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Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t792306878>

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To cite this Article Van Ngo, Hieu(2009) 'Patchwork, Sidelining and Marginalization: Services for Immigrant Youth', *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 7: 1, 82 – 100

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/15562940802687280

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15562940802687280>

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Patchwork, Sidelining and Marginalization: Services for Immigrant Youth

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Adolescence is a challenging developmental period for all young people. For immigrant youth, their experiences are compounded by complex linguistic, acculturative, psychological, and economic difficulties. Rooted in the central premise that immigrant youth are entitled to services that effectively address their settlement needs and promote their full participation in Canadian society, this article critically reviews the selected programs and services for immigrant youth in three Canadian metropolitan centers, namely Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. The findings reveal various shades of patchwork, sidelining and marginalization of immigrant youth in the social services and education arenas. This article calls for a paradigm shift in immigrant youth services from charity-based programming to an entitlement/rights-based model of practice.

KEYWORDS *Immigrant youth, social services, educational services, social justice*

INTRODUCTION

Historically, voluntary services such as community associations and churches were the main venues for social care for immigrants in Canada (Al-Krenawi

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The author wishes to thank Beth Chatten, Avery Calhoun, David Este, Catherine Worthington, Tim Pynch, Lloyd Wong, and Amal Umar for their thoughtful feedback and support. The author would also like to appreciate the helpful comments of the anonymous reviewers and editors.

& Graham, 2003). Bound by a charitable, “deserving poor” framework, those services mostly helped immigrants to meet their basic needs. In contemporary society, however, immigration is less associated with the “deserving poor” and more an important impetus for the survival and prosperity of Canada as a nation (see Royal Bank of Canada, 2005). In legislation, the principles of equality, inclusion, and full participation for all citizens are enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the United Nations International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. The critical question, then, is whether programs and services for immigrants have shifted from the charity to the rights-based models of practice? In practical terms, have programs and services addressed both settlement needs and fostered full participation of immigrants in Canadian society?

This article sets out to critically review programs and services for immigrant youth in three Canadian metropolitan centers, namely Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. It will focus on how the selected settlement agencies, mainstream organizations and Canadian institutions have responded to the complex, multifaceted needs of young immigrants. This article is structured as follows: (1) demographic context and an overview of needs and issues facing immigrant youth; (2) methodological description of the selection of programs and services for critical examination; (3) critical examination of the selected programs designed to support immigrant youth in Canada, with an emphasis on the needs of immigrant youth in the education and social services arenas; and (4) recommendation of effective practice and policy development to address settlement needs and promote full participation of immigrant youth in Canadian society.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Demographics

The foreign born population in Canada in 2001 was 18.4% of the total population, its highest level in 70 years (Statistics Canada, 2003). The 2006 census reveals that immigrants made up the vast majority of the 1.6 million new Canadians between 2001 and 2006, giving the country the highest population growth rate among G8 countries (Statistics Canada, 2007). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2005), children of immigrants between the ages 0 and 24 are the second largest group of permanent residents, accounting for an average of 37.3%, compared to 49.5% for those in the 25–44 age group. They are more likely to arrive from Asia and Pacific, Africa, Middle East, and South and Central America (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005).

Needs of Immigrant Youth

Adolescence is a challenging developmental period for all young people. For immigrant youth, their experiences are compounded by complex linguistic, acculturative, psychological, and economic difficulties (see Ngo, 2004; Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; Beiser, Shik, & Curyk, 1998). In the social arena, immigrant youth often face cognitive and psychosocial challenges related to cultural adjustment and adaptation (Delgado, Jones, & Rohani, 2005). They may experience difficulties in forming cross-ethnic friendships, over-reliance on support from peers with similar cultural backgrounds, alienation and isolation, and limited access to positive role models and mentors (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; James, 1997). In their transition into adulthood, immigrant youth have the highest unemployment rate in Canada, at 20% for those aged 15 to 24, compared to the national rate of 8% (Statistics Canada, 2001). Many struggle to achieve positive identity formation due to conflicting values at home and in the community, and the pervasive impact of internalized racism (Desai & Subramanian, 2003). Their well-being and development are intricately linked to their multiple identities and experiences at the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

In the health arena, immigrant youth experience a range of physical and mental health challenges. Those raised in families with disadvantaged socioeconomic status are at higher risk of malnutrition (Weissman, 1994). Some have been exposed to communicable diseases in their home countries (Cookson et al., 1998). Adolescents from certain religious and cultural backgrounds also face cultural taboos and practices that prevent their access to sex education and compromise their sexual and reproductive health (Orgocka, 2004; Elgaali, Strevens, & Mardh, 2005). In terms of mental health, those young people of a refugee background who were subjected to persecution, war, violence, loss of family members, and trauma in their home countries or during migration are more likely to experience post-traumatic stress syndrome (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007). Recent research has also linked poor mental health among some visible minorities to their experiences of racism and discrimination (Davies & Stevenson, 2006; Zayas, 2001).

In education, many immigrant youth require English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. Between two and five years of explicit English language instruction are needed to develop basic communication skills and between five and seven years to develop academic language proficiency (Collier, 1989). Further, those who arrive in Canada without a solid grasp of their first language may risk losing some aspects of their cultural heritage without access to heritage language support.

With respect to the justice arena, traumatic migration experience, poverty, limited English, intergenerational and family conflicts, social isolation, lack of a sense of belonging, and discrimination make some immigrant youth vulnerable to victimization and recruitment by organized crime

groups (Cooper, 2003; Delgado et al., 2005; Wortley & Tanner, 2006). When young immigrants are in conflict with the law they experience a wide range of issues in their contact with police and youth justice court procedures. These include distrust and fear of authority figures, limited knowledge about the Canadian justice system, lack of understanding of their constitutional rights, problems understanding and providing accurate information during investigation and court proceedings due to limited English, and cultural misinterpretation (Currie, 1994; Kawaguchi, 1994; see Penn, Green, & Gabbidon, 2006).

Immigrant youth also function within the contexts of their home, school and community environments. A significant number of children of immigrant families are growing up in households impacted by a range of socioeconomic issues such as cultural and language barriers, unemployment or underemployment, social isolation, illiteracy, discrimination, and limited civic participation (Cooper, 2003; Delgado et al., 2005; Statistics Canada, 2003). As many as 51% of immigrants under the age of 15 and 41% of those aged 15–24 live in poverty (Statistics Canada, 1995). In school, immigrant learners may not have access to culturally competent support. The lack of system leadership and limited participation of immigrant parents in school activities have left decisions regarding language instruction and services for ESL learners at the discretion and political will of individual school administrators (see Ngo, 2006). Consequently, many learners with limited English have received minimal, if any, direct language instruction (see People for Education, 2006; Ngo, 2001). At the community level, a combination of the lack of culturally inclusive programs and limited awareness of community resources and services has resulted in low levels of participation of children of immigrant families in community activities and services (see Herlock, McCullagh, & Schissel, 2004).

METHOD

This critical analysis is based on the central premise that immigrant youth are entitled to services that effectively address their settlement needs and promote their full participation in Canadian society. As illustrated in the previous section, the needs of young immigrants are complex and multifaceted, and require services from all service sectors. The selection of the existing programs, therefore, extends beyond the immigrant specific programs provided by settlement agencies, and includes an examination of how Canadian institutions and mainstream organizations are supporting immigrant youth. For the purpose of this article, the selection of the programs and services is limited to those in the social services and education arenas. This analysis also focuses on the programs that are most common among the three major immigrant receiving metropolitan centers, namely Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary.

With respect to youth services provided by settlement agencies, the process of selecting the programs involves the following: (1) an examination of the list of service providers across Canada offered by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2003); (2) a thorough online review of youth programs and services available at the selected organizations in the three cities; and (3) categorizing the youth programs and services into common themes. In addition to the review of youth services provided by settlement agencies, three mainstream service organizations, each with a long history of service provision in Canada, are also examined in terms of how they have responded to changing ethno-cultural demographics in the community, particularly in response to children of immigrant families. The selected organizations include Boys and Girls Club of Canada, Scouts Canada and the YMCA. All three organizations have branches in Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. Finally, since English language proficiency is crucial for full participation of immigrants in Canadian society, this analysis also examines how three school boards, namely Toronto District School Board, Calgary Board of Education, and Vancouver School Board, have responded to ESL needs of their learners. This review has limitations due to its reliance on the list of organizations listed (and often funded) by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, as well as by the availability to the public of information online.

YOUTH PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY SETTLEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Descriptions of Selected Programs

A review of youth programs offered by settlement organizations in the cities of Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver yields nine groups of immigrant youth programs, namely: general social/educational youth program, settlement workers in school program, community-based augmented academic support, gender-specific program, school-work transition program, heritage language school, counseling services, civic participation and leadership program, and advocacy and social justice. Table 1 outlines the number of programs for immigrant adolescents in the selected cities.

Typically, general social and education youth programs provide participants, particularly those newly arrived in Canada, with opportunities to connect to other immigrant youth, to participate in recreational activities, and to learn about Canadian ways of living. Some also provide issue-based workshops that address intergenerational and intercultural conflict, as well as cultural identity and skills development. In recent years, the settlement workers in school (SWIS) program, first piloted in Ontario, has gained some popularity. With the cooperation of the school, the SWIS worker systematically contacts all newcomer families to orient them to school and community resources, and to refer them to specific services (Ontario Council

TABLE 1 Immigrant Youth Programs in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver

Program	Number of Program in the selected cities			
	Toronto	Calgary	Vancouver	Total
General social/educational youth program	6	3	3	12
Settlement workers in school program	1	1	0	2
Community-based augmented academic support	3	2	1	6
Gender-specific program	3	1	0	4
School-to-work transition program	2	4	3	9
Heritage language school	1	0	0	1
Counseling services	3	1	1	5
Civic participation and leadership program	3	0	4	7
Advocacy and social justice	1	0	2	3
Total	23	12	14	49

of Agencies Serving Immigrants, 2005). Also designed to support children of immigrant families with their schooling are community-based augmented academic support programs. These programs typically provide drop-in, after school homework support to participants once or twice per week at local libraries or other community settings (Cultural Link, 2007; Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth, 2007). During the summer months, they may also provide literacy support to help immigrant learners with their reading and writing, and involve them in recreational activities (Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth, 2007). For those youth and family members who are experiencing psychosocial difficulties, there are some counseling services that help them to deal with acculturative, developmental, and familial issues (Jamaican Canadian Association, 2006). Ethno-specific associations, such as the Afghan Women's Organization (2006) in Toronto, also provide children of immigrant families with opportunities to learn and maintain their heritage languages on weekends throughout the school year, or on week days during the summer months.

Among the selected programs, a small number of services are designed to support immigrant youth to deal with gender specific issues or school-to-work transition. The gender specific programs vary in their activities, ranging from art and craft (e.g. beading circle) to development issues (e.g. healthy eating, positive self-image, sexuality) and gender equality issues (e.g. empowerment and leadership) (see Cultural Link, 2006; Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, 2007). School-to-work programs, on the other hand, target older youth and prepare them for the labor market. These programs, often primarily funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada, provide young people with opportunities to develop life and employment skills and participate in short term community service projects (Alternative Youth Centre for Employment, 2007; Centre for Newcomers, 2007).

Finally, there are a few programs with an explicit focus on civic participation, leadership, advocacy and social justice. Civic participation and leadership programs support immigrant youth to develop leadership skills, to get involved in community volunteer activities, and to participate in social and athletic opportunities available in the community at large (COSTI Immigrant Services, 2007; North Shore Multicultural Society, 2007; S.U.C.C.E.S.S., 2007). Advocacy and social justice programs take additional steps to assist participants in dealing with issues related to power, racism, and diversity (see North Shore Multicultural Society, 2007; Scadding Court Community Centre; 2007).

Critiques of the Selected Immigrant Youth Programs

The journey towards full participation of immigrant youth in Canadian society often involves complex processes of acclimatization, adaptation and integration both on the part of the immigrant and the receiving community (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). These processes occur in all social, economic, cultural and political spheres. Figure 1 provides an overview of the selected programs situated along the settlement and integration continuum.

A large number of programs are designed to support young immigrants with their acclimatization and adaptation. These include general social and educational programs, settlement workers in school programs, community-based augmented academic support, counseling services, and heritage language support. Most of the selected programs do not clearly articulate the needs and issues on which they focus in the context of youth development and acculturation of immigrant youth. Additionally, they do not elaborate the theoretical or philosophical bases for their approaches to service delivery. The programs are often described in generic terms without clear statements of goals, objectives, activities, targeted outcomes and impact. As a

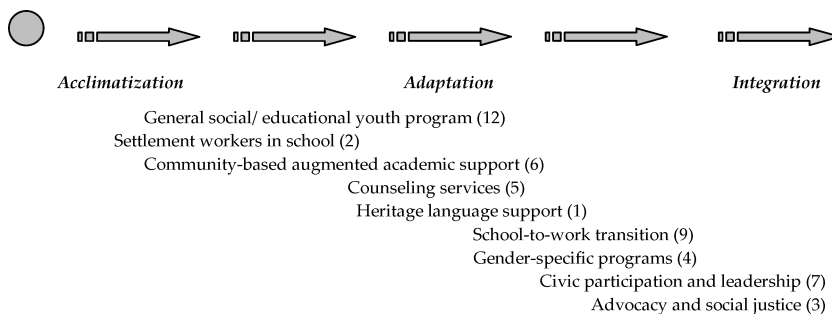


FIGURE 1 Existing Programs Along the Settlement/Integration Continuum (Adapted from Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998)

consequence, the existing service delivery to immigrant adolescents appears intuitive and less coherent than planned, evidence-based practice.

In terms of range and scope of services, a large number of programs lean toward supporting youth in their early stages of acclimatization and adaptation. Recreational activities are overwhelmingly represented in general youth programs. When examining the scope of services provided by the selected programs in relation to the complex, multifaceted needs and issues facing young immigrants, the selected programs do not adequately pay attention to deeper issues, such as formation of cultural identity, acculturative gaps, and trauma. The programs are delivered without an explicit effort to connect children of immigrant families to the wider community, risking reinforcing over-reliance of immigrant youth on intra-ethnic or immigrant networks (James, 1997).

The processes of acclimatization, adaptation, and integration occur in all social, economic, cultural, and political spheres. Yet, the selected programs focus primarily on the social and cultural spheres. Only a very few programs related to social justice, leadership, and advocacy prepare young immigrants for civic participation and raise their political consciousness. In the light of the high prevalence of discrimination and marginalization experienced by immigrants and visible minorities in Canada and their devastating impact on formation of identity and the well-being of individuals and groups (see Desai & Subramanian, 2003; Davies & Stevenson, 2006), the selected programs do not adequately help immigrant youth to deal with racism and discrimination. They also fail to support young immigrants to develop critical insights into their politically, socially and culturally situated realities.

The settlement sector often asserts the notion of two way street integration. Ironically, their services, for the most part, have only reinforced support for immigrants to integrate into Canadian society. Most selected programs exhibit a functionalist focus on the development and adaptation of immigrant youth. Less prevalent, however, are activities that help the receiving community to adapt and change in response to new socio-cultural realities.

An examination of the funding allocation for immigrant youth services reveals a lack of priority accorded to support for children of immigrant families. With the exception of the immigrant youth focused service organizations, programs for young immigrants have a small role in the agencies' overall strategic service delivery directions. The limited number of services for immigrant youth signals a larger problem with funding priorities for immigration in the federal government (see Government of Canada, 2006, 2007). Notably disturbing is a lack of funding priority on the part of Citizenship and Immigration Canada for immigrant children and youth. Until recently, this department notionally supported children of immigrant families within its larger funding framework for the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2000). This time limited

program delivers only basic services, such as reception, orientation, translation, interpretation, referral to community resources, para-professional counseling, general information, and employment-related services. Within its strict criteria for eligibility and stringent budget, service providers often cannot adequately help families to address their settlement needs, and certainly cannot afford to provide specialized youth services. Since 2005, the department has piloted a number of SWIS programs in Ontario, and recently, in Alberta. The funding, however, has been limited. In Calgary, for example, there are only a few SWIS positions allocated to a limited number of schools.

Severe funding limitations also confront the popular school-to-work and community-based augmented academic support programs. A typical 12-week employment training program, for example, can provide services to fewer than 30 participants at one time (Centre for Newcomers, 2007). Given the bleak reality that 62 to 74% of immigrant youth of an ESL background drop out of school (see Alberta Education, 1992; Gunderson, 2004; Watt & Roessingh, 1994, 2001), the availability of those school-to-work programs is a mere drop in the bucket. Similar funding limitations also allow a typical homework club to be delivered for about two hours once a week in a local library (Calgary Bridge Foundation, 2006). This can hardly help young immigrants to keep up with their learning. Limited funding priorities for services for children of immigrant families perpetuates use of para-professionals in the settlement sector, increases the challenge of attracting and retaining qualified staff, and leads to ad hoc, piecemeal and incoherent services.

YOUTH SERVICES PROVIDED BY MAINSTREAM ORGANIZATIONS

The settlement sector focuses support for immigrant youth on the early stages of settlement, namely acclimatization and adaptation. These young people, therefore, need to access mainstream services to address their complex, multifaceted needs, and to receive support for equitable participation in all aspects of Canadian life. It is often assumed that immigrants, once settled in the receiving community, can readily access mainstream services. This assumption, in recent years, has been challenged. Unless mainstream organizations recognize diversity in their communities and adapt to this shifting reality, immigrant youth will remain sidelined in terms of their access to services. Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs (1989) offer a cultural competence framework to assess how service organizations develop effective attitudes, policies and practices in working with culturally diverse populations (see Figure 2). This cultural competence continuum includes cultural destructiveness (e.g. removal of First Nations children from their parents), cultural incapacity (e.g. discriminatory hiring practices or lower expectations of minorities), cultural blindness (e.g. one size fits all), cultural pre-competence (e.g. tokenism or hiring of translators), cultural competence (e.g. explicit focus on cultural

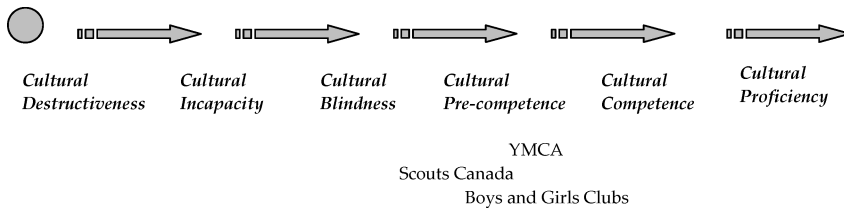


FIGURE 2 Selected Organizations Along the Cultural Competence Continuum (Adapted From Cross et al., 1989)

diversity in policies and practices), and cultural proficiency (e.g. contribution to knowledge building).

Cultural competence requires organizations to explicitly recognize and integrate cultural diversity into all aspects of organizational structures and functions, including: organizational culture, governance, policy, administration, personnel practices, communication, community relations, and service delivery (Ngo, 2000). The three selected mainstream organizations, namely YMCA, Scouts Canada, and the Boys and Girls Club, demonstrate various levels of cultural pre-competence. Scouts Canada has just started to recognize cultural diversity in communities across the country. Although the organization has in place a statement that recognizes multiculturalism, some resources related to diversity, translation of its brochure into a number of languages, and an invitation to community members to supply multicultural content or images (Scouts Canada, 2007), it does not have a strategic plan to deal with cultural diversity in Canada. Firmly rooted in its traditional Scout Promise and Law, its programs for youth have not evolved in keeping with new traditions and cultural activities (see Scouts Canada Chinook Council, 2007; Scouts Canada Greater Toronto Council, 2007; Scouts Canada Pacific Spirit Council, 2007).

YMCA, on the other hand, has moved its organization toward the later stage of cultural pre-competence. The organization articulates its commitment to newcomers and other cultural groups (YMCA Toronto, 2007), and provides some selected immigrant-specific services to newcomers, such as adult ESL classes, and life skills and leadership training for immigrant youth (YMCA Calgary, 2007; YMCA Toronto, 2007; YMCA of Greater Vancouver, 2007). Similarly, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada outline inclusion, opportunity, respect, belonging, empowerment, collaboration, and advocacy in its core values statements. It also has some specific programs for immigrant youth, who make up 11% of its total number of participants (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2005). While its tracking demonstrates a coherent effort to monitor services for children of immigrant families, the client ratio is not reflective of the immigrant population in Canada. In order for pre-cultural competence organizations, such as YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs, to move from pre-cultural competence into cultural competence, they would have to

move from add-on services, to clear articulation and integration of cultural diversity into all aspects of their organizational structures, practices and programs.

ESL SERVICES FOR IMMIGRANT YOUTH PROVIDED BY SCHOOL BOARDS

Many young immigrants require English language instruction. In fact, learners with an ESL background respectively make up 53, 20, and 60% of all student population in the Toronto District School Board, the Calgary Board of Education and the Vancouver School Board (Calgary Board of Education, 2006; Toronto District School Board, 2007; Vancouver School Board, 2007). These young people require up to seven years or more of explicit ESL support to develop cognitive academic language proficiency (Collier, 1989). Yet, in most school boards, even though ESL learners generate additional ESL funding, on top of the basic instruction grant available to all learners, the funding to which these learners are entitled often does not follow them into their classrooms. In its recent report, People for Education (2006) points out that even though 71% of all Ontario's ESL learners are in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), only 51% of all GTA schools have ESL learners, and the percentage of GTA schools with ESL learners but no ESL teachers has more than doubled over the past five years. The report points out that despite increases in funding for ESL, the number of GTA schools reporting ESL learners but no ESL teacher has increased from 32% in 2004–2005 to 42% in 2005–2006. The most blatant misuse of ESL funding is in the Toronto District School Board, which spent only approximately \$35 million of the \$80 million of ESL funding on the ESL programs, and used the rest to cover overall costs such as increasing teachers' salaries and benefits, electricity, plumbing, and maintenance of swimming pools in 2005–2006 (People for Education, 2006; Toronto Star, 2006). Similar lack of support for ESL learners is also evident in the Calgary Board of Education where one ESL teacher is responsible for at least 115 learners (Ngo, 2001).

Gross neglect on the part of school boards has resulted in ad-hoc, minimal, and often indirect ESL instruction for immigrant youth, with devastating outcomes for ESL learners. The dropout rates among ESL learners are significantly high, between 61 and 74% (Alberta Education, 1992; Gunderson, 2004; Watt & Roessingh, 1994, 2001). Latimer (2000) examined provincial achievement test scores of learners in the Calgary Board of Education, and found that ESL learners in grades 3, 6, and 9 were between 16 to 28 percentage points behind other learners in language arts. The treatment of learners with ESL needs in the public education system is, in short, a blatant act of systemic discrimination.

RECOMMENDED DIRECTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

This critical review of selected settlement agencies, mainstream organizations and institutions has highlighted some serious concerns about the state and quality of services. Emerging from the analysis are the following principles and areas of focus that I contend are essential to improving services for immigrant youth.

Key Principles

The current state of inadequate, inequitable services for immigrant adolescents in the social and educational arenas highlights the need for Canadian institutions and service organizations to examine their commitment to social justice. The social justice framework demands Canadian institutions and service organizations allocate equitable resources to support children of immigrant families to deal with their multi-faceted, complex acculturative needs, as well as to facilitate their access to decision making processes that impact their lives. The rights of immigrant youth to quality, equitable services in all social, educational, political, economic, and cultural spheres of their lives are enshrined in various provincial, national, and international legislative frameworks. Services, therefore, ought to be squarely positioned within a framework of rights and social justice, and should reflect the principles of equality, equity, inclusion, and participation for all citizens.

Development of Comprehensive Immigrant-Youth-Specific Services

In their journey towards full participation in Canadian society, young immigrants encounter a wide range of multifaceted, complex issues related to acclimatization, adaptation and integration. Yet existing services, as illuminated in this analysis, have mostly focused on general social and educational support in the early stages of acclimatization and adaptation. Services need to concurrently address the settlement needs of immigrant youth and promote their active community participation. Services have to be responsive to complex needs, such as trauma, formation of identity, and discrimination, and they must address a wide range of issues relevant to the immigrant experience in all economic, educational, political, cultural, and social spheres of living. Development and implementation of services have to reflect sound philosophical and theoretical bases in relation to youth development and acculturation. They should also be attuned to the diversity among young immigrants and the intersection of multiple identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. In the case of English language support, ESL services need to reflect a sound pedagogy of second language

learning, and receive adequate funding to support learners to develop cognitive academic language proficiency.

Cultural Competence

In the changing socio-cultural landscape in Canada, cultural competence is a requirement for all organizations to stay relevant and be responsive to the complex needs of diverse populations. This analysis has, however, established that the selected mainstream youth organizations are only in the pre-cultural competence stage. The prevalent add-on services only provide piecemeal services to a limited number of immigrant youth. Mainstream service providers need to embark upon thoughtful, coherent and system-wide efforts to integrate cultural diversity into all organizational aspects, including governance, policies, resource allocation, communication plans, effective intercultural community relations, personnel practices, service delivery, and evaluation. This, in turn, would promote equitable access of immigrant youth to culturally responsive services.

Coordination and Collaboration

This critical analysis has pointed out the disproportionate focus of services for immigrant youth in the settlement sector on general educational and social support, as well as the disconnect between settlement service agencies and mainstream service organizations. Best practice in services for children of immigrant families, therefore, has to ensure greater coordination and collaboration among service providers. Within the settlement sector, agencies need to coordinate their services to ensure proportionate emphases on services appropriate to various stages of integration among young immigrants. Settlement agencies and mainstream organizations and institutions need to develop partnerships that support immigrant youth to deal with diverse, complex developmental and acculturative issues, and promote their equitable participation in the community.

Community Development

Integration is a two-way process that requires both immigrants and the receiving community to adjust to shifting socio-cultural realities. The examined services in the immigrant sector, however, have lacked program activities that help the receiving community to adapt and change in response to new socio-cultural realities. Community development initiatives can play an important role in facilitating meaningful dialogue and learning between immigrant youth and other community members. Further, they can jumpstart and support sustainable, participatory community action that promotes

inclusion and the active participation of young immigrants and their families, and collective transformation of the community as a whole.

Involvement of Immigrant Youth

The voice of children of immigrant families and their input into the development of programs and services are notably lacking in the services examined in this article. Service providers need to recognize the strength and resilience of immigrants. They need to extend their view of immigrant youth as merely recipients of services, and recognize their potential as contributors to the development of culturally responsive and youth-relevant services. Young immigrants are experts in their own socio-cultural realities and know what services are best for them. Service providers need to engage and involve these young people in the planning, development and evaluation of all services for immigrant youth.

Advocacy and Ombudsmanship

Clearly emerging from the analysis of services is a severe lack of funding and provision of services for children of immigrant families. Advocacy efforts, firmly rooted in the anti-oppressive and social justice paradigm, are needed to promote equality and equity in terms of resource allocation for immigrant youth services, and access of young immigrants to services and civic community participation. Further, until Canadian institutions fully adhere to the principles of equality and equity in service delivery to children of immigrant families, there is a dire need for ombudsmanship to assist young immigrants and their families to deal with institutionalized discrimination.

Responsive Policy Development

In the light of the lack of coordinated, comprehensive, and equitable services for immigrant youth, this analysis highlights the need to develop policies that ensure availability of quality services. Nationally, the Government of Canada must champion a national strategy that focuses on the education, resettlement and integration of children of immigrant families. This strategy should involve all federal departments to develop department-specific actions and inter-departmental initiatives to support school- and community-based programs that address identified needs of young immigrants in the social service, health, education and justice arenas. At the provincial level, ministries of education need to ensure mandated ESL curricula and instruction for all levels. They need to provide adequate ESL funding, and establish accountability measures to ensure that money follows ESL learners to their classrooms. At the municipal level, service providers in the health, education, social services

and justice sectors need to work in partnership to plan and implement inter-sectoral and system-wide coordination of services for children of immigrant families. They further have to develop and integrate cultural competency in all practices. Leadership in schools and school boards can also play an important role in the development of policies, regulations, and programs that promote adequate quality ESL instruction and educational support for immigrant learners.

CONCLUSION

This critical review of selected programs among settlement agencies, mainstream organizations, and Canadian institutions has revealed various shades of patchwork, sidelining and marginalization of immigrant youth. The remnants of the charitable, “deserving poor” model of services for immigrants in the early days of Canadian social services are still entrenched in contemporary responses to the needs of children of immigrant families. Equitable, quality services for young immigrants require nothing less than a paradigm shift from charity-based services to an entitlement/rights-based model of practice. The patchwork, sidelining, and marginalization of immigrant youth services compromise the future of Canada. They risk making service providers and Canadian institutions become part of the development of a subculture of defeat and marginalization, in which children of immigrant families, denied their right to equitable, quality services, face life-long underutilization of human potential.

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