

Provision of Afterschool Programs: Understanding the Educational Needs and Outcomes of Newcomer and Refugee Students in Canada

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Abstract : Newcomer and refugee youth feel excluded in the education system in Canada, and the formal education environment does not fully cater for their learning needs. The objective of this study was to build knowledge and understanding of the educational needs and experiences of these youth in Canada and how available afterschool programs can most effectively support their learning needs and academic outcomes. The Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), which funded this research, enables and empowers students to advance their educational experience through targeted investments in services that are delivered by youth-serving organizations outside the formal education system through afterschool initiatives. A literature review and a provincial/territorial internet scan were conducted to determine the availability of services and programs that serve the educational needs and academic outcomes of newcomer youth in 10 provinces and 3 territories in Canada. The goal was to identify intersectional factors (e.g., gender, sexuality, culture, social class, race, etc.) that influence educational outcomes of newcomer/refugee students and to recommend ways the ESDC could complement settlement services to enhance students' educational success. First, data was collected through a literature search of various databases, including PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, Google docs, ACADEMIA, and grey literature, including government documents, to inform our analysis. Second, a provincial/territorial internet scan was conducted using a template that was created by ESDC staff with the input of the researchers. The objective of the web-search scan was to identify afterschool programs, projects, and initiatives offered to newcomer/refugee youth by service provider organizations. The method for the scan included both qualitative and quantitative data gathering. Both the literature review and the provincial/territorial scan revealed that there are gender disparities in educational outcomes of newcomer and refugee youth. High school completion rates by gender show that boys are at higher risk of not graduating than girls and that girls are more likely than boys to have at least a high school diploma and more likely to proceed to postsecondary education. Findings from literature reveal that afterschool programs are required for refugee youth who experience mental health challenges and miss out on significant periods of schooling, which affect attendance, participation, and graduation from high school. However, some refugee youth use their resilience and ambition to succeed in their educational outcomes. Another finding showed that some immigrant/refugee students, through ethnic organizations and familial affiliation, maintain aspects of their cultural values, parental expectations and ambitious expectations for their own careers to succeed in both high school and postsecondary education. The study found a significant combination of afterschool programs that include academic support, scholarships, bursaries, homework support, career readiness, internships, mentorship, tutoring, non-clinical counselling, mental health and social well-being support, language skills, volunteering opportunities, community connections, peer networking, culturally relevant services etc. These programs assist newcomer youth to develop self-confidence and prepare for academic success and future career development. The study concluded that advantages of afterschool programs are greatest for youth at risk for poor educational outcomes, such as Latino and Black youth, including 2SLGBTQI+ immigrant youth.

Keywords : afterschool programs, educational outcomes, newcomer youth, refugee youth, youth-serving organizations

Conference Title : ICIEI 2024 : International Conference on Inclusive Education and Integration

Conference Location : Oslo, Norway

Conference Dates : June 27-28, 2024