

Newcomer Youth and Belonging: Service Providers' Views

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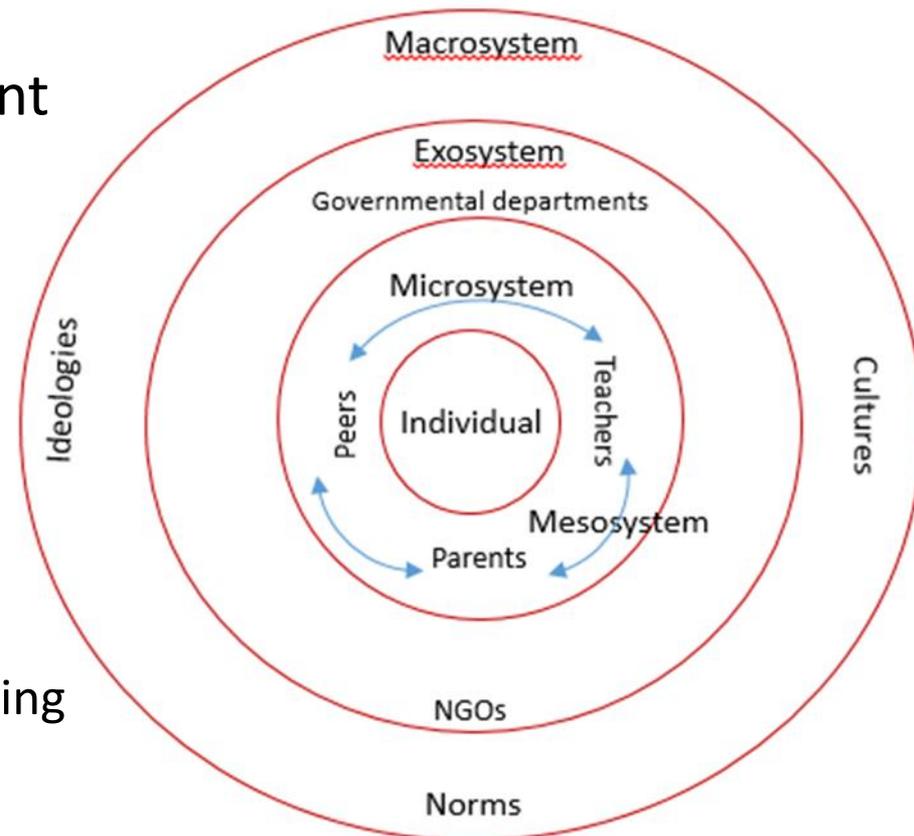
Refugee Student Integration: Building Welcoming Communities and Schools for a Sustainable Future.
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The Project

- Three-year investigation into the needs and available supports for newcomer Canadians
- Comparative analysis across 3 sites (St. John's, Winnipeg, Calgary)
 - This paper focuses on the investigation of the needs of newcomer youth in NL and the services provided to them through the lens of service providers

Theoretical Framework – Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1999, 2005)

- A set of nested systems that influence human development
 1. Microsystem (personal relationships)
 2. Mesosystem (connections between microsystems)
 3. Exosystem (NGOs, service providers, gov't)
 4. Macrosystem (predominant culture, norms, values)
 5. Chronosystem (changes occurring over time)



Literature Review

- **Historical and contemporary immigration trends in NL**
 - ❖ NL has a traditional trend of immigration from Europe
 - ❖ Low newcomer intake and high ratio of refugees: 770 immigrants came to NL each year and 155 of them were refugees
 - ❖ Low newcomer retention rate: 22.9%

Literature Review

- **Government policies in response to growing population of newcomers in NL**
 - ❖ The province's first immigration strategy "Diversity, Opportunity and Growth" was launched in 2007 (Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism, 2007).
 - ❖ The ten-year population growth strategy for the period of 2015 to 2025 was launched in 2015, and one of its foci is increasing immigrant attraction and retention rates (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015).

Literature Review

- **Services and support in response to growing population of newcomers in NL**
 - ❖ **Association for New Canadians (ANC)** provides wrap-around settlement services
 - ❖ **AXIS (Acquiring eXperience and Integration Skills)** provides specific employment services for newcomers
 - ❖ **NGO agencies: Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council Inc. (RIAC) & Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador (MWONL)**
 - ❖ **Local Immigration Partnership (LIP)** was established in June 2014, by the City of St. John's and ANC, "to help improve the integration of immigrants as well as to strengthen the City's ability to attract immigrants" (City of St. John's, 2014, para. 3).

Literature Review

- **Services for newcomer youth in NL**

- ❖ **Settlement Workers in the Schools (SWIS)**: liaison between school and community)
- ❖ **Literacy Enrichment and Academic Readiness for Newcomers (LEARN)** program: to bridge newcomer students' education gaps and prepare them for joining mainstream classes
- ❖ **Sharing Our Cultures**: a school-based program aimed at encouraging youth to share and learn from each other's cultures
- ❖ **Recreation Experiences and Leisure Program (REAL)**: to provide recreation and leisure opportunities to children and youth in financial need.
- ❖ **MUN Med Gateway** is a volunteer program collaborated between Memorial University, the ANC and Eastern Health to serve as a gateway to medical services for refugees.

Research questions

1. What are the specific needs of newcomer youth as identified by various service providers in NL?
2. How do existing service providers view their merits, collaborative efforts, and service gaps in supporting newcomer youth integration?

Methodology

- A basic qualitative research method (Merriam, 2009)
- Data sources:
 - ❖ 33 Semi-structured Interviews with personnel from:
 - government-sponsored settlement agencies
 - NGO immigrant and refugee support associations
 - medical and counseling units
 - municipal recreational offices
 - educational programs
 - ❖ 10 Observations of various programs and events

Findings: Service Gaps Perceived by Service Providers

Transportation difficulties

*“If a family is not living in our Catchment area where they can access the school bus, then they **have to pay \$45 per child** to get them here ... Some of these are big families, two or three students ... And the burden of that cost is falling on the families instead of being provided for them.”* – Bridging teacher 1

Findings: Service Gaps Perceived by Service Providers

Insufficient academic bridging programs

- No academic bridging programs in elementary schools

“... short-sightedness ... unreasonable optimism ... Pollyannaish thinking ... inexcusable...” -- Bridging teacher 2

- Inadequate academic bridging teachers in secondary schools

*“You’re trying to do the same job with the same number of teaching units, but with **four times the students.**” – Bridging teacher 1*

Findings: Service Gaps Perceived by Service Providers

- Specific career services to newcomer students are not available in the schools

*“The career counselors need **to guide specific students in specific areas ...** (knowing) who's goal is what, who wants to be what.” – Bridging teacher 1*

- Career counsellors in community agencies may lack the experience in working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds

*“Knowing when different approaches may be needed for different people and **being aware of cultural diversity are important.**” -- NGO Service A staff*

Findings: Collaborative Efforts among Service Providers

❖ Schools being a connecting point with other agencies

➤ Settlement workers

*“(settlement workers) are **incredibly committed, determined, well-educated, incredible experienced.**” – Bridging teacher 1*

➤ A school-based diversity program

“I’ve never yet been to a school where I have been turned down.” – The diversity facilitator

➤ Public nurses

❖ Settlement Workers in Schools being the bridge between municipal recreational programs and schools & post-secondary institutions

Findings: Need for More Effective Collaboration

- **Schools and community organizations can improve in information sharing**

*“They (community and the schools) need to work together more because I am not very sure, even for my work **I don't know how the school is helping them.**” – NGO Service C staff*

- **Competition for funding causes friction among community agencies**

Discussion and Implications

- **Fluidity of bioecological systems and flexibility of services**
 - ❖ SWIS staff in the exosystem have developed close relations with newcomer youth and their families and become part of their microsystem
- **Linking the systems and enhancing collaborations**
 - ❖ Agencies in the exosystem could shift some of their services and programs to the newcomer youth's microsystem or build connections with the bridging teachers and settlement workers
- **Connecting the broken link and acting on inclusion**
 - ❖ Transportation to and from school is a broken link in the exosystem

Questions and comments?

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