

LITERATURE REVIEW - Here are some stats from “ESL and Literacy Survey 2008”

Introduction

Immigrants form an important and growing part of the Canadian population. Governments recognize the need to help new immigrants integrate into Canadian society by learning to speak either English or French, and therefore offer or support language training programs.

The federal government, through the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, runs the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program (LINC). However, three Canadian provinces (British Columbia, Manitoba, and Quebec), provide their own programs in lieu of LINC, and Quebec supports only the learning of French. Provinces and territories also have programs to provide access to English (or French) as a Second Language courses.

Despite all these programs, figures from the 2003 *International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey* (IALSS) suggest that language training efforts have so far been insufficient and that immigrants, even when relatively well-educated, continue to face greater literacy challenges than do native-born Canadians.

According to the *IALSS*, 42% of adult Canadians 65 years and under scored below Level 3 in prose literacy, (considered to be the level at which one can deal with the demands of a knowledge society). If we split this group into native-born Canadians and immigrants, the native-born rate is 37% versus 60% for the immigrant population. Furthermore, 37% of immigrants scored at Level 1 (the lowest level) – double the proportion of those among the native-born population (“International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey”, *The Daily*, November 9, 2005).

A difference in scores is seen even among university-educated immigrants. Whereas 2% of the university-educated Canadian-born scored at Level 1 prose literacy proficiency, 18% of recent immigrants scored at this level (ibid.).

This literature review looks at the segment of the immigrant population who are not literate in their native language, and who may require some combination of ESL and literacy education, or “ESL literacy” education. The literature reviewed includes discussions on definitions of literacy and who is an ESL literacy learner. It addresses issues such as the training and working conditions of teachers, instructional strategies, assessment, and policy.