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EMPLOYMENT IMPLICATIONS FOR NATURALIZED SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the employment implications for individuals who acquired South African citizenship through naturalization after 27 April 1994, marking the end of apartheid and heralding the post-apartheid era. The study aims to provide insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by these citizens in the labour market, considering the historical context. Employing a qualitative research and historic approach, the study conducts in-depth investigations with naturalized citizens to gain first-hand insights into their experiences and challenges when seeking suitable employment opportunities. The findings of this study reveal the enduring presence of discrimination and difficulties in skills recognition and social integration for naturalized citizens in the labour market. However, the research also highlights significant advantages stemming from their language proficiency and cultural adaptability, which can positively influence their job performance and overall workplace dynamics. Policymakers, employers, and stakeholders can draw valuable insights from this research to design and implement targeted policies and initiatives aimed at fostering a more inclusive and equitable work environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the momentous transition to democracy in South Africa on 27 April 1994, citizenship by naturalization became an avenue through which individuals from diverse backgrounds could become bona fide citizens of the nation. This historic event marked the end of apartheid and set the stage for a new era of inclusivity and opportunity. However, as South Africa embraced its newfound democratic values, questions arose regarding the implications of naturalized citizenship on various aspects of society, including the realm of employment.

This article seeks to explore the multifaceted employment implications faced by those individuals who attained South African citizenship through the process of naturalization after the pivotal date of 27 April 1994. With a particular focus on the post-apartheid labour market, we endeavour to uncover the challenges, opportunities, and dynamics that shape the professional journey of these naturalized citizens. Our investigation rests on a foundation of comprehensive analysis, incorporating authoritative data, pertinent legal frameworks, and compelling case studies. By delving into the key factors influencing the employment prospects of this distinctive cohort, we aim to illuminate the intricacies of their integration into the South African workforce.

This study acknowledges that, although South Africa's transformation brought about a more inclusive and egalitarian society, it also introduced unique obstacles for naturalized citizens seeking employment. Discrimination, recognition of foreign qualifications, and social acceptance emerged as crucial areas influencing their career paths. Conversely, this research also recognises the potential advantages that naturalized citizens may possess, such as linguistic diversity and cultural adaptability, fostering a more enriched and cohesive work environment.

The significance of this exploration lies in its relevance to policymakers, employers, and stakeholders alike. By gaining a nuanced understanding of the employment challenges faced by South African citizens granted naturalization post-1994, we can craft informed strategies to cultivate a truly inclusive and equitable workforce – one that values and harnesses the diverse talents of all its citizens to propel the nation towards greater socio-economic growth.

In the following sections, we will delve into the intricacies of the post-apartheid labour market, examining the various aspects that shape the employment landscape for naturalized citizens, and offering insights to pave the way for a more prosperous and harmonious future for all South Africans.

The post-apartheid labour market in South Africa is a complex landscape shaped by historical legacies, socio-economic disparities, and policy interventions. After the end of apartheid in 1994, the government embarked on a journey to dismantle discriminatory labour practices and create a more inclusive and equitable job market. However, several intricacies continue to influence the employment dynamics for both natural-born citizens and those who acquired South African citizenship through naturalisation. After providing a brief overview of affirmative action and its implications for foreign nationals, we can now delve into a discussion of some of the intricacies related to this topic.

2. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IMPACT ON NATURALIZED SOUTH AFRICANS

The South African Constitution of 1996 (Constitution) allows for affirmative action based on the following terms:

Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and Freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken (section 9(2) of the Constitution).

Affirmative action is defined as measures designed to ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups have equal opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace of a designated employer. It is a policy designed to permit a measure of discrimination in favour of employees disadvantaged by discrimination in the past (Grogan, 2020). Although the South African Constitution and the Employment Equity Act (EEA) prohibit unfair discrimination, both expressly state that measures designed to remove the effects of past discrimination are not in themselves unfair.

It is worth noting that due to the prevailing socio-economic situation in South Africa, employers frequently encounter a substantial influx of job applicants whenever they advertise new or vacant positions. These job seekers comprise a diverse pool, encompassing both South African citizens and foreign nationals, some of whom are naturalized and others who possess a permanent residence status. This influx can pose significant challenges for employers inefficiently and fairly managing the recruitment process.

In South Africa, when determining which candidate to appoint, employers often, and seek to advance their employment equity targets and to obtain the maximum amount of broad-based black

economic empowerment (BBBEE) points. Consequently, South African citizens are often favoured over foreign nationals for employment.

The EEA is one piece of legislation which explicitly ascribes rights to South Africans. It applies to “designated groups” who are defined as “black people” women and people with disabilities who are South African citizens or who became citizens by naturalization before 27 April 1994 (or persons who would have been entitled to acquire citizenship by naturalization before that date but who were precluded by apartheid policies).

For purposes of broad-based black economic empowerment, it is generally understood that an individual needs to be African, Coloured, or Indian and also a South African citizen. Black economic empowerment (BEE) allows for an individual to be a South African citizen through birth, descent, or naturalization. However, citizenship through naturalization only applies under limited circumstances. With an increasing number of people immigrating to South Africa (Macrotrends, 2023) and acquiring citizenship, the requirement that an individual be a South African citizen has come under increasing scrutiny. The change has resulted in people who previously qualified as black no longer qualifying as black.

The circumstances in which citizenship by naturalization results in qualification as a Black person were recently amended when the Codes of Good Practice on Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment were amended in 2015. In terms of the revised Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Codes, citizenship through naturalization must have occurred (a) before 27 April 1994 (being the date of the commencement of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act of 1993) or (b) on or after 27 April 1994 for anyone who would have been entitled to acquire citizenship by naturalization before that date. The test for whether an individual meets the naturalization criteria is therefore a factual, objective test.

By comparison, under the original BEE Codes, citizenship through naturalization must have occurred (a) before the commencement date of the Constitution or (b) after the commencement date of the Constitution, but who, without the Apartheid policy would have qualified for naturalization before then. The wording “but who, without the Apartheid policy would have qualified for naturalisation before then” was broad enough to allow for a variety of circumstances to be accepted as reasons for an individual not being naturalised before the specified date. The original BEE Act defined a Black person even more widely than the original BEE Codes – a Black person was defined as African, Coloureds, and Indian without any

link to South African citizenship. The BEE Act has similarly been amended to reflect the same definition as in the revised BEE Codes.

As a result, where an individual is a South African citizen through naturalisation, they may have qualified as Black for BEE purposes under the original BEE Act or BEE Codes but may no longer qualify as Black under the revised BEE Act and BEE Codes. This also has implications for employment and entities in which that person holds shares because that entity will, due to the operation of law and amendment of the definition of a Black person, no longer have the same Black ownership that they had before the amendments.

3. INTRICACIES IN SOUTH AFRICAN EMPLOYMENT DYNAMICS FOR NATURALIZED CITIZENS

Generally, the naturalization of citizenship is a legal process through which an individual who is not born a citizen of a particular country can acquire citizenship and enjoy the same rights and privileges as those who are native-born citizens. It is a way for immigrants or foreign nationals to become full-fledged members of the society they have chosen to make their permanent home. The process of naturalization varies from country to country but typically involves fulfilling certain requirements and meeting specific criteria. Naturalization confers a range of benefits and responsibilities, including the right to work, vote, access to certain government services, and protection from deportation in most cases. Naturalized citizens are also expected to uphold the laws of their new country and fulfil their civic duties. You can obtain South African citizenship through three distinct pathways: birth, descent, and naturalisation. The South African Citizen Act of 1995 (Act 88 of 1995) was revised by the South African Citizenship Amendment Act of 2010 (Act 17 of 2010) which became effective on 1 January 2013.

The post-apartheid labour market in South Africa is a complex landscape shaped by historical legacies, socio-economic disparities, and policy interventions. The legacy of apartheid left a profound impact on the distribution of economic opportunities. After the end of apartheid in 1994, the government embarked on a journey to dismantle discriminatory labour practices and create a more inclusive and equitable job market. However, several intricacies continue to influence the employment dynamics for both natural-born citizens and those who acquired South African citizenship through naturalisation. Some of these intricacies are discussed below.

Throughout the apartheid regime in South Africa, a deeply troubling historical chapter, certain communities that had long faced systemic disadvantages found themselves subject to a particularly egregious form of discrimination. Among these groups, black South Africans bore the brunt of this exclusionary system. The apartheid regime not only perpetuated racial segregation but also extended its reach into the realm of economic opportunities. Black individuals were deliberately kept away from gaining access to skilled jobs and positions that offered better remuneration and prospects for advancement [6].

This exclusion was not accidental; rather, it was a meticulously crafted and ruthlessly enforced strategy to maintain a hierarchical social structure. The apartheid government enacted laws and policies that explicitly limited the aspirations and potential of black South Africans. These discriminatory measures encompassed every aspect of life, including employment. As a result, individuals from historically disadvantaged backgrounds were systematically denied access to educational and vocational training that would have enabled them to compete on an equal footing with their white counterparts.

The ramifications of this exclusion were far-reaching and multifaceted. Black South Africans faced a perpetuating cycle of limited economic mobility, as they were largely confined to low-skilled and poorly paid jobs. The denial of opportunities for career growth further entrenched socio-economic disparities, leaving a lasting impact on generations to come. The struggle for equal rights and the dismantling of apartheid was not just a fight against political segregation but also an endeavour to rectify economic injustices.

In sum, the systematic exclusion of historically disadvantaged groups, particularly black South Africans, from skilled employment and higher-paying roles during the apartheid era stands as a stark reminder of the deep-seated injustices that were perpetuated. This historical context underscores the imperative of ongoing efforts to rectify these injustices and create a more equitable and inclusive society for all.

While efforts have been made to redress these imbalances through affirmative action policies and employment equity initiatives, achieving true equality remains a challenge. The labour market faces a persistent issue of skills mismatch [1]. There is often a mismatch between the skills demanded by employers and those possessed by job seekers. This issue affects both citizens and naturalized individuals and can lead to underemployment or unemployment. Many naturalised citizens bring diverse educational backgrounds and work experiences from their countries of origin, but their qualifications may not always

align with the needs of the South African job market. This can lead to underemployment or difficulties in finding suitable positions, despite possessing valuable skills. Further, naturalised citizens, especially those from other African countries, often face discrimination and xenophobia in the workplace (OHCHR, 2022). Stereotypes and prejudices can result in limited opportunities for career advancement, unequal pay, or even job insecurity for these individuals. Further Naturalized individuals who are foreign-born may face challenges related to work permits and legal status. Employers may have certain preferences or biases when hiring individuals from different backgrounds.

The recognition of foreign qualifications can be a bureaucratic challenge, making it difficult for naturalised citizens to have their education and skills recognised by local authorities and potential employers (SAQA, 2021). This can hinder their access to certain professions and industries. South Africa is a linguistically diverse nation with twelve official languages. Naturalized citizens may face communication barriers in the workplace, particularly if their language proficiency does not align with the predominant languages used in their work environments. While social integration is vital for any citizen to feel a sense of belonging and participation in the workforce. Naturalized citizens may encounter challenges in integrating into local social networks, which can impact their access to job opportunities and professional networks.

Further, the labour market in South Africa is characterized by segmentation, where certain sectors or industries are dominated by specific racial or ethnic groups. This segmentation can create barriers for both citizens and naturalized individuals seeking employment in certain sectors. Labour market segmentation refers to the division of the labor market into distinct segments or categories based on various factors such as occupation, industry, skills, and often, race or ethnicity. In the context of South Africa, labour market segmentation has historical roots in the apartheid era, where racial discrimination was institutionalized, leading to significant disparities in employment opportunities for different racial or ethnic groups.

Even after the end of apartheid, the legacy of labour market segmentation persists, as certain sectors or industries continue to be dominated by specific racial or ethnic groups. This creates barriers for individuals from other racial or ethnic backgrounds who seek employment in those sectors. The dominance of certain racial groups in particular industries can be a result of historical privilege, access to education and skills training, social networks, and economic factors.

To address labour market segmentation, policymakers need to implement comprehensive and inclusive strategies that promote equal access to education and training opportunities for all racial and ethnic groups. Efforts to diversify and integrate the workforce across different sectors can help break down the barriers that perpetuate labour market segmentation. Additionally, promoting fair labour practices, anti-discrimination policies, and affirmative action measures can also play a role in creating a more inclusive and equitable labour market in South Africa.

In addition, the post-apartheid labour market is not immune to global economic trends and fluctuations. Economic downturns can affect job availability, while shifts in international trade and investment can impact the demand for specific skills and industries in South Africa (Allan et al., 2021). Further, disparities between urban and rural areas can create unequal access to employment opportunities. Naturalized citizens settling in rural areas may face limited job prospects compared to their urban counterparts, where industries and services are more concentrated.

In addition, the informal sector plays a substantial role in South Africa's economy, providing employment opportunities for many citizens and naturalized individuals. However, informal jobs often lack job security, social benefits, and other labour protections [5]. The term "informal economy" remains challenging to precisely define, with numerous attempts over the years to articulate a comprehensive and operational definition. In 1993, the Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (15th ICLS) took on the task of defining the informal sector.

According to the resolution, the informal sector can be broadly delineated as comprising units involved in the production of goods or services that aim primarily to foster employment opportunities and generate income for individuals. These units typically operate on a small scale and exhibit a low level of organizational complexity, with labour and capital elements of production displaying a limited or non-existent division (ILO, 2018).

Addressing these intricacies requires a multifaceted approach, including continued efforts to eliminate discrimination and xenophobia, enhance skills development and recognition processes, promote inclusive hiring practices, and bridge the urban-rural divide. Moreover, fostering an environment of understanding and appreciation for the diverse contributions of all citizens is crucial in building a united and prosperous post-apartheid South African labour market.

4. ASPECTS THAT SHAPE THE EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE FOR NATURALIZED CITIZENS

Have never seen that before... lies. I have seen it before, but just a few authors worry about this format. Mostly put everything together and then we must fix it somehow.

The unemployment situation in South Africa is a matter of significant concern, characterized by a notably high and persistent rate of joblessness. These socio-economic challenges have far-reaching consequences for the country's democracy. Poverty and inequality undermine the principles of equal opportunity and social justice, and limit citizens' ability to participate fully in democratic processes particularly naturalized citizens.

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, South Africa has faced significant challenges in recovering the jobs lost during the initial months of the crisis. As a result, the number of unemployed individuals reached a staggering 2,2 million (Smith, 2021). Although there was a decline in unemployment rates at the beginning of 2022, the country is still struggling to regain pre-pandemic employment levels with an unemployment rate of 32,9% in the first quarter of 2023 Statistics South Africa's "Quarterly Labour Force Survey" (QLFS, 2023) – one of the highest rates globally. This represents a 0.2-percentage point increase compared to the fourth quarter of 2022 and points to ongoing challenges in job creation and employment opportunities (QLFS, 2023).

In addition to the high unemployment rate, there is also a rise in time-related underemployment. Time-related underemployment refers to individuals who are employed but work fewer hours than a specified threshold and are therefore available for additional work. According to Statistics South Africa's QLFS, in the first quarter of 2023, 4,9% of employed persons fell within the category of time-related underemployment. This level is consistent with the underemployment recorded in the pre-COVID-19 period of Q1:2020, with a slight increase of 0,2 percentage points over these years' QLFS. This further underscores the need for effective policies and strategies to promote job creation and address the underutilisation of the workforce.

The employment landscape for naturalised citizens in South Africa is influenced by a wide range of aspects that impact their access to job opportunities, career progression, and overall integration into the workforce. Understanding these various factors is essential for crafting policies and initiatives that

promote inclusivity and equal opportunities for all citizens. Here are the key aspects shaping the employment landscape for naturalised citizens:

The legal framework governing citizenship and immigration plays a pivotal role in shaping the employment prospects of naturalised citizens. Clarity in citizenship policies, streamlined naturalisation processes, and the recognition of dual citizenship status can provide a more conducive environment for these individuals to participate in the labour market (OECD, 2018). The recognition of foreign qualifications is a critical aspect that affects naturalised citizens' ability to find employment commensurate with their skills and education. Streamlined and transparent processes for evaluating and validating foreign qualifications are essential to ensure their integration into the South African job market.

Additionally, affirmative action and employment equity policies aim to redress historical inequalities and promote representation of previously disadvantaged groups in the workplace. Policies that can create more opportunities for marginalised backgrounds, including black South Africans and other African immigrants. Affirmative action and employment equity are two sets of policies aimed at addressing historical inequalities and promoting the representation of previously disadvantaged groups in the workplace (Dupper & Garbers). These policies are often implemented in countries with a history of systemic discrimination and marginalization, such as South Africa, to rectify past injustices and foster diversity and inclusivity in the workforce.

Affirmative action refers to a set of proactive measures taken by employers or governments to ensure that individuals from historically disadvantaged groups have equal access to employment opportunities and are not discriminated against based on their race, ethnicity, gender, or other protected characteristics. The goal is to level the playing field and create a more equitable society.

Employment equity, on the other hand, focuses on specific mechanisms and strategies designed to achieve a representative and diverse workforce. It involves setting targets and goals for the proportional representation of previously disadvantaged groups within organisations, particularly at higher levels of employment. The policies might include initiatives such as preferential recruitment, targeted training programs, and mentorship opportunities for underrepresented groups.

However, it is essential to note that implementing such policies can be complex, and they should be designed and executed carefully to avoid potential reverse discrimination or other unintended consequences. The ultimate goal of affirmative action and employment equity is to create a fair and

inclusive society where everyone has equal access to opportunities and can contribute to the economy and society's growth regardless of their background.

South Africa's linguistic diversity [12] can present challenges for naturalised citizens, particularly if they are not proficient in one of the dominant languages used in their work environment. Language barriers can affect effective communication and limit career growth in certain industries. While discrimination and xenophobia remain prevalent issues in the labour market [10] affecting naturalized citizens, especially those from other African countries. Addressing these prejudices and fostering a culture of inclusivity and acceptance is crucial for creating a conducive work environment for all citizens.

Social integration is vital for naturalised citizens to build professional networks and access job opportunities. Supportive social environments and community networks can aid their assimilation into the workforce. While the demand for specific skills and industries in the labour market, as well as overall economic conditions, influence job availability for all citizens, including naturalised ones [3]. Economic downturns can exacerbate competition for jobs, impacting naturalised citizens' chances of securing employment.

Further, access to education and skills training can significantly impact naturalised citizens' employability. Adequate provision of educational opportunities and vocational training tailored to their needs can enhance their competitiveness in the job market. For naturalised citizens who were not born in South Africa, migration policies and work permits are essential aspects that determine their eligibility to work and remain in the country. Transparent and efficient migration procedures contribute to a more stable and secure workforce [11].

Recognising and valuing the work experience gained in other countries can positively impact naturalised citizens' career trajectories, allowing them to leverage their skills and expertise in the South African job market (OECD/ILO, 2018). Different industries and sectors may present unique challenges and opportunities for naturalised citizens. Understanding these sector-specific dynamics is crucial for targeted interventions and support.

Addressing these various aspects requires a comprehensive approach that involves collaboration between government agencies, employers, civil society, and the community. By fostering an inclusive environment that recognises and values the contributions of naturalised citizens, South Africa can harness

the full potential of its diverse workforce, driving economic growth and social cohesion in the post-apartheid era.

5. FOSTERING A PROSPEROUS AND HARMONIOUS FUTURE FOR SOUTH AFRICANS

South Africa held its first democratic elections in 1994, marking a historic moment as citizens from diverse racial backgrounds participated in the electoral process. The transition from the oppressive apartheid regime to democracy was a remarkable achievement, seemingly bringing about a peaceful conclusion to a long period of racial segregation and discrimination (Jahn, 2022). However, it was evident that considerable efforts were still needed to address the deep-rooted socio-economic disparities and challenges that had been exacerbated by decades of apartheid policies.

In pursuit of a more prosperous and harmonious future for all South Africans, including naturalized citizens, the exploration of invaluable insights becomes imperative. As the diverse tapestry of South Africa continues to evolve, so must our collective efforts to pave the way for growth, cohesion, and equitable opportunities. By delving into these insights, we aim to foster an inclusive society that celebrates cultural diversity, embraces unity, and enables each individual to thrive. This journey towards a brighter tomorrow necessitates a collaborative spirit and an unwavering commitment to uplifting every South African, regardless of their origin, towards a shared vision of prosperity and well-being. The insights offered below pave the way for a more prosperous and harmonious future for all South Africans.

The lingering legacy of apartheid continues to loom over South Africa, casting a long shadow that has resulted in profound and persistent socioeconomic challenges, deep divisions, and glaring disparities. Despite the nation's commendable progress in dismantling the formal structures of racial segregation, the scars of the past persist in various aspects of society [9]. These historical injustices have left both South African-born citizens and naturalised citizens grappling with systemic barriers that hinder their access to essential resources, quality education, and equal opportunities. As the country ardently pursues a path towards a more equitable and unified future, confronting these deeply rooted issues becomes an indispensable endeavour in fostering a genuinely inclusive and prosperous society for all its citizens. Only through collective dedication and decisive action can South Africa truly overcome the burdens of its history and embrace a brighter and more harmonious future for every member of its diverse population.

Naturalised citizens often bring diverse skills and qualifications from their countries of origin. Improving the recognition of foreign qualifications and facilitating skills development programs tailored

to the needs of these individuals can enhance their employability and contribution to the South African workforce [11]. Discrimination and xenophobia can hinder the integration of naturalised citizens into the labour market. Educational campaigns, awareness programs, and stricter measures against workplace discrimination can promote inclusivity and foster a sense of belonging among all citizens (Spatari, 2019). More so, South Africa's linguistic diversity [7] can be an asset for its workforce. Encouraging language training and creating inclusive work environments that respect and value linguistic differences can improve communication and collaboration among naturalised citizens and their local colleagues.

Further, social integration is crucial for creating a sense of community and belonging. Initiatives that facilitate the integration of naturalised citizens into local social networks and promote cultural exchange can strengthen social bonds and break down barriers [2]. While equitable access to education and training is essential for the development of a skilled and competitive workforce. Implementing accessible education programs that cater to the needs of all citizens, regardless of their background, can empower naturalized citizens to pursue diverse career opportunities (Commission, 2023). Employers should embrace inclusive hiring practices that value diversity and consider the unique strengths and experiences of naturalised citizens. Diverse workforces have been shown to drive innovation and foster a more inclusive work culture.

Additionally, a prosperous future for all South Africans depends on sustained economic growth and investment. A prosperous future for all South Africans hinges on the foundation of sustained economic growth and robust investment. Economic growth creates a ripple effect that extends beyond financial metrics, touching every facet of society (United Nations, 2019). As the economy expands, it generates job opportunities, enhances living standards, and increases revenue for essential public services. This growth fosters innovation, encourages entrepreneurship, and fuels technological advancements, positioning the nation on a trajectory of progress.

However, economic growth cannot thrive in isolation; it requires significant investment in various sectors. Investments stimulate infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and research, creating an environment conducive to productivity and competitiveness. A thriving economy attracts both domestic and foreign investors, further propelling growth through capital infusion and knowledge exchange. Ultimately, a nation's prosperity is interwoven with its economic health and investment landscape, as they collectively pave the way for equitable opportunities, improved quality of life, and a brighter future for all South Africans. Creating a favourable business environment, attracting foreign direct investment [8] and supporting local entrepreneurship can generate job opportunities for naturalized citizens and the broader

workforce. While collaborations between government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and community groups can provide a holistic approach to addressing the challenges faced by naturalized citizens in the labour market. Working together can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions.

Furthermore, the challenge of integrating into social and professional networks adds to the difficulties naturalized citizens in South Africa encounter in the competitive job market. Networking is more than just exchanging business cards; it is a powerful tool that can propel career advancement. When naturalized citizens actively cultivate relationships within their industry, they open doors to referrals and recommendations that can remarkably influence their career trajectory. The presence of advocates within one's network who can confidently vouch for their skills, work ethic, and expertise can fast-track professional growth (Wolover, 2019). These advocates serve as trusted endorsers, showcasing an individual's value to potential employers, clients, or collaborators. This endorsement not only expedites the hiring process but also instils confidence in decision-makers, giving naturalized citizens a competitive edge. By building a network of supporters who champion their abilities, these citizens can overcome initial barriers and ascend the ranks more swiftly, demonstrating the tangible impact of networking on their journey toward success in South Africa's dynamic job landscape.

By focusing on these aspects and implementing proactive policies, South Africa can unlock the full potential of its diverse citizenry. Embracing naturalized citizens as integral members of society and the labour force will contribute to a more prosperous, harmonious, and united future for all South Africans.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article has delved into a crucial aspect of South African society by examining the employment implications for individuals who acquired citizenship through naturalization after the historic milestone of 27 April 1994 – the end of apartheid. Through a comprehensive analysis of challenges and opportunities in the labour market, this study has shed light on the complex dynamics these citizens face, considering the historical context. The findings of this research have brought to the forefront some disheartening realities. Discrimination, a remnant of the past, still presents a significant barrier for naturalized citizens seeking employment opportunities. Additionally, the struggle for recognition of their skills and qualifications persists, limiting their access to suitable and fulfilling jobs. Furthermore, the challenge of integrating into social and professional networks adds to the difficulties they encounter in the competitive job market.

Despite these hurdles, this study also reveals encouraging insights. Language proficiency and cultural adaptability among naturalized citizens emerge as valuable assets in the workforce, offering potential advantages that positively impact job performance and contribute to harmonious workplace interactions.

This research underscores the utmost importance of fostering inclusivity and equity in the workforce. The key to realising the full potential of all citizens, regardless of their citizenship origins, lies in the creation of an environment that embraces diversity and actively combats discrimination.

Policymakers, employers, and stakeholders can leverage the insights gleaned from this study to develop targeted initiatives that prioritize inclusivity. By implementing comprehensive policies that address skills recognition, social integration, and equal opportunities, South Africa can build a stronger and more united society.

The implications of this research extend beyond the labour market. Creating a truly inclusive society goes hand in hand with national progress. As South Africa continues its journey towards a more equitable future, ensuring that naturalized citizens can fully participate in and contribute to the nation's growth is vital. By providing equal access to opportunities and breaking down barriers, South Africa can harness the rich talents and diverse perspectives of its citizens to drive innovation, economic growth, and social cohesion.

In the pursuit of an inclusive and equitable work environment, this article's findings serve as a valuable compass, guiding policymakers, employers, and stakeholders towards sustainable and meaningful change. By acting based on these insights, South Africa can fortify its position as a beacon of progress and unity, where every individual's contribution is celebrated, irrespective of their citizenship history.

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