

New Canadians/Immigrants & International Mature Students

Research detailing experiences of immigrant or international mature students is lacking, and current findings point towards a critical need to further investigate experiences of mature students who are entering Canadian higher education institutions within a transnational context. In addition to adjusting to Canadian culture, mature students need to adjust to being a non-traditional student, effectively making their adjustment more challenging.

Key Points from the Literature

- Barriers faced by new Canadian/immigrant mature Students include English language proficiency, obtaining home-country school transcripts, and lack of financial support (Grabke & Anisef, 2008).
- International mature students are increasingly put at a disadvantage because they do not have English as their first language (Leder & Forgasz, 2004).
- International mature students tend to spend more time studying and have more financial security (Leder & Forgasz, 2004).
- International mature students tend to have fewer friends, feel a certain degree of loneliness and have difficulty working with others (Leder & Forgasz, 2004).
- Classroom behaviour/performance connects to cultural upbringing for immigrant mature students (Lee & Sheared, 2002).
- Cultural discontinuity occurs when a gap exists between learners' native culture and their current school culture. Resultantly, immigrant mature students might feel marginalized, confused or isolated (Lee & Sheared, 2002).

Recommendations

- There is no 'one way' to address the complex nature of the issues that adult immigrant students face, although Ontario universities and colleges need to respond quicker (Grabke & Anisef, 2008).
- Steps for adult educator: design inclusive curriculum; examine cultural assumptions; promote community development and involvement (Lee & Sheared, 2002).

References

Grabke, S. & Anisef, P. (2008). *The Responsiveness of Ontario Colleges and Universities to Recent Adult Immigrants*. Paper presented at the 10th National Metropolis Conference, Halifax, April 3-6, 2008.

Authors point out that even though adult immigrants might access the Canadian job market through attending Canadian colleges and universities, there might still not be a job available to them. The study coordinators conducted 18 interviews with selected administrators of Ontario colleges and universities. Barriers faced include English language proficiency, obtaining home-country school transcripts, and lack of financial support. Findings conclude that there is no 'one way' to address the complex nature of the issues that adult immigrant students face, although Ontario universities and colleges need to respond quicker.

Leder, G. & Forgasz, H. (2004). Australian and international mature students: The daily challenges. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 23(2), 183-198.

The authors point out that mature age is 'not recognized as a category of disadvantage' at Australian universities, and yet mature students live more complex lives than their younger counterparts. International mature students are increasingly put at a disadvantage because they do not have English as their mother tongue. Therefore, as a result, this study sought to chart over a 6-day period the daily activities of a sample group of international mature students and if there are any differences to other groups in terms of time and resources. This study built on an existing

Australian study that suggested that mature students are typically from lower socioeconomic origins, but highly motivated and success-oriented. This study covers five universities, and most of the study participants were studying full time. After tracking the activities of study participants, it was noted that, a) international mature students spent more time studying; b) had more financial security; and c) had fewer friends; felt a certain degree of loneliness and had difficulty working with others.

Lee, M. & Sheared, V. (2002). Socialization and immigrant students' learning in adult education programs. In M. V. Alfred's (Ed.) *Learning and sociocultural contexts: Implications for adults, community, and workplace education* (pp. 27-36). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This is an interesting chapter on the experiences of immigrant women entering adult education programs. While it does not specifically mention higher education, there are some interesting points, such as a) Classroom behaviour/performance links to cultural upbringing; b) Cultural discontinuity occurs when a gap exists between the learner's native culture and her/his current school culture. Students might feel marginalized, confused or isolated. Steps for adult educator: design inclusive curriculum; examine cultural assumptions; promote community development and involvement.

- Compiled by Robert Mizzi & Arpi Panossian