order to find a solution to the population decline. The dependence on immigration and emigration has led to the development of sophisticated migration policies targeting migration control and migrant integration or incorporation issues. Thus far, we have discussed migration control policies, leaving aside issues related to how immigrants and emigrants are integrated into Singapore society. Considering the relevance to this present study, in this section I briefly discuss Singapore’s integration policy.

In 2012, Tong Chee Kiong and myself published a paper entitled “Integration Policy in Singapore: A Transnational Inclusion Approach” in *Asian Ethnicity* journal, where we argued that the existing integration models do not adequately capture the complexities of contemporary immigration, emigration, and integration, especially in the context of growing migrant transnationalism (Rahman and Kiong 2012). The paper introduced a new concept of ‘transnational inclusion’ to conceptualize Singapore’s initiative to embrace transnational overseas Singaporeans as well as transnational immigrants. We noted that Singapore has devised a transnational inclusion policy, due to its immigration legacy, by allowing its huge immigrant and emigrant population to remain transnational (Rahman and Kiong 2012).

We noticed that immigration is often conceptualized in terms of two dominant modes: temporary and permanent immigration. As a result, the integration of immigrants into the core of a receiving country has been explained so far by four models of integration: namely, differential exclusion, assimilation, pluralism, and trans-state spaces (for details, see Faist 1997; Entzinger 2000; Castles 2002; Joppke and Morawska 2003; Rahman and Kiong 2012). While most immigration and settlement experiences fit into one of these models and often into a combination of them, increasingly important groups such as transnational emigrants and transnational immigrants do not. Castles argues that changes brought by globalization are undermining all the modes of controlling difference premised on territoriality (Castles 2002). These changes have led to debates on the significance of transnationalism as new modes of migrant belonging. Transnational migrants are groups whose identity is not primarily based on attachment to a specific territory. They therefore present a powerful challenge to national models of integration.

While national integration models such as differential exclusion, assimilation, and multiculturalism, or ‘trans-state spaces’ focus on communities who are living within the container of nation states or cross-border spaces, our proposed model of ‘transnational inclusion’ includes both transnational emigrants and transnational immigrants, the group which is ‘leaving for’ and ‘living in’ other countries. Our transnational inclusion model is close to the ‘differential exclusion’ model. In the differential exclusion model, migrants are integrated temporarily into the labour market but excluded from others. In Singapore, foreign professionals and skilled migrants are allowed to marry locals or bring their immediate ‘dependents’ to Singapore, and allowed to become PRs and citizens over time. In fact, they are the primary source of PRs and future citizens in Singapore. Apart from this, over one million semi-skilled migrant workers who are encouraged to live and work here up for to 22 years are managed in such a way (e.g., visiting home countries, maintaining families in home countries, remitting to families, etc.) that they are simultaneously rooted in both societies, a phenomenon popularly called ‘transnationalism’ (Levitt and Nyberg-Soerensen 2004). In addition to the overseas Singaporeans (on account of their extraterritorial nature), the differential exclusion model does not thus adequately capture the complexities of the integration of the current transnational immigrant population in Singapore.

Singapore has devised proactive policies and programs to connect to its population overseas. Singapore has launched outreach initiatives in which citizens and residents of Singapore overseas, that is global Singaporeans or Singaporean emigrants, are contacted and encouraged to maintain strong transnational ties with Singapore. In doing so, Singapore has set up the Overseas Singapore Unit (OSU) under the Prime Minister Office (PMO) to attract global Singaporeans. The OSU is playing a key role in facilitating stays overseas and connecting global Singaporeans into Singapore society. Key initiatives to engage overseas Singaporeans include platforms such as the Overseas Singaporean Portal and overseas Singaporean clubs, as well as outreach events such as Singapore Day and the Distinguished Business Leaders Series. Singapore imposes no restriction on exit or emigration. Singapore citizens and PRs are allowed to leave the country with or without cancellation of memberships (citizenships or PR status) in Singapore. Envisioning the migration (emigration and immigration) as a transnational phenomenon rather than a once off event at the top level of policy making has made the case of Singapore different from some immigrant countries (Rahman and Kiong 2012). Singapore has also rightly realized that integrating migrants into the different spheres of society is a process rather than an end. The policy measures that have been devised to address the different groups of non-resident and resident populations are transparent and pragmatic. It is the integration of foreign and home-grown talent and the efficient management of low-skilled migrants that have allowed the country to enjoy decades of sustained economic growth. Singapore sets an example for other countries in the region and beyond.