A BMRC RESEARCH DIGEST
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SUPPORTING INTELLIGENT CAREER PATHWAYS FOR EDU-IMMIGRANTS

A path to post-education resilience

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What you need to know

In 2019, a total of 642,480 international students studied in Canada (IRCC, 2019). Sixty percent of these students planned to apply for permanent residency in Canada (OECD, 2019), and seventy-five percent sought post-graduation work placements; essentially creating a class of "edu-immigrants". Scant research exists which assesses the availability of campus resources that support edu-immigrants during schooling and post-graduation, nor which identifies the role of community stakeholders in strengthening their resilience as prospective Canadians.

What is this research about?

The purpose of this research is twofold: to understand the experience of edu-immigrants coping with new social, political, and environmental structures in order to integrate into their adopted countries' labour market and society; and to explore how regional and community stakeholders such as post-secondary institutions, settlement agencies, and local businesses support edu-immigrant resilience. There is a lack of awareness of the challenges confronting policymakers, international student recruitment agencies, and settlement agencies who are working to support successful edu-immigrant settlement. Also, the level of collaboration among these groups is not well understood.

How was the research carried out?

Using a qualitative approach, interviews were conducted with 13 key informants including on- and off-campus community stakeholders, followed by a cross-sectional survey of 374 international students. Community stakeholders included the administrators of international student programs at a mid-sized university, located in Southwestern Ontario as well as community-based, business-focused groups and newcomer settlement agencies.

What have we learned from the research?

Resilience is related to intelligent career management. Successful management depends on taking ownership of one's career and investing beyond any single employment setting in these three specific competency areas of 'knowing': 1) knowing why, 2) knowing how, and 3) knowing whom. Having clear educational and career goals, most edu-immigrants know why and how to enhance their skills and competencies. However, they don't know whom to turn to for help in acquiring social connections, which are very important to access a spectrum of work experiences. It is difficult for edu-immigrants to develop higher-level social capital/contacts without the support of campus and external stakeholders. Although university administrators create strong educational experiences, they do not prepare these edu-immigrants for Canadian careers. This research reveals a gap in services for edu-immigrants in Canada. For example, settlement agencies do not receive funding to support international students/edu-immigrants. University administrators noted that new ideas for more settlement support are not viewed as core to the institution's educational mission. This study highlighted the potential for help from various community stakeholders. Post-secondary institutions can help edu-immigrants by focusing on nurturing the three types of 'knowing' – ensuring they know their goals, aiding in the creation of the skills needed for lasting careers, and facilitating the establishment of a career-relevant social and professional network. Educational institutions may also collaborate with other stakeholders, such as religious institutions, settlement agencies, and other non-governmental agencies to provide necessary services and develop new programs. Further, to provide sufficient opportunity to develop meaningful professional networks and address the settlement needs of edu-immigrants, including a collaborative approach that involves partnering with public organizations and private enterprises to fund programs and services.

How can you use this research?

The analyses in this study provide insights regarding a significant new phenomenon affecting many regional communities in Canada. As such, policymakers, settlement workers, and service providers who work with immigrants could benefit from the findings of this research. Community stakeholders could broaden their understanding of the experience and intentions of edu-immigrants and support the development of resilience and intelligent career management. for them. Policymakers must recognize the goals and needs of edu-immigrants and pursue ongoing dialogue with campus administrators to ensure the necessary services are available to them at all stages of their migration.

Who is leading this research?

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Learn more

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