



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

# To integrate or not to integrate is the question:

*A quantitative study investigating employability challenges of skilled immigrants in the  
Danish labor market*

Master Thesis in Strategic HRM

And Labor relations.

30 higher education credits

Author: Nayyar Iqbal

Supervisor: Tommy Isidorsson

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## ABSTRACT:

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**Title:** To integrate or not to integrate is the question: A quantitative study investigating employability challenges of skilled immigrant in the Danish labor market.

**Aim:** This is a scientific article that aims to investigate factors that influence employability (successful employment) of green card holders (skilled immigrants) in the Danish labor market. In 2007 Denmark introduced a ‘green card scheme’ under which skilled immigrants are granted a 3 year work permit to look for work relevant to their education. In 2009 a study conducted by Ramboll (Market research company) for the Danish government revealed that among green card holders in the Danish labor market 30% are successfully employed, 42% are doing odd jobs and 28% are unemployed.

**Method:** From a sample of 493 green card holders a survey was carried out. Odds ratios from logistic regression are used to illustrate significant factors that influence successful employment.

**Theory:** Concept of ‘employability’ is used. The theoretical part then focuses on various individual employability factors (previous research done by scholars) that influence an individual’s capability in achieving successful employment.

**Findings:** Findings reveal that green card holders who have European education, higher Danish language skills, invest more number of hours to learn Danish language and who belong to academic profession of IT are more likely to gain successful employment relevant to their education. In contrast according to this study having prior non- European work experience and local Danish education does not influence successful employment. Many of these significant factors are derived from previous research- employability challenges of skilled immigrants from Canada, Australia + New Zealand. This leads to the understanding that some employability challenges (obstacles) are international and affect employability of skilled immigrants in respect to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Denmark.

**Keywords:** Denmark, green card holders, employability, successful employment, odd jobs and unemployment.

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# 1 Introduction:

## 1.1 Background

Firms all around the world often recruit skilled labor to meet their operational needs. In a similar fashion economies (macro level) like organizations also require skilled labor to meet demands of local employers and to fill in gaps of skilled shortages. But what if an economy does not have sufficient skilled labor in sectors such as medicine, business, law etc to meet local demands and to maintain sustainable growth? This is when economies turn towards skilled immigration. Like organizations that have human resource departments to recruit skilled labor, similarly at macro level it is the immigration services of an economy that recruit foreign skilled immigrants. These incoming skilled immigrants are called 'economic immigrants'. The reason why they are termed economic is because apart from filling skilled labor shortages in the host country they also support the economic growth of an economy for example by paying taxes (Papademetriou, Somerville & Tanaka 2008:3).

It was in the 1960's that developed countries initiated recruitment of foreign skilled labor. This process consist of a screening process through which foreign skilled applicants (the ones who apply) are rewarded a work permit and in some cases permanent residence so they can look for work. To term this process, scholars label this recruitment of foreign immigrants as 'supply driven system'. The screening process is based on a 'point system' in which applicants characteristics are rewarded points on age, education attainment, language proficiency and occupation (Chaloff & Lemaitre 2009: 21). Once successful candidates score at or above the government set 'pass mark' they are then granted either temporary or permanent residence. In contrast there is also a 'demand driven system' in which employers themselves according to their needs recruit foreign skilled labor themselves (Chaloff & Lemaitre 2009: 17).

The point of departure for this paper is the case of Denmark that introduced a 'point based' immigration system in 2007 to recruits skilled immigrants. But before this issue is further elaborated it is important to understand how this trend evolved.

As mentioned earlier it's the 1960's that gave way to industrialized economies, a new system to recruit skilled immigrants for sustainable growth. The trend setters were US in 1965 and Canada that in 1967 opened doors for foreign skilled labor. But it was Canada that came up with a 'point based system' (Shachar 2006: 170-175). According to this system points are awarded on level of education, prior work experience, English language skills and country of education. This trend was soon followed by Australia in 1973 which adopted a similar system to that of Canada (Shachar 2006: 176-178). By time these countries became part of a global competition to attract foreign skilled labor. Realizing the gains of attracting foreign skilled labor New Zealand also joined the race in 1991. New Zealand also followed the footsteps of Canada and adopted a 'point based' system (Shachar 2006: 179-183).

Under competitive pressure these four economies in the 1990's were compelled to bring in structural changes to their 'points based' system. The US adopted a 'point based' system like Canada and increased its intake from 65000 to 195,000 skilled immigrants (Shachar 2006: 183-184). In response Australia further brought flexibility to its 'points system' for e.g. giving extra points to foreign students who studied in Australia and also allowed applicants (skilled immigrant) spouse to work which was not common before. Like Australia, Canada did the same.

Finally the Europeans economies realizing the benefits economic immigrants bring with them could not resist for long. In 2000 Germany introduced a 'point based' immigration system for skilled immigrants. It was not long that UK also adopted a similar system to recruit skilled immigrants. From Scandinavia Sweden also took part to compete for skilled immigrants by offering direct permanent residents to all those skilled immigrants who were offered a full time job relevant to their education (Shachar 2006: 194).

Finally in 2007 Denmark also joined the race, it followed the ‘point based system’ and since then it has offered a ‘green card’ scheme (3 year work permit- extendable to 7 years) allowing skilled immigrants to look for work relevant to their education. In the Danish system points are awarded for level of education, for having European or non- European education, prior work experience, for having lived in the European before, English language skills and Scandinavian language skills (Newtodenmark 2012).

## **1.2 Problem Discussion and Purpose**

The points based system may attract skilled labor and bring in many benefits to the host economy but it also have some drawbacks. According to Chaloff and Lemaitre (2009) skilled immigrants arrive without a job. And in some cases a significant proportion does not get jobs matching their qualifications. In other words, it is not necessary that the point based immigration system (supply driven system) is a substitute for demand driven systems in which employers recruit foreign skilled workers themselves according to their needs.

The above critique is mimicry of reality. The Danish government one year after introducing the Green Card scheme conducted a survey along with Ramboll (Marketing Research Company). The survey was carried out from a population of 1,276 individuals who were granted Green card visa in 2008 and 2009. Results from Ramboll study, based on a sample of 301 persons show that green card holders who are in the Danish labor market 30% are successfully employed relevant to their education, 42% are doing odd jobs and 28% are unemployed (Ramboll: 2009).

The dilemma discussed above gives way to the purpose of this study to conduct research in this real-life problem in order to have an understanding of its existence, “employability challenges of skilled immigrants in the Danish labor market”. Furthermore this purpose is strengthened not only because it is a real problem but also because there is no scientific research in this area till date, that explains why many green card holders are not successfully employed relevant to their education. The lack of research in this subject provides strong grounds to investigate the phenomena. However this investigation on employability can be done from three levels. Macro level (government, labor laws), meso level (employer’s perspective) and micro level (green card holder’s perspective).

Firstly from the government perspective the investigation would focus on established rules and regulations that Denmark has towards employment of foreign skilled workers. For example does the law prohibit or support successful employment of skilled immigrants? Secondly it would also be interesting to conduct this study from an employer’s perspective. What is it that employers in Denmark expect from green card holders? Possible findings could be a lack of personality traits, self-confidence, employers lack confidence in foreign education in comparison to local standards or even a lack of Danish language skills etc. Thirdly the last perspective is the individual level- (micro level) green card holder’s perspective and it is at this level of analysis this study is strictly restricted to. An investigation at this level would reveal different individual factors that influence employment outcome.

### 1.3 Aim and Research Question

The aim of this article is to analyze factors that influence green card holder's employability into the Danish labor market.

From the chosen level of analysis-individual level (micro-level), three different subgroups of Green card holders would be investigated: A) successfully employed, B) the ones doing odd jobs C) unemployed.

Having cleared the aim this leads to the research question of this paper:

*Q. 1 What individual factors do explain if green card holders are successful or not in achieving a job (relevant to their education)?*

The above research question is not descriptive, rather explanatory. Meaning, the research question strives to unveil factors that stimulate or hinder successful employment. Albeit three groups are investigated in this study, the main focus of this study is on the 'successfully employed' group. The factors that influence 'odd jobs' and the 'unemployed' group are not within the main focus of this article, instead they would be recommended for future research. Thus, this sharpens and narrows down the focus of this article.

It is also important to clarify here that any green card holder doing unskilled work, blue collar job or a job that does not match their qualifications are classified as doing an 'odd job'. Furthermore this definition of odd jobs even includes green card holders who are doing white collar work that does not match their education. For e.g. someone who has a Master's degree in Sociology and is teaching at high school or someone who does blue collar work that is skilled for e.g. Electrician is considered as 'odd jobs'. This is because their academic skills are underutilized. Also the 'successfully employed' in this study are all those green card holders who have a job relevant to their education.

In last it is important to mention here what employability actually means and what it is referred to. (This is dealt more comprehensively in 2.2.1 section on employability) According to Thijssen, Van Der Heijden & Rocco (2008) the term employability has several meanings and can be studied from many different perspectives, but most definitions have one common outcome, employment. And in this study employability refers to, "Employability is the relative capacity of an individual to achieve meaningful employment given the interaction of personal circumstances and the labor market (Canadian Labor Development Board 1994: viii)." (McQuaid & Lindsay 2005: 200). Shortly, employability in this study is confined to the interaction of green card holder's personal circumstances (how confident they are, if they have high emotional intelligence, communication skills etc) and the Danish labor market, which affects their employment status. This employment status could be successfully employed, doing odd jobs or unemployed. In respect to this study since it focuses investigating factors that influence successful employment, the meaning of employability is strictly confined to 'successful employment'. That is green card holders who have a job relevant to their education.

### 1.4 Limitation

The first limitation of this study is that it touches upon individual factors that influence employability that are very big factors just by themselves. For example a factor that influences employability is 'self confidence' and 'emotional intelligence'. These variables alone can be tested through several questions. But since this study focuses on unveiling individual factors that hinder or stimulate successful employment, it is not possible to go in depth of all variables due to limited time, space and resources. Instead this study uses 14 factors in total and outlines the ones that are most significant.

The second limitation of this study is that the individual factors used for investigation are not easy to measure. For example it is not easy to measure one's self confidence and there is no international or standard scale designed to do this. Also according to previous scientific research that measures self confidence, different techniques and scales have been designed to fit different contexts. Therefore a scale of 5 units is designed for this study. Probably a different scale might bring out some variation in findings.

Thirdly, the findings do not stand against the test of time. Because the findings of this study are subject to change as time passes. Many unemployed may become employed in future and vice versa. Furthermore, the finding of this study is subject to the economic growth of Denmark. After the 2008 world financial crises Denmark was also one of the affected countries. Therefore the chances of employability are subject to changes depending on the Danish economic growth and stability.

## **1.5 Disposition**

This paper consists four chapters. The first chapter serves as the introduction of the thesis covering background, problem discussion, purpose, aim, research question and limitations.

The second chapter is a combination of previous research and the theoretical framework together. The most important factors derived from previous research on employability and previous research that outlines empirical findings from Canada, Australia + New Zealand are taken into consideration. Based on these findings a theoretical model is developed called 'employability key model' which not only helps summarizes this whole chapter but also serves as a testing tool to conduct the survey.

The third chapter describes the method used to carry out this study, a quantitative online survey. This section outlines how the research was carried out, the medium used to access the sample, sample population, reliability, validity, ethical considerations and challenges related to this method.

The fourth chapter is of empirical findings, statistical analysis and discussion. This section is divided into three sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. Section 4.1 presents a description of the sample. Section 4.2 presents statistical analysis of logistic regression which shows the most significant factors influencing employability of green card holders. This section also includes discussion in line with previous research of employability. In end section 4.3 presents general discussion of the results followed by a conclusion and recommendation for future research.

In last a bibliography is presented followed by appendix I- that shows the questionnaire used in this study.



## **2 Previous Research and theoretical framework:**

This section is a combination of previous research and theory altogether. The first section 2.1 is of previous research that outlines empirical findings on employability challenges of skilled immigrants. These empirical findings depart with a general scholarly review. Then empirical findings from two cases 1) Canada and 2) Australia & New Zealand are presented. These cases highlight employability challenges of skilled immigrants in their host country.

The second section 2.2 departs with the theoretical foundation of this paper. It is important to mention here that the theoretical section of this study basically consist of previous research of scholars that address different concepts of employability and how individual employability factors influences employment outcome. Also in this section the definition of employability which is used in this study is clarified.

The third section 2.3 presents all important factors from previous sections 2.1 and 2.2 that help answer the aim of the article. These factors are put together in a model called the 'employability key model'. This model not only summarizes this whole chapter but also serves as a testing tool which will be used to unveil factors influencing employability of skilled immigration in the Danish labor market.

### **2.1 Empirical findings of general employability challenges of skilled immigrants-scholarly review:**

Some scholars who have conducted research in employment challenges of skilled immigrants have pointed out some international obstacles that come with a 'supply driven system'. Some of these obstacles are internationally common while some are country specific. To name a few obstacles that stand against employment opportunities for skilled immigrants are discrimination, academic accreditation, undervaluing foreign education + work experience, economy of host country, structural changes in labor markets, host country language proficiency and cultural differences with the host country (Syed 2008: 30-32).

Apart from obstacles, there are many advantages of skilled immigration as well. McDonald (2007) in a study estimates that skilled immigrants in Ireland added up to 3% growth to gross national product from 2003 to 2005. Similarly Anderson (2006) states that a study conducted in the US revealed that skilled immigrants increased specialization in the economy, aided innovation and enhanced productive capacity and enhanced nations productive capacity. According to Stalker (2000) an estimate about 1.5 million skilled migrants from developing countries have settled and gained employment in developed host countries.

According to Benson-Rea and Rawlinson (2003) employers tend to undervalue foreign qualification and work experience of skilled immigrants. Fletcher (1999) also supports this notion that foreign qualifications and work experience from developing countries at times remains neglected.

Furthermore Syed (2008: 31) states that employment opportunities for skilled immigrants in industrialized economies are not always stable; it depends on the socio-economic situation of the host country.

Having discussed different empirical findings on the general challenges skilled immigrants face in industrialized economies, the following two cases present empirical findings that provide a deeper and narrow understanding of the subject in focus, 'employability challenges of skilled immigrants'.

#### **2.1.1 Empirical findings from the case of Canada: Devaluation of skilled immigrants:**

According to Girard and Boudier (2005), based on previous study of Bauder (2003), Krahn (2000), Li (2001), Mata (1999) and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (2002) Canada has been admitting highly

skilled immigrants to support the competitiveness and growth of its economy. However once these skilled immigrants arrive their work experience and credentials are normally devalued (Girard & Boudier 2005: 1). Furthermore according to Statistics Canada that tracks immigrant's success in Canadian labour market, 70% encounter problems and barriers from finding a job. This is because they lack Canadian work experience, poor English language skills and unacceptable foreign education serve as the most critical elements hindering successful employment (Canadian Labor and Business Centre 2002: 17).

Further Girard and Boudier (2005) based on previous study conducted by FC2I Steering Committee (2003), state that companies often find it difficult to hire foreign skilled immigrants due to poor language skills. Especially the ones that are not fluent in English language, unable to clearly explain non-technical staff about technical issues or unable to deal customers effectively (Girard & Boudier 2005: 6-7).

Girard & Boudier (2005) based on their own previous research Girard and Boudier (2004), specifically reason why foreign work experience and education might not be accepted is because for e.g. skilled immigrants who have an engineering background would not be taught or trained the same way as it would be regulated in Canada. One regulator explained that the engineering education in Canada has a 'depth and breadth' that is quite distinct. As a result many are denied full licenses until they re-train in Canadian institutions (Girard & Boudier 2005: 4). They further state that Canadian employers are not confident in foreign credentials because they do not know what they are capable of. Employers don't know the universities or the courses that were available. Therefore employers tend to hire with what they are familiar with, local qualifications. Thus Canadian credentials tend to have greater value in the Canadian labor markets (Girard & Boudier 2005: 6).

Another problem skilled immigrant's face is of institutional barriers. Skilled immigrants maybe selected over their experience, occupation and education but they are not clearly communicated by the federal immigration services that they would be eligible to get a license to work in their respective profession (Government of Alberta 2004: 4). Furthermore Girard and Boudier (2005) based on previous research of Brouwer (1999) also stress the role of institutional barriers for skilled immigrants. Skilled immigrants need to get their foreign education and work experience attested by licensing bodies. At times these licensing bodies conclude that their foreign education and work experience is unacceptable. It is the provincial government that has delegated regulatory responsibility for approving foreign education and work experience for professions such as law, medicine, engineering (Girard & Boudier 2005: 1-2). This indirectly forces immigrants to work into low-wages, unstable 'survival' jobs. This phenomena is also supported by Canadian Labor and Business Center (2002) that skilled immigrants employment opportunities often diminish because a lack of recognition over foreign qualifications. Licensing bodies may not accept foreign credentials and employers may undervalue foreign working experience. Unfortunately, these obstacles result in under-utilization of skilled immigrant skills (Canadian Labor and Business Center 2002: 21).

Longitudinal studies have shown that in the different sectors in Canada, IT specialist with foreign experience and education are rewarded more than other sectors (Skills Research Institute 2008: 12-13). Hall's findings reveal that high tech industries there is no formal certification requirements and employers directly evaluate credentials of potential employees (Skills Research Initiative 2008: 13).

Very shortly the main employability obstacles for skilled immigrants that reflect this case are: 1) undervaluing foreign education and work experience, 2) host country language skills, 3) institutional barriers that don't accredit foreign qualifications and 4) academic profession (since IT professionals are more likely to get jobs compared to other professions)

## **2.1.2 Empirical findings from Australia & New Zealand: Challenges of skilled immigrants:**

Previous research done in Australia is aligned with that of US, Canada and New Zealand shows that those who speak minority language and the ones with ethno-cultural minorities tend to have poorer outcomes for employability in comparison to English speaking and native born skilled labor force. Language proficiency is commonly considered a crucial factor for employment success. However similar cultural background has proven to be very crucial as well in facilitating employment. This means that skilled immigrants who are most culturally distant such as non-Europeans that represent the majority skilled immigrated labor force in Australia face most difficulty to gain employment (Colic- Peisker 2011: 2). Furthermore Hawthorne (2011) also supports the notion of language proficiency. His study concluded that proficiency in a host countries language is a vital tool to gain employment in early stages. Concerning Australia's skilled immigrants English language skills the government decided to set the standards high. For e.g. for IELTS (International English Language Testing System) requirements were raised from 5 to 6 and awarding bonus points for those with band 7 or more (Hawthorne 2011: 153). This way incoming skilled immigrant with advance English language skills have more chances of employment.

The Department of Labor of the Australian government conducted a study to compare migration policies of Australia & New Zealand. In regards to academic profession finding revealed that most successfully employed skilled immigrants in Australia are professionals who are from IT and they account for 22% of all successfully employed. In New Zealand the profession with most successful employment is also of IT with 7% and also 7% professionals from Business Management (Hawthorne 2011: xxii)

Very shortly the main employability obstacles for skilled immigrants that reflect this case are: 1) host country language skills, 2) academic profession and 3) cultural distance from host country.

## **2.2 Theoretical Departure**

### **2.2.1 Concept of Employability**

According to Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden (2006), based on their previous research on Versloot, Glauvé & Thijssen (1998) the concept of employability came into use around the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, 1955. However, the empirical study on employability started in the 1990's. Many historical overviews have shed light on the development over its definition and conceptualization (Thijssen & Van der Heijden, 2003; Van Lammeren, 1999; Versloot et al., 1998). The concept of employability is studied from distinct levels (individual, organizational and industrial) and different angles. Such as human resource management, business and management, psychology, human resource development, career theory and educational sciences. However only a few studies have tried integrating the several different perspectives (Thijssen & Van der Heijden, 2003) (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden 2006: 450).

According to Thijssen, Van Der Heijden & Rocco (2008) employability can be defined as the possibility to survive in an internal or external labor market. This definition is not specific but rather general, the starting is like an umbrella, covered with a wide range of definition. The term employability is attractive but confusing as a professional buzzword. There are abundant definitions and synonyms of employability. Each and every definition emphasizes various characteristics for potential employees for example cognitive and physical suitability, learning, adaptation, flexibility and mobility. However all these definitions have one common outcome, employment. Depending on which angle employability is being studied, employability is believed to accommodate all or some of these aspects, it is a variegated and multidimensional (Fugate et al., 2004) concept (Thijssen, Van Der Heijden & Rocco 2008: 167).

The Labor Force Development of the Canadian government has also offered a definition of employability: “Employability is the relative capacity of an individual to achieve meaningful employment given the interaction of personal circumstances and the labor market (Canadian Labor Force Development Board, 1994, p. viii).” (McQuaid & Lindsay 2005: 200).

“In simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. More comprehensively employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labor market to realize potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labor market environment) within which they seek work” (Hillage & Polard 1998: 2).

As mentioned earlier by Thijssen, Van Der Heijden & Rocco (2008) regardless of the different kinds of definitions given to the concept of employability, in the end they all have one common outcome, employment. Keeping this in mind it is important to limit this study to a specific definition. In this study employability is defined as “Employability is the relative capacity of an individual to achieve meaningful employment given the interaction of personal circumstances and the labor market (Canadian Labor Force Development Board, 1994, p. viii).” (McQuaid & Lindsay 2005: 200). According to this definition the link between employability and employment depends on the labor market an individual is in and how well their personal circumstances interact to attain meaningful employment. Since this study is about highly skilled immigrants in Denmark trying to get jobs matching their qualifications, meaningful employment is strictly referred to “successful employment”. Thus green card holders who have jobs relevant to their education are classified as successfully employed in this study.

In relation to the aim of this study it is now important to address several individual employability factors that affect an individual from achieving successful employment. This will help understand what factors hinder or stimulate successful employment.

### **2.2.2 Individual Employability Factors:**

This section touches upon six different factors that affect employability. These factors are divided into personal competence and communications skills.

#### **Personal competence:**

Pool and Sewell (2007) based on previous research of Moynagh & Worsley (2005) state that emotional intelligence is an essential factor that leads to employment. Emotional intelligence is very important especially in customer-facing jobs that require significant human interaction. According to the authors emotional intelligence is defined as :

“... the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer et al., 2004, p 197).” (Pool & Sewell 2007: 283).

Emotional intelligence in simple terms is the capacity of recognizing feelings of other and our own, motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in us and our relationships (Goleman 1998) (Pool & Sewell 2007: 283).

According to Cooper (1997) research has proven that individuals with high emotional intelligence manage to motivate others and themselves to achieve more. Such individuals also build stronger personal relationship,

enjoy more career success and enjoy better health in comparison to those who have low level of emotional intelligence. Thus Jaeger (2003) suggests that emotional intelligence can be improved by teaching, learning at higher education institutes and it has a positive correlation with academic achievement (Pool & Sewell 2007: 283).

Work experience is another factor that increase the chances of one's employment. Plenty research has pointed out that employer's favor graduates who have prior work experience over those who do not. (Pool & Sewell 2007: 284-285). According to a Study conducted by the Pedagogy for Employability Group (2004), it is commonly agreed that graduates who hold work experience have more chances to secure employment than graduates who don't (Pool & Sewell 2007: 285).

If self efficacy is the belief that one has the capability in a particular situation, then self confidence can be viewed as the way how this is projected towards the outside world. Self confidence can be seen from a person's behavior and manner. According to Goleman (1998) individuals who have self confidence are capable of presenting themselves with self assurance and have 'presence'. Suggestions state that self confidence could either be a trait or something specific to some situations. According to Norman and Hyland (2003) they state that self confidence is a trait, here personality theorists suggest that this is relatively stable over time, in comparison to those who lack self confidence are unlikely to develop it from educational activities. If self confidence is viewed as a situation specific concept, then students might be able to increase levels of self confidence in a given situation. Thus an increase in self- efficacy is reflected in an increase in self confidence (Pool & Sewell 2007: 286).

### **Communication skills:**

Marin, Marshall and McKenzie (2008) conducted a survey on 1137 employers to get their views what they think is necessary for employment and verbal communication was one of the main findings. Verbal communication is defined as clarity in speech. Also according to Fallows and Steven (2000) graduates who have academic knowledge their employability can be affected by their verbal communication skills such as clarity in speech. Thus a high level of verbal communication skills increase chances of employment.

Furthermore apart from clarity in verbal communication it is also important for an individual to have good interpersonal communication skills. According to Clarke (1997) and Powell & Jankovich (1998) Interpersonal communication skills is how well an individual is able to structure a message, articulate their thoughts and to keep communication with people working in the surrounding.

Hazer & Jacobson (2003) and Charner (1988) stress that there are non verbal communication channels through which an individual can communicate with others. Apart from verbal communication, an individual can also communicate their image. Depending on how well an individual is able to carry their personality (mature, professional etc) and how well they present themselves for e.g. by dress code, this all effects the image of an individual. For example an individual who reflect that they are mature and professional through the way they dress and deal with others have more chances of employment as compared to individuals who reflect the opposite.

## **2.3 Summary of theory and previous research:**

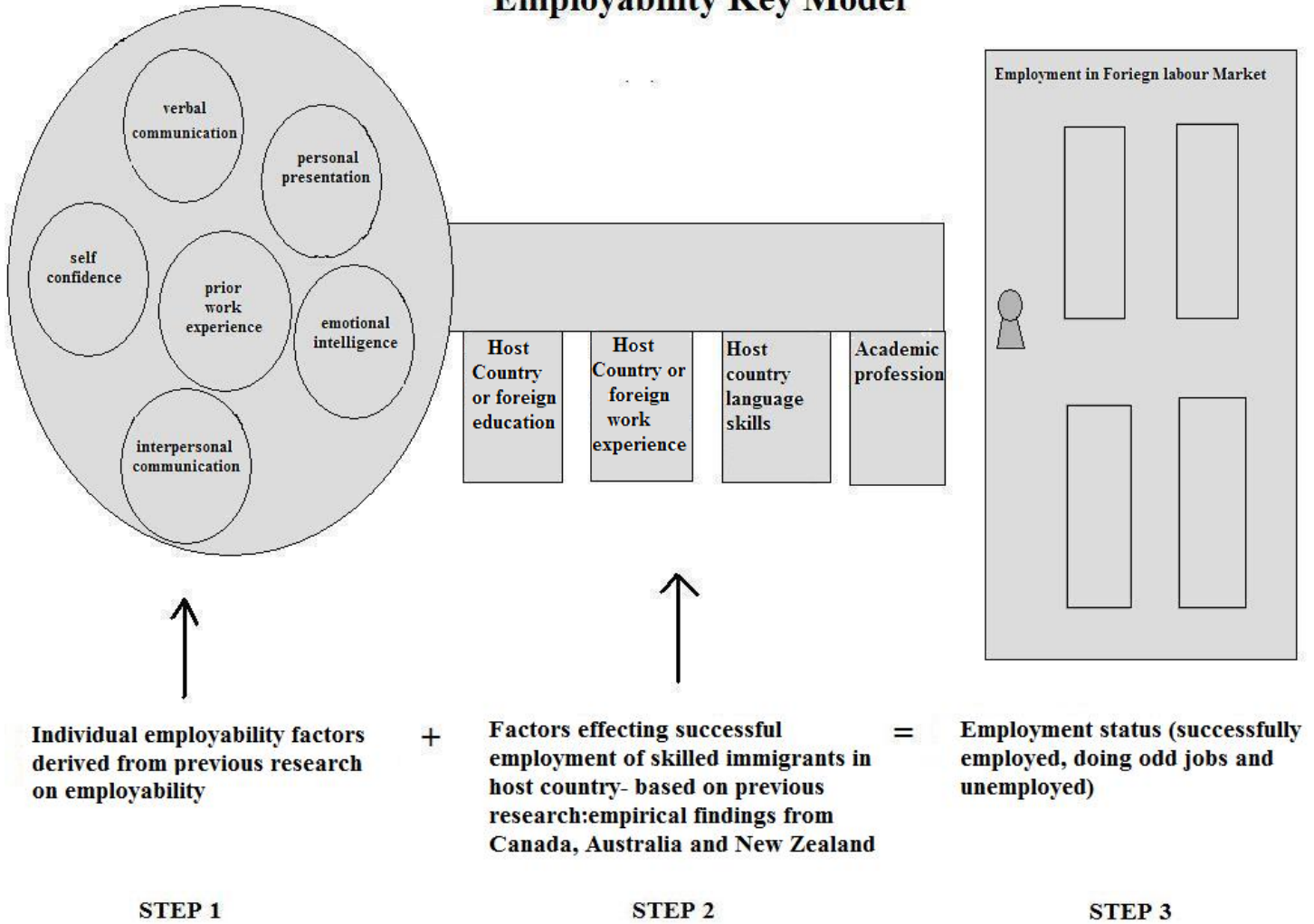
To sum up all the different factors that influence employability from all the above discussion they are:

From *previous research- individual employability factors*: self confidence, emotional intelligence, prior work experience, verbal presentation, personal presentation and interpersonal communication. These factors help

explain how individual employability factors can effect employment outcome. The more competent an individual is for e.g. communication skills the more chances an individual has towards successful employment. From *Previous research-empirical findings of Canada, Australia & New Zealand*: country of education, foreign or local work experience, host country language skills and academic profession. These factors are derived from the empirical findings that outline employability challenges of skilled immigrants in Canada, Australia & New Zealand.

Having summed up the most important factors from section 2.1 and 2.2 it would be interesting to place all of them in a model. And then to use the model as a tool to test ‘challenges to employability for skilled immigrants’ in Denmark. This model is illustrated below:

### Employability Key Model



*Note: Only the outline of this model is inspired from authors Pool and Sewell (2007) on their article about employability. However this ‘employability key model’ used in this study is different from the actual source because of its components. The components of this model are based on findings of previous research on individual employability factors and previous research on empirical findings from Canada, Australia & New Zealand that outline employability challenges of skilled immigrants, discussed in this article.*

This model above is called “employability key model”. The purpose of this model is to help summarize all important findings of this chapter, in relationship to the aim of this study. The aim of the study is to investigate factors that influence employability of green card holders in the Danish labor market. And it is in relation to the aim, this model is used as a testing tool. Furthermore this model serves another purpose, to help readers

understand the framework of this study at a glimpse- ‘the use of different individual factors to investigate employability challenges of skilled immigrants in their host country’.

***Employability key model:***

The employability key model illustrated above is derived from factors evolving from previous research on individual employability and empirical findings that hinder employability of skilled immigrants in Canada, Australia & New Zealand discussed in this article. This model is built in three steps and an explanation of each step is provided below:

In the first step from previous research on individual employability, the most important factors that explain successful employment are an individual’s *self confidence, emotional intelligence, work experience, verbal communication, personal presentation* and *interpersonal communication*. In light of previous research if an individual has adequate self confidence and emotional intelligence they are more likely to get successful employment. Prior work experience also stimulates successful employment because employers value prior work experience. Furthermore communication skills also play a very important role in determining employment outcome. Verbal communication is how clear an individual is their communication. This factor good or bad affects employment outcome. Personal presentation is how well an individual carries their personality and image with them. For e.g. if an individual is able to present themselves in a mature and professional manner. So the better the personal presentation, the better the image and personality one carries and that positively affect their employment outcome. In last interpersonal communication is the capability of how well one communicates with people around them. If a person does not have good means of interaction with people working in their surrounding this affects their team work skills. Therefore good interpersonal communication stimulates successful employment.

The first step all by itself would leave the employability key model incomplete. Since this article aims to investigate employability of green card holders in the Danish labor market, individual employability factors alone are not sufficient to answer the aim. Mainly because the individual’s under investigation are in a foreign labor market. So if one is employable (with good self confidence emotional intelligence etc) would this guarantee successful employment in a foreign labor market? Would it be possible that a foreign labor market could have certain demands from skilled immigrants which further make their employment outcome complex?

It is in light of these questions, it was important to include factors from previous research that outline empirical findings on employability challenges of skilled immigrants in other countries. Because it is possible that factors that have hindered successful employment for e.g. in Canada could be common in Denmark as well. Therefore the second step is introduced. In this step most important factors that affect employability of skilled immigrants from previous research (Empirical findings of Canada, Australia & New Zealand) are used such as: *host country or foreign education, host country or foreign work experience, host country language skills and academic profession*. Previous research in this article draws attention that a lack of proficiency in host country language skills hinders skilled immigrant employability. Also if skills immigrants have host country education and work experience they are most likely to get employment in comparison to those who have foreign work experience and education. Also depending on what academic background an individual belongs to also affects their employment outcome because in certain contexts some professions (like IT profession) are least affected by foreign education and work experience.

In last to conclude this model, step 3 helps explains how individual factors of skilled immigrants interact with the labor market they exist in. The interaction results in three employment statuses namely: successfully employed, doing odd jobs, or if they are unemployed. Also in step 3 the most significant factors that affect successful employment would come out and this would help answer the aim. Thus the findings would help outline if employability challenges (obstacles) in Denmark are in line with Canada, Australia & New Zealand or not.

## **3 Method:**

### **3.1 Research Design:**

The aim of this study is to investigate factors that influence employability of green card holders in the Danish labor market. The three groups that are being investigated (successfully employed, the ones doing odd jobs and unemployed) will be tested by the employability key model. Albeit the aim investigates three groups, it is the successfully employed group that this study specifically focuses on, to unveil what factors that hinder or stimulate successful employment. In order to answer this aim the three groups are tested by the employability key model and the results are presented in Table 6 which shows odds ratios of logistic regression. This table helps explain factors that influence green card holders to get a job relevant to their education or not. Also the software used to analyze odds ratios from logistic regression are SPSS and STATA.

The sample consisting of 493 green card holders belongs to an association called DGCA- Danish Green Card Association. This is a volunteer association consisting of 8 board members who are green card holders themselves. This association was formed in 2009. The foundation of this association is to get hold of as many green card holders as possible and to inform them of events, updates and issues regarding employability. Another reason to form this association is to raise a collective voice like a union so they can collectively address their problems to the Danish government, unemployment office and employers. Till date the association has conducted several events with different stakeholders and have shared their concern over employment opportunities in Denmark with the ministry of labor, immigration officers and concerned parties.

Therefore the method adopted to conduct this study is quantitative survey –online questionnaires. A quantitative approach has been chosen because the aim of this paper is best answered by a quantitative research design and also due to size of the target group. The sample consists of 493 green card holders. This was only possible after approaching DGCA who agreed to help out in this study. They have been the ones who sent out the questionnaire and requested 493 green card holders to fill out this survey that is being conducted for scientific research. The questionnaire was designed in a way in which respondents rate themselves. For example how respondents rate themselves in self confidence, emotional intelligence, language skills etc. The questionnaire in Appendix 1 lists all the questions. Thus examples were provided with questions in order to simply what is being asked for e.g. emotionally how sensible are you towards your surrounding situation for example at work, in a formal meeting, with friends etc.

Some advantages of online surveys are that they are cost effective and efficient. Its turnaround time is fast and several respondents are able to reply altogether. Some limitations of online surveys are that lengthy questionnaires are normally skipped and at times respondent's browser settings are not compatible. Therefore to overcome these drawbacks the survey was kept short to last in between 12-15 minutes and the survey was made approachable via a web-link, taking respondents to a whole new webpage. In last one major advantage in this study that exists is that the target group is highly educated and all respondents would have basic computer skills.

The online survey was sent twice through the DGCA database, with a 5 day gap. The survey was sent twice because some respondents could have forgotten to reply the first time because they were busy. So by sending it the second time those who had not filled the survey would be given another chance to do so. Thus this helps to increase response rate.

### **3.2 Sample and Population**

The total population of green card holders in Denmark is 8538 till December 2011. And out of this population the association DGCA has approximately 5.78% of green card holders registered in their database. From a



sample of 493 green card holders 284 replied making the response rate 58%. This response rate excludes 19 questionnaires which had to be deleted since they were incomplete.

Because this was a full investigation of the DGCA database, the sample consisted of only those nationalities the board members represented. The sample of this study is described in Table 1 and population in table 2:

**Table 1- Nationality distribution of DGCA Sample and Response rate. Collected April 2012**

	Pakistan	Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Iran	Cameroon	Nigeria	Ghana	Total
Sample of DGCA database	103	96	69	81	51	37	34	22	493
Sample of DGCA database%	21%	19%	14%	16%	10%	8%	7%	5%	100%
Response	67	61	48	45	23	13	18	9	284
Response rate%	65%	64%	70%	56%	45%	35%	53%	41%	58%

**Note:** the 8 nationalities of the sample are presented in descending order and the sample represents 5.78 % of the total population.

From the sample of 493 green card holders, the gender distribution is 14 females and 479 males, in percent that is 3% female and 97% male. Out of 284 response rate, the gender distribution 5 females and 279 males, in percent that is 2% female and 98% male. This means that the response rate in terms of gender distribution is quite similar to the overall sample of DGCA database. It is also interesting to see from the sample that majority of the nationalities are Asian, namely: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal accounting to 70%. African nationalities represent 20% while Middle Eastern represent 10% of sample in comparison to 70% Asians. Right below is the nationality distribution of the overall population of green card holders in the Danish labor market.

**Table 2- Nationality distribution of Population of Green Card Holders in Denmark up till December 2011**

	India	Turkey	Pakistan	China	Bangladesh	Iran	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Nepal	Cameroon	Nigeria	Others	Total
Population of Green card holders	1125	1039	1011	952	692	606	519	433	346	344	1471	8538
Population of green card holders in percent	13%	12%	12%	11%	8%	8%	6%	5%	4%	4%	17%	100%

**Note:** the top 10 nationalities in quantity that exist in the Danish labor market are listed above in descending order and they represent 83% of the total population.

From a population of 8538 green card holders in the Danish labor market, the gender distribution is 363 females and 8172 males. In percent female represent 4.2% of overall population while male represents 95.8%. In Table 2 the top 10 nationalities of overall green card holder's show that it is Asian countries which represent the majority of green card holders in the Danish labor market namely: India, Pakistan, China, Bangladesh and Nepal which account to 49% of all green card holders. Amongst top 10 nationalities two African nationalities Cameroon and Ghana altogether represent 8% of the population. From Middle Eastern namely Turkey and Iran that are in top 10 nationalities represent 20% of overall population.

To compare Table 1 of sample and Table 2 of population many similarities are revealed. Firstly the gender distribution of the sample is very similar to the population. In the sample 3% are female and 97% male, in the

population its 4.2% female and 96.8% male. Secondly the Asian community represents majority of the sample 70%. In contrast from top 10 nationalities in the population the Asian community (namely: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal that exist in sample) represents 49% of the population. Also all 8 nationalities in the sample exist in the top 10 nationality distribution of the population. However some differences also exist. Some nationalities are not covered by the sample, these missing nationalities have a significant share in overall population according to top 10 nationality distribution of Table 2 and they are: Turkey 12%, China 11% and Bosnia and Herzegovina 6%. Also there are many other nationalities in the population that make up 17% of the overall population; they are not covered by the sample either.

In conclusion the comparison to the sample and population reveal many similarities in respect to the Asian community, gender distribution and all nationalities that are covered in sample exist in the top10 nationalities of the population. Despite many nationalities that have been missed, the generalization of this study is possible towards the population of green card holders in Denmark, especially the Asian community which represents the majority of the sample and the population.

### **3.3 Pre-study:**

When conducting a quantitative survey experience and creativity play a critical role in developing it. Having done a few quantitative projects it has been clear that it's not easy to develop a questionnaire step-by-step, at times it is important to work backwards. Meaning in order to strengthen a questionnaire it's always good to test it first before it is sent to the target group. Therefore this questionnaire was tested through a focus group on DGCA board members who are green card holders themselves. The reason why DGCA board members were selected for the focus group is because they themselves know very well the different problems that green card holders encounter from obtaining successful employment. This testing was conducted on 4 board members of DGCA. The focus group consisted of a 40 minutes session.

The focus group findings indicated several strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire. Some drawbacks that appeared were the length of the survey which was shortened down, a few questions that were important and missing were taken into consideration and a few questions were edited.

After amending the questionnaire followed by the focus group, the questionnaire was then experimented on 4 random green card holders to see if the questionnaire had flaws in generating a response or not. The only concerns that rose were confusion in understanding some questions. This was improved by adding examples to self-rated questions in order to increase ease of understanding.

### **3.4 Design and Measures:**

Several steps have been taken into account in measuring reliability, validity, avoidance of general mistakes, ethical considerations and some challenges while conducting the study.

*Reliability:* the first and one of the most important issues of reliability is subject error- will the findings be same throughout time or will they change? This study is prone to this kind of subject error because the findings of this study are prone to change by passage of time. Probably after 6 or 12 months many employed could become unemployed and vice versa. Therefore the current findings do not stand in line with time. Further in order to overcome subject biasness, respondents of this study are clearly explained that this study is anonymous and it is being done for scientific research. The anonymity is kept by not asking their names and CPR number (social security number). This makes the results more reliable since respondents don't have to fear any institution which could judge their responses. Thirdly observer error occurs when a question asked in different ways leads to different results. This kind of error is overcome by making explicit examples along with questions so respondents don't get confused. In last observer biases also affect reliability of a study because observers can interpret results in many different ways. However in this quantitative study the results if put under different statistical tests they would reveal the same findings. For example if chi-square tests are conducted on cross

tabulation to find most significant factors or odd ratios in logistic regression is conducted it would give the same results. Therefore collected data for this study only reveals one kind of results. Also it is important to mention that target group is not approached anonymously, they have been approached by an organization which respondents trust. Thus these respondents have kept their email addresses in DGCA database in order to get updates and necessary information. This makes the channel of communication ethical and reliable.

*Validity:* to increase validity of this study many steps have been taken. Firstly history of respondents in this study affects the results. For e.g. newly arriving green card holders are more prone to be unemployed than old ones. This challenge was overcome since none of the 284 respondents had been in Denmark for less than 6 months. So the possibility that unemployed green card holders are the newly arrived ones is overcome. Secondly testing is a phenomenon in validity that is if respondents alter their results because they fear something. As stated above in reliability this was overcome by making respondents completely anonymous and making it clear that the survey is being conducted for scientific reasons only. Thirdly errors evolving from mortality- the number of drop out in a study are eliminated by deleting 19 incomplete questionnaires, this way the results are reliable. Fourthly maturation is a challenge that occurs if respondents answers are affected by some external event happening in that specific time span. Here it is important to acknowledge that after the world financial crises of 2008 the Danish labor market had been affected and it is still recovering (MacCarthy 2011). Therefore there is limited growth. This issue cannot be overcome because by time the Danish economy will experience an increment or decrement in its economic growth which in turn affects employability of green card holders. Another issue regarding validity is the ambiguity of causal relationship. For e.g. in this study respondents were asked to rate themselves over their self confidence and emotional intelligence. So if unemployed have low self confidence is it because they are unemployed or the other way around. This issue of ambiguity of causal relationship is overcome by making the respondents clear to rate themselves regardless of their employment status. This was followed by examples and scenarios to which respondents had to rate themselves how they would stand out. In last measures were taken to increase the face reliability of this study. Face reliability is testing of a questionnaire before it is actually sent out to the target group. This was done by taking testing the questionnaire on a focus group elaborated in section 4.3 and then 4 random respondents.

*Ethical Considerations:* firstly the most important issue is to be value free, to present the results the way they are. This has carefully been done. Secondly in order to conduct this study it was important to keep in mind ethics when approaching DGCA. So firstly this association was approached early in January 2012 to confirm if they can assist this study. The DGCA association was more than happy to know that a scientific study is being conducted on employability challenges of green card holders. It is since then the association has provided full support and cooperation. Also apart from email communication a personal meeting with the president and 3 other board members was held to explain the study and the significance of its findings. They all had no problems for this study to be conducted and offered any kind of support necessary. Ethical matters in relation to respondents were strictly respected firstly by keeping respondents anonymity and secondly by forwarding the survey maximum 2 times. The survey was not forwarded more than 2 times because this way respondent's could feel irritated and compelled to fill out the survey. Fourthly the respondents were not forced to fill out the survey, but rather requested by the DGCA board members to contribute to a study being conducted for scientific research. In last the author and thesis tutor details were clearly mentioned on the front page of the survey which is a letter of intent. This way any respondents who wanted to get in touch with the author would have a chance to clarify questions and queries.

*Some common mistakes:* that take place in quantitative research is how raw data will be analyzed. Many people ignore how they would analyze collected data until they have collected it. This common problem was overcome by analyzing earlier the different techniques that are applicable on the data such as logistic regression. Another important step is that the nature of variable was also taken into account. Because different nature of variables can limit the type of response and the type of statistical tests desired to be tested. Therefore it was analyzed earlier in the study the type of variable in use and what kind of response it would generate. In this study only 3 types of variables are used that give out different type of responses: 1) ordinal- in which categories can be

ranked for e.g. How would you rate your self confidence out of a scale of 5?, 2)nominal- in which categories cannot be ranked for e.g. what is your academic profession?, and 3)dichotomous- in which there are only two categories for e.g. what is your gender? This early analysis allowed visualizing the type of results that would come out and how they would be used in logistic regression. Thus the sample size is 493 for this study, this allows great diversity in answers and this made it easy to use logistic regression. It is also important to mention here that the last three questions were open ended, so respondents can give their feedback, views, thoughts about issues which the questionnaire does not cover. This would give space to other unknown factors that have not been touched in the questionnaire.

*Challenges:* In last it is important to mention some challenges that occurred while conducting this quantitative study. Firstly in the beginning of the study it was not easy or possible to reach Danish green card holders and to get a response of over 200 respondents seemed impossible. The Danish migration board that deals with Green card holders were contacted to see if they could help forward this survey. Despite their interest in the findings they could not help forward this survey to any green card holder due to confidential reasons. So it was only the DGCA formed by green card holders themselves the only way to grab a hold of 493 green card holders. It is also important to mention here that the software used to analyze logistic regression and odds ratios is of SPSS. But after much difficulty it was not possible to derive odds ratios from SPSS, therefore STATA which is another statistical tool was used. And it is from STATA that odds ratios from logistic regression were derived illustrated in 4.2 Table 6.

## **4 Empirical Findings, Statistical Analyses, and Discussion:**

This article aims to analyze factors that influence green card holder's employability in the Danish labor market. This aim is answered in sections 4.2 and 4.3.

The first section 4.1 basically describes the sample. Then section 4.2 deals with the research question, what individual factors do explain if green card holders are successful or not in achieving a job relevant to their education. This is done by conducting statistical analysis on the collected empirical data in Table 6. The statistical analysis is of logistic regression that shows odds ratios on factors tested from the employability key model. After analyzing Table 6, a discussion is followed for any correlation, threads or connections that can be drawn from previous research. An important point to mention here is that chi-square test could also have been conducted on cross tabulation to see what factors are significant. But since those results would be similar to that of logistic regression in 4.2, there was no point of conducting two different statistical tests to reveal similar significant factors.

In end section 4.3 presents general discussion of the results followed by a conclusion and recommendations for future research.

#### 4.1 Sample description:

**TABLE 3- Response for Academic Profession from DGCA Sample**

Group	<i>Status %</i>	<i>IT + Engineers %</i>	<i>Social Sciences %</i>	<i>Medical %</i>
Successfully employed	30	22	5	2
Odd job	47	22	18	7
Un-e	23	10	7	6
Total	100 %	54%	30%	15%

**TABLE 4- Response for Country of Education from DGCA Sample**

Group	<i>Status %</i>	<i>Danish degree</i>	<i>Country of Education</i>
		<i>Yes %</i>	<i>European %</i>
Successfully employed	30	2	22
Odd job	47	8	23
Un-e	23	5	13
Total	100 %	15%	58%

**TABLE 5- Response for Number of Hours Invested in Learning Danish Language per week and Prior non-European Work Experience from DGCA Sample**

Group	<i>Status %</i>	<i>Invest more than 6 hours/week to learn Danish language %</i>	<i>Prior non-European work experience +24 months</i>
Successfully employed	30	13	2
Odd job	47	12	9
Un-e	23	4	3
Total	100 %	29%	14%

The above table 3, 4 and 5 describes the surveys response in respect to academic profession, education, number of hours invested to learn Danish language and prior non-European work experience.

The response in total consisted of 284 respondents from a sample of 493 green card holders registered with DGCA making the response rate approximately 58%. The response rate excludes 19 questionnaires were

eliminated because they were incomplete. Out of 284 green card holders 30% are successfully employed, 47% doing odd jobs and 23% unemployed. These figures show some similarity with that of Ramboll who had a sample of 301 green card holders out of which 30% successfully employed, 42% doing odd jobs and 28% unemployed. On average the age of the respondents were 32 with a range from 25 - 49. 94% of the respondents have a Master degree level education. About 43% of the respondents have non-European education. 31% of the respondents had completed their higher education from 'Sweden' in Europe. 74% of the successfully employed group consists of IT+ engineer professionals. 42% green card holders in the successfully employed group invest more than 6 hours/week in learning Danish language skills making this group dominant while the least 19% in unemployed. Also 63% of the sample has spouses. All respondents had been in Denmark for more than 6 months. 98% are male respondents. 29% of the respondents live in an independent accommodation while the rest live either in sharing apartment or shared rooms. None of the 284 respondents had European work experience.

A discussion on sample and its comparison to population is provided in section 3.2.

Having described the sample and population, it is now important to analyze the factors that help explain if green card holders are able to get successful employment or not.

## 4.2 Analyzing Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression

**Table 6- Individual factors (from ‘employability key model’ and their) influence on Green Card Holders job status. Odds ratios.**

Factors	Successfully Employed	Doing Odd Jobs	Unemployed
<b>Country of education:</b> European (ref)			
Non European	.363**	1.870*	1.155
<b>Danish degree:</b> yes (ref)			
No	3.809*	1.027	.393*
<b>Academic profession:</b> Medical (ref)			
IT+ Engineering	4.819**	.709	.341*
Social Sciences	1.494	1.384	.549
<b>Interpersonal communication:</b> Poor (ref)			
Good	.559	.618	3.305*
<b>Verbal communication:</b> Poor (ref)			
Good	.666	1.850*	.659
<b>Personal presentation:</b> Poor (ref)			
Good	.617	1.075	1.638
<b>Number of hours invested in Danish:</b> <3 (ref)			
3-6	3.583**	.876	.313**
+6	2.978**	.491*	.943
<b>Danish language:</b> Poor (ref)			
Good	4.170***	.611	.384**
<b>Self confidence:</b> Poor (ref)			
Good	1.284	.860	1.002
<b>Emotional intelligence:</b> Poor (ref)			
Good	1.447	.536*	2.119*
<b>Prior non- European work experience:</b> Less than 2 years (ref)			
More than 2 years	.271*	2.185*	1.170

+ p<0.1, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

## 4.2 Factors influencing successful employment:

According to the quantitative findings of this study Table 6 shows the tests of odds ratios from logistic regression. In light of Table 6 verbal communication, personal presentation, interpersonal communication, self confidence and emotional intelligence do not have an influence on successful employment. It is important to mention here that all these factors are derived from previous research on individual employability factors and none of them show significance in this study except prior work experience. Surprisingly all factors derived from previous research that outlines empirical findings of Canada, Australia & New Zealand show significance except local/host country education. These factors are host country or foreign education, host country or foreign work experience, host country language skills and academic profession.

According to the study the odds ratios from logistic regression reveal that *country of education* is very significant to gain successful employment. If green card holders have European education they are almost 3 times more likely to get successful employment as compared to non-European. In comparison green card holders who have non-European education they are 2 times more likely to be doing odd jobs as compared to European education. However surprisingly holding a *Danish degree* also has a significant influence on successful employment. Without a Danish degree green card holders are 4 times likely to be successfully employed. Green card holders that have a Danish degree are 3 times more likely to be unemployed. Here the finding is in and out of line previous research. In Canada local education significantly impacts successful employment opportunities. According to Girard & Boudier (2005:1-2) and state that in Canada foreign education is many times undervalued and at times not accepted. But here however European qualifications support successful employment, but local Danish degree does not have the same impact in the Danish labor market.

Table 6 surprisingly reveals that the *having prior non-European work experience* has a significantly impact gaining successful employment in the Danish labor market. Green card holders who have less than 2 years of non-European work experience are 4 times likely to be successfully employed. And green card holders who have more than 2 years of non-European work experience are 2 times likely to be doing odd jobs. It is here that the finding is not in line with previous research on individual employability factors instead it is in line with previous research- empirical findings from Canada, Australia & New Zealand. According to Pool & Sewell (2007: 284-285), prior work experiences helps increase employment opportunities. In respect to theory this study in Denmark reveals Danish employers do not value prior work experience. However this finding is in line with previous research- empirical findings from Canada, Girard & Boudier (2005), who state that employers do not value foreign work experience simply because Canada has a different set of working conditions, rules and regulation which differ from many developing countries where most skilled immigrants come from. And this is the same case with Danish employers. In general Danish employers do not value foreign work experience; in this case foreign is non-European.

In communication skills two factors are significant for successful employment, *Danish language skills* and *number of hours invested to learn the language*. Thus these two factors also support one another because investing more hours to learn Danish language increases Danish language skills. According to the Table 6 the green card holders who invest more than 6 hours/week in learning Danish language are 3 times more likely to be successfully employed as compared to those who invest less than 3 hours/week. It is important to note here that the successfully employed group that invests more number of hours in learning Danish language is before receiving successful employment, not after being successfully employed. Also green card holders who are successfully employed are 4 times more likely to have high Danish language skills. Here the findings are very much in line with previous research- empirical findings from Canada, Australia & New Zealand. From Canada Girard & Boudier (2005) and Canadian Labor and Business Center (2002:17) support that a proficiency in host country's language significantly impacts successful employment of skilled immigrants in Canada. From empirical findings of Australia & New Zealand Hawthorne (2011) and Colic-Peisker (2011) state that skilled immigrants have problems in getting successful employment relevant to their education because they don't have good English skills/host country language skills. Previous research in all these countries shows that proficiency



in the host country language increases chances of successful employment and this is the similar case with Denmark. Thus according to Table 6 green card holders who have low Danish language skills are almost 3 times likely to be unemployed.

In last *Academic profession* also has a significant impact in being successfully employed. If green card holders belong to the profession of IT + Engineering they are 5 times more likely to get successful employment in comparison to medical related professionals. Here this specific finding is supported by previous research of Canada, Skills Research Institute (2008: 12-13), precisely elaborates that amongst all professions it is only IT professional that have best employment chances. Also Hawthorne (2011) also states that most employable profession in Australia and New Zealand are professionals belonging to IT. One possible explanation for this is that IT related work is probably done mostly in English language e.g. software programming done in Finland or in Austria, it requires coding in English language following high level of international standards. Also Hawthorne (2011) states that in Australia and in New Zealand the profession with most successful employment is of IT.

Albeit this study mainly focuses on the factors that stimulate or hinder employability of green card holders from attaining successful employment, it is good to have a short comparison between the results of the three groups. Simply because this helps understand employment patterns. Very shortly green card holders who belong to the 'odd jobs' group are almost 2 times likely to have non- European education, 2 times likely to invest less than 3 hours/week to learn Danish language as compared to those who invest more than 6 hours/week, almost 2 times more likely to have poor emotional intelligence and in last almost 2 times more likely to have more than 2 years of non- European work experience. Here some possible explanations why green card holders would end up in this group, in comparison to successfully employed group are: 1) they do not invest much number of hours/week in learning Danish language, 2) have poor emotional intelligence, 3) have more non- European qualifications and 4) they are more likely to have more than 2 years or non- European work experience. In light of previous research of Canada according to Girard & Boudier (2005), from Australia & New Zealand according to Hawthorne (2011), a lack of host country language proficiency and undervaluation of foreign education and work experience hinders employability of skilled immigrants.

As for the unemployed they are almost 3 times likely to have a Danish degree, almost 3 times more likely to belong to medical profession as compared to IT+ Engineering, almost 3 times likely to invest less than 3 hours/week in learning Danish language as compared to those who invest 3-6 hours/week, almost 3 times likely to have poor Danish language skills. Here some possible explanations to why green card holders are unemployed in comparison to the successful employed group are, 1) they invest less number of hours/week to learn Danish language, 2) have poor Danish language skills, 3) they have less IT+ Engineering professionals and 4) more likely to have Danish education. In light of previous research- empirical findings from Canada according to Girard & Boudier (2005), from Hawthorne (2011) Australia & New Zealand, a lack of proficiency in host country language hinders successful employment.

### **4.3 General discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research:**

#### **General Discussion:**

Albeit this study gives exposure to the subject in focus "employability challenges of skilled immigrants in the Danish labor market" there are some limitations to it. Firstly the factors tested in this study only reveal findings of those factors. It is possible that there are more factors that influence employability other than the ones used in this study. Secondly as mentioned earlier these findings do not stand much long against time. Depending on the Danish economic growth or even structural changes in the labor market many unemployed in the future could get successful jobs relevant to their education or vice versa. This limitation is also in line with the critique of Syed (2008) who states that economic growth of a country affects employment opportunities. However the sample of this study represents approximately 5.78% of the overall population of green card holders. Based on

the discussion of section 3.2 that discusses similarities and differences of sample and population, the results of this study can be generalized to the overall population to an extent, especially to the Asian community. Although the sample was not collected randomly, it was collected from the database of DGCA which shares many similarities with the overall population.

This study basically aimed to highlight factors that influence employability of green card holders in the Danish labor market. Albeit three groups were investigated in the process 1) successfully employed, 2) doing odd jobs and 3) unemployed, the study was restricted to the ‘successfully employed’ group to narrow down the focus of this article. In order to answer this aim the ‘employability key model’ was formulated and tested. This model was formulated in two steps. In the first step it took into consideration individual employability factors which influence successful employment, this is based on previous research of scholars who indicate how individual employability factors influence employment outcome. In the second step factors that hinder employability of skilled immigrants based on the empirical findings from Canada, Australia + New Zealand were taken into consideration. The role of the employability key model was to help reveal individual factors that hinder or stimulate successful employment. These factors were derived from odds ratios logistic regression in Table 6.

The results derived from testing the employability key model reveals two interesting findings. The first finding is not just interesting but rather surprising. Individual employability factor’s which effects employment outcome (in respect to previous research on employability) show that most factors did not help unveil employment patterns. This even includes individual employability factors which were excluded from the study such as adaptability-flexibility, team work, social skills, entrepreneurship skills, job channel and efforts in job seeking. Only one factor ‘prior work experience’ came out significant in this study and it shows that having prior non-European work experience does not influence successful employment. Green card holders who have more than 2 years of prior non- European work experience are 2 times more likely to be doing odd jobs and the ones with more than 2 years of prior non- European work experience are 4 times more likely to be successfully employed. This finding however is in line with empirical findings from Canada, as Girard & Boudier (2005) points out that foreign work experience of skilled immigrants is usually undervalued.

This result from step 1 was an unexpected finding, earlier in the research it was expected that the successfully employed would significantly have higher emotional intelligence, self confidence etc in comparison to other groups. From a critical point of view, if the employability model was to be tested from a qualitative method for e.g. interviews, it is possible that different findings would appear and help explain which factors are significant from Step 1 that influence successful employment.

The second finding that comes out from the employability key model is the most interesting in this study. All employability factors that were derived from previous research- empirical findings of Canada, Australia & New Zealand are significant. These factors are country of education, academic profession, host country language skills and host country work experience. This group has higher Danish language skills, they are more likely to be IT + Engineers, they are more likely to have European education but not local Danish and they are also most likely to have less than 2 years of foreign non- European work experience. This means that most factors that hinder employability of skilled immigrants in Canada, Australia & New Zealand are also common in Denmark for e.g. From Canada Girard & Boudier (2005) and Canadian Labor and Business Center (2002) and from Australia & New Zealand, Colic- Peisker (2011) and Hawthorne (2011) point out that a lack of English language proficiency hinders successful employment of skilled immigrants. Also in Canada Skills research Initiative (2008) and from Australia Hawthorne (2011) IT professionals were most likely to be employable than any other profession and this is the same in Denmark. Furthermore employers in Canada undervalued foreign work experience as pointed out by Girard & Boudier (2005) this is also in line with this study. However in Canada according to Girard & Boudier (2005) state that employers value local education, this study shows the opposite trend, green card holders who have a Danish degree are more three time likely to be unemployed. But surprisingly what is in line with Canadian employers is that having European education a green card holder is 3

times likely to be successfully employed. This shows that Danish employers value European education, but not local Danish.

In light of the above two findings of this study it can be said that the employability key model was useful in answering the aim of this study because it unveiled factors that were significant and factors that were insignificant. The model revealed one factor from Step 1 of the model- (individual employability factors) which was significant while the rest was not. In comparison Step 2 of the model (previous research- empirical findings on employability challenges of skilled immigrants from Canada, Australia & New Zealand) all factors revealed to be significant. Thus this study confirms many previous empirical findings, which come out as international employability obstacles for skilled immigrants. Also the model highlighted some employment trends amongst the three groups. The 'odd jobs' and 'unemployed' group both invest less number of hours/week in learning Danish language and have poor Danish language skills as compared to the 'successfully employed' group. Also the 'odd jobs' group is more likely to have foreign non- European education and more than 2 years of non- European work experience. In contrast the 'successfully employed' group they are more likely to have European -education and more likely to have less than 2 years of non- European work experience.

Overall out of 284 responses 30% are successfully employed while the rest 47% are doing odd jobs and 23% are unemployed. These figures share similarity with that of Ramboll- market research company that conducted a survey in 2009 under the Danish government. Their findings revealed that about 30% green card holders were successfully employed, 42% doing odd jobs and 28% unemployed. This shows a common thread, the percent of the three groups from a sample of 301 surveyed in year 2009 and the sample of this study 493 surveyed in year 2012 are very similar. Also the finding of this study is also in line with the critique of Chaloff & Lemaitre (2009) who states that in a 'supply driven' system a significant proportion of skilled immigrants do not get jobs matching their education. This critique is in line with the findings of this study since 47% green card holders do odd jobs.

It is important to mention here that the survey consisted of three open ended questions which gave room to some explanation on why many green card holders are not successfully employed. The main reasons were 1) lack of Danish language skills, 2) institutional barriers (especially for medical related professionals who required Danish licenses to practice) and 3) a lack of financial resources due to which many green card holders are left with no choice but to do odd jobs. The first obstacle is in line with the quantitative study of this article and further highlights the important of having proficient host country language skills to gain successful employment. However the last second and the third obstacle are new findings. But since these obstacles are not quantified because this is a quantitative study, these obstacles do not hold solid grounds in explaining employability of green card holders. However they raise concerns for qualitative research that would better bring out these obstacles and with deeper explanations. Therefore these obstacles/speculations are suggested for future research.

The results of this article serve as an interesting finding for the Danish migration board. This scientific study not only gives exposure to the subject in focus, 'employability challenges of green card holders' but also raises many questions over the different factors that hinder or stimulate successful employment. Albeit this study is from a micro (individual) level of analysis it still raises questions on me-so and macro level of analysis For e.g. employers recruitment or preferences, how institutional barriers hinder successful employment, labor market rules and regulations, policy making of the 'points based system' etc. In respect to scientific research, the findings of this study will be helpful for the future improvements of the 'green card scheme'. Because in past Canada and Australia who have had the 'point based system' have had structural changes in order improve their skilled immigration scheme for e.g. Hawthorne (2011) in previous research mentions that Australia increased the level of English language requirement from applicants, because many skilled immigrants in Australia lacked proficiency in English language. Likewise, this article creates space and room for scientific researchers to do research over the employability challenges of green card holders in the near future, so similar improvements in

the green card scheme are implemented as in Australia. Probably a basic know-how of Danish language could become a pre-requisite for the green card scheme in the future.

In closing, all the above discussion and findings lead towards a very important question for skilled immigrants on their integration in the Danish labor market, “To integrate or not to integrate, is the question”. Because skilled immigrant come to Denmark to acquire successful employment relevant to their education. And for whatever individual factors (in line with findings of this study) if one does not get successful employment in Denmark, it is questionable, if it is worth to immigrate to Denmark if their skills and qualifications are underutilized.

### **Conclusion:**

The aim of this article was to analyze factors influencing green card holder’s employability into the Danish labor market. This was done by testing the employability key model which is formulated by several factors from previous research on individual employability factors and previous research- empirical findings from Canada, Australia & New Zealand. The findings of the study explain that a lack of Danish language skills, academic profession (for social science and medical related professionals), non-European education and undervaluation of foreign work experience are the main individual factors that hinder successful employment. On the other hand high Danish language skills, academic profession (IT+ engineering) and European education are individual factors that stimulate successful employment.

Also, since most of the significant individual factors that influence employability are from empirical findings of Canada, Australia & New Zealand this shows an international connection. That a skilled immigrant in respect to Denmark, Canada, Australia & New Zealand have many common individual factors that influences employability. Namely proficiency in host country language, academic profession (IT) and undervaluation of foreign credentials (non- European education) and work experience (non- European).

In last skilled immigrants who choose to work in a foreign labor market must keep in mind that every foreign labor market has its own pros and cons. It is not necessary that if an individual is employable in their home country they would have the same employment outcome in foreign labor market. Mainly because employer’s in a foreign labor market may have a different set of demands, trends and preferences which may differ from skilled immigrant’s home country. Consequently, effecting employability of skilled immigrants, successful employment.

### **Suggestions for Future Research:**

It would be interesting to test more employability factors that have not been taken into account of this study and see what explanations they reveal over green card holders employability.

It would also be interesting to investigate employability challenges for green card holders in Denmark from meso-level of analysis (employer’s level) and investigate why employers are not hiring green card holders.

Also it is interesting to explore from a macro-level of analysis how institutional barriers, rules & regulations and economic growth effects employability of green card holders. Because from the open ended questions most medical related professionals blamed institutional barriers from gaining successful employment for e.g. bio-medicine professionals require licenses to practice in pharmacies.

In light of the open ended questions of this study points an unusual factor that compels many green card holders to do odd jobs. This is a lack of financial resources. And if they have financial responsibility of their spouses they are further pressured and opt for odd jobs. This phenomenon should be investigated through qualitative and quantitative measures to see how *a lack of financial resources* influence green card holders employability. It is

also important to mention here that a 3 year work permit is only provided to green card holders if they show they have 1 year financial resources to live in Denmark without employment (Newtodenmark 2012). But do green card holders really bring 1 year living expenses with them to Denmark or not leaves room for scientific investigation and explanation.

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Ramboll 2009

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Appendix I- Questionnaire:



UNIVERSITY OF  
GOTHENBURG

Strategic Human Resource Management and Labor Relations - Master Thesis:

*“Challenges to integrate in the Danish labor market: Green Card Holders Prospective”*

**Dear Green Card Holders:** my name is Nayyar Iqbal and I am a Master student studying Strategic Human Resource Management and Labor Relations from the University of Gothenburg. This survey is being conducted solely for scientific reasons in order to complete my thesis.

The aim of this study is to investigate why green card holders in Denmark are employed, unemployed or doing low skilled work.

This survey is completely anonymous. Your personal details such as name, CPR number are not required. In other words your personal integrity is at no risk.

I request you to fill in this questionnaire honestly and in full. Incomplete questionnaires will be discarded.

The questionnaire takes approximately **15 - 18 minutes** to complete.

If you have any questions, queries, comments regarding this survey please feel free to contact me.

**Thesis Author: Nayyar Iqbal**

Contact: +46-700448919 (Danish residence: +45-43661434)

email: [nayyar.dhariwal@gmail.com](mailto:nayyar.dhariwal@gmail.com)

**Thesis Tutor: Tommy Isidorsson**

Associate Professor: Department of Sociology and Work Science University of Gothenburg

Contact information: +46-317865501 (email: [tommy.isidorsson@av.gu.se](mailto:tommy.isidorsson@av.gu.se))

1. Age:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Sex:

Male Female

3. Country of origin:

\_\_\_\_\_

4. When did you enter Denmark: e.g. November 2009

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How many months have you stayed in Denmark (after receiving green card): e.g. 8 months

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your current status at the moment :

Successfully Employed- doing work relevant to my qualifications

Unemployed

Doing low skilled work, blue collar jobs or work that underutilizes my academic skills- odd job

7. Marital status:

Single

Married

Legal registration with partner

8. Do you have spouses in Denmark or back in home country? e.g. wife, husband, kids, girl friend, boy friend:

Yes No

9. Nationality of Spouse if applicable e.g. husband, wife, boy friend, girl friend, children:

\_\_\_\_\_

Does your spouse live with you in Denmark?

Yes No

Does your spouse live home country?

Yes No

10. Academic qualification:

High School- Upper secondary school:

Bachelor:

Master:

PHD:

Others:

Name of the country where you completed your last education (Masters or PHD):

\_\_\_\_\_

What academic profession do you belong to:

IT

Business and Economics

Medicine and Health related

Law  
 Engineering  
 Natural Sciences: such as chemistry, physics  
 Any other : \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a degree from a Danish University:  
 Yes no

Are you currently enrolled for a degree at a Danish University:  
 Yes No

Do you intend to enroll at a Danish University to gain employment:  
 Yes no

**11. Work experience: non- European** relevant to your education before entering Denmark (month). For e.g 13 months

\_\_\_\_\_

Work experience relevant to your education after entering Denmark- (white collar).

\_\_\_\_\_

Work experience irrelevant to your education after entering Denmark- (odd jobs).

\_\_\_\_\_

After entering Denmark, how many months of unemployment have you experienced: e.g. 10 months

\_\_\_\_\_

What channel did you get this job from? E.g. social network, newspaper, job center, online network etc.

\_\_\_\_\_

Work experience relevant to your education in Europe: e.g. 3 months

\_\_\_\_\_

If employed, are you getting the same wages as Danish citizens with same education and experience?  
 Much higher higher equal lower much lower

**12. Where do you live in Denmark for e.g. Copenhagen, Aarhus, Aalborg etc.**

\_\_\_\_\_

**13. Language:**

Do you attend Danish language courses  
 Yes no

If yes, at home or at school ?  
 Home School

How many months (part time or fulltime) have you invested in learning Danish language- in months. For e.g. 7 months part time, 2 months full time or 5 months part time and fulltime

Number or months =

Full time                      Part time                      Fulltime and part time

If yes, how many hours a week do you study/invest in Danish language (for those employed, before employment)

\_\_\_\_\_

What level are you in your Danish language Course

Level 1    Level 2    Level 3    or higher: \_\_\_\_\_

How fluent can you speak, understand and write Danish language:

Extremely fluent    very fluent    average fluent    not too fluent    not fluent at all

English skills: how fluent can you speak, listen and write English language:

Extremely fluent    very fluent    average fluent    not too fluent    not fluent at all

#### 14. Self confidence:

Self confidence: as a green card holder how confident are you in your (personality, education, communication etc) that you can get a job relevant to your education:

Extremely confident    Very confident    confident    not so confident    not confident at all

Self esteem : as a person how competent are you to overcome your employment challenges as a green card holder:

Extremely competent    very competent    normal competent    not so competent    not competent at all

Self motivation: when in some kind of trouble, difficult circumstance or pressure how well are you able to motivate yourself to overcome such challenges:

Always motivate myself    Often motivate myself    sometimes motivate myself    not motivate myself often  
not motivate myself at all

#### 15. Emotional Intelligence

Emotionally intelligence: emotionally how sensible are you towards your surrounding situation for e.g. at work, in a formal meeting, with friends etc

Extremely sensible    very sensible    average    not so sensible    not sensible at all

#### 16. Social skills:

Social skills: you would rate myself

Extremely social    very social    normal social    not too social    not social at all

#### 17. Verbal communication:

Verbal presentation: When you speak how clear is your verbal presentation: e .g. some people do not speak clearly and have to repeat themselves in order to convey their message.

Extremely clear    very clear    clear    not so clear    not clear at all

#### 18. Personal presentation: how well are you able to carry you views, vision, personality with you and when you deal with other people

Extremely well    very well    not too good and not too bad    not so good    not good at all

**19. Basic interpersonal communication skills:**

Interpersonal communication skills: How well do you communicate with people around you e.g. articulating your thoughts, fluent speech, and structure of your message:

Extremely good   very good   average   not so good   not good at all

**20. Entrepreneurship skills**

How would you define your entrepreneurship skills: ability to identify opportunities, negotiating etc

Extremely good   very good   average   not so good   not good at all

**21. Adaptability:**

Adaptability: how flexible are you toward flexible working time, hours, seasonal

I am extremely flexible   I am quite flexible   I am normal flexible   not too flexible

How willing are you to take a job in another field of expertise other than your own for e.g. if your education is in Marketing would you be willing to work in management instead if offered a job

Extremely flexible   very flexible   flexible   not so flexible   not flexible at all

**22. Efforts in job seeking:**

Awareness: How aware are you of different job seeking channels

Extremely aware   very aware   normal   not so aware   not aware at all

If applicable, how many odd jobs do you apply per month

\_\_\_\_\_

If applicable, how many white jobs do you apply per month

\_\_\_\_\_

How effectively do you make use of job seeking channels for e.g. applying online job advertisements, online recruiting firms, job centers database etc.

Extremely effectively   very effectively   effectively   not too effectively   not effectively at all

Do you use informal social networking as a tool to look for jobs- white and odd

Extremely   very much   seldom   not too often   not at all

**23. Housing:**

What kind of housing do you live in

Private house   private flat   shared flat with private room   shared room

How satisfied are you with your situation in Denmark: e.g. overall quality of life, if the experience meets your expectations etc.

Very satisfied   satisfied   Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   Dissatisfied   Very dissatisfied

(For unemployed and the ones doing odd jobs) What do you think are the reasons that you are not able to get a professional job relevant to your education- white collar?

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(For those who are employed relevant to their education) According to your own experiences what are the most important reason to get a professional job relevant to your education- white collar?

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Anything you would like to Say: \_\_\_\_\_