

MORE THAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION: AN INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF ISANS' ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE PROGRAM

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Introduction

- A qualitative in-depth study exploring an innovative one-to-one language and cultural training program called English in the Workplace (EWP).
- Offered by the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS).
- The study draws on the experiences and perspectives of 30 EWP participants.
- Participants included Employee Learners, Employers and Instructors of the program.

Background

- During the last ten years, Nova Scotia has worked to raise its profile as a province welcoming of newcomers.
- These efforts reflect larger national trends in provincially driven immigration. They are also indicative of Nova Scotia's unique economic and demographic needs.
- English in the Workplace Program is an onsite one-to-one language and cultural training program designed to work with employers and newcomers. Offering 36 hours of on-the-job language training over a 12-week period.

EWP Objectives

- (1) Develop the workplace language of employed and self-employed newcomers in the workforce.
- (2) Increase newcomers' knowledge and understanding of Canadian workplace culture.
- (3) Increase the capacity of Nova Scotian workplaces to support newcomers' workforce integration.

Methodology



30 interviews with EWP participants: Newcomer learners (17), Employers (9), and Instructors (4).



Demographics: Hospitality, Food Service Delivery, Information Technology, Not for Profit, Education, Entrepreneurs



Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour in length.



Thematic analysis was used to understand and code the transcripts.



Interviews were designed to determine program's effectiveness vis-à-vis study objectives.

Findings



Study Objectives

1. to understand program objectives and to determine if program objectives correspond to participant objectives;
2. to offer an assessment of the successes and potential limitations of the program;
3. to provide recommendations on how the program can be further developed or enhanced to ensure program objective

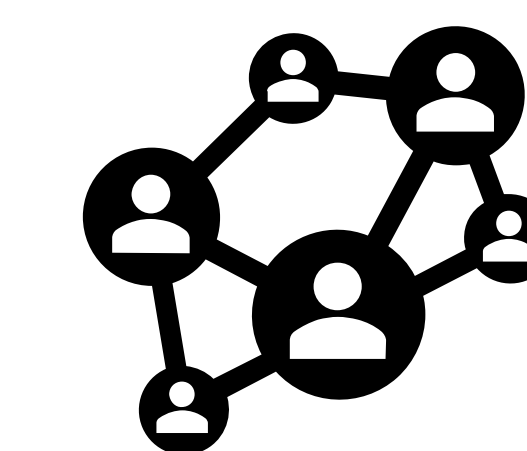
Insights

- Intensive, individualized language training fosters task-specific communication skills and workplace confidence.
- Workplace-specific language training enables newcomer employees to assume new responsibilities and draw on the myriad skills they already have.
- Newcomers are interested in positive relationships with Canadian co-workers and enhanced worker relations improve the quality of the workplace.
- Newcomers are not resistant to adapting to Canadian workplace norms, but they need to understand those norms to do so effectively.
- Workplace integration is not a one-way street; EWP employer participants noted their increased capacity to support their newcomer employers, and subsequently the likelihood that they would hire newcomers in the future.

Recommendations

1. Expand the EWP program both in delivery (more sessions over a longer period of time) and access (ensuring a wider client base, including self-employer / small business-owning newcomers).
2. Integrate language instruction in the workplace facilitates attendance to generate an authentic opportunity for learning.
3. Offering a range of options for language instruction strengthens the likelihood of newcomer success across a range of activities.
4. Meaningful communication encompasses language proficiency and cultural understanding. Learning to communicate must include practices and social norms that may be taken-for-granted by long-standing residents or employees.

Participants Voice



"I could be more myself." and "My coworkers were starting to start conversations with me."



"And they didn't have to ask me to repeat myself often. I could understand what they were saying."



"I am able and confident [in my communications with colleagues]."



"I enjoy working now, I feel comfortable again."

Partners

isans | Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia



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