

ATESL Newsletter – September 2007

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ATESL FALL CONFERENCE

October 19 & 20, 2007

Mount Royal College
Lincoln Park Campus
4825 Mount Royal Gate S.W.
Calgary, AB, T3E 6K6

For more conference information:
http://www.atesl.ca/07conf_index.html

Early Bird Registration Deadline: September 14.

Registration online or by mail closes October 5th. After that you will be able to register in person at the registration desk at the conference.

http://www.atesl.ca/07conf_registration.html

Register online OR by mail.

- See below to register online and pay with a credit card on our secure server. (You must use the online service to use a credit card.)
- Or print a form in PDF or in Word fill it in and mail with your cheque or money order. (click either link for printable form-see p. 2 ATESL Newsletter for registration form).
See www.atesl.ca/07conf_registration.html

U of C TESL Program

We are excited to announce that effective September 2007, UCCE will offer a Teaching Second Languages professional development certificate program developed by U of C Language Research Centre (LRC), Faculty of Education and the Graduate Division of Educational Research's (GDER) Master of Education – TESL Program.

These courses were developed by LRC and Education's senior faculty members and have been taught for four years to existing language instructors. The ESL specialization courses are aimed at new and existing ESL teachers who want to improve their teaching and deepen their understanding of language teaching. Recently, UCCE has expanded the existing professional development courses into a 250-hour Teaching Second Languages (TSL) certificate program which includes a specialization in Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language.

The core courses of the program include 130 hours of teaching second language fundamentals and theory, with another 120 hours of professional development with specific language and classroom skills. In addition, an optional 20-hour practicum course is available and will be offered in conjunction with our English Language Program, which has over 35 years of providing ESL/EFL education to students and teachers the world over.

The program is very flexible and is offered entirely ONLINE. For more information please visit: conted.ucalgary.ca/tsl/

President's Message

Welcome to a new academic year for many of you and to the busiest time of year for ATESL. With the conference in Calgary fast approaching, I would like to encourage you to think about taking advantage of this great opportunity to meet fellow ESL practitioners from around the province and to discover some of the exciting innovations taking place in ESL delivery.

The Board is pleased to announce that the new benefits package for ATESL members is now available through the website. This package includes dental, health and travel insurance and is made available through the same company that has successfully managed a similar package for TESL Ontario. I consider this insurance package to be a major step forward for ATESL in better meeting the needs of the membership. One further new development to look out for is the reconstruction of our website. We are currently in the process of hiring a website designer to help us update our website and to enable us to upload even more information related to professional development and advocacy issues to the site. I would like to thank Carolyn Dielemann and Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry for supporting this initiative.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the conference and if you have issues or concerns you would like to raise with the Board I would welcome the opportunity to discuss those. This will be my final newsletter submission as ATESL President and I would like to sincerely thank the amazing group of volunteers who make up the Board and local organizations of ATESL for your help and support. I have learned a huge amount from you and I look forward to a vital and interesting year ahead with Marian Rossiter as the incoming ATESL President.

Sincerely,

Justine Light

ATESL President

Thematic Organization of Instruction for an Adult ESL/EAP Curriculum: A Qualitative Study of an EAP Program

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the impact that thematically organized instruction for an English as a Second Language (ESL)/English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curriculum has made on adult learners in an intensive language program and to discover its potential to meet the needs of adult ESL/EAP learners in a Canadian context. Using multiple data sources this study seeks to address the research question: How do adult ESL/EAP learners perceive their English learning experiences in an intense language/EAP program, where thematic organization has been implemented? Using action research methodology, the researcher examines the implementation of thematic organization for adult ESL/EAP learners in the EAP program at the University of Calgary from the perspectives of twelve Level 4 students, three instructors, and the program director. The data include class-room observation notes, artifacts of student learning, interviews with students, instructors and the program director, and photographic evidence. Analysis of these data yielded linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological themes. The findings and implications of this study are intended to allow educators to use the students' insights in order to plan in a more informed and grounded manner for an enhanced quality of ESL/EAP programs for EAP adults in the Canadian educational context.

BACKGROUND

Since 1990s, an increasing number of new arrivals who speak English as a Second Language (ESL) have appeared on Canadian campuses to pursue their post secondary degrees. Among these new arrivals there are a significant number who do not meet the English language requirement for university level studies. They need intensive support to develop the level of language proficiency and the study skills required for successful engagement with a university level curriculum (e.g. inquiry-based learning, collaborative/group work/independent research skills, and project-driven class work). Universities across Canada, including the University of Calgary, have responded to this need by offering intensive language programs or English for Academic Purposes (EAP). These EAP programs play a vital role in bridging the language gap and introducing these students to the learning culture of the university. The question of whether these programs are effective in achieving their goals has been under-researched. This study addresses this question by tapping the students' perspectives, using a variety of data sources.

Over the past decade, a reorganization of ESL/EAP curriculum and teaching materials as well as novel instructional strategies and techniques has been implemented in order to better meet the needs of ESL/EAP students. In the recent past, thematic organization has been increasingly accepted in post-secondary ESL/EAP settings as a way of providing a context for language through content (LTC) teaching and learning. There is considerable literature recording the experiences of immigrant ESL/EAP students in high schools (Chow, 2000; Watt, Roessingh & Bosetti, 1996) and the positive outcome of thematically organized instruction for high school ESL/EAP students (Roessingh, 1995, 1996; Roessingh & Kover, 2003; Roessingh, Kover & Watt, 2005) and for postsecondary EAP learners (Pally, 2000, 2001). However, few studies have captured the perceptions of adult ESL/EAP learners regarding their English learning experiences under thematically organized instruction in a Canadian post secondary setting. This study takes a deeper look into the learning experiences of these learners and how ESL/EAP adults perceive what is happening as they participate in thematically organized instruction. It is a topic that I felt needed further exploration to help ESL/EAP professionals and educators better meet the needs of adult ESL/EAP learners and to deepen our understanding of their learning process.

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

The orienting research questions are as follows:

- How do learners perceive their English learning experiences in an EAP program where thematic organization for an ESL/EAP curriculum is implemented?
- Do learners think thematically organized instruction for an adult ESL/EAP curriculum helps them achieve their academic goals? If yes, in what aspects (motivation, language proficiency, confidence, skill demands of the university study)? Any drawbacks?
- Do instructors perceive their students benefit from thematic organization?

Qualitative Inquiry: Action Research

This research project is classroom based. It can be described as action research, following the tradition of qualitative methodology. Action research, perceived as a valuable form of inquiry for educators, has a number of advantages (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2000; Schmuck, 1997). Foremost, it focuses on practical improvement. It seeks to implement solutions to problems in the classroom or school setting. In addition, it allows teachers, administrators, and students to be involved in meaningful ways. More importantly, all participants can contribute to and benefit from the process. Adapting the conventional process of action research including cycles of planning, action and reflection, I as observer/participant (rather than a doer/teacher) lived the multiple cycles of observing, recording, and interpreting and reflecting in two level 4 EAP classes. As shown in Figure 1, the action research process is cyclical and open-ended. It is iterative and continual: each research activity feeds the next over three cycles. Critical reflection is a key element. 'Each reflective phase yields more information about the issue and increases the researcher's understanding' (ATA, p.12). The researcher engages in all of the research activities of the cycle and uses these as feedback about the activities of data collection already taken and as direction to inform and direct the subsequent actions in the cycle.

Figure 1 The Action Research Process

Participants

VISA/EAP students in Level 4

The study population consisted of twelve students enrolled in two Level 4 classes of the EAP program in the winter session of 2006. The foremost criterion for participant selection was students who demonstrated an interest in participating in the study and in sharing their perceptions of English learning experience in the EAP program. Further to this criterion, the attempt was made to balance

the group by gender, first language, level of English language proficiency, length of time in the program and previous education experience.

Instructors

Three instructors who taught the two Level 4 classes were involved in this study. According to the instructors, thematic organization is not new to them at all. They had received training of it in formal settings, at university. This equipped them for their teaching practice. During the whole process, the researcher worked closely with the instructors, first gaining access to the students through them, and then getting involved in their teaching planning and practice. Interviews of these instructors were done towards the end of the semester when both the researcher and instructors had an overall picture of what had been achieved.

Program director

The director of the program was vital to this study. She was the initial contact for the researcher and led the researcher to other participants: the instructors and students. The director first learned about thematic organization for an ESL/EAP curriculum from Dr. Roessingh in the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary. Even though she anticipated some resistance from the program staff because of the restructuring, she was receptive to the challenge.

Researcher as participant/observer

In action research, observation provides a holistic picture; helps document non-verbal behaviours (i.e. using camera to capture photographic evidence); and increases the researcher’s sensitivity to multiple variables (ATA, 2000). By entering the level 4 EAP classrooms, I glean first hand insights into meanings of behaviours (what people do), language (what they say), and interactions in a natural setting. This also helped me gain the respect and trust from potential participants for interviews, the primary source of the data.

DATA COLLECTION

The data collection phase took place from January to April 2006. Figure 2 provides an overview of data collection activities (Creswell, 1998).

Figure 2 Data Collection Activities within Action Research

Figure 2 Data Collection Activities within Action Research		
Data Collection Activities	Action Research Tradition	Specific to this Study
What type of information typically collected? (forms of data)	Participant observations, interviews, and documents	Inside and outside class observational fieldnotes, interview write-ups, photographing, sound recording, and students’ course work (assignments, presentations, online journaling/blogs, reflections, etc.) and exams (with teachers feedback and evaluation)
How is	Fieldnotes, interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used observational protocols to log

information recorded? (recording information)	and observational protocols	<p>information learned during the observations (descriptive notes- settings/activities; reflective notes- reflection on activities, summary conclusions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Took photographs and audio taped when necessary during the observations • Used interview protocols to take notes during the interview about the responses of the interviewee • Audio taped the interviews and transcribed them • Collected and organized students' sample work • Reflective journals
What are common data collection issues? (field issues)	Field issues (e.g., reflexivity, reactivity, "going native," divulging private information, deception)	Estimated the time needed to collect extensive data and followed the schedule. Actively shared and asked for confirmation of information (i.e. rationale for collecting the data and what had been collected) with participants in the culture group to gain trust and cooperation.
How is information typically stored? (storing data)	Field notes, transcriptions, computer files	Categorized the data: field notes (hard copies), transcriptions (hard copies/e-version/recording), copies of documents (hard copies), photos (e-versions)

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The study data include observations, photographic evidence, interviews, artifacts of student learning, and other documents. These multiple sources of data were collected and analyzed to allow recurring themes to emerge. Three broad categories of themes and some subthemes emerge from the data analysis. Each of the themes in the broad categories represents a major finding of the study, and they are explored in depth in this chapter. The impact of thematically organized instruction for an ESL/EAP curriculum is presented in Figure 3. A hierarchical tree diagram shows different levels of abstraction, with the boxes in the top of the tree representing the most abstract information and those at the bottom representing the least abstract subthemes. The paradigmatic shift from teacher-fronted to learner-centered instruction is sustained by the three broad categories of themes: linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological. The intent of the diagram is to provide a visual structure for understanding both student participants' learning experiences under thematically organized instruction and how it impacts these learners.

Category One: Linguistic themes are comprised of information related to linguistic aspects of thematic organization. This category refers to themes about 'making meaning and using language as a tool for

knowledge construction'. The sub-themes include the importance of accessing and connecting to students' prior knowledge, integration of language skills, and recycling of vocabulary and forms.

Category Two: Pedagogical themes are comprised of information related to instructional practices that promote active engagement in language learning. This covers sub-themes connected with collaboration/group work, assignments/projects, targeting students' instructional level or, in Krashen's terms, Comprehensible Input + 1 ($C_i + 1$), and transfer-ring what is learned.

Category Three: Psychological themes meaning creating a community of learners are comprised of information about atmosphere for learning and teaching and empowerment. The former theme includes supports of learning (i.e. respect/encouragement/feedback) and learning from mistakes (e.g. Mistakes are good.). The latter encompasses sub-themes associated with motivation, confidence, and taking initiative and being resourceful.

DISCUSSION

The academic culture of university is making new demands on today's students. International students face the challenges of developing not just the English language proficiency required for reading textbooks, attending lectures and taking notes; they must also develop the skills for critical thinking, problem solving, inquiry, independent research and collaboration that are often unfamiliar and daunting. There is increasing interest in curricular reform at the tertiary level that reflects a less dogmatic, more principled approach to teaching and learning in EAP programs that will address these learner needs. Such an approach shifts the focus from teaching to learning, placing the students' needs at the center. In broad strokes, principles associated with constructivism, communicative language teaching and learner centeredness lie at the heart of the curriculum reform effort. There are concomitant demands made of EAP instructors, as they grapple with implementing these curricular re-forms.

Thematic organization for instructional planning can provide a broad, flexible frame-work that will allow for the integration of curricular elements usually identified in the more traditional approaches to curriculum design for EAP programs. It also offers a relevant and motivating context for students to develop and practice the additional skills noted above that are so important to their academic engagement and success. The University of Calgary's EAP program recently adopted thematic teaching. The current study sought to obtain in-sights, largely from the students' perspective, into the efficacy of thematic instruction.

Toward Learner Centered Instruction: Meeting students' needs

The findings presented previously are organized around three broad themes: linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological and the associated sub-themes that emerged from the data. Here comes a synthesis and summary of the findings within the rubric of strengths/weaknesses/action. It considers the implications for institutional commitment to staff development, the need for preparation time for instructional staff, and purchase or preparation of learning resources; and makes suggestions for future research.

Figure 3 A Hierarchical Tree Diagram of Emergent Themes from the Study Data

Leadership

The move to thematic teaching represents a major reconceptualization of the curriculum based on evolving and changing beliefs about the nature of and the relationship between teaching and learners. To implement

this reform requires committed leadership. Hiring practices, staff development, and paid preparation time are all within the purview of the pro-program director/leader and need to be addressed.

Staff development: Supporting teachers to meet the learning needs of students

Shifting to thematically organized curriculum places significant new demands on the teachers. They are no longer technicians who can rely on the textbooks to drive their in-instructional decision-making. Rather, they have a multiplicity of responsibilities to address and roles to play in an atmosphere of heightened accountability. The EAP program ultimately must operate within budgetary constraints and produce tangible results. The new roles for teachers could include diagnostician, facilitator, coach and mentor, learning resource developer, and curriculum designer.

Many of the new demands placed on teachers can be supported through an array of staff development activities. Teachers must reposition themselves in the classroom – from teacher fronted to learner centered.

A paradigmatic shift in curriculum ideology at minimum requires intensive orientation to create the ‘buy in’ required for its success. End of summer institutes are one idea. At the instructional level, teachers may need suggestions for task design that will more actively involve the students in using language for meaningful, purposeful learning. Workshops focused on teaching strategies for the communicative classroom can be less intensive. Mentoring, peer observations, and partnering between more experienced and knowledgeable teachers can provide opportunities for novice teachers to acquire the new skills and insights they need. Embedding action research as a form of professional inquiry and development can encourage teachers to make the link between theory and practice. Participation and presentations at ATESL/TESL Canada conferences and contributions to professional news-letters and journals are ways to disseminate action research findings to other TESL practitioners at the tertiary level who are just as anxious about seeking better ways to address their students’ learning needs.

The University of Calgary offers a Master’s Degree in TESL including course work in ESL curriculum design, materials design, methods and assessment that will address and provide some of the academic background required. Instructors who are not confident that they have the requisite skills and knowledge to implement theme-based teaching can consider the graduate course work.

In short, the classroom must transform from a site for practice to one of praxis: a place where teachers reflect critically on what they do to become more intentional and in-formed, more committed and dedicated.

Learning Resources

In addition to staff development, it is vital to develop effective learning resources to meet the students’ needs. First, direct grammar instruction which provides recycling of language forms is needed in the current thematic curriculum. In addition to identifying students’ problem areas (i.e. typical grammar problems), the instructors should consider explicit and direct grammar instruction. For instance, the learning resources can review grammar rules and provide the content for students to practice using grammar in various contextualized situations. In short, the current thematic curriculum can be made better by including a grammar syllabus that is contextualized in the themes/content in each level of the pro-program. Additionally, resources that allow explicit instruction for inquiry-based learning, critical thinking and problem solving are needed. The curriculum designer/learning resource developer/instructor can generate the essential questions that drive each theme study. Some academic tasks for the development of these skills can be included in the curriculum. Tasks such as group discussions, lectures, videos, book responses, and written/oral presentations that require synthesizing and questioning of ideas can be considered for the curriculum. The learning resources are unlikely to be found in any single textbook. Teacher-prepared materials designed specifically to meet the needs of students can complement textbook resources. The curriculum designer/learning resource developer/instructor, therefore, needs to identify, purchase, or prepare appropriate materials to support thinking skills and problem solving. This requires sufficient supports such as preparation time.

Preparation time

Sufficient preparation time is necessary for building an effective thematic curriculum and successfully implementing it. As previously mentioned, to 'hunt and gather' learning resources to meet students' needs is time consuming. The curriculum specialist needs to work closely with the instructors to first identify the students' needs and proceeds to develop appropriate materials. More importantly, this is not a job that is ever completed. It is an on going task to update materials, locate new sources and media, keeping everything current and relevant. On a more practical level, to maximize the positive outcomes of a thematic curriculum, practitioners who implement the curriculum need to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of how to do this. Time and opportunities for learning and understanding how to implement the curriculum are needed. Instructors, therefore, need time for professional development (i.e. taking graduate courses, conducting action research, attending and presenting at ATESL/TESL conferences). Additionally, considerable time is needed for conferencing with peers and students, as well as lesson planning and personal reflection on practice. In all, the program needs to provide adequate release time for practitioners to develop the learning resources, to prepare classroom teaching, and to follow up their instructional practice. Specifically, personal reflection, conferencing with peers and students and pursuing personal academic goals should become a plan for professional development.

CONCLUSION

The presence of international students in educational settings at all levels will likely continue to increase in the future. The strengths of the ESL/EAP program renewal are identified by students and instructors alike. Theme-based teaching within an integrated communicative framework has enormous potential to address the heightened demands international students must meet if they are to succeed. These demands are communicative competence, and academic linguistic proficiency at a high level, critical thinking and problem solving skills, and the need to take ownership for their learning. Ongoing work to develop the curriculum in accordance with the principles that inform the thematic framework can yet produce better outcomes in the future. The work has only just begun.

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Canada - Brazil Project

July 2007 was an adventure loosely disguised as professional development. I joined three other Calgary teachers, led by a Brazilian teacher, to offer the Second Annual Canada - Brazil Project. It is a voluntary ESL Methodologies Course at UESPI University in Teresina, Piaui, Brazil. From Monday until Friday we each led 30 of our Brazilian peers through interactive English activities and discussed the methodologies. Here is a light overview of this wonderful adventure.

Monday, July 2nd was the Opening Ceremony. The team from Canada was dressed in the prerequisite black and white outfits in 35 degree temperatures. The plan to set up a booth filled with Canadian facts was postponed. That gave us an opportunity to look forward to the unknown ceremony in a theatre style auditorium with almost sufficient air-conditioning.

As the class lists had not yet been posted, there were many curious looks passing through the auditorium. A few of the courageous Brazilians asked us about the flight and made general small talk. This made the additional one hour wait for the distinguished guests not so painful. At 10, five University dignitaries expressed best wishes to the program using various Portuguese wordplays, then returned to their workload. Now we Canadian teachers had our chance to sit on stage to be watched like bugs. The pressure to appear friendly, professional, unconcerned by the stares and not completely confused by the unknown language made it a terribly long two hours.

On Tuesday, July 3rd, half an hour before class, the office we were working out of was not yet opened. Five lists of 30 participants and classrooms with code words like Setor 6 and Sala 7 were on the small door. I chose to try searching for the classroom instead of pacing by a locked door. It was surprisingly easy to find! I opened the door to a room cooled with a loud air conditioning unit located at the rear. There were 27 ancient, minia-ture, tablet arm desks almost completely filling the room. Luckily there was no desk for me or there would have been no room to stand. I foresaw interactive language activities to be a bit of a challenge. By the 8 am, start time, there were two participants in the cramped room. By 11 I had met most of the class. Unfortunately, there was a constant flow of entering and leaving participants, making it difficult to put faces to names. The actual class plan was similar to an ESL class in Calgary. However, after each activity we discussed what the objectives were, if they were met and how it might work in their classes. Needless to say, when the day ended all of us were exhausted.

Day 2 in the classroom started much the same with a similar plan. I found out the cause of the flow of participants was that many of my peers were still teaching. Some worked 7 am to 8 am and came as soon as they were finished. Others had to leave early as they worked later in the morning. Lucky were the ones with afternoon shifts as they could work all morning in their second language, then face 50 students. Still others had evening classes from 7 pm to 10 pm. Many were tutoring on top of this grueling schedule. They never complained. In fact, they would always sincerely thank me for the class and ask if I wanted to join them to see the city. One participant traveled home each weekend. He took two buses to get to a larger centre where he would take three more buses to get to Teresina.

My Brazilian peers inspired me. Over the course of July, many activities were tried and discussed. The challenge of space was overcome with participant engagement and a shared determination to utilize every activity to the fullest extent. Each of the four language skills had one day for it to be the focus. However, as in Calgary, it became clear that each lesson covered each skill area. The joy of reading was introduced through Literature Circles. With resources being very limited in the very poor North East state of Piaui, it is very challenging to make reading, especially reading in English, enjoyable. Since the Canadian team was limited to whatever we thought to bring in our suitcases, we were in a similar circumstance. We had about 20 pieces of literature. Of the many ideas discussed, we chose to introduce Literature Circles. We made a quick introduction of the roles of the four group members and the expectation of the presentation. Participants formed groups of four and chose a piece of literature. They read the piece. Then the group members discussed the main ideas. They each listened to the ideas of the other group members. They then wrote the main ideas on posters. Finally, everyone presented their piece of literature to the entire group.

The presentations were amazing. In my class there was Reader's Theatre, a comic strip recreation of the story, an amusing re-telling of the story and a more traditional discussion of the piece. Each group had interactive vocabulary practice and comprehension questions. We introduced four different pieces of literature with just four books, four pieces of poster board, some pencil crayons and some very creative teachers. The pleasure of writing was introduced with postcards. We offered the participants two free weeks with all responsibilities taken over and unlimited funds at their disposal. As these were adults who often worked 12 hour days, this was very challenging. First they talked about what to do with the windfall. After a slow start, they relaxed and just dreamed for a minute. One class went to "Visit Canada". They utilized a display filled with various pieces of information about Canada, otherwise known as the "Canada Booth". Through small group discussion, ideas flowed. Then they were given postcards to write home from their dream location. Suddenly to write in English did not seem so complicated. They had friends to help them and just a small piece of writing to complete. Each participant received a postcard to read to the class. Such a simple activity sparked much conversation and excitement. Everyone could see how they could create small, engaging writing activities by utilizing the other three language skills.

classes of 30, 50 or even 80. After four weeks of sharing ideas and activities we were all ex-hausted The learning never stopped for anyone involved. For each activity introduced, someone would add another excellent idea. For each idea presented, there was another one waiting to be discussed. For each presentation delivered more interactive lesson ideas were born. The techniques we use in Canada for small classes of 20 were being altered to fit yet inspired to do more, try more, be more.

July 27 was the Closing Ceremony. The only similarity to the Opening Ceremony would be the dress of us visitors. Instead of discomfort, there were sincere smiles, laughter and tears. Flashes continually blinded all in attendance. The University dignitaries returned however the speeches seemed shorter. The participants interrupted to give their own presentations. One class sang a Brazilian song about friendship and life. Another class wrote a story about a Hurricane dropping unsuspecting Canadian ESL teachers in Brazil. The Closing Ceremonies of the Project ended with the presentation of a generous donation of books from Mount Royal College.

The Canada - Brazil Project 2007 was the best professional development opportunity I have ever had. Not only did I meet inspiring colleagues, but I also picked up new tips and activities for my classes. For more information about the Project, visit the website at www.newclassroom.org or visit us at the Fall 2007 ATESL Conference.

ATESL Bursary

Immigration, Integration and Language

University of Calgary Conference on Immigration, Integration and Language: Final Report to the Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Industry

Introduction

Immigration, Integration and Language: A Public Policy Conference on Living, Learning and Working in Canada was hosted by the University of Calgary's Faculty of Education in October 2006 and was specifically designed to bring together invited participants and experts from a broad range of sectors in order to identify and prioritize current issues in social, educational and occupational immigrant integration. In addition to discussion, however, the express purpose of this collaboration was to articulate policy-oriented principles and feasible strategies that could improve the integration of immigrants, in particular those who choose to work and live in Alberta. The ultimate goal of the conference was to generate a document containing the conference proceedings, the panellists' papers and presentations as well as an Immigrant Integration Action Plan to inform future decision making and suggest areas where more information is needed to make informed policy decisions.

In support of this initiative, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry committed \$25,000. This final report describes the structure of the conference, the invited participants, the deliverables and their distribution as well as the outcomes achieved by the conference. In addition, four documents are attached to this report as appendices:

- • the list of invited participants
- • the summary of participants' conference evaluations
- • the budget statement
- • the Executive Summary from the conference proceedings document

Conference Structure

The two-day conference began with three panel discussions in the areas of Living (four panellists), Learning (four panellists) and Working (7 panellists). The invited panellists included educators, academics, representatives from private industry, government, regulatory bodies, professional and occupational associations, and immigrant-serving agencies. Each panellist was asked to describe their involvement in the area of immigrant integration and address the following aspects:

- • Key integration issues.
- • Challenges and barriers.
- • Possible solutions or best practices.
- • Suggestions for policy directions to address the identified issues.

From the panellists' discussions, the conference participants were asked to prioritize the identified issues in terms of their importance to each area. On the second day of the conference, participants were organized into three working groups and charged with the following tasks:

- Reviewing the prioritized issues.
- Establishing ideal outcomes related to each issue.
- Identifying factors that might contribute to the ideal outcomes.
- Generating basic principles to undergird policy decisions in each area.
- Articulating policy-oriented strategies to inform the creation of an Action Plan to address the identified integration issues.

Subsequent to the conference, a writing team gathered and edited the papers and presentations. In addition, the lists of prioritized issues, principles and strategies were compiled and analyzed, firstly, for a briefing document for the new Minister of AEII in December, 2006 and , secondly, for the conference proceedings document in February, 2007.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Email invitations were sent to over two hundred and twenty-five business and community leaders, academics and educators and representatives of government and immigrant-serving agencies across Canada. On the first day of the conference, there were approximately one hundred participants in attendance and approximately sixty on the second day.

DISTRIBUTION OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS AND ACTION PLAN

The conference proceedings document will be mailed to those participants who indicated interest in receiving a hard copy. All participants will receive an email containing instructions for accessing an electronic version of the document from the Faculty of Education website. In addition, copies will be sent to a number of governmental departments and ministries, including Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry, Alberta Advanced Education and Alberta Education, as well as the Faculty of Education's EAL (English as an Additional Language) funders and other EAL stakeholders. A media launch, planned for early April in Calgary, will also raise the profile of the report's findings.

CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

The Immigration, Integration & Language Public Policy Conference successfully achieved the projected outcomes, as described in the August 2006 AEII funding application.

As a result of the conference:

- Invited participants, business and community leaders, educators and educational institutions, researchers, representatives from immigrant-serving agencies and language training programs, employers and policy-makers, had an opportunity to hear experts describe immigrant integration issues and also best practices for welcoming, attracting and retaining immigrants to Canada and Alberta.
- Participants provided their input by prioritizing the integration issues raised on the first day of the conference. These prioritized lists provided the foundation for the working groups' discussions as well as the principles and strategies generated by these groups on the second day of the conference.

- A selected group of policy-makers, academics and representatives of NGOs had the opportunity to collaborate and come to consensus on basic principles and policy-oriented strategies to suggest to government regarding social, educational and occupational immigrant integration. These include strategies to enhance:
 - the integration of immigrant youth
 - settlement services to better meet immigrants' needs
 - programs and resources for immigrant families coping with the social stressors of integration
 - the accreditation process for immigrants in professional, technical and trade occupations
 - the attraction and retention of an internationally-trained immigrant workforce
 - the successful educational advancement of multilingual immigrants
 - educational recognition of multilingualism
- The University of Calgary, Faculty of Education's EAL (English as an Additional Language) community-oriented research agenda was clarified in response to the issues, principles and strategies generated at the conference. This agenda will include future research in such areas as pre-service teacher education, English language proficiency, professional integration for engineers, teachers and health science professionals.
- A briefing document summarizing the macro-issues and key principles and strategies generated by conference participants was prepared and sent to Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry in December 2006.
- A conference proceedings document, including an Immigrant Integration Action Plan, is being published and will be distributed to conference participants, municipal, provincial and federal government representatives as well as a number of invited participants who were unable to attend the conference but indicated interest in the conference proceedings and the Immigrant Integration Action Plan.
- The Final Report has been prepared for Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry in order to describe the structure of the conference and the outcomes achieved as well as to provide an accounting for the conference budget.