

Title: Integration of Young Francophone African Immigrants in Francophone Schools in British Columbia

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Research Question:

What are the academic, social needs and expectations of francophone African students enrolled in schools operated by the Conseil scolaire francophone [Francophone Education Authority] in BC? And what are the specific challenges that all academic partners—school administrators, teachers, community workers, and students’ parents—are facing, in order to facilitate academic and social integration for these students?

Importance:

This exploratory study, the first of its kind to be done in the francophone African population in BC, brings into light the importance to contextualize and address the issues of academic and social integration of young francophone African immigrants from a dynamic perspective, and to build (inter)cultural competence among the players in the educational system.

Research Findings:

1. The study shows the complexity of the situations that exist, in terms of the migrants’ status, origins, languages and cultures and their previous social and academic experiences. Some difficulties that are facing young African students in school are associated with their pre-migration experiences, while others are more specific to the francophone schools. In particular, community workers and teachers report the academic and cultural disconnects as major obstacles to the integration of students. Also, there is a shared concern among the partners involved in their education about including students from the francophone African community, although there is a disconnect between the various spaces where the representation occurs.
2. The lack of collaboration between school-community partners and school-family seems to be an issue. However, the CSF has recently hired liaison workers to facilitate the integration of young immigrants.
3. The triple minoritization of young Africans (immigrants/refugees, francophones, visible minority) and the power imbalance between Anglophones and Francophones filter the identity experience of young Africans in their new integration context.
4. For some parents knowledge in both languages is seen as a tool for social mobility, while for others acquiring fluency in English is the primary tool for social success in the new environment.
5. Community workers report that some children are not admitted to the schools because their parents do not speak French. We consider that the issue is more complex than simply “not speaking French”, however the denial of their francophone identity felt by the parents could discourage other African parents to register their children in the francophone schools, to avoid the risk of the same rejection.

Implications:

In the light of the data collected, it would now seem essential that a larger study be conducted involving all francophone African students enrolled in the CSF’s schools and that a comparative perspective be incorporated by expanding the research to the provincial level.