

Two Professions, Two Countries: Credential Evaluation for IEHPs: Trends and Regulatory Implications

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### CGFNS International

- Non-profit
- Immigration-neutral organization
- Mission: to serve the global community through programs and services that verify and promote the knowledge-based practice competency of healthcare professionals
- Established in 1977
- Located in Philadelphia

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### CSMLS

- Non-profit
- National professional association
- Certification body
- National assessment service for internationally educated MLTs (regulatory functions)
- Established in 1937
- Located in Hamilton, Ontario

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### Who are the IEHPs?

- Historically - Most of the IEHPs seeking assessment services in Canada were immigrants residing in Canada at the time of application.
- Many of the IEHPs seeking assessment services in the US are still residing in their home countries at the time of application. Canada has shifted to this model in 2013.

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### Assessment of IEHPs

Implications for assessing IEHPs:

- Immigration requirements vs. registration/licensure requirements
- Assessment types
- Assessment costs
- Remediation options
- Bridging programs
- Cultural context

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### Agenda

- Assessment Services - putting it into context
- Current Practices
- Assessment Tools
- Trends and Implications
- Recommendations

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### Historical Context

- IEHPs **want** to migrate to improve the quality of life.
- IEHPs **want** to work in their professional fields.
  
- IEHPs **need** to meet immigration requirements.
- IEHPs **need** to meet entry-to-practice requirements.

*The system must balance wants vs. needs - and this is where perspective clash.*

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### Socialization and Cross-Cultural Contexts

Important for success:

- Language proficiency and communication effectiveness
  
- Acculturation and social adjustments
  
- Assessment process AS a socialization process for immigrants to the new country and the expectations of the profession (roles, responsibilities, expectations, etc.)

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### Economic Context

- Allow immigrants to work to the fullest potential (satisfaction)
  
- Meet labour market demands (economic)
  
- Increasing economic base of the host countries (taxation, consumption)
  
- Increasing economic base of the source countries (remittances)

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### Healthcare Context

- Patient safety -standard **must** be met
- Portability of credentials (education, professional competence, roles and responsibilities)
- Receptivity from professions range from welcoming to not welcoming
- Increase in diversity of clients/patients

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### Global Context

- Migration is on the rise
- English as the international language
- Technology levels the playing field
- Knowledge-explosion knows no boundaries/borders
- The Bologna Process in EU
- The rise of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)
- The right to work across borders is expected

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### Assessment: Current Practices

Academic Model:

- Verification/authentication of documents
- Use of global databases (education and regulation)
- Focus on analysis of educational systems
- Focus on number of credits earned (length of study) and degree earned
- Equivalency in academic degree earned & access given

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### Assessment: Current Practices

Profession-Specific Model:

- Establish curriculum benchmarks and learning outcomes prior to implementation (standards)
- Determine professional competency (standards)
- Determine language proficiency (standards)
- Qualifying IEHPs to sit for exams (gap identification, filling)
- Granting registration/licensure for entry-to-practice

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### Practices Specific to the US

Occupational Visa screening\* for 7 health professions:

- nursing
- physical therapy
- medical laboratory sciences
- occupational therapy
- audiology
- speech language pathology
- physician assistants

*\*Federal requirements for immigration*

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### Practices Specific to the US

State requirements for licensure:

- State specific
- Not harmonized, leading to “shopping” for gateway states (easiest point of entry)
- Increased focus on content of education
- Increased focus on English proficiency

*National certification exists for some professions*

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### Creation of Assessment Tools

- Meeting profession-specific needs **beyond** academic credential evaluation
- Integrating academic credential evaluation and profession-specific evaluation
- Content-based, evidence-based, outcome-based

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### Creation of Assessment Tools

- Includes :
  - general education
  - professional education
  - clinical education
  - may also consider continuing education
- Benchmarked against accreditation, national competency, or other standards
- Field reviewed and tested to achieve reliability and validity

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### Creation of Assessment Tools

Constraints of profession-specific assessment tools:

- Paper-based, document-based. **No** simulated contexts to measure competence
- Difficult to capture **authentic** information regarding work experience or prior learning experience
- Challenge of accepting self-reporting as a source of information to be assessed
- Time-consuming process

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### Trends: Canada and the US

- Disconnect between federal requirements for entering the country and state/provincial/territorial requirements for licensure
- No systematic tracking of labor statistics to document needs (HR supply and demand)
- Increase in degree requirements in health professions

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### Trends: Canada and the US

- Professions moving to competency-based, evidence-based assessment - focus on outcomes
- Disconnect between credential evaluation for academic admissions and credential evaluation for professional licensure
- Perception of fire wall creating barriers
- No real coordinated effort to help IEHPs

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### Differences: US

- Immigration policy direction remains uncertain and unresolved for a long time
- Retrogression in effect
- Majority of IEHPs apply from outside the US
- IEHPs viewed as competing for jobs in a poor economy
- Source countries continue to diversify
- Clients to be served continue to diversify

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### Differences: Canada

- Federal/provincial government expect pan-Canadian harmonization
- Credentialing agency seen as a gatekeeper: protectionist vs. protecting the public
- Immigration 2013
  - ✓ Two stage immigration policy
  - ✓ Minimum language fluency standards
  - ✓ Likely to change source countries
  - ✓ Assess qualifications prior to immigration

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### Regulatory Implications

**Achieving fair and effective assessment:**

- Efficient application systems using technology are expected
- Provide clear instructions on information to be evaluated, manner of submission, process etc.
- Taking a position on these constructs: equivalency, substantial equivalency, comparability - what does it mean to you?

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### Regulatory Implications

- Establishing standards for evaluation
  - Course work
  - Clinical experience
  - Prior learning
  - Learning outcomes
- Academic credential assessment and profession specific credentials assessment - Can or should they be evaluated separately?

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### Regulatory Implications

Examining gaps in education:

- ✓ Gap in course content identified
- ✓ Often, curriculum is rote-based, not focused on critical thinking
- ✓ No content on local practice

Developing a remediation plan:

- ✓ What resources are available?
- ✓ What if there are no resources
- ✓ Who is responsible?
- ✓ Who should pay?

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### Changing Our Lens

- Is it ever possible for IEHPs to have had the **same** education as our domestic graduates?
- Do these differences make it impossible for IEHPs to provide safe and effective practice?
- What are the critical elements to achieve safe and effective practice?
- What needs to be done so IEHPs can be deemed safe to practice?

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### Recommendations

- Clarify the goal of the assessment - harmonized standards - founded on evidence-based research
- Is it comparability or equivalency?
- Official documents from issuing source vs. original documents provided by applicants? - Clarify document requirements
- Is self-reporting acceptable? - Clarify the burden of proof to the individual

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### Recommendations

- Clarity on achieving consistency, reliability, and validity
- Clarity on fairness: application process; timeliness of service; assessment and requirements; making up deficiencies
- Clarify ownership on the issue of Bridge training funding: Bridge training -Immigration? Education? Associations? Regulators? Employers? Individual?

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### Recommendations

- Examine the role of work experience in home country
- Clarify critical elements to achieve safe and effective practice

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