

# Portrayal of Skilled Migrants' Careers in Business and Management Studies: A Review of the Literature and Future Research Agenda

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*A systematic literature review in business and management studies was conducted, which paints a portrait of the existing literature on skilled migrants' host country career experiences. Core themes arising from this review are presented, including labeling inconsistency concerning the population (with researchers using terminology such as 'skilled migrants,' 'immigrant professionals' and 'qualified immigrants' interchangeably); the need for including skilled migrant managers and business professionals in research (rather than concentrating on lower-level employment categories only); and a more relational, holistic realization of skilled migrants' careers (rather than the current literature's negative portrayal, propounding the image of migrants as exploited or under-utilized). In underlining the gaps in the literature and research in this area, a research agenda is proposed. The review is relevant for individuals following careers in a foreign country; for organizations employing and developing the careers of internationally mobile employees; and for human resource management professionals supporting international employees.*

**Keywords:** skilled migrant; career; systematic literature review; immigrant professional; qualified immigrant; self-initiated expatriate

## Introduction

In the last ten years, internationally mobile professionals beyond the organization-assigned expatriate are increasingly discussed in management and organization studies. International migrants, as one category of international labor inflows to countries, have been recognized as valuable human resources to organizations and countries (Syed & Murray 2009; Al Ariss & Syed 2011; Cerdin *et al.* 2014). Skilled migrants, for the purpose of this paper, are defined as having a university degree or extensive experience in a given field (Iredale 1999). Their potential contribution to organizations and countries is considerable with skilled migrants embodying a significant resource of skills that can alleviate or even solve skills shortages in specific sectors (Borjas 2001). Nevertheless, existing knowledge on skilled migrants'

careers in management and organization-related studies requires synthesis, consideration of gaps in the existing research, and direction towards future research opportunities. We attempt to contribute to this special issue by addressing each of these concerns in turn. Specifically, this paper paints a portrait of the existing literature on skilled migrants' careers in management studies. It shines a spotlight on the research gaps in this area and proposes a research agenda to tackle those research gaps.

A systematic literature review (SLR) (Tranfield *et al.* 2003; Petticrew & Roberts 2006) was undertaken drawing on literature in the business and management domains. The next section details how this SLR was conducted facilitating replicability for other researchers. We balance the discussion on SLRs by both outlining the limitations of the SLR process and emphasizing its contribution to management research. Then we highlight, from our review, the main themes in the literature on skilled migrants in the business academic domain. We identify the gaps in the extant literature and, finally, suggest a research agenda.

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The primary contribution of this paper is for the benefit of management researchers in providing a synthesis of research themes on skilled migrants' careers in business and management studies. Second, for organizations, managers and human resource managers employing skilled migrants, the paper highlights the common challenges and benefits associated with this international labor population across the literature, and the organizational supports that may be required. Third, for skilled migrants, the paper unpacks from the detailed SLR the dynamic multilevel factors impacting on their workplace experiences and careers in a foreign country, providing researchers and practitioners alike with a better understanding of the consolidated facilitators and challenges skilled migrants face in their careers.

### Research approach: the systematic literature review

The systematic literature review model (SLR) has been proposed as a useful research method in management studies in order to overcome the criticism that literature reviews in this area are deficient in evidence and rigor (Tranfield *et al.* 2003). Having attained popularity in the discipline of medicine, it is acknowledged that, when applied to management studies and social science literature, the SLR model relies largely on the subjective judgement and interpretation of the researcher(s), who determine the articles to ultimately include or exclude for particular reasons (Denyer & Tranfield 2009). In this way, it is recognized that the SLR process is an iterative process, 'requiring researchers to engage with each stage in a reflexive way' (Arksey & O'Malley 2005: 22). Below we explain how this was done for this paper.

The five steps in the SLR model are as follows (Pittaway *et al.* 2004; Denyer & Tranfield 2009): (1) scoping study (identification of broad topics to be included; career and skilled migrant were the core topics in our search); (2) pilot testing search strings (in our case, the initial search was 'skilled migrant,' or 'migration' and 'career;' we subsequently added 'immigrant professional' or 'qualified immigrant' to the search strings); (3) categorizing results (determining if there is duplication or irrelevant results; this was the most iterative and time-consuming of the filtering process, where the coauthors individually and collaboratively determined which articles were most relevant to the SLR analysis); (4) reviewing relevant articles/sources (reading remaining sources, including relevant articles in the references of those articles returned from the SLR); and finally, (5) synthesizing and critiquing relevant articles (in order to determine themes and gaps). While these steps appear linear, they are actually more reflexive in practice. For instance, in synthesizing and critiquing the relevant

articles in our SLR (step 5 above), we discovered that articles on 'immigrant professionals' and 'qualified immigrants' were missing. In our analysis, both qualified immigrants and immigrant professionals are analogous with skilled migrants as an international labor category. This led to us refining our search strings (steps 1 and 2 above) to allow us to categorize and review those returns (steps 3 and 4).

The Web of Science database (including 2.6 million records, <http://wokinfo.com/>) was the repository searched for the SLR (cf. Özbilgin *et al.* 2011). Within the Web of Science database, the Social Sciences Citation Index (1956–present) was selected and all articles between 2000 and 2015 were searched. Our focus in this review was on recent research and literature on migrants' careers, so we limited the search to publications since 2000 (cf. Andresen *et al.* 2014).

We searched for articles which had in their topic 'career' and either 'migration,' or 'skilled migrant,' or 'qualified immigrant,' or 'immigrant professional.' The initial return (excluding qualified immigrant or immigrant professional) was 25,373, which rose to 25,588 when we included those terms in the search string. We filtered out any non-English language articles which reduced the articles to 23,934. We then refined the search to the single research area of *Business and Economics*, which reduced the returns to 4,128 articles. Next, we refined by two Web of Science categories: business and management, which resulted in 451 articles. We refined the search by document type and kept in only articles (not book reviews, or proceedings papers). This resulted in 406 articles remaining. Then we filtered out articles that were not published in general business and management journals. For instance, we excluded articles (called 'source titles' on the database) published in scientific or technological journals such as *Science, Technology and Society* and *Information Systems Research*, where migration referred to IT systems rather than the population of migrants being investigated in this review; and in marketing-specific journals such as *Marketing Science* and *Advances in Marketing Research*, where the focus was more on consumer migration. Our focus in the review was on publications in business and management peer-reviewed journals only, concerning career and where the population being studied was identified as skilled migrants, in line with the research focus in the scoping study (first stage in a SLR). This reduced the number of potential articles in the review to 217 (see Appendix 1 for the detailed search string).

Next, we focused on ABS-rated journals only (<http://charteredabs.org/academic-journal-guide-2015-view/>), as a means of further filtering the journals and the corresponding articles to be reviewed, according to an objective quality ranking system. Articles published in ABS-ranked journals undergo a stringent peer-review process to meet quality expectations. This filtering of both

non-relevant and non-ABS-ranked journals narrowed our search to 170 articles.

Next, we reviewed the titles of the articles in those journals, and if we were unclear from the titles whether or not the article would be relevant (that is, included content on migrants' careers in business and management studies), we read the article's abstract, removing from our review any articles which did not focus on our broad search topics of career and skilled migrants. The criteria we adopted was to consider if, from the abstract and the title, it was clear that the article concerned career or career-related topics, related to skilled non-host country nationals, that is, for skilled migrants/internationally mobile professionals. This is the 3rd step in the SLR approach – categorizing results and removing irrelevant returns. It is here that researcher discretion and the subjectivity of the researcher is paramount in making the judgement whether or not to include or exclude articles from the review (Denyer & Tranfield 2009). The decision to exclude papers here was verified among the authors, thereby granting some element of rigor and reliability in the methodology of our exclusion criteria. It is an iterative process, filtering down articles until there was agreement amongst the authors that the remaining articles were relevant and required further analysis. In order to facilitate replicability of our process for other researchers, our process here was as follows: we individually went through each of the articles that were returned (their titles and abstracts) and selected those which we felt warranted inclusion in the SLR. Those lists were compared between all researchers, until the shortlisted 47 papers were reached. The questions we posed in determining which papers to exclude were: Is the article concerned with the population of interest, with the search string terms used in the article (migration or skilled migrant or immigrant professional or qualified immigrant)? Is the article concerned with the workplace careers of this population, or the workplace experiences of this population which would have an impact on their careers? Articles were excluded which concerned, for example, remittances, or welfare chasing, or domestic migration, or undocumented migrants, or economic migration flows, since our focus was on the *careers* of skilled migrants in the host country. This is the stage which underlines the researcher's role in the SLR and could be considered one limitation of the SLR process in business and management studies, where researcher subjectivity is used to determine exclusivity criteria to shortlist the articles in the review. This influences the replicability of SLRs across researchers in the business and management domain. However, we hope that our documentation of the process we undertook for this study will aid other researchers undertaking SLRs.

Each of the 47 remaining articles were reviewed, in line with step four of the SLR process, and then finally (step 5) categorized thematically and critiqued with regards to

apparent research gaps in the area. While considering our returned articles from the SLR, we found that certain articles were missing. This was because some journals are not included in the Social Sciences Citation Index on the Web of Science database we were searching, notably the *Journal of Management Development* which had published a special issue on the careers of skilled migrants in 2013. This is a further limitation of database-specific SLRs in business and management studies, where not all journals are included on the search databases. We retrospectively included this journal in separate searches and added the relevant articles from the *Journal of Management Development* to this review (n=5), bringing the total number of articles in this SLR to 52. Table 1 summarizes the articles that were included in the review and which form the basis of the discussion in the rest of the paper.

However, there may be other journals which were also excluded in our SLR. We recommend that future SLRs in this domain extend the search to include other databases with as wide a journal inclusion listing as possible in order to overcome this shortcoming. It would be interesting to compare such a study with the one conducted here in order to ascertain if the same common themes were apparent. This again underlines the importance of researcher discretion and reflexivity in practice when conducting a database-specific SLR. It also shows that SLRs in business and management studies are currently cumbersome in practice, but we hope that this will improve as more journals are affiliated with the main academic databases in time. SLRs, therefore, in practice are iterative and never final given the limitations of journals that may not be on particular databases, given the ongoing publications taking place which can render SLRs outdated after a short period of time, and given the researchers' judgement calls which ultimately determine which articles remain in the review or not. Nonetheless, SLRs do facilitate a pathway for replicable and comparative studies when the process followed is clearly delineated, as we have attempted to do above.

The abstracts and papers of all 52 articles were read and considered thematically. 'Synthesizing evidence is like assembling a jigsaw' (Petticrew & Roberts 2006: 125), with the four preceding steps of the SLR being concerned with finding the right pieces. In this SLR, the analysis involved organizing the returned papers into groups of meta-themes and analyzing each paper's findings within its theme. To ensure thematic consistency and reliability, the coauthors reviewed the original themes put forward by the first author, which were then discussed until agreement was reached between all authors as to the core themes in the recent literature on migration/migrants and careers in business and management studies. The meta-theme column in Table 1 presents how we categorized each paper under the themes we identified across the

Table 1 Papers included in the Systematic Literature Review

Title	Author(s)	Journal	Year	Core Paper Theme	Meta Theme	Method
Activating Cross-border Brokerage: Interorganizational Knowledge Transfer through Skilled Return Migration	Wang, D	ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCE QUARTERLY	2015	Knowledge transfer through returning migrants	Business case for human resource management of skilled migrants	Quantitative survey of 3012 returned migrants
An empirical study of nation branding for attracting internationally mobile skilled professionals	Silvanto, S, Ryan, J & McNulty, Y	CAREER DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONAL	2015	Holistic approach to nation branding campaigns to attract migrants	Business case for human resource management of skilled migrants	Use of secondary data to test 6 hypotheses
Researching expatriate types: the quest for rigorous methodological approaches	Tharenou, P.	HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	2015	Methodological issues associated with research into 3 expatriate types and advice on how future research can be conducted to improve the robustness of results.	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus	Extensive database searches of empirical studies on 3 expatriate types
Recognizing the important role of self-initiated expatriates in effective global talent management	Vaiman, V, Haslberger, A & Vance, CM	HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT REVIEW	2015	Effective utilization of SIEs; acknowledgement of SIEs/skilled migrants blurred distinction	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus	Conceptual paper
Accounting for variations in the patterns of mobility among conventional and self-initiated expatriates	Alshahrami, ST & Morley, MJ	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2015	Comparing patterns of mobility and finding differences, with SIEs; SIEs/skilled migrants blurred distinction	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus	Quantitative, data obtained from 344-self-initiated and 74 conventional expatriates in the banking sector in Saudi Arabia
Managing the well-being of temporary skilled migrants	Bahn, S	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2015	Western Australia's answer to skills shortages; human capital and vulnerability of temporary skilled migrants; assimilation strategies at HRM/org level to support retention and well being	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Mixed method – secondary data and semi-structured interviews
The skill paradox: explaining and reducing employment discrimination against skilled immigrants	Dietz, J, Joshi, C, Esses, VM, Hamilton, LK & Gabarrot, F	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2015	Discrimination of skilled migrants	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Quantitative, experimental laboratory setting
Human resource management of international migrants: current theories and future research	Guo, C & Al Ariss, A	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2015	Better understanding of human resource management of international migrants	Business case for human resource management of skilled migrants	Conceptual/ Review
Cross-cultural adjustment of skilled migrants in a multicultural and multilingual environment:	Ravasi, C, Salamin, X & Davoine, E	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2015	Support practices which could improve adjustment of migrants	Motivations to migrate and the acculturation of skilled migrants	Quantitative study of foreign

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Table 1 (Continued)

<i>Title</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Core Paper Theme</i>	<i>Meta Theme</i>	<i>Method</i>
an explorative study of foreign employees and their spouses in the Swiss context	Zikic, J	<i>HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</i>	2015	Intelligent career theory and resource-based view of diversity to leverage skilled migrant career capital for human resource management	Focus on career and career development	employees and spouses
Skilled migrants' career capital as a source of competitive advantage: implications for strategic HRM		<i>INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</i>				Conceptual paper
Multiculturalism as a Strategy for National Competitiveness: The Case for Canada and Australia	Ng, E. & Metz, I.	<i>JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS</i>	2015	Multiculturalism as a source of competitive advantage for countries	Business case for human resource management of skilled migrants	Multiculturalism policy index statistics for Canada and Australia
Chinese international business graduates: A career dilemma: Repatriate or stay?	Tharenou, P	<i>JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT &amp; ORGANIZATION</i>	2015	Push and pull factors to return or remain – multiple factors influencing decision making	Motivations to migrate and the acculturation of skilled migrants	Secondary data and empirical data from 46 studies of Chinese coursework graduates
The role of highly skilled migrants in the process of inter-firm knowledge transfer across borders	Liu, XH, Gao, L, Lu, JY & Wei, YQ	<i>JOURNAL OF WORLD BUSINESS</i>	2015	International knowledge transfer – organizational level	Business case for human resource management of skilled migrants	Multiple case studies
Does Social Influence Span Time and Space? Evidence from Indian Returnee Entrepreneurs	Qin, F & Estrin, S	<i>STRATEGIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP JOURNAL</i>	2015	Returning migrants, entrepreneurship, social networks	Skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions under researched	Quantitative – dataset of overseas alumni of a top Indian university
Action Programs for Ethnic Minorities: A Question of Corporate Social Responsibility?	Podsiadlowski, A & Reichel, A	<i>BUSINESS &amp; SOCIETY</i>	2014	Diversity and corporate social responsibility	Business case for human resource management of skilled migrants	Quantitative, multilevel modelling with 1865 organizations from 10 countries
Engaging institutions in global careers: highly skilled self-initiated expatriates' journeys through a Nordic welfare state	Bjerregaard, T	<i>EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT JOURNAL</i>	2014	Examination of the interaction between institutional contexts and agency in self-initiated global careers – different factors influencing career	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Field-based study of SIEs' encounters with the institutions of a Nordic welfare state, with interviews, observations, and document analyses.

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Table 1 (Continued)

Title	Author(s)	Journal	Year	Core Paper Theme	Meta Theme	Method
Founder nativity, founding team formation, and firm performance in the U.S. high-tech sector	Hart, DM	INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	2014	Founder nativity, foreign-born entrepreneurs, and skilled migrants - blurred distinction. Entrepreneurial migrants	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus Skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions under researched	Quantitative and qualitative data on the U.S. high-tech sector
The relationship between the migration experience and risk perception: A factor in the decision to become an entrepreneur	Hormiga, E & Bolivar-Cruz, A	INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	2014	Migration experience and entrepreneurship in host country	Skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions under researched	Data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Spain 2009 Survey
Addressing international mobility confusion - developing definitions and differentiations for self-initiated and assigned expatriates as well as migrants	Andresen, M, Bergdolt, F, Margenfeld, J & Drickmann, M	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2014	SIEs/skilled migrants blurred distinction	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus	Conceptual paper, content analysis
Who is a self-initiated expatriate? Towards conceptual clarity of a common notion	Cerdin, JL & Selmer, J	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2014	Definition of an SIE according to four criteria which must all be fulfilled at the same time. SIEs/skilled migrants blurred distinction leading to this discussion	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus	Conceptual paper
A test of the relationship between person-environment fit and cross-cultural adjustment among self-initiated expatriates	Nolan, EM & Morley, MJ	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2014	Adjustment. Implications for organizations when recruiting and supporting SIEs; SIEs/skilled migrants blurred distinction	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus	Quantitative data gathered from 369 self-initiated expatriate doctors working in Ireland
Career capital development of self-initiated expatriates in Qatar: cosmopolitan globetrotters, experts and outsiders	Rodriguez, JK & Scurry, T	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2014	Career capital development influenced at micro-individual, meso-organizational and macro-country level; contextual relevance important	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants Career & career development	Qualitative data gathered in Qatar from 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews
Qualified immigrants' success: Exploring the motivation to migrate and to integrate	Cerdin, JL, Dine, MA & Brewster, C	JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STUDIES	2014	Success of qualified immigrants linked to motivation to integrate explained by motivation to migrate - multiple factors to help explain career success	Focus on career & career development Motivations to migrate and the acculturation of skilled migrants	Qualitative research with qualified immigrants in France
Self-initiated expatriation and migration in the management literature: Present theorizations and future research directions	Al Attiss, A & Crowley-Henry, M	CAREER DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONAL	2013	Comparison, blurring of terms; SIEs/skilled migrants blurred distinction	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus	Conceptual paper

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Table 1 (Continued)

Title	Author(s)	Journal	Year	Core Paper Theme	Meta Theme	Method
The relative stability of national career patterns in European top management careers in the age of globalisation: A comparative study in France/Germany/Great Britain and Switzerland	Davoine & Ravasi	EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	2013	Increase in number of foreign nationals in senior executive positions over last decades	Skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions underresearched	Quantitative: biographical and career related data from 916 top managers in 111 companies across France, Germany, Great Britain and Switzerland Qualitative interviews in France and Germany
Understanding career experiences of skilled minority ethnic workers in France and Germany	Al Ariss, A, Vassilopoulou, J, Ozbilgin, MF & Game, A	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2013	Bourdieuan analysis of agency of skilled migrants; in context of inequality structures	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Qualitative, 4 case studies comparing the strategies of 3 UK trade unions towards organizing low-paid migrants
Organising migrants as workers or as migrant workers? Intersectionality, trade unions and precarious work	Alberti, G, Holgate, J & Tapia, M	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2013	Vulnerability and diversity of migrants in the labor market; need to promote the successful involvement of vulnerable migrants into trade unions	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Qualitative, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 32 informants Conceptual paper
Chinese professional immigrants in Australia: a gendered pattern in (re)building their careers	Cooke, FL, Zhang, JY & Wang, J	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2013	Career motivation and development of Chinese women immigrants in Australia	Focus on career and career development	Qualitative, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 32 informants Conceptual paper
Vulnerable work and international migrants: a relational human resource management perspective	Hakak, LT & Al Ariss, A	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2013	Relational perspective to migrant vulnerability	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Conceptual paper
The Evolving Diaspora of Talent: A Perspective on Trends and Implications for Sourcing Science and Engineering Work	Lewin, AY & Zhong, X	INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT	2013	STEM talent networks at macrolevel, globalization of innovation	Skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions underresearched Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants Business case for human resource management of skilled migrants	Conceptual paper, secondary data
Negotiating future careers-A relational perspective on skilled migrants' labour market participation	Fossland	JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT	2013	Recruitment and participation is multilayered and relational	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Qualitative, interviews
The Hesitant Hai Gui: Return-Migration Preferences of U.S.-	Zeithammer, R & Kellogg, RP	JOURNAL OF MARKETING RESEARCH	2013	Chinese STEM doctoral students reasons to remain in USA due to	Focus on career and career development Motivations to migrate and	Quantitative, survey

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Table 1 (Continued)

Title	Author(s)	Journal	Year	Core Paper Theme	Meta Theme	Method
Educated Chinese Scientists and Engineers				salary differentials with China – motivations/choices	the acculturation of skilled migrants	
Motivation and adjustment of self-initiated expatriates: the case of expatriate academics in South Korea	Froese, FJ	<i>INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</i>	2012	Skilled migrants–academics – motivation and adjustment; SIEs/skilled migrants blurred distinction	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus Motivations to migrate and the acculturation of skilled migrants	Qualitative study, 30 academics
Pre-migration adaptation of highly skilled self-initiated foreign employees: the case of an EU agency	Yijala, A, Jasinskaja-Lahti, I, Likki, T & Stein, D	<i>INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</i>	2012	Adaptation of SIEs pre-migration; SIEs/skilled migrants blurred distinction	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus Motivations to migrate and the acculturation of skilled migrants	Quantitative study, 95 people surveyed
The role of (transnational) social capital in the start-up processes of immigrant businesses: The case of Chinese and Turkish restaurant businesses in Finland	Katila, S & Wahlbeck, O	<i>INTERNATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS JOURNAL</i>	2012	Social capital of Chinese and Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland	Skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions underresearched	Qualitative interviews with 2 groups
Careers of skilled migrants: towards a theoretical and methodological expansion.	Al Ariss, Koall, Ozbilgin & Suutari	<i>JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT</i>	2012	Critical review of literature; relational view of careers; need to expand research to include more reflexive methods	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Conceptual paper, review
Self-initiated expatriates and their career success	Cao, Hirschi & Deller	<i>JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT</i>	2012	Labelling inconsistency	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus	Conceptual paper
Careers and talents not to be wasted. Skilled immigrants' journeys through psychological states en route to satisfying employment	Pearson, Hammond, Heffernan & Turner	<i>JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT</i>	2012	Typology of four psychological responses to employment status of skilled migrants based on research in Ireland.	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Mixed methods, 309 Polish immigrants surveyed; 12 Polish immigrants interviewed
Careers of skilled migrants: Understanding the experiences of Malagasy physicians in France	Ramboarison-Lalao, Al Ariss & Barth	<i>JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT</i>	2012	Contextual-specific paper, different career profiles among skilled migrants	Focus on career and career development	Qualitative life stories
Capital Mobilization of Skilled Migrants: A Relational Perspective	Al Ariss, A & Syed, J	<i>BRITISH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT</i>	2011	Multilevel perspective on capital mobilization of skilled migrants; relational perspective across micro-, meso-, macrolevels	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Qualitative study
Modes of engagement: migration, self-initiated expatriation, and career development	Al Ariss, A	<i>CAREER DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONAL</i>	2010	Careers and career development of skilled migrants in France, navigating macrostructural challenges and the role of agency	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants Focus on career and career development	Qualitative interviews

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Table 1 (Continued)

Title	Author(s)	Journal	Year	Core Paper Theme	Meta Theme	Method
Crossing national boundaries: A typology of qualified immigrants' career orientations	Zikic, J, Bonache, J & Cerdin, JL	JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR	2010	Career orientations; subjective/objective career interlinkage (not independent, but coexistent), more holistic fine-grained view of career	Focus on career and career development	Qualitative study, 45 qualified immigrants in Canada, Spain and France
International careers of Indian workers in Tokyo Examination and future directions	Agullo, B & Egawa, M	CAREER DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONAL	2009	Heterogeneity of career patterns of skilled migrants/Indian knowledge workers in Tokyo	Focus on career and career development	Secondary data and previous qualitative studies
The relative importance of motives for international self-initiated mobility	Thom, K	CAREER DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONAL	2009	Dynamic, heterogeneous motivations to move internationally; SIEs/skilled migrants blurred distinction	Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Quantitative methodology, with over 2600 internet survey responses
Transnational Entrepreneurship: Determinants of Firm Type and Owner Attributions of Success	Sequeira, JM, Carr, JC & Rasheed, AA	ENTREPRENEURSHIP THEORY AND PRACTICE	2009	Immigrant entrepreneurs and types of business they engage in depending on host and home country affiliations	Motivations to migrate and the acculturation of skilled migrants Skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions underresearched	from highly educated New Zealanders living and working around the world Quantitative survey of 1202 transnational business owners drawn from the Comparative Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project database
Career success of immigrant professionals: stock and flow of their career capital	Fang, T, Zikic, J & Novicevic, MM	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANPOWER	2009	Focus on individual and organizational human capital investment and resultant career success. Discrimination, additional career challenges of skilled migrants	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants Focus on career and career development	Analysis based on the 2003 Canadian Workplace and Employee Survey (WES)
Employment prospects for skilled migrants: A relational perspective	Syed, J	HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT REVIEW	2008	Human capital/skills of skilled migrants alone not sufficient to determine their employment prospects. Relational perspective across macro-, meso- and microlevels required	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Conceptual paper
Cultural diversity in hospitality work: the Northern Ireland experience	Devine, F, Baum, T, Heams, N & Devine, A	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	2007	Macrolevel consideration of immigrants in the hospitality industry including relevance of social integration	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants Skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions underresearched	Quantitative survey of migrant workers in nine hotels in Northern Ireland; focus groups with migrant employees in all survey establishments

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Table 1 (Continued)

<i>Title</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Core Paper Theme</i>	<i>Meta Theme</i>	<i>Method</i>
A global link between national diversity policies? The case of the migration of Nigerian physicians to the UK and USA	Healy, G & Oikelome, F	<i>INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</i>	2007	Importance of global diversity strategies for African medical professionals emigrating to UK and USA	Skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions underresearched Business case for Human Resource Management of skilled migrants	Conceptual paper
Brain drain: Inclination to stay abroad after studies	Bamuch, Y, Budhwar, PS & Khatri, N	<i>JOURNAL OF WORLD BUSINESS</i>	2007	Brain drain of international students, motive to stay depending on perceptions of ethnic difference/labor market; adjustment to host country, family in home country – different motives	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants Motivations to migrate and the acculturation of skilled migrants	Quantitative survey of 949 management students
From global careers to talent flow: Reinterpreting 'brain drain'	Carr, S, Inkson, K & Thom, K	<i>JOURNAL OF WORLD BUSINESS</i>	2005	Brain drain to talent flow; macro level	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Quantitative – New Zealand case study, e-survey of 2200 expat professional New Zealanders
Paths into the economy: structural barriers and the job hunt for skilled PRC migrants in Canada	Salaff, J, Greve, A & Ping, LXL	<i>INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</i>	2002	Structural career barriers to high level jobs for skilled Chinese migrants in Canada; challenges	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Qualitative – 32 couples interviewed in 1999-2001

**Table 2** Frequency of Articles (on Migration OR Skilled Migrants OR Immigrant Professionals OR and Careers) in Business and Management Studies' Journals (Web of Science Database, 2015)

Publication year	Record/count	% of total count (/52 articles)
2015	14	26.92
2014	9	17.31
2013	9	17.31
2012	6	11.54
2011	2	3.85
2010	2	3.85
2009	4	7.69
2008	1	1.92
2007	3	5.77
2005	1	1.92
2002	1	1.92

literature. These themes are considered individually in the Findings and Discussion section of this paper.

Table 2 gives an overview of the number of articles in our SLR since 2000. That table shows that publications relating to skilled migrants' careers in business and management studies have grown in recent years, which is testimony to the growing academic interest in the area of international migrants' careers in the business and management domain.

In addition, it is clear from our review that the journal publishing most in this area is the *International Journal of Human Resource Management* (at over 32% of all articles in this domain), followed by *Career Development International* (at over 8%). See Table 3. However, it is also evident that interest in this topic is far-reaching, with 20 journals (including top generalist journals such as *Journal of International Business Studies* and *Human Resource Management Journal*) having published relevant articles. The widespread interest in the skilled migrant population's career experiences in the host country, with this present review only focused in the business and management publications, highlights its multi- and cross-disciplinary research potential internationally.

**Table 3** Primary journals publishing articles on migration, skilled migrants and careers in business and management studies (Web of Science Database, December 2015)

Journal Title	Record Count	% of total (of the 59 articles)
<i>International Journal of Human Resource Management</i>	19	32.203
<i>Journal of Management Development</i>	5	8.474
<i>Career Development International</i>	5	8.474
<i>Journal of World Business</i>	3	5.084
<i>European Management Journal</i>	2	3.389
<i>Human Resource Management Review</i>	2	3.389
<i>International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal</i>	2	3.389

With the following journals having published one article in this space between 2000–2015 and representing 1.694% respectively of publications here: *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *British Journal of Management*, *Business and Society*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *Human Resource Management Journal*, *International Journal of Manpower*, *International Small Business Journal*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of International Management*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*

Table 1 lists the papers included in this SLR, the theme of the respective paper, our categorization of the paper according to the meta-themes we found, and the research method undertaken in the paper. While each paper adds value in its own right, and we have attempted to summarize some of the main elements of these papers, the purpose of an SLR is to synthesize and group broad themes in order to inform researchers about the existing literature foci and to pinpoint research gaps which could be addressed in future studies. Table 4 presents the six meta-themes we found in our analysis of the literature. While some papers appeared to us to be relevant across more than one theme, we attempted to categorize them, where possible, under one main category/theme. However, for several papers, more than one category was assigned.

We elaborate further upon Table 4, with examples and literature from Table 1, next, in the following section, where we focus on the meta-themes we found during our synthesis of the papers in our SLR (step 5 of the SLR process).

### Findings and discussion: core themes arising from the SLR

The six core themes we found from our review are as follows: terminology inconsistency blurring research focus; pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants; skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions underresearched; focus on career/career development; motivations to migrate and the acculturation of skilled migrants; and the business case for human resource management of skilled migrants. We discuss each of these, next.

#### *Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus*

The literature is concerned about the persistent usage of different terminology by different authors in different

**Table 4** Discussion: main themes arising From The SLR

Broad theme	Analysis	Example papers	Gap / future research requirement
Terminology inconsistency blurring research focus	There is a requirement for definitional clarity regarding the different terms used in research on the skilled migrant population (Cao <i>et al.</i> 2012; Tharenou 2015). Additionally, there is overlap regarding the specific issues and factors concerning this particular population as a distinct internationally mobile group and the SIE population (see discussion in Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry 2013). There is a clear stated need for conceptual clarity in order to facilitate comparative research.	Skilled migrants (Bahn 2015; Ravasi <i>et al.</i> 2015; Zikic 2015); Skilled immigrants (Dietz <i>et al.</i> 2015); Internationally mobile skilled professionals (Silvanto <i>et al.</i> 2015); Immigrant professionals (Fang <i>et al.</i> 2009); Qualified immigrants (Zikic <i>et al.</i> 2010; Cerdin <i>et al.</i> 2014); Foreign-born (Hart 2014); Self-initiated expatriates addressing the same pertinent issues as relevant for skilled migrants (Thorn 2009; Alshahrani & Morley 2015; Vaiman <i>et al.</i> 2015).	More focus could be on unpacking further the specific issues running across different internationally mobile populations, highlighting contextual/institutional, background and time period influences on how those issues are perceived, supported and managed by different international populations. In other words, rather than focusing on labels and developing new terms to represent skilled migrants, focus could move to address core issues in international HRM concerning internationally mobile professionals.
Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants	Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants, such as discrimination and career barriers faced by skilled migrants in the host country, which lead to outcomes such as underemployment, along with macrolevel concerns about brain drain in home countries caused by the migration of skilled migrants. A rather negative outlook on migration is therefore highlighted.	Discrimination (Dietz <i>et al.</i> 2015); inequality (Al Ariss <i>et al.</i> 2013); vulnerability (Alberti <i>et al.</i> 2013; Hakak & Al Ariss 2013); barriers faced by skilled migrants in the host country (Pearson, Hammond, Heffeman & Turner, 2011); Salaff <i>et al.</i> 2002); brain drain (Baruch <i>et al.</i> 2007); return migration (Zeithammer & Kellogg 2013; Qin & Estrin 2015; Wang 2015).	Movement to more positive multifaceted analysis in research on skilled migrants' careers, incorporating relational analysis across macro-, meso- and microdimensions, where contextual nuances are researched and can explain in part how career patterns can vary. A more nuanced consideration of the opportunities available for skilled migrants and their organizations and host countries would present a more balanced representation of skilled migrants' careers.
Skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions underresearched	Many studies focus on skilled migrants in academia or the medical profession, as well as knowledge workers and entrepreneurs, with workers in other professions and sectors underresearched, notably at the management levels in organizations.	Skilled migrants in academia (Froese 2012), in the medical profession (Healy & Oikelome 2007), in science and engineering (Zeithammer & Kellogg 2013), in knowledge transfer (Agullo & Egawa 2009; Liu <i>et al.</i> 2015; Wang 2015), entrepreneurs (Sequeira <i>et al.</i> 2009; Katila & Wahlbeck 2012; Hart 2014; Hommiga & Bolivar-Cruz 2014; Qin & Estrin 2015).	Research is needed on skilled migrants in key management positions within organizations (middle and senior management) in order to make research on skilled migrants more relevant to organizations and management scholars. For example, theories on talent management might be of help in better understanding the mobilization of skilled migrants' human capital in organizations.
Focus on career and career development	Individual careers and career development are dependent on many factors, across different relational levels. The literature here underlines that career <i>patterns</i> rather than unilateral career paths for all skilled migrants are the empirical reality. The heterogeneity of career outcomes for skilled migrants across subsections (gender, country of origin) is stressed.	Career as a relational construct (Al Ariss & Syed 2011; Al Ariss <i>et al.</i> 2012; Ramboarison-Lalao <i>et al.</i> 2012; Fossland 2013; Hakak & Al Ariss 2013); focus on career <i>patterns</i> (Agullo & Egawa 2009); the heterogeneity of career outcomes for skilled migrants (Agullo & Egawa 2009; Bahn 2015); coexistence of subjective and objective career orientations (Zikic <i>et al.</i> 2010).	The microlevel agentic influence of the skilled migrants themselves has been underresearched (Al Ariss 2010; Al Ariss <i>et al.</i> 2013).
Motivations to migrate and the acculturation of skilled migrants	We group these together here as one theme, as the studies here recognize that motivation and acculturation depend on different factors, with individual skilled migrants having different motivation and acculturation experiences. However, it is also apparent in the literature, that both these	Motivations to migrate (Thorn 2009; Froese 2012; Zeithammer & Kellogg 2013; Cerdin <i>et al.</i> 2014); acculturation, assimilation and adjustment of skilled migrants in the host country/organization (Baruch <i>et al.</i> 2007; Nolan & Morley 2014; Bahn 2015; Ravasi <i>et al.</i> 2015); relationship between motivation and adjustment (Froese 2012; Cerdin <i>et al.</i> 2014); both these factors	More relational studies are required on how motivations to migrate impact upon adjustment, acculturation and assimilation, and in turn upon choice to remain in the host country, better showing the interconnected nature of these themes, e.g., see Cerdin <i>et al.</i> (2014) and Froese (2012).

(Continues)

Table 4 (Continued)

Broad theme	Analysis	Example papers	Gap / future research requirement
Business case for human resource management of skilled migrants	<p>topics combined influence the decision and choice of the skilled migrant to remain in the host country.</p> <p>Studies on skilled migrants as relevant for organizations and human resource management in promoting superior performance through utilization of skilled migrants</p>	<p>combined influence the decision to remain in the host country (Baruch <i>et al.</i> 2007), and to continue an international career.</p> <p>Business case for diversity (Zikic 2015); need to better understand human resource management of skilled migrants and business outcomes (Bahn 2015; Guo &amp; Al Ariss, 2014; Podsiadlowski &amp; Reichel 2014); effective utilization of skilled migrants (Vaiman <i>et al.</i> 2015).</p>	<p>Need to link business outcomes to the human resource management strategies supporting skilled migrants in organizations. A closer alignment between research on skilled migrants and the relevance for organizations and businesses is required.</p>

papers when seemingly presenting studies on the same population (Tharenou 2015). In our own review, skilled migrants (e.g., Bahn 2015), skilled immigrants (Dietz *et al.* 2015), international migrants (Guo & Al Ariss 2015), internationally mobile skilled professionals (Silvanto *et al.* 2015), qualified immigrants (e.g., Zikic *et al.* 2010; Cerdin *et al.* 2014), immigrant professionals (Fang *et al.* 2009) and foreign-born [professionals] (Hart 2014) all appear to be analogous and were utilized in papers returned from our search strings. Using these different terms to represent the same population has resulted in a lack of conceptual clarity and is confusing unless clear distinctions between these terms exist and are delineated. Tharenou (2015) has recently highlighted the need for rigor in research on different international worker categories, with her review showing overlap in studies and lack of clarity in many articles with regards to the population under investigation. In our own research, the different terms used to describe the same population resulted in extending the search strings required in conducting the SLR. For further reviews and comparative studies, it could result in some research being excluded due to the lack of terminology uniformity in research on skilled migrants. This highlights the need for conceptual clarity and its importance in assisting the empirical investigation of phenomena and for advancing applied research (Suddaby 2010). Tharenou's (2015) recent paper focuses on the methodological concerns which arise due to the lack of conceptual clarity regarding the different terminology being utilized by different researchers in this area.

It was evident in our review, that even though we did not include 'self-initiated expatriate' (SIE) in our search string for this SLR, some papers were returned due to their usage of the term 'migrant' in their title or abstract or paper, confirming the lack of concept clarity here. Despite our SLR's focus on skilled migrants, the blurring of research boundaries and the extant literature's inherent assumptions concerning SIEs and skilled migrants were covered in a number of the papers returned, such as Cao *et al.* (2012); Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry (2013); Andresen *et al.* (2014); and Cerdin and Selmer (2014) ; Alshahrani and Morley (2015). Dickmann and Baruch (2011: 125), for instance, group both 'immigration and self-initiated foreign work' together in recognition that:

Having immigrated, some foreign individuals aim to stay for good. But the reality means that sometimes those who planned to come for a short time stay longer, even permanently. Others who planned to stay a lifetime might decide to return or move on due to unfulfilled expectations or plans

However, our purposeful exclusion of SIEs from the SLR search string ensured the papers returned were relevant to our area of concern (skilled migrants) and were



focused on research areas specific to skilled migrants and their careers. We did not seek out comparative studies or studies focusing on SIEs (see Doherty 2013 for a literature review on SIEs), but rather, our focus was on considering literature specific to skilled migrants' careers, and that was our intent when using the search strings we did.

It is evident that similar issues are pertinent for both skilled migrants and SIEs, with the research in this space and the issues being studied running across these populations. In our review, for instance, we include Vaiman *et al.*'s (2015) paper on the effective utilization of SIEs for global talent management, which returned from our database search string, even though 'SIE' was not included in the search string. We retained it in our SLR analysis because we felt that similar concerns with global talent management would equally apply for organizations and their effective utilization of skilled migrants for global talent management. Similarly, Alshahrani and Morley's (2015) research which found different mobility patterns between organization-assigned expatriates and self-initiated expatriates is also relevant for researchers on skilled migrants' career patterns.

We conclude that while much effort seems to be given to researching and distinguishing between different internationally mobile populations, perhaps more focus could be on unpacking further the common issues facing internationally mobile professionals, where the heterogeneity of multilevel influences impacting on international careers is apparent. In this way, while common issues are being researched, the degree to which those respective issues are pertinent to different internationally mobile populations due to context, background and period in time could be qualified. Furthermore, future research in this area could seek to combine the existing terms describing skilled migrants by analyzing in depth the different research studies which use different terms, and possibly presenting a table where clear differences in the populations under consideration are provided for researchers' reference.

#### *Pluralist challenges facing skilled migrants*

The second theme from our analysis of the literature in our review notes the tendency to present a unidimensional portrait of skilled migrants' careers, where discrimination (Dietz *et al.* 2015), inequality (Al Ariss *et al.* 2013), vulnerability (Alberti *et al.* 2013; Hakak & Al Ariss 2013) and the macro-, meso- and microlevel barriers faced by skilled migrants in the host country (Hakak & Al Ariss 2013), such as underemployment (Salaff *et al.* 2002; Pearson *et al.* 2012) and institutional barriers (Bjerregaard 2014), are discussed. The literature also contains macro-level concerns about brain drain in home countries caused by skilled migration (Baruch *et al.* 2007; ) and a focus on return migration (Zeithammer & Kellogg 2013; Qin &

Estrin 2015; Wang 2015), rather than a promotion of international talent flows, as suggested by Carr *et al.* (2005). Overall the literature portrays migration in a negative light with migrants, in general, experiencing poor career outcomes (Fang *et al.* 2009), such as underemployment and talent wastage (Ramboarison-Lalao *et al.* 2012). The SLR also exposed a gap in the study of the agency of skilled migrant workers with skilled migrants assumed to have little or no ability to overcome career barriers (Al Ariss *et al.* 2012). We suggest that future research on skilled migrants' careers should include a more positive multifaceted analysis, incorporating a relational inquiry across macro-, meso- and micro dimensions. Such an approach can aid in explaining the variation in career patterns for skilled migrants from different home countries in different host country contexts. A more nuanced consideration of the opportunities available for skilled migrants would present a more balanced representation of skilled migrants' careers as, despite the negativity of the literature, there are migrants who have careers at top managerial levels, which can be objectively assessed as successful (Davoine & Ravasi 2013). Individual success stories, ethnographic diaries and research documenting the challenging but often rewarding pathway to career success at objective and subjective levels would be welcomed here. Qualitative research, including interviews, case studies and ethnographic studies would be most suitable here.

#### *Skilled migrants in various professions and across managerial positions underresearched*

Many studies in our review focus on skilled migrants in particular professions, such as those in academia (Froese 2012) or the medical profession (Healy & Oikelome 2007), as well as knowledge workers (Agullo & Egawa 2009; Liu *et al.* 2015; Wang 2015), scientists and engineers (Lewin & Zhong 2013; Zeithammer & Kellogg 2013), and entrepreneurs (Sequeira *et al.* 2009; Katila & Wahlbeck 2012; Hart 2014; Hormiga & Bolivar-Cruz 2014; Qin & Estrin 2015). Other studies focus on migrants in a particular sector (such as the hospitality sector, Devine *et al.* 2007). Skilled migrants in other professions and sectors are underresearched. A notable gap here is the dearth of studies on skilled migrants at the managerial level within organizations, which would be of considerable relevance in business and management studies (Davoine & Ravasi 2013).

We suggest that future research on the competitive advantages of hiring and mobilizing talents of skilled migrants in organizations is essential if the skilled migrant population is to receive focus in business and management studies. Without empirical research on the management levels within organizations, where skilled migrants may occupy top, senior and middle management

positions, the relevance of the population to organizations will remain under developed.

#### *Focus on career and career development*

Our fourth theme is not surprising given that our SLR concentrates on skilled migrants' careers. In our analysis, it is widely accepted in the literature that careers and career development are dependent on many factors, across different relational levels (Syed 2008; Al Ariss & Syed 2011; Hakak & Al Ariss 2013), underlining that career patterns (Agullo & Egawa 2009) rather than predefined career paths for skilled migrants are a more realistic outcome in research in this space. The heterogeneity of career outcomes for skilled migrants across subsections of this population (including gender, Cooke *et al.* 2013) is stressed (see also, Agullo & Egawa 2009; Bahn 2015), where subjective and objective career orientations are not independent, but rather coexist (Zikic *et al.* 2010).

However, despite acknowledgement of the multilevel, relational influence on career and career development across the macro-country, meso-organization and micro-individual domains (Rodriguez & Scurry 2014), the micro-level agentic influence of the skilled migrants themselves has been underresearched (Al Ariss 2010; Al Ariss *et al.* 2013). It is at this level, 'the human face of migration' (Fang *et al.* 2009), where the individual career experiences of the population of skilled migrants can be unearthed and then analyzed in light of organizational and national contextual factors. For example, more research is needed on the way skilled migrants succeed in their careers, the strategies that they deploy, and the networks that they mobilize in their careers. There is also a dearth in the literature on how skilled migrants face and cope with barriers to their career development in the host country (Fosslund 2013). Capital and capital mobilization are two issues in this area of the literature with human capital being the main form of capital used to study migrant careers (Al Ariss & Syed 2011). This has created a gap in the knowledge of migrant career development because human capital lacks comprehensive qualitative understanding and has a narrow focus, ignoring the other forms of capital utilized by migrants during their careers (Al Ariss & Syed 2011). Therefore, research exploring capital mobilization and agency of skilled migrants is required to support knowledge development on particular career theory and career development factors which are relevant to the population of skilled migrants.

#### *Motivations to migrate and the acculturation of skilled migrants*

The fifth theme which features in our review considers both skilled migrants' motivations to migrate (Thorn

2009; Froese 2012; Zeithammer & Kellogg 2013; Cerdin *et al.* 2014), and the acculturation, assimilation and adjustment of skilled migrants in the host country/organization (Baruch *et al.* 2007; Yijala *et al.* 2012; Nolan & Morley 2014; Bahn 2015; Ravasi *et al.* 2015). We group these themes together here in our analysis, since these factors combined play an influential role in the skilled migrant's decision and ultimate choice to remain in the host country (Baruch *et al.* 2007) and to continue an international career. The relationship between motivation to migrate and eventual adjustment has been proven (Froese 2012; Cerdin *et al.* 2014). Cerdin *et al.* (2014) found that qualified immigrant success is positively connected to their motivation to integrate in their host country, which in turn is connected to their original motivations for immigrating.

However, further relational studies on how motivations to migrate impact upon adjustment, acculturation and assimilation are needed in order to unpack decision patterns of skilled migrants to remain in the host country and to further prove the interconnected nature of these themes. Given the heterogeneity of the motivations to migrate, such as influences of a vocational, cultural or economic nature, and of adjustment factors, such as cultural (Ravasi *et al.* 2015) or psychological (Hakak & Al Ariss 2013), empirical evidence on the following would be invaluable: migrants' motivations to move internationally, adjustment and adaptation to their new position in the host country, and decision to remain in the host country. Such evidence would enable organizations to design and implement relevant programs and supports to recruit and retain skilled migrants in the long term (Cao *et al.* 2012).

#### *Business case for human resource management of skilled migrants*

Our final overarching theme focuses on the benefits of diversity and why human resource management, as a discipline, should be interested in understanding skilled migrants' careers in more detail. Ng and Metz (2015) present the case for multiculturalism for Canada and Australia, espousing the policies that promote multiculturalism and how multiculturalism relates to competitiveness at country level. At organizational level, Liu *et al.* (2015) research highly skilled migrants and knowledge transfer between organizations in different countries. Zikic (2015) exhibits how intelligent career theory and the resource-based view of diversity can be utilized to enlighten HRM practitioners and organizations on how best to leverage the career capital of their skilled migrant employees for competitive advantage. Guo and Al Ariss (2015) also call for better understanding on the human resource management of skilled migrants.

Similarly, Podsiadlowski and Reichel (2014) link macro- and meso-level analysis in order to show that social reasons and corporate social responsibility are prioritized by organizations when considering action programs for ethnic minorities. Bahn's (2015) recent study promotes the organizational advantages of enhancing the well-being of temporary skilled migrants, and suggests assimilation strategies at the HRM/organizational level to support the retention of skilled migrants.

Further studies on the relevance of skilled migrants for organizations and human resource management in enabling superior performance through the effective and strategic utilization of skilled migrants are needed. In the domain of international strategic human resource management, the effective use of internationally mobile professionals is required (Vaiman *et al.* 2015).

Studies researching the link between business outcomes and the HRM strategies supporting skilled migrants in organizations would contribute to changing the portrayal of skilled migrants' careers as predominately

challenging to advantageous. A closer alignment between research on skilled migrants and the relevance for organizations and businesses is required. For instance, future research could consider business performance outcomes (e.g., financial reports) as well as the corresponding organization's human resource management policies supporting international workers in order to determine correlations. Detailed case studies, with access to company reports and financial statements, would be recommended.

#### *Future research direction*

This paper has considered prevailing themes on skilled migrants' careers across business and management publications in order to present a portrait of the existing literature on skilled migrants' careers to both academic and practitioner audiences. The objective was to amass and analyze existing knowledge on skilled migrants' careers, from which gaps could be identified. Those gaps would then serve as the basis for a research agenda of

**Table 5** Future research agenda

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Research agenda/requirements</i>
Clarifying the terminology and concepts on skilled migration Focus on core relevant issues	A detailed analysis across studies using different terms to consider the skilled migrant population in order to be able to provide (if existing) clear distinctions and delineation of the specific population to which the different terms apply. In our review, we consider many of these terms to be analogous, but further analysis and confirmation would facilitate conceptual clarity in future research. To prevent future research becoming cumbersome in trying to distinguish between the terminology variations for skilled migrants and to undertake comparative research in this area, research could focus more on relevant issues (such as discrimination, career success, etc.) impacting all internationally mobile professionals (e.g., organization-assigned, SIE and skilled migrant), presenting the heterogeneity of factors under respective issues which may determine the outcome for the individual and the organization.
Focus on the more positive outcomes of skilled migration	Movement to more multifaceted analysis in research on skilled migrants' careers, incorporating relational analysis across macro-, meso- and microdimensions. A more positive consideration of the opportunities available for skilled migrants and their organizations and host countries would present a more complete representation of skilled migrants' careers. Success stories representing skilled migrants who have attained positive career outcomes from their migration in the business and management space would be welcome research here.
Enlarging focus in empirical research to include underrepresented professions and top managerial positions	Research is required on skilled migrants at the managerial level within organizations, which would be of considerable relevance in business and management studies. Recent research on foreign CEOs in France, Germany, Great Britain and Switzerland (see Davoine & Ravasi 2013) is a good start.
More focus on career research and career development of skilled migrants	Further research exploring capital mobilization (Al Ariss & Syed 2011) and agency of skilled migrants (Al Ariss 2010; Al Ariss <i>et al.</i> 2013) is required to support knowledge development on particular career theory and career development factors which are relevant to the population of skilled migrants.
Uncovering the relationship between motivation and adjustment, also acculturation, assimilation and decision to remain in a host country	Further relational studies on how motivations to migrate impact upon adjustment, acculturation and assimilation are needed in order to unpack decision patterns of skilled migrants to remain in the host country and to further prove the interconnected nature of these themes. Given the heterogeneity of motivations and adjustment factors, empirical studies incorporating motivations to expatriate, adjustment to new positions (in the host country) and decision to remain in the host country would be invaluable for organizations in understanding and implementing relevant supports to retain their skilled migrant talent.
Depicting a business case in terms of organizational advantages of effective utilization and talent management of skilled migrants	Detailed organizational research (such as via organizational case studies) on human resource practices concerning skilled migrants in organizations, the effective utilization of skilled migrants in organizations, and the corresponding business outcomes (profitability, performance, quality) is required in order to underscore the relevance for organizations and businesses of skilled migrants in their employment.

particular interest for scholars in management and organization studies. Further research in this area would also be beneficial to human resource management practitioners and organizations in sharing the career patterns of skilled migrants, with the multilevel, relational influences, which are important for organizations to understand when developing policies to support skilled migrant retention.

Table 5 summarizes the future research requirements concerning the careers of skilled migrants, as unearthed in our SLR, and as discussed briefly under each of the respective themes above.

## Limitations of the Study

A limitation of all SLRs is that the searches conducted are only as good as the search strings that are established. As outlined earlier in the paper, we included terms in our original search string in order to return more articles concerned with skilled migrants' careers in business and management studies. We also relied on our judgment to exclude articles we felt did not meet our research objective (to share existing research on skilled migrants' careers), and to include those that did. Other researchers may have made different choices.

Similarly, the synthesis (Petticrew & Roberts 2006) of the six core themes portrayed in the SLR were determined collaboratively by the researchers. Other research groups or researchers may have focused on different themes. Nonetheless, the SLR process we followed is replicable and other researchers may undertake a similar review, which would then facilitate a comparative analysis of the corresponding findings with our review, further informing this research topic.

In line with this special issue, our review focused on publications in the business and management discipline. Wider reviews across disciplines would uncover themes which could have the potential to be researched further through cross- and multidisciplinary studies.

## Conclusions

In order to present a portrait of current literature regarding skilled migrants' careers, we researched existing studies and literature in the business and management domain, using the Web of Science database's Social Science Citation Index. The systematic literature review (SLR) process that we have adopted offers a scientific and reliable alternative to the traditional literature review, an alternative that seeks to reduce bias in a fully accountable process (Tranfield *et al.* 2003; Pittaway *et al.* 2004). This research process has shown that the SLR is a rigorous, comprehensive process with which to unpick core topics

and themes. Systematic literature searches enable comparative literature research to be conducted within and across disciplines. It facilitates the ability to highlight research undertakings within management and business studies, which can then lead to identifying gaps and research plans.

The paper contributes to the management and organization studies literatures in two important ways: first, in systematically identifying the predominant existing themes regarding skilled migrants, and, second, in underlining the gaps in the literature and research in this area through a proposed research agenda. This paper contributes to this special issue by consolidating research on skilled migrants' careers to date, demonstrating how the careers of skilled migrants are considered in the literature, and presenting a research agenda to fill the gaps in the existing research.

The resultant 52 papers of our review were thematically analyzed under six broad headings, as shown in Table 4 and summarized subsequently. The myriad of terms used to denote skilled migrants was found to be a deterrent to comparative research opportunities in this space. We therefore called on researchers to analyze any conceptual differences between the variety of terms used which we believe to be analogous with skilled migrants and to share the distinctions with the wider research community. Without such delineation or consensus that the terms represent the same skilled migrant population, future research studies in this area are in jeopardy of lacking comparative possibilities. We also suggest that a current research gap in this domain is a focus on contrasting different internationally mobile populations, rather than highlighting the common issues faced to varying degrees by different internationally mobile groups.

Given the focus on the challenges encountered by skilled migrants in the host country, we suggest a more balanced representation of both opportunities and challenges across relational, multilevel research analyses, particularly focusing on the micro-individual level concerning capital mobilization and agency of skilled migrants in terms of their own career outcomes and development. Thus there is a need for studies that go beyond the negative portrayal of skilled migrants, as this focus lacks the depth of reasoning and agency behind many skilled migrants careers (Syed 2008).

Also in the domain of skilled migration, studies need to be conducted with skilled migrant business professionals in order to garner information on employees at the managerial levels in organizations, in terms of organizational challenges and supports required. Research on skilled migrants within business organizations would aid human resource practitioners in understanding the particular challenges faced by skilled migrants and in being able to better support their retention in the organization.



Finally, in order to prove the business case for diversity and how the effective utilization of skilled migrants can lead to superior competitive performance and advantage, empirical evidence and case study research in organizations is required. In testing how skilled migrants in organizations impact on organizational performance, with their utilization aligned with business strategy and practices, and supported with HR policies and programs, a more positive consideration of skilled migrants' careers in organizations may be realized. All of our further research suggestions are portrayed in Table 5. Our review presents the current portrayal of skilled migrants in business and management studies, and it also outlines the strategic potential and relevance for organizations in advancing research on skilled migrants in terms of their effective utilization in organizations.

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### **Appendix 1: Search string utilized in Web of Science database, Social Science Citation Index, 9 December 2015**

**TOPIC:** (migration) *OR* **TOPIC:** (skilled migrant) *OR* **TOPIC:** (qualified immigrant) *OR* **TOPIC:** (immigrant professional) *AND* **TOPIC:** (career) Analysis: **LANGUAGES:** (ENGLISH) *AND* **RESEARCH AREAS:** (BUSINESS ECONOMICS) *AND* **WEB OF SCIENCE CATEGORIES:** (MANAGEMENT OR BUSINESS) *AND* **DOCUMENT TYPES:** (ARTICLE) *AND* [**excluding**]: **SOURCE TITLES:** (REVIEW OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS OR NEW TECHNOLOGY WORK AND EMPLOYMENT OR RESEARCH POLICY OR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OR JOURNAL OF PRODUCTIVITY ANALYSIS OR DISASTER PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OR TRANSFORMATIONS IN BUSINESS ECONOMICS OR COMPUTATIONAL ECONOMICS OR JOURNAL OF DESTINATION MARKETING MANAGEMENT OR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FORECASTING OR INFORMATION MANAGEMENT OR ACTION RESEARCH OR JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT OR TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT BUSINESS EXCELLENCE OR ELECTRONIC COMMERCE RESEARCH AND APPLICATIONS OR SYSTEMIC PRACTICE AND ACTION RESEARCH OR EMERGING MARKETS FINANCE AND TRADE OR SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OR SERVICE SCIENCE OR TECHNOVATION OR SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY OR SYSTEMS RESEARCH AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE OR SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY OR RESEARCH TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT OR SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY OR R D MANAGEMENT OR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

OF TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT OR QME QUANTITATIVE MARKETING AND ECONOMICS OR REVIEW OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION OR JOURNAL OF MACROMARKETING OR JOURNAL OF THE OPERATIONAL RESEARCH SOCIETY OR MIS QUARTERLY EXECUTIVE OR JOURNAL OF STRATEGIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS OR MIS QUARTERLY OR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CONSUMER STUDIES OR JOURNAL OF SERVICE RESEARCH OR MARKETING THEORY OR INFORMATION SYSTEMS RESEARCH OR MARKETING SCIENCE OR INDUSTRIAL AND CORPORATE CHANGE OR MARKETING LETTERS OR JOURNAL OF MARKETING OR EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF OPERATIONAL RESEARCH OR ELECTRONIC COMMERCE RESEARCH OR INTERNATIONAL MARKETING REVIEW OR E M EKONOMIE A MANAGEMENT OR TECHNOLOGY ANALYSIS STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN MARKETING OR TECHNOLOGICAL FORECASTING AND SOCIAL CHANGE OR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF OPERATIONS PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT OR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MARKET RESEARCH) *AND* [**excluding**]: **SOURCE TITLES:** (INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT LOGISTICS OR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ELECTRONIC COMMERCE OR INTERFACES OR INNOVATION MANAGEMENT POLICY PRACTICE OR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT OR INFORMATION AND ORGANIZATION OR INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION OR INDUSTRIAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT OR IMA JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT MATHEMATICS OR GEOGRAPHY AND STRATEGY OR CONSUMPTION MARKETS CULTURE OR BUSINESS HISTORY REVIEW OR BUSINESS HISTORY OR ADVANCES IN CONSUMER RESEARCH VOL 30 OR ADVANCES IN CONSUMER RESEARCH) *AND* [**excluding**]: **SOURCE TITLES:** (JOURNAL OF INTERACTIVE MARKETING OR JOURNAL OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OR JOURNAL OF FORECASTING OR JOURNAL OF ELECTRONIC COMMERCE RESEARCH OR JOURNAL OF CONSUMER RESEARCH OR JOURNAL OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS OR JOURNAL OF BUSINESS VENTURING OR INTERNATIONAL TRANSACTIONS IN OPERATIONAL RESEARCH OR SYSTEM DYNAMICS REVIEW OR OPERATIONS RESEARCH OR JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY OF MARKETING SCIENCE OR JOURNAL OF TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER OR JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL AND END USER COMPUTING OR JOURNAL OF OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT)