

How To Engage Adult Immigrant Students?

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A decorative graphic consisting of several sets of concentric circles in shades of yellow and green, resembling ripples in water, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Outline

1. Purpose
2. Background
3. Literature review on student engagement
 - traditional students
 - adult students
 - minority students
4. Characteristics of adult newcomer students
5. Framework for immigrant engagement

Purpose

- To compare and contrast engagement issues between adult immigrant students and traditional students
- To contribute towards the development of a student engagement typology

Student engagement

- time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities inside and outside of the classroom
- policies and practices institutions use to induce students to take part in these activities
- student success is influenced by the nature of involvement

Background

- For adult newcomers, **getting employed**, especially in an appropriate field, is a main priority
- Adult newcomers **face many challenges**:
 - non-recognition of credentials and past work experience
 - barriers within regulatory processes for professional licensing and registration
 - no Canadian experience
- Increasing proportion **seeks post-secondary (re)training**

Engaging traditional students (1)

➤ Traditional student

- young (18-24 years old)
- middle class
- Caucasian
- full time attendance

➤ Engagement measures

- student-faculty interaction
- residency status
- employment status

Engaging traditional students (2)

➤ Effective institutional policies/practices

- A strong and consistent **mission statement** outlining its values and aspirations and providing direction and framework for action
- Compatible **policies and programs**
 - communicate expectations about full participation in institution's life
 - create opportunities for and remove obstacles to student involvement in their own education
 - encourage students to be responsible for the quality of their living and out-of-class learning environments
 - adopt active engagement teaching methods (e.g. problem-based learning, interaction with communities, team projects, online discussion)

Adult learners / Mature students

➤ Lifestyle characteristics

- family responsibility
- off-campus residence
- off-campus employment
- social networks outside postsecondary institution
- prior experience in postsecondary education

➤ PSE experience

- part-time attendance
- mostly taking place in the classroom environment
- little peer interaction and out-of-class interaction with faculty
- more likely to use services directly connected to their academic involvement than campus health, placement and counselling

➤ Engagement issues

- focus on their experience in the classroom
- consider part-time and interrupted enrolment
- consider lifestyle conditions

Minority students

➤ Characteristics

- cultural norms and values different from majority population
- participating in both majority and minority cultures

➤ PSE experience

- those who feel at ease as well as competent in both their native culture and the PSE institutional environment are more likely to be successful in higher education
- they perform better and are more likely to persist when their cultural identities are affirmed

➤ Engagement issues

- adopt a bicultural integration paradigm
- acknowledge involvement in cultural activities
- provide race-based programs

Adult newcomer students

➤ Barriers to success

- language fluency
- financial constraints
- cultural expectation for women
- unfamiliarity with institutional culture

➤ Characteristics similar to adult learners and minority students

- bicultural frame of reference
- strong sense of personal agency

➤ PSE experience

- part-time enrolment
- community college first, then university
- on campus engagement with fellow students and faculty
- use campus services that are primarily academic in nature
- bicultural engagement

Towards an immigrant engagement model (1)

- Note similarities and differences with adult learners and minority students
- Note their worldview that allows them to adopt attitudes and strategies conducive to success in school
- Note importance attached to ethnic identity, and strong engagement with family and community

Note their resilience and orientation

Towards an immigrant engagement model (2)

- Adopt an institutional mission with multicultural/bicultural orientation towards integration
- Use a bottom-up approach to identify relevant knowledge on student needs and develop institutional missions and values

Institute a diversity mission

Towards an immigrant engagement model (3)

- Consider their lifestyle characteristics when developing curricular and extracurricular programs
- Consider the many challenges (language, finance, etc.) to school involvement faced by them
- Build strong collaboration with minority communities, especially those surrounding the institution
- Involve their families during the orientation process

Connect to their family and community

Towards an immigrant engagement model (4)

- Promote understanding and support by faculty and counselling staff
- Facilitate school-to-work transitions
- Modify measures of engagement to account for how immigrant students are socially and academically involved

Understand their motive and need

Next step

- To develop a pilot study of postsecondary educational institutions, and see if and how they engage adult immigrant students