No Canadian Experience - No Job. Fact or Myth?
A qualitative inquiry of newcomers’ perceptions and experiences with the labour market

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Art
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Abstract

Recent research in immigrants' participation in the Canadian labour market indicates above average levels of unemployment, and points to the severe repercussions to the individual and the community. This study attempts to explore the perceptions and labour market experiences of nine newcomers, and its implications on immigrants' integration and adult language programmes. It finds that upon arrival in Canada, most participants experienced severe difficulties. It observes that these newcomers initially believed 'Canadian experience' to be their greatest barrier to employment, and that initial perception had changed overtime. It also observes that participation in an ESL/workplace preparation programme assisted these recent immigrants in labour market integration. All of the participants secured related employment or co-op placements which led to job offers. Overall, the findings are informative for public and policy decision-makers about immigrants' integration, and useful for future design of settlement policies and adult ESL programmes.
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1. Introduction

According to the 1996 census, between 1991 and the first four months of 1996, 42 percent of all new arrivals to Canada settled in Toronto. Furthermore, 6 of every 10 recent immigrants came from Asia and the Middle East.

Ornstein’s (1996) study points out that there are racial and ethnic groups in Toronto which suffer serious deprivation relative to the overall distribution of education, jobs and income. The largest problem to which these results point is unemployment. The unemployment rate is more than twice the average rate among people from specific African nations, Mexicans and Central Americans, Tamils, Iranians, Arabs and West Asians, Vietnamese, and Sri Lankans. Furthermore, studies indicate that many of these racial and ethnic groups with high unemployment rates have above average levels of education.

Needless to say, the costs of unemployment are extremely severe both to the individual and the community. Unemployment has been linked to increase in crime, poverty, family violence and mental illness (Aycan, 1996; Brouwer, 2000).

On October 3, 1998, CERIS (Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement - Toronto) organized a seminar “Building Research Links: A Working Seminar on Immigration and Settlement in the Greater Toronto Area”. Professor Alan Simmons, from York University, suggested that Canada’s immigration levels are very high by contemporary international standards, and noted the challenges arising from the immigration process. Firstly, immigrants selected for their occupational skills often have difficulty obtaining accreditation and in finding work in their areas, at the level they
expect. Furthermore, Simmons pointed out some concerns arising from government budget cutbacks and deficit reduction. Budget cutbacks have affected the fields of education, housing and health, likely leading to increased difficulties faced by immigrants during the settlement process. Finally, budget cutbacks may have increased competition among community (NGO) agencies struggling over a reduced pot of state funding. Programme providers may be trying to do as much as possible with less, thus affecting the quality of programming.

In summary, the increase in immigration in recent years has presented a number of challenges. One such challenge is the high unemployment rate among certain groups of recent immigrants. High unemployment represents human, community and economic losses. In addition, due to government cutbacks, community agencies and educational institutions may not be in a position to provide the necessary settlement support to newcomers.

The following section describes the context for the present study as well as the main objectives: to gain greater understanding of immigrants’ experiences in the labour market, their views and perceptions regarding issues of Canadian experience, underemployment and barriers which they face or have faced, and to learn what type of interventions might be of benefit to future learners in ESL/workplace preparation programmes. The goal of the study was not to evaluate one current ESL/workplace preparation programme at Career Action for Newcomers/JobStart where the research took place, but instead, to discover what the learners found beneficial and to derive implications for future programmes.
2. Issues under study

For the purpose of this inquiry, I conducted nine interviews with foreign trained professionals who had graduated from an English as a Second Language (ESL)/workplace preparation programme at Career Action for Newcomers/JobStart within three years of the interview (1999). The interviewees were: selected from a list of past participants; were between the ages of 25-50; were females and males of various racial backgrounds; had a professional background; and had limited or no Canadian work experience prior to participating in the ESL/workplace preparation programme. Three of the participants had graduated from the programme three years earlier; three participants two years; and three participants within one year. By selecting clients based on the length of time since their graduation from the programme, I hoped to observe changes with respect to their career development over time.

The main objectives of this inquiry were: to gain greater understanding of participants’ experiences in the labour market prior to and after the ESL/workplace preparation programme; to analyze their views and perceptions regarding issues of Canadian experience, underemployment and barriers which they face or have faced; and, to learn what type of interventions might be of benefit to future participants in ESL/workplace preparation programmes.

In addition, I conducted a document analysis of several artifacts: C.A.N./JobStart registration forms; previous participants’ course evaluations, and other reports prepared by the agency.
Context of the Study

The ESL/workplace preparation programme at Career Action for Newcomers/JobStart is co-sponsored by the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the Toronto District School Board. The programme is funded by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Ontario Works and the United Way Agency. For 1999, HRDC funding supported 175 clients, 70% of whom received job placements (this includes full-time jobs, co-op placements or further training/education). Ontario Works supported 40 clients annually and 75% of clients obtained jobs within three months of course completion. The clients are referred to the program through friends and acquaintances, HRDC, various social service agencies and the Internet.

The Career Action for Newcomers/JobStart programme has been in operation for nine years, and offers job search/labour market/language training/individual career counselling/job placement for newcomers to Canada looking to enter the workforce. Over the last few years, an increasing number of learners have been foreign trained professionals. The learners are initially screened by an employment counsellor for employment readiness, and are screened for language proficiency by an ESL instructor. They then participate in an eight week ESL/Employment Preparation programme. During this time, participants are exposed to curriculum dealing with: ESL; labour market trends; skills assessments; job search techniques; computer training (wordprocessing and Internet); communication, presentation and research skill development. The Toronto Catholic District School Board’s 1998 Adult ESL Curriculum Guidelines provide an overview of some key issues involved in teaching Job Search Skills and Workplace
Communications in ESL. The guidelines make note of changes in the workplace, from traditional to high performance. The high performance workplace requires a new set of critical workplace skills such as initiative, teamwork, problem solving and oral communication. The guidelines encourage the development of these skills in an ESL classroom. Following the eight week programme, participants receive assistance through employment consultants from JobStart, for a period of three months. The employment consultants introduce the participants to potential employers. The individuals’ resumes are forwarded to a number of employers in their industry and the employers indicate whether they have an opening for a full-time position or a co-op placement. The employers schedule personal interviews with the perspective candidate(s) and decide on their suitability to the position/company. The job seekers have a final say in the decision. In addition, the clients may receive assistance from vocational counselors in dealing with non job issues such as daycare, housing and health matters and may be referred to other professionals or agencies for further assistance.

The four instructors at Career Action for Newcomers are employed by the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board. All the instructors have TESL qualifications, as well as degrees in relevant areas of study (Linguistics, Sociology, Computer Science, Humanities). I have worked as an ESL instructor at this center for the past seven years. Prior to that, I have worked as an ESL instructor with another board, and as a settlement worker with new immigrants and refugees with Non Government Organizations (NGO).
3. Literature Review

This literature review presents an overview of literature dealing with career development and foreign trained immigrants. It focuses on factors such as: labour market trends; immigrants and labour market participation; adult ESL and workplace preparation; the role of perceptions in adult career development; access to professions and trades; and intervention strategies.

3.1 Labour market trends

Much literature has been dedicated to the changing labour market in Canada. The labour market is said to be dynamic and evolving due to technological innovations, globalization, demographic and geopolitical trends. Much of the literature is founded on theoretical frameworks such as the human capital theory and segmentation theory. The segmentation theory assumes that there is a split labour market: primary, secondary and self-employment. Hiebert (1998) states that:

...The concept of human capital assumes that labour market is an equilibrium seeking mechanism that allocates workers to jobs on the basis of their education, skill, experience, and past performance. Employers are portrayed as rational actors motivated by economic maximization and, as such, pay attention only to the attributes of potential workers that affect their performance: literacy, numeracy, specific training, experience, and so on. Workers find themselves in poor jobs because they are inadequately prepared for better ones... Able workers wishing to improve their position need to add to their human capital by learning new skills... The labour market is assumed to be a neutral arena that is gender and colour blind and the onus is on individuals to succeed... (p.3)

Foord Kirk (1996) states that, no matter what the field, the good jobs of yesterday are much harder to find now and finding your way in the new workplace means coming up with entirely new strategies. We are told that our employability is our own responsibility.
It’s up to us to develop or upgrade our skills constantly, and to stay a step ahead of trends.

London (1998) suggests that today’s work environment promises little job security. The only way to avoid or quickly overcome career failure may be to know what abilities and knowledge will be required and be prepared. The key concept is ‘self’, because no one will do it for us. We are responsible for our own development (London, 1998, p.133).

Naylor (1988) notes that structural changes in the economy resulting in layoffs and firings reinforce the importance of the life long learning movement and the trend toward lifelong career development. He points out that employability skills have been deemed an important part of career education; however there is no consensus on defining employability skills and on deciding how and when they will be taught.

Campbell (1994) writes that to survive economically:

...we must learn to predict the future. Impossible? Not really. Once the trends affecting change are better understood, we can make fairly accurate predictions to help us plan a viable career strategy...

(p. xi)

Thus, the literature on labour market in Canada suggests that changes and restructuring have taken place in the world of work. Hence, different job search strategies and different skills are required to survive and to thrive on the job. Furthermore, the literature stresses individual action for securing employment and ensuring one’s long term employability through lifelong learning. The literature also points out the significance of career education and the need for defining and teaching employability skills.
3.2 Immigrants and labour market participation

Ornstein (1996) published a report on the socio-economic situations of racial and ethnic groups in Metropolitan Toronto. He obtained the data from the Canadian Census of 1991. His main analytic question was whether any socio-economic groups suffer serious deprivation, relative to the overall distribution of education, jobs and income.

The report indicates that some groups appear to be most disadvantaged: members of First Nations, Africans, Jamaicans, Tamils, Sri Lankans, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, Vietnamese, Iranians, other Arabs and West Asians, Latin Americans and Hispanics. Visible minorities constitute the largest percentage of the most disadvantaged; however, Latin Americans' and Iranians' disadvantaged position cannot be explained this way.

Ornstein (1996) points out significant discontinuities in the situations of groups. Ethno-racial groups with more education have slightly lower levels of unemployment, while groups with the least education: Portuguese, Greeks and Italians have higher incomes than many better educated groups. He suggests that this may reflect the occupational niches they have found, period of immigration and the fact that some communities facilitate the development of social networks and institutions.

In this report, Ornstein (1996) suggests that the larger problem to which these results point is unemployment. The findings indicate that people from the specific disadvantaged groups experience an overall unemployment rate (19.7% - 25.8%) which is more than twice the average rate (9.6%). He posits a number of interesting questions, namely whether there are groups with low income relative to their educational attainment and whether positions of women and men are similar or different across ethno-racial groups. The report does answer these questions, but the author recommends further
research with greater focus on discontinuities among the socio-economic groups.

Hiebert (1997) conducted a study to examine immigrants' participation in the labour market in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Using data from Statistics Canada-1991, Hiebert tested to see whether there is a tendency for certain ethnic groups to specialize in specific types of jobs and the development of enclave economies within ethnic groups. He defines enclave economies as "networks of contractual relationships - labourers, realtors and lawyers, linked in webs of exchange that are part of the logic of efficiency and profit but also revolve around ethnic identity" (p.2). He suggests that ethnic groups come to be identified with the economic participation of their members, both externally and internally through shared imagination.

Hiebert's (1997) empirical investigation of occupational clustering explored three inter-related issues: the extent of ethnic and gender segmentation; the nature of this segmentation; and the geographical specificity of segmentation. The results of this investigation indicate that immigrants are less compensated for their human capital (education) than others. Using the concept of dual labour market (primary: special qualifications and skills, higher income, advancement opportunities; secondary: less skilled, vulnerable to economic fluctuations, less income) Hiebert illustrates that women who enter the secondary segment, the un-or semi-skilled, are not compensated for their education. Furthermore, the results indicate that, on average, the relationship between ethnicity and occupation is stronger than average for women in Toronto. Generally, the most highly segmented groups are visible minorities, particularly women of colour locked in secondary occupations. Furthermore, immigrants who have been in Canada longer are more evenly distributed across occupational categories than those who have arrived more
recently (within 5 years).

Hiebert et al.'s (1997) case studies of immigrant experiences in the Vancouver area reveal that lack of accreditation and the demand for fluency in English presents greater difficulties than the immigrants expected. Furthermore, obstacles in the labour market are interpreted by some immigrants as evidence of systemic racism in Canadian society.

Finally, the writers note that:

... the key point raised by this preliminary research is the intensity of the struggle in which immigrants must engage in order to achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families in Canada...
(p. 28)

The study suggests complex changing dependencies and renegotiating of family life that may also include conflict and stress as families experience dislocation and resettlement. In conclusion, the study makes us aware of the complexity of the immigrant experience and warns us to exercise caution in generalizing about the immigrant experience.

Shaafsma and Sweetman (1999) examined the impact of age at immigration on men's employment earnings using Canadian census data, and found significant effects. In conclusion, the study found that age at immigration does matter because the young acculturate more easily. The writers note that visible minority immigrants who landed at an older age do experience an earning deficit relative to otherwise equivalent immigrants and this deficit grows with age at migration.

Ooka and Wellman's (2000) study examines job search experiences of five Toronto ethnic groups: English, German, Jewish, Ukrainian, and Italian-Canadian. Their key questions were to examine to what extent members of each group use ties within their
own ethnicity or outside of it to search for jobs, and to look at income levels when
members use job contacts within or outside of their own ethnicity. The authors state:

...The Toronto-area labor market is ethnically segmented. In this ethnically segmented labor market, information concerning job openings is not equally accessible to all groups. Ethnic segmentation means that the resources that people can find within ethnically homogeneous networks can be limited... (p. 3)

Their findings suggest that members of low-status ethnic groups tend to achieve higher income when they have ties outside of their ethnic group. Furthermore, people who have ethnically heterogeneous networks (friends from another ethnic group) are more likely to seek job contacts outside of their own ethnic group. Education and generation have been identified as significant contributors to the development of ethnically heterogeneous networks. About 48% of first generation immigrants with post-secondary education engage in heterogeneous networks, compared to 26% of those with less education. In addition, participation in heterogeneous networks increases with each generation, regardless of education. Finally, the findings suggest that both women and men benefit from inter-ethnic ties. However, women who use inter-ethnic ties for job search have a 10% higher income, while men have 2%. The findings also point out that members of two high-status ethnic groups (English and German) have higher income when using ties within their own ethnic group. Overall, usage of inter-ethnic ties in an ethnically segmented labor market like Toronto can help people to gain access to diverse resources beyond their homogeneous networks.

A study by Lo, Preston, Wang, Reil, Harvey and Siu (2001) examines immigrants’ economic status in Toronto. The writers report that more recent immigrants have the highest unemployment rates. In addition, they note that some ethnocultural immigrants
(Latin Americans, Blacks, South Asians, Southeast Asians, Eastern Europeans and Southern Europeans) have persistently high unemployment rates compared with the Toronto average. Furthermore, visible minority immigrants experience higher unemployment rates than their European counterparts. In conclusion, the study suggests that some recent immigrants face systemic barriers, requiring institutional response in the form of regulatory responses (prior learning and credit for foreign experience) as well as a review of assistance provided during the initial phases of settlement. The writers note:

"...We need to determine if current settlement and integration programs in Toronto prepare recent immigrants for the job market with its demanding educational, skill, and language requirements ... Moreover, the interactions among settlement services, public education initiatives, skills development programs, and other settlement infrastructure need to be evaluated when programs are under review. The impact of changes in the provision of language training illustrates the importance of considering how policies interact ..." (p. 31)

Although inconclusive, the data suggest that socioeconomic parity with non-immigrants is achieved somewhere between 10 and 20 years of residence in Canada. The authors call for more detailed information about immigrants' employment experiences through qualitative research and identifying the success factors for some immigrants:

"...Research should consider the work histories of immigrants who have succeeded in obtaining remunerative jobs commensurate with their qualifications as well as those who struggle to find and keep appropriate employment. Such comparative research may reveal the factors contributing to success more readily than many previous studies that have concentrated on the least successful..." (p. 32)

In conclusion, the literature on immigrants' experiences with the Canadian labour market points to several findings. First, recent immigrants from certain ethnocultural backgrounds and visible minorities experience a higher unemployment rate than average. This has been attributed to: lack of accreditation; demand for fluency in English; age at
immigration; ethnically segmented labour market; and systemic racism. Secondly, the studies recommend: a review of assistance during the initial phases of settlement; research on discontinuities in groups; and qualitative research for identifying the success factors for some immigrants.

3.3 Access to professions and trades

As the Provincial Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (1999) report indicates, each year Ontario receives approximately 100,000 immigrants from over 180 countries. Approximately 60% of those of working age are highly educated and trained, and 25% fall within the regulated professions and trades. However, many of these highly skilled immigrants are unable to put their skills to use in the economy because their academic credentials, training and work experience are not recognized or understood. A number of studies attribute this to structural barriers and to problems related to recognition of credentials of foreign-trained professionals, and suggest that control of entry to the professions combined with high costs has created occupational disadvantages for professional immigrants.

Brouwer (2000) reports that the largest single group of immigrants relocating to Canada are the independent or skilled worker class. The applicants are selected on the basis of points awarded for age, language ability, arranged employment in Canada, the type of work they intend to do here and their skills, qualifications and experience in that area. Most foreign-trained professionals and tradespeople who immigrate to Canada expect to practice their profession upon arrival, but typically face major obstacles. The report points out that between 1991 and 1994, 10,279 engineers (civil, mechanical,
chemical, electrical) arrived in Canada. According to the 1996 Census, nearly half of those engineers were not employed.

The access difficulties that new foreign trained professionals experience have been documented through numerous task forces, studies and inquires by all levels of government and other stakeholders. For instance, McDade (1988) points out the discrepancy between accreditation and entry criteria for the independent class of immigrants. Although these individuals are assessed on the basis of points for education, skills, experience, etc., many individuals are unable to become licensed in Canada in their profession or trade or face a great many barriers. McDade’s paper implies that many immigrants may be seriously misled as to the possibility of transferring those skills and credentials into Canada.

Cumming (1989) indicated that many professionals and tradespeople who received their education and training outside Canada are often unable to get certified or to get a license. The ACCESS! Report (1989) identified several barriers responsible for this problem: lack of information regarding licensing; lack of reliable tools for assessing and recognizing academic qualifications, prior learning and work experience; lack of appropriate licensing and language tests; lack of supplementary and bridging education; and lack of accessible review and appeal procedures.

Mata (1994) observes that lack of recognition of foreign credentials is discrimination according to our Human Rights legislation and the Charter of Rights and Freedom. He points out that lack of accreditation has a direct effect on immigrants’ economic and social integration.
Aycan (1996) examined the process of acculturation with specific emphasis on the impact of economic integration on psychological well-being and adaptation. This study revealed that inability to integrate fully into the labour force within the first six months in Canada was attributed to the lack of competence in official languages and Canadian work experience, and the difficulty in getting credentials recognized. However, in time, these barriers seemed to be overcome. In their place, factors related to market conditions (e.g., low paid jobs, inadequate work conditions, economic recession) gained significance in delaying employment. Furthermore, the duration of unemployment and current employment status were critical for immigrants’ psychological well-being and adaptation. Those with longer durations of unemployment in Canada experienced acculturative stress, negative self-concept, alienation from the society, and adaptation difficulties.

The ‘Metro Toronto Immigrant Employment Services Review’ (1997) report acknowledges that accreditation and certification is a major barrier to employment. It notes that Canadian employers, professional associations and accreditation bodies do not assess prior learning and experience of immigrants from the developing world, and this hinders their labour market access. The report notes:

... This problem adds years of low or no income while the immigrant is re-educating or acquiring Canadian experience in other areas, often eroding their ability of successful job transfer. It also is a cause of some recent immigrants remaining in low-paying jobs, which, while meeting short term needs, are unsatisfactory for long term integration, and reduce job acceptance, happiness, and the probability of successful adjustment ... (p. 34)

Azuh’s (1998) study sought to identify the nature of barriers which prevent foreign-trained professionals from practicing their professions and contributing
meaningfully to the Canadian society. The study examines a number of issues and offers numerous recommendations. Some of those recommendations are the need for accurate information on credentials assessment, licensing processes and employment opportunities. The study identifies the high costs associated with assessments, licensing, appeals and retraining, and calls for a government sponsored Loans Board to assist the new immigrants. It recommends temporary or restricted licensure which could allow the foreign-trained professionals earlier entry into the profession or trade. Furthermore, it calls for government incentives (e.g. tax incentives) to employers and organizations who employ foreign-trained professionals at levels commensurate to their experience and expertise.

Brouwer (2000) suggests that federal-provincial initiatives to date have been very limited in scope. For instance, PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition), considered quite successful, is not widely used. Other initiatives, such as language assessment and sector specific language training, are very limited.

The report observes that the regulation of professions is delegated by the provinces to independent occupational regulatory bodies. The process in which occupations are regulated varies widely from province to province. Furthermore, as the Canadian Ethnocultural Council (1998) brief suggests:

... Through the creation of artificial, arbitrary or unnecessary accreditation criteria, some associations have found that they could restrict the numbers of practicing professionals or tradespeople. By controlling the supply they could increase demand and thereby bring financial benefit to their members... (p. 12)

Brouwer (2000) notes that the College of Midwifes of Ontario has made some significant strides in developing new structures to recognize the qualifications of foreign-trained professionals by developing an inclusive program of Prior Learning and
Experience Assessment.

With respect to trades, each province determines which trades require compulsory and voluntary certification. The process of certification varies from trade to trade, and usually involves some period of apprenticeship followed by temporary certification and an exam. Brouwer (2000) notes:

... One of the major problems facing foreign-trained tradespeople seeking certification in Canada is the lack of trade-specific language training and testing. Too often, competency testing for trades certification (written multiple choice exams) appears to test applicants' language facility rather than their practical ability to do the job ... (p. 9)

Brouwer (2000) reports that Canada forgoes a windfall to its economy by failing to recognize foreign academic credentials and work experience. Quoting an Australian study, the study notes:

... Similar to Ontario in demographic, socioeconomic, cultural and immigration characteristics, Australia quantified the loss to their national economy, due to the nonrecognition of foreign degrees, as ranging from S100 million to S350 million (US) in 1990. This represents 200,000 immigrants who failed to gain recognition and never returned to their pre-migration occupations ... (p. 5)

In conclusion, the literature in this section reveals that new immigrants experience many difficulties with respect to access to professions and trades. In addition, limited access to fair accreditation and access to trades and professions contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and provincial human rights legislation. The studies outline the human, social and economic impacts resulting from Canada's failure to recognize the credentials of immigrants. It is suggested that visible minority immigrants who find themselves shut out of their occupations may feel individually and collectively alienated and as victims of institutional discrimination. Furthermore, those immigrants with longer
duration of unemployment in Canada experience an erosion of skills, loss of technical language competence, acculturative stress, negative self-concept, alienation from the society, adaptation difficulties, and mental and physical health problems related to stress. The studies recommend improvements in: credential assessments; prior learning and experience assessments; and language training and testing.

3.4 Adult ESL/Workplace Preparation

In 1990, the federal government increased the level of immigration to a target of 250,000 a year. As previously cited studies indicate, there has been a growing pressure towards maximizing foreign-trained individuals’ contribution to the economy and ensuring that Canada benefits from immigrants’ skills and expertise. One venue for facilitating this has been through adult language training programs.

As Burnaby, James and Regier’s (2000) preliminary report indicates, the 1990s was an era marked by significant revisions to the adult language-training programs. The earlier federal employment program, delivered through provincial colleges, had been discontinued. The government of Canada, in cooperation with provincial governments, school boards, immigrant and community organizations (NGOs) began to offer free language training for adults through LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada). However, as the Spencer (1991) report indicated, the language training system for adult immigrants was chaotic and wasteful. It suggests that learners had difficulties accessing programs and that programs were not coordinated to meet the learners’ needs. In addition, Burnaby, James and Regier (2000) describe the challenging employment conditions for the ESL/LINC instructors. They point out that although non-credit ESL
teachers are generally very well qualified, their work environment has been highly unfavorable. Only a small percentage were permanent employees, a significant percentage received no benefits or minimal benefits, the majority of instructors were faced with challenging conditions of multi-level classes and continual intake, and were confronted with lack of funding and training.

In 1992, the Government of Canada funded a project in response to the growing need for national standards. This project contributed to the development of the Canadian Language Benchmarks. In 1996, the group published a 'Working Paper', followed by "Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000". The CLB consists of a descriptive scale of communicative proficiency, expressed as 12 benchmarks or reference points. It was designed to describe and measure the learner’s communicative proficiency and assist in the development of programs, curricula and materials that relate to a consistent set of competency descriptors for all ESL learners in Canada. In the preface of the CLB 2000 the writers advocate that:

... In small, but increasing numbers, immigrants are able to demonstrate to employers, using the Canadian Language Benchmarks, that they have the language skills needed for available jobs ... In growing numbers, they are able to compare their current level of ability in English or French with the ability they need to enter a program of study, occupation or profession. At long last, immigrants can plot out for themselves, in advance, their own paths of language learning to attain their goals ... (p. V)

The CLB contains recommended performance tasks for the workplace, community and study. Forin (2001) notes:

... This is a strong claim to make for an assessment system that is just four years old, for which an implementation guide to assist administrators, teachers, and curriculum writers is still being developed, and for which comparability studies with other accepted norm-referenced tests are far from conclusive ... (p. 22)
Burnaby, James and Regier (2000) suggest that Power Analysis Inc. (1998) conducted the most comprehensive study of adult ESL across the city (Toronto) and province (Ontario). The study is said to provide a detailed account of the characteristics, qualifications, teaching conditions of ESL teachers of adults, as well as perspectives from these teachers and administrators. However, the writers note the lack of learners’ perspectives, although the recommendations to do so had been raised through a variety of earlier government commissions. Furthermore, the report recommends:

...It is especially important that research be conducted to learn the views of the students in the program, and even those of potential learners. We know virtually nothing about satisfaction of learners much less about immigrants’ perspectives on their needs ... An iterative approach is needed between large scale and or quantitative research and small scale and or qualitative research in order to truly begin to get a sense of the scope much less the impact of educational programming relating to immigration in Toronto... (p. 40)

In conclusion, the writers note:

...both levels of government have been instrumental in the professionalization of ESL teachers overall but as well in creating “bad job” conditions for teachers of non-credit ESL. Recent evidence suggests that teacher training is not keeping up with growing needs ... In sum, the Ontario government began by dealing with immigrant issues through the Ministry of Education, then expanded its programs into other areas, significantly the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, but is in the process of reconsolidating most of these activities under the Ministry of Education. More study is needed on the quality as well as the quantity of services provided. (p. 43)

In 1999, the Toronto Catholic District School Board published The Adult ESL Curriculum Guidelines. It states that:

...The aim of the Toronto Catholic District School Board Adult Education Program is to assist learners in achieving communicative and linguistic competence in English so that they will be able to achieve their
occupational and educational goals. It must also assess learners with their settlement and integration needs and help them adjust to the Canadian social, political and cultural environment in order that they become active members of Canadian society ... (p. 1)

The guidelines have dedicated a separate section on workplace issues recommended for an ESL program. It appears to be the only adult ESL curriculum guideline in the ESL field pertaining to new workplace tasks and skills, and the linguistic tasks necessary to meet those. These guidelines discuss the differences between a traditional workplace (one where management functions to control workers and to maintain the status quo), and a high performance workplace (where workers are respected as equals with managers and valued according to contributions). It is suggested that a variety of skills/tasks are necessary for the high performance workplace: participating on teams; reading/interpreting/charts, graphs, and flow charts; oral communication; contributing to brainstorming exercises; understanding cause and effect; understanding how to categorize and record ideas; process visualization; formulating suggestions; and, writing up minutes of meetings or short status reports. In addition, the guidelines make a distinction between linguistic tasks needed to: get a job; survive on the job; and to thrive on the job.

Gow and McDonald (2000) conducted research on Australian employers and educators in order to identify virtual attributes necessary for generating income in the year 2005. As the writers note:

...While many training and educational institutions and government agencies have delineated the competency standards required of professionals and trades persons in Australia, the changes in the nature of work mean that postcompulsory education (secondary schools, vocational colleges and universities) graduates need to be able to demonstrate additional knowledge, skills and abilities - herein referred to as virtual attributes - in order to generate an income in the twenty-first century... (p. 373)
The authors report that global, economic, technological and social trends are already changing the way people conduct business, and altering the skills needed to gain entrance into and maintain one’s place in the work force. Globalization, increasing numbers of small businesses, more widespread use of work teams and flatter organizational hierarchies are some of the changes representing the new world of work. Furthermore, they point out the need for coordination between Australia’s economic agenda and its education preparation system. The study identifies seven key competencies currently required in the workplace: collecting, analyzing and organizing information; communicating ideas and information; planning and organizing activities; working with others and in teams; using mathematical ideas and techniques; problem solving; and using technology. As Table A indicates, the research findings identify four virtual attributes that employers and educators recognize as of importance to the twenty-first century workforce: accountability; adaptability; business management; and cross-cultural competence. In their discussion, the authors highlight a discrepancy between the attitudes of young people towards ‘business management skills’ and the findings. Young people do not perceive these as important. Hence they point out the significance of perceptions and conclude that these attitudes represent a significant barrier to the development of these skills.
**Table A: Gow & McDonald (2000) Virtual Attributes (pg 387)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#1 ACCOUNTABILITY</th>
<th>#2 ADAPTABILITY TO CHANGING WORK ENVIRONMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Exercise a sense of responsibility and accountability</td>
<td>1. Create and envision new ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Value own skills and services</td>
<td>2. View change as opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Meet deadlines</td>
<td>3. Network to create new business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Show personal values and ethics in the workplace</td>
<td>4. Demonstrate willingness to diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Recognize and report hazards in the workplace</td>
<td>5. Learn in a range of environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Monitor and correct personal performance</td>
<td>7. Possess awareness of the need to develop networks of contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Handle complaints</td>
<td>8. Demonstrate tolerance for ever-changing environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Give and receive feedback</td>
<td>9. Respond quickly to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Cope with stress and tension</td>
<td>10. Show willingness to take risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Explore new ideas and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Identify the best personal learning strategy and style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Tolerate diverse viewpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Demonstrate motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Strive for continuous self-development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Work with people from diverse backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. Take responsibility for career development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Self-direct behaviors and operate independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. Market oneself and one's ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. Responsibly challenge existing procedures and policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. Learn and perform multiple tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#3 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS</th>
<th>#4 CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Possess business awareness</td>
<td>1. Demonstrate knowledge of political systems of other nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Financially manage business</td>
<td>2. Show knowledge of legal systems of other nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Recognize the value of the customer</td>
<td>3. Display knowledge of history of other nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Represent organization positively</td>
<td>4. Demonstrate knowledge of economic systems of other nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Display product knowledge</td>
<td>5. Assess domestic and foreign market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Demonstrate leadership</td>
<td>6. Demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of culture of other nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Appraise, assess and certify the quality of a product or service</td>
<td>7. Demonstrate understanding of international business issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Strategically plan for the future of the organization</td>
<td>8. Display knowledge of current global events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Communicate inter-culturally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Speak a language other than English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bolton (1999) conducted interviews with employers and experts in the Information Technology industry in the Toronto area. Both the employers and experts stressed written and verbal communication skills, ability to work in a team environment and understanding business as the most requested employability skills.

The Conference Board of Canada identifies the critical skills necessary to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work in its *Employability Skills 2000*. These include communication, managing information, using numbers, problem solving, positive attitudes and behaviors, responsibility, adaptability, commitment to continual learning, familiarity with health and safety practices, team work, and, participation in projects and tasks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fundamental Skills</th>
<th>Personal Management Skills</th>
<th>Teamwork Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Demonstrate Positive Attitudes &amp; Behaviours</strong></td>
<td><strong>Work with Others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• read and understand information presented in a variety of forms (e.g., words, graphs, charts, diagrams)</td>
<td>• feel good about yourself and be confident</td>
<td>• understand and work within the dynamics of a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• write and speak so others pay attention and understand</td>
<td>• deal with people, problems and situations with honesty, integrity and personal ethics</td>
<td>• ensure that a team's purpose and objectives are clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• listen and ask questions to understand and appreciate the points of view of others</td>
<td>• recognize your own and other people's good efforts</td>
<td>• be flexible: respect, be open to and supportive of the thoughts, opinions and contributions of others in a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• share information using a range of information and communications technologies (e.g., voice, e-mail, computers)</td>
<td>• take care of your personal health</td>
<td>• recognize and respect people's diversity, individual differences and perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use relevant scientific, technological and mathematical knowledge and skills to explain or clarify ideas</td>
<td>• show interest, initiative and effort</td>
<td>• accept and provide feedback in a constructive and considerate manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manage Information</strong></td>
<td><strong>Be Responsible</strong></td>
<td><strong>Contribute to a team by sharing information and expertise</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• locate, gather and organize information using appropriate technology and information systems</td>
<td>• set goals and priorities balancing work and personal life</td>
<td><strong>Lead or support when appropriate, motivating a group for high performance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• access, analyze and apply knowledge and skills from various disciplines (e.g., the arts, languages, science, technology, mathematics, social sciences, and the humanities)</td>
<td>• plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals</td>
<td><strong>Understand the role of conflict in a group to reach solutions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use Numbers</strong></td>
<td>• assess, weigh and manage risk</td>
<td><strong>Manage and resolve conflict when appropriate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• decide what needs to be measured or calculated</td>
<td>• be accountable for your actions and the actions of your group</td>
<td><strong>Participate in Projects &amp; Tasks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• observe and record data using appropriate methods, tools and technology</td>
<td>• be socially responsible and contribute to your community</td>
<td>• plan, design or carry out a project or task from start to finish with well-defined objectives and outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• make estimates and verify calculations</td>
<td><strong>Be Adaptable</strong></td>
<td>• develop a plan, seek feedback, test, revise and implement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Think &amp; Solve Problems</strong></td>
<td>• work independently or as a part of a team</td>
<td>• work to agreed quality standards and specifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• assess situations and identify problems</td>
<td>• carry out multiple tasks or projects</td>
<td>• select and use appropriate tools and technology for a task or project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• seek different points of view and evaluate them based on facts</td>
<td>• be innovative and resourceful: identify and suggest alternative ways to achieve goals and get the job done</td>
<td>• adapt to changing requirements and information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recognize the human, interpersonal, technical, scientific and mathematical dimensions of a problem</td>
<td>• be open and respond constructively to change</td>
<td>• continuously monitor the success of a project or task and identify ways to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• identify the root cause of a problem</td>
<td>• learn from your mistakes and accept feedback</td>
<td><strong>Learn Continuously</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be creative and innovative in exploring possible solutions</td>
<td>• cope with uncertainty</td>
<td>• be willing to continuously learn and grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• readily use science, technology and mathematics as ways to think, gain and share knowledge, solve problems and make decisions</td>
<td><strong>Work Safely</strong></td>
<td>• assess personal strengths and areas for development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evaluate solutions to make recommendations or decisions</td>
<td>• set your own learning goals, identify and access learning sources and opportunities</td>
<td>• set your own learning goals, identify and access learning sources and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• check to see if a solution works, and act on opportunities for improvement</td>
<td>• plan for and achieve your learning goals</td>
<td>• plan for and achieve your learning goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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In summary, the last decade has been marked by a significant increase in highly educated immigrants, many of whom chose to settle in GTA. The federal and provincial governments have continued to support free language training through LINC and other ESL programs. Both of these are currently delivered through local school boards and NGOs. However, the working conditions in these programs have been reported to be highly unfavorable, marred by fears of program discontinuity, poor benefits, and lack of appropriate funding and training. In Toronto, there is a limited number of ESL/workplace preparation programs and the provincial ESL programs are increasingly pressured to incorporate workplace content into the teaching curriculum; however, there is very little support and training in that direction. As some of the studies indicate, language training and workplace preparation are very important factors in preparing new immigrants for the labour market. However, the literature review indicates that the programs have received little review and it is uncertain if they meet the learners’ needs. Furthermore, the curriculum guidelines governed by the CLB are the only official ESL guidelines to date, and are vague in reference to workplace preparation. As some of the studies indicate, the world of work is changing rapidly and so are the skills required for the new workplace. The language training programs must remain tuned to these changes and to provide career education which many newcomers may require in the initial phase of labour market integration.
3.5 Adult career development

There are a number of dominant adult development perspectives which have influenced adult career development theories. Those perspectives are: cultural, developmental, transitional, life-span, social cognitive and other views.

Cultural Perspective: The theorists in this grouping believe that the cultural context or social environment is the most significant predictor of individuals' lives. For instance, Rosenbaum's (1979) research indicates that promotion chances in organizations increase until age 35 to 40 and then decline. Promotion chances for those with baccalaureate degrees reach a peak (over 60%) at age 35 and then decline abruptly during the next 5 to 10 years. Hence, Rosenbaum demonstrates that midlife crisis is predictable from the extreme decline in promotion chances, not the psychological effects of aging.

Developmental Perspective: A group of theorists, represented by Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978) explain adult behaviour in terms of age and sequential stages of development. They identified six age-related sequential periods: leaving the family - late adolescence to about age 22; getting into the adult world - early to late 20s; settling down - early 30s to early 40s; becoming one's own person - age 35 to 39; making a midlife transition - early 40s; and restabilizing and beginning middle adulthood - middle and late 40s. Levinson et al. (1978) emphasized similarity in the adult experience. Other theorists, Erikson (1950), Vaillant (1977) and Gould (1978) postulate that adults pass through developmentally sequenced stages that are not based on chronological age. Furthermore, they stipulate that some people move through the stages swiftly, whereas others become arrested at one stage and never move forward. They identified stages of development characterized by successfully
resolved issues of: identity (who am I?); intimacy (can I be committed and close to others?); generativity (can I nurture others?); and ego integrity (am I satisfied with my life?). These theorists explained adult development as the progressive struggle for freedom from the internal constraints of childhood, and moving from the simple to the complex. Ego development theories described adults as progressing from dependency on outside authority and others' judgments to a higher stage of responsibility for consequences of actions and a tolerance for ambiguity. Most of the research behind the theories in this section has focused primarily on men; yet the application of these theories has been considered useful for both men and women. Gilligan (1983) challenged this application and identified different issues as being central to the development of women. They are issues of attachment, caring and interdependence. Gilligan's research suggests the need for alertness to gender differences and modification of the dominant models of adult development.

Transitional Perspective: Theorists Lowenthal and Pierce (1975) suggested that nearly all cultures contain norms or social clock regarding significant events or life-cycle transitions such as: entering the labour force, marriage, having children and retirement. Their research demonstrates that expected and unexpected life events or transitions are more important than chronological age in understanding and evaluating behaviour. For example, the authors noted that men facing retirement after an active social life encounter many of the same problems whether they retire at 40, 50, 60 or 70. The authors also highlighted the different ways men and women handle transitions. Women had less positive self-images than men, felt less in control of their lives, and were less likely to plan for transitions. However, their affective lives were richer and they had a greater
tolerance for ambiguity. Pearlin's (1982) research demonstrated that men and women cope with transitions by either changing the situation, modifying its meaning, or relaxing in the face of stress. Pearlin indicates that effective copers use multiple strategies and recommends multistrategy workshops (i.e., mediation, stress management, relaxation) to assist the individuals in transition.

**Life-Span Perspective:** Theorists who examined adulthood from this perspective support individuality and variability in the adult experience. Vaillant's (1977) study involved 200 college sophomores from high socioeconomic backgrounds, and its purpose was to predict what they would do with their lives over a 35 year span. The results pointed out the significance of sustained relationships with others, and that the course of life has surprising outcomes. Life-span orientation suggests that individuals deal with certain issues differently throughout life, and what works for an individual at one time in his or her life might not be the most helpful strategy over time. Hence, it is advisable to employ a variety of strategies such as: individual counseling; group support system; an internship involving something new within the organization; or a computer-based career guidance program.

**Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT):** This theory was derived from Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory resting on psychosocial assumptions about human capacity for self-regulation. Lent and Brown (1996) suggest that the SCCT framework emphasizes the dynamic processes which help to shape and transform occupational and academic interests, choices, and performances. It is based on the assumption that a variety of personal, contextual, and behavioural variables affect career developmental outcomes. Lent and Brown (1996) remarked that we are witnessing a fertile period in the evolution
of theories and in research on career development and counseling. They indicate that many of the currently popular topics such as cognition, personal agency (individual’s capacity for self-direction) and empowerment have been imported from related fields of inquiry, whereas gender, race and ethnicity, and social-environmental factors are indigenous to the career literature. SCCT highlights three intricately linked variables which are believed to regulate career behaviour: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals.

Self-efficacy is “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1986, p.391). It is suggested that self-efficacy beliefs are acquired and modified through four sources: a) personal performance accomplishments; b) vicarious learning; c) social persuasion and d) physiological states and reactions. Of these four sources, personal accomplishments are generally seen as exerting the greatest influence on self-efficacy (Lent & Brown, 1996, p.312). Outcome expectations are derived from personal experiences and second-hand information and refer to the outcomes of performing particular behaviors, for instance, enjoyment and gainful employment. Personal goals may be defined as one’s intention to engage in a certain activity or to produce a particular outcome (Bandura, 1986). Lent and colleagues (1994) suggest that both self-efficacy and outcome expectations exert direct influence on developing career interests. Thus, SCCT suggests that self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals are dynamic, malleable constructs, and with proper intervention they can be modified. Lent and colleagues (1994) do point out that temporal lag might occur prior to changes in interest. Furthermore, they recommend longitudinal analyses to determine if changes in self-
efficacy and interest persist over time.

Recently, a number of individuals (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994; Osipow, 1990; Harmon, 1994) have expressed a growing concern with the limitations of career development theories to meet the needs of at-risk populations. At-risk refers to persons who, because of political, economic, social, and cultural conditions, have limited access to educational and occupational opportunities (Chartrand & Rose, 1996). Ornstein (1996) indicates that various racial and ethnic minorities in Toronto are clearly suffering serious deprivation, relative to the overall distribution of education, jobs and income.

Chartrand and Rose (1996) point out that SCCT takes into consideration environmental factors, affordances and influences which affect learning experiences, beliefs, interest formation, goals, performance, and attainments. They suggest that SCCT shifts the focus away from a group differences approach, which creates an unintended side effect of reinforcing stereotypes. Thus, it is not sufficient to know that differences do exist, but is more important to understand and address the mechanisms that lead to differences in career choice (Chartrand & Rose, 1996). Furthermore, they point out that when opportunities are limited or are perceived as limited, the need to understand an individual's beliefs may be primary and interest exploration and goal setting secondary.

Luzzo, Funk and Strang (1996) conducted a study to determine the role of locus of control on career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE) through attributional retraining. Locus of control refers to self-appraisals regarding the degree to which an individual believes that reinforcements are either internally or externally derived, and this appraisal is linked to personal pride and other self-esteem related affects experienced in the face of success (Graham, 1991). Several studies suggest that locus of control plays an
instrumental role in career development, and an internal locus of control is associated with more mature and adaptive vocational behaviours and attitudes. Attributional retraining involved videotaped testimonials of current students or graduates who verbally persuaded viewers to alter their conceptions regarding past failures. Students were encouraged to view past failures as a result of internally controlled forces such as lack of effort rather than the result of externally controlled forces. In this study, Luzzo et al. administered the career locus of control scale (CLCS; Trice et al., 1989), a career decision making self-efficacy scale (CDMSES; Taylor & Betz, 1983) and a demographic questionnaire. Participants' scores on CLCS were divided into two groups: internal and external on the basis of a median split. The results indicate that attributional retraining was an effective method for increasing the CDMSE of college students who initially exhibit an external career locus of control. Apparently, attributional retraining offers little advantage to students with an internal career locus of control.

In summary, the literature review in this section reveals many of the complexities involved in adult career development. It illustrates the role of personal, contextual and behavioural variables in career development outcomes and suggests the need for alertness to gender differences. Furthermore, the studies highlight the significance of self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals as intricately linked variables believed to regulate career behaviours. In addition, an internal locus of control, associated with more mature and adaptive vocational behaviours and attitudes was found to play an instrumental role in career development.
3.6 Intervention strategies for career development

Luzzo et al. (1996) acknowledge that not all career related difficulties are due to lack of effort. Client’s aptitudes, abilities, interests, and skills must be considered when determining the most effective intervention strategy. They warn that clients who have low levels of CDMSE due to lack of decision making skills or important information for making career decisions require different intervention than those clients who are aware of important information and possess adequate skills yet still experience low self-efficacy. In their discussion, they warn that caution must be taken when applying attributional retraining techniques to groups such as women and minorities, who traditionally have been denied equal access to occupational opportunities. Furthermore, they point out another limitation of cognitive intervention, mainly the potential for relapse among individuals who initially exhibit gains in self-efficacy after treatment.

Bandura (1997) states that in most occupations, people face stiff competition. He identifies several factors which contribute to employability. Among these is job seekers’ ability to conduct effective job searches and to convey to potential employers favorable impressions of their capabilities and promise. Perceived efficacy is seen as the most influential factor. Other factors such as age, marital status, length of tenure, quality of job performance, depression, perceived obstacles to reemployment, and general personality characteristics were found insignificant.

Bandura (1997) identifies a number of psychosocial skills as necessary for employability: ability to communicate well; to relate effectively to others; to plan and manage the demands of one’s job; to exercise leadership; and to cope with stress effectively. He suggests that these psychosocial skills are more difficult to develop than
technical skills and often more difficult to modify if they are dysfunctional. However, a sense of personal efficacy in these skills can aid career advancement. Furthermore, he notes that training in job search skills bolsters perceived efficacy to navigate the competitive job market successfully. The higher the perceived efficacy, the more extensive the job search behaviour and the higher the rate of reemployment. Finally, Bandura states that enhancement of occupational self-efficacy requires both individual and social remedies.

Solberg, Good and Nord (1994) recommend that career search self-efficacy be incorporated in career development, particularly with individuals who are at risk of career search difficulty. They suggest that self-efficacy holds promise for the study of career development among racial/ethnic minority populations due to its emphasis on viewing the environment as sharing responsibility for changing individuals’ efficacy expectations.

Four sources of efficacy are recognized as effective means of promoting career efficacy expectations: a) enactive attainments, b) vicarious experiences, c) verbal persuasion, and d) physiological arousal. Enactive attainments are hypothesized to be the most powerful sources of efficacy information because they consist of mastery experiences. Hence, seminars and workshops which offer opportunities to practice networking, personal exploration, job search activities and interviewing is expected to increase efficacy expectations in employment seeking performance. Vicarious experiences, such as watching someone in an interview roleplay provides observers with information about the types of questions asked, flow of the interview, and nonverbal communication. Vicarious experiences are especially powerful when modeled by individuals perceived as similar to the observer. Thus, having individuals videotape and review their mock interview sessions
contributes to mastery and vicarious experiences. Verbal persuasion may consist of encouraging clients to engage in risky career search behaviours such as information interviewing. Physical cues such as sweaty palms, loss of concentration and changes in speech patterns indicate that clients are in a stressful situation. Developing skills for relaxation and stress management (physiological arousal) may result in enhanced career search self-efficacy expectations.

Solberg et al. (1994) recommend assessing the effectiveness of career search self-efficacy interventions through the use of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE; Taylor & Betz, 1983) and Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES; Solberg et al., in press).

London (1998) notes that today's career patterns are more disorderly, unpredictable, and transitory than before. People move sideways, downward, and in and out of different organizations. He identifies several key job skills: ongoing appetite for change; rapid decision making; ability to manage and motivate oneself; and willingness to take responsibility for one's own financial future. London recommends several career enhancing strategies: staying positive about workplace change; seeking accountability; getting ahead by moving sideways into other jobs that may have more advantageous possibilities; finding a mentor; seeking advice and information about training and job assignments; developing work and career plans, learning new or developing existing skills, working extra hours and networking.

London (1998) concludes that the changing nature of work indicates that people must be attuned to their own developmental needs; however, organizations and government policies must provide the enabling resources. He indicates that further
research is needed to find what career enhancement strategies work best to help people change their self-image and take positive actions to avoid career barriers.

In summary, the literature on intervention strategies for career development highlights the fact that training in job search skills increases self-efficacy, which then leads to more extensive job search behaviour and higher rate of reemployment. Cognitive interventions in psychosocial skills such as: ability to communicate well; relate effectively with others, plan and manage demands of one's job; leadership; and the ability to cope with stress contribute to improved self-efficacy. The literature suggests that active participation in networking, personal exploration and interviewing is extremely effective. Furthermore, observation of others in interview situations contributes to positive vicarious experiences. Verbal persuasion, encouragement, stress management and relaxation contribute to enhanced career search self-efficacy expectations. In addition, aptitudes, abilities, interests, skills, decision making skills and career information must also be considered. The studies warn us of the possibility of relaps among individuals who initially exhibit gains in self-efficacy after intervention.

3.7 Concluding remarks

The main objectives of this inquiry were: to gain greater understanding of participants’ experiences in the labour market prior to and after the ESL/workplace preparation programme; their views and perceptions regarding issues of Canadian experience, underemployment and barriers which they face or have faced; and, to learn what type of interventions might be of benefit to future participants in ESL/workplace preparation programmes. In order to gain greater understanding of these issues, I have
selected literature from the following areas: labour market; immigrants and labour market participation; access to professions and trades; adult ESL/Workplace Preparation; adult career development; and intervention strategies for career development.

The literature on labour market trends indicates that the world of work has undergone radical changes and restructuring. Furthermore, the studies stress the need for individual action in developing new strategies for finding work and thriving on the job. Some studies call for a consensus on defining the new employability skills and the need to teach those in career education.

The literature on immigrants’ experiences with the labour market indicate that a large percentage of highly educated and trained immigrants experience unusually high levels of unemployment (twice the national average) and are generally less compensated for their education than others. The studies reveal that many immigrants face difficulties with access to professions and trades. In addition, the studies outline the human, social and economic impacts resulting from Canada’s failure to recognize the credentials of immigrants. In addition, limited access to fair accreditation and access to trades and professions contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and provincial human rights legislation. The studies recommend improvements to: credential assessment; prior learning and experience assessments; and language training and testing.

The literature review on adult ESL/workplace preparation reveals that language training programmes have been severely affected by reduced federal and provincial funding, bad job conditions and lack of training opportunities.

The literature on adult career development illustrates the complexities of adult career development. Moreover, it highlights self-efficacy, outcome expectations and
personal goals as the most significant variables in regulating career behaviour. The literature on intervention strategies for career development indicates that training in job search skills increases self-efficacy, which then leads to more extensive job search behaviour and higher rate of reemployment. The studies suggest that cognitive interventions in the development of psychosocial skills such as: communication and interpersonal skills; planning and organizing; initiative; and ability to cope with stress contribute to improved self-efficacy. The studies also note the need to focus on aptitudes, abilities, interests, technical skills, and career information.

The literature review demonstrates that in order to reduce the barriers faced by many foreign-trained professionals, organizations and government policies must provide the necessary resources to support the new immigrants in this difficult transition and to assist them in the speedy integration in the Canadian labour market.

Hence, the following study examines many of the issues related to the literature review and the objectives of the study: new immigrants experiences with the Canadian labour market; their perceptions on barriers to successful integration in the labour market; and suggestions or strategies for overcoming those barriers.
4. Methodology

4.1 Theoretical perspectives

As the literature review indicates, a significant number of quantitative studies have been conducted in the area of immigrants’ experiences with the Canadian labour market. Many of these studies demonstrate that recent immigrants experience higher levels of unemployment than others, and call for qualitative research to gain better understanding of this phenomenon. In order to gain greater understanding of recent immigrants’ experiences in the labour market and their views and perceptions regarding Canadian experience and other barriers, I conducted a qualitative study. I chose qualitative research, because as Stake (1995) states, qualitative research is a search for understanding which describes in depth how things are at a particular place, at a particular time. He suggests that the purpose of qualitative research is not to map and conquer the world but to offer thick descriptions in contexts which “treat the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts as important to understanding” (p.39). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) define qualitative research as “multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (p. 2).

4.2 Methods of collecting data

a) Interviews:

Data collection for this research came primarily from interviews. Interviews were chosen as one of the data-seeking methods, because as Patton (1990) states “the purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective, and that it begins with the assumption “that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and
able to be made explicit” (p. 278). Furthermore, Patton (1990) states that “the fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understanding, in their own terms” (p. 290). Hence, the interviews established the kind of context in which the recent immigrants could explore, clarify, elaborate their experiences, and speak freely and at length about their experiences and perceptions which they considered significant.

A tightly structured method such as a questionnaire would not allow similar freedom. In choosing the interview as the central data-seeking procedure, a number of factors had to be taken into consideration. First, an attitude of empathy on the part of the interviewer is necessary to encourage the respondent to speak freely about the subject under discussion. Second, the interviewer must keep the discussion focused while allowing the participant liberty to elaborate on topics of importance to him or her. To achieve this, open ended questions were developed ahead of time and served as a guide. This was done in order to identify in advance certain issues pertinent to the inquiry, to allow some flexibility and to be able to explore certain information as it emerged. Four main categories of questions were asked in each interview: (1) background information about the participant, (2) experiences with the Canadian labour market upon arrival in Canada, (3) experiences with the Canadian labour market and perceptions at the time of interview, and (4) perceptions regarding future career goals and barriers, as well as suggestions for other foreign trained professionals and future ESL/workplace preparation programmes (Appendix A).

All interviews were conducted in the summer of 1999, lasted from one to two hours, were tape recorded, transcribed and coded. The contents of the interviews were
analyzed to identify common themes which emerged from the conversations. For example, all of the participants elaborated on their experiences and perceptions upon their arrival in Toronto. Many of them mentioned difficulties associated with English language, recognition of foreign credentials/education, cultural adaptation and job search techniques. After each interview, postinterview notes were written to reflect on insights, thoughts and observations gained through the interviews and were included in the analysis.

b) Document Analysis

Merriam (1990) states that the term documents “applies to all forms of data not gathered through interviews or observations” (p. 105). For the purpose of this research, a number of documents were obtained for analysis. The documents consisted of participants’ registration forms, participants’ ESL/workplace preparation programme evaluations, and Career Action for Newcomers/Jobstart reports.

4.3 Empirical Study

For the purpose of this research, respondents were selected from a list of previous participants of ESL/workplace preparation programme/C.A.N. The selection was partially based on the length of time since graduation from the programme. The goal was to select three individuals who had graduated approximately three years earlier, 3 who graduated two years earlier and 3 who graduated within one year. In doing so, I hoped to observe the individuals’ career development over several years. Another selection criterion was gender. I chose to select a balanced number of women and men in order to observe the role of gender in career development.
The candidates for the study were contacted by phone or email and informed of the study. Some of the individuals declined to participate and further contacts were initiated. I requested their permission for participation, briefed them on the nature of the study and set up a time for interviews.

Most of the interviews were carried out at Career Action for Newcomers, while two of the interviews were conducted at the participants’ homes, as requested by them. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and coded. The participants were asked to fill out a participation/release of information form authorizing me to use the interviews for the purpose of this research.

Once coding was achieved, the data was analyzed and explored to generate meaning. Firstly, using a wordprocessor the data was organized under particular codes, then printed for visual display. This made the data accessible for reading, exploration of codes and categories and reorganization. Following the analysis of central tendencies and ranges, the data had been organized into expected and unexpected categories. Expected refers to data that confirms the ideas of the authors in the literature review or the researcher’s assumptions, and the unexpected refers to data that departs from those. The exceptions, misfits, or chunks of data that do not fit into the codes were closely examined.

In this chapter I have described the methods I used to collect data and the nature of the empirical study. The findings from this qualitative study are reported in the following chapter. Chapter 5 focuses on the concepts related to newcomers experiences and perceptions of the labour market in Canada and are supported by verbatim transcripts.
5. Findings

This section introduces findings from the data obtained through interviews and document analysis. The findings are organized to correspond to the main objectives of this inquiry which are: to gain greater understanding of newcomers’ experiences in the Canadian labour market; to analyze newcomers’ views and perceptions regarding Canadian experience, underemployment and other barriers; and to learn what type of interventions might be of benefit to other immigrants and to ESL/workplace preparation programmes.

First, I will present the participants’ background as well as their comments on expectations and perceptions of their careers in Canada prior to arrival. Obtaining an understanding of these elements can contribute to a holistic view of the individuals’ career experiences in Canada and provide a forum for individual views.

5.1 Prior to arrival

Participants’ Profile

As Table 1 indicates, nine immigrants and refugees took part in the interviews; four were females and five were males. Six of the participants were 25-30 years of age; two were 40-50; and one was 30-35. Five participants were married at the time of arrival and three had a child or children; four were single. The individuals had immigrated from various countries: Romania, Yugoslavia, Cuba, Russia, Yugoslavia/Germany, Bangladesh,
Ukraine, Nigeria and Peru/Japan. Two of the participants had lived in other countries (Germany and Japan) for extended periods of time prior to immigrating to Canada.

Table 1: Participants’ profile

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<td>Married with children</td>
<td>Married with child</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Married with children</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Married no children</td>
</tr>
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<td>Russia</td>
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<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Peru/Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>B.Sc., Chemical Engineer</td>
<td>B.Sc., Mechanical Engineer</td>
<td>B.A., English</td>
<td>Ph.D., Science</td>
<td>Pharmacy (B.Sc. incomplete)</td>
<td>M.Comm, Accounting</td>
<td>B.Sc., Medical Engineer</td>
<td>B.Sc., Mechanical Engineer</td>
<td>B.A., Industrial Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work exp. in country of origin</td>
<td>2 yrs journalism 6 mths engineer 2 yrs data base entry</td>
<td>6 mths tech. Assistant 2 yrs musician</td>
<td>3 yrs in travel</td>
<td>20 yrs as researcher</td>
<td>2 yrs in customer service</td>
<td>10 yrs in accounting</td>
<td>21 yrs as engineer</td>
<td>1 yr as medical doctor</td>
<td>5 yrs in design/office admin.</td>
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</table>

Table 1 shows also that eight of the participants held university degrees from their countries of origin: 6 bachelor degrees: 1 masters and 1 Ph.D; and one of the participants had an incomplete bachelor degree.

Most of the participants had work experience in their countries of origin, ranging from 6 months to 21 years. Table 1 indicates that three of the individuals with 10-21 years of experience held senior level positions such as accounting manager, project leader and
consulting engineer in the last years of their employment. Several participants (25-30 years of age) reported having had other positions, unrelated to their areas of study. For instance, one participant commented:

... I studied journalism part-time while I was working as data base operator... So, I have different skills which is part of the portable skills which helped me a lot here, in coming to Canada... (Interview #1, p. 1)

Another individual observed:

... During my studies for mechanical engineer I worked part-time as technical assistant in patent agency, basically created some technical documents, drawings and so on. Apart from that, for years I was involved in music. I play guitar and I played semi-professional. I had my own jazz trio. I worked as a recording session musician... I experienced quite a bit of different situations all over the world, from Korean Singapore to Brazil, with real language problems. Coming here to Canada was like, much easier... (Interview #2, p. 1)

Reasons for immigration

When the participants were asked to identify their reasons for immigrating to Canada, many indicated discomfort with this issue and responded with nervous laughter. Those who did respond to this query, provided a wide range of responses. Some individuals indicated the political and economic instability in their country of origin. One participant commented:

... I guess what happens right now in Eastern Europe is part of the answer. There’s lots of turmoil over there, so I knew it’s gonna be over and over again. It’ll never settle... (Interview #1, p.1)

Some participants cited better environment as their main reason. For instance, one participant commented:
... I heard Canada is a good country, democracy, multicultural country, everybody has the same rights, land of opportunities... (Interview 65, p. 1)

Other reasons cited were: better opportunities for children and their education; familiarity with the official language; curiosity; partner initiated relocation; opportunities for graduate work; and better career opportunities for oneself. As one participant observed:

... Back home I had good qualifications and good job also... My family are rich back home, we had good house ... We in third world, we always think maybe first world something out there ... Somebody says to me go, maybe you get some experience, something new things you get from there, then maybe in future you come back... (Interview 66, p. 1)

Another participant remarked:

... Because back home, there's much advantages for foreign trained professionals. People appreciate it more, because of knowing you must have seen lots more than people back home... (Interview 86, p. 1)

Expectations of career in Canada

The participants had indicated that prior to relocating to Canada, most believed that they would face difficulties in their careers. One individual observed:

... Before coming to Canada, I thought that I will have a lot of difficulties at the beginning, but that I will be able to be approximately at the same level here. Yes, and I can use all my background and knowledge and experience in Canada. But I understood at that time that I will have some difficulties and perhaps one, two years I will work as a, I don't know, technician or whatever... in general my goal was to work for private company or state institute, approximately at the same level as I used to work in my country... (Interview 64, p. 2)

Although most participants reported expecting difficulties with their careers, many were hopeful at the same time. One participant stated:
...I knew it would be difficult, but at the same time I think Canada was the place where I can start a new career ... I wanted to start in the field of creativity... (Interview #9, p. 2)

Most participants indicated that they had a very clear picture of what they could expect about their careers in Canada, due to information they received from others. As one participant summarized:

...I believe that population of people from former YU is quite big and there is tens of thousands of people coming within last, maybe 10 yrs. I have quite a few good friends already here and relatively reliable information. A clear picture of what I can expect here... The picture was quite rosy for mechanical engineers or skilled professionals in general, with technical background. Like 85 to 90% of people I heard of were getting jobs within 6 to 8 months, regardless of the language skills ... So that encouraged me... (Interview #2, p. 2)

A number of individuals reported feeling optimistic about their careers in Canada due to the fact that they believed to have strong English skills. Finally, as one participant observed:

...Oh, you believe everything before coming here ... So ya, which is makes easier to come here and start life, right? Cause if you don't believe, if you think it's tough, maybe a lot of people wouldn't come. But, it's tough everywhere in the world. So, you have to give it a try... (Interview #1, p. 1)

Most participants indicated that prior to relocating to Canada, they believed that they would face difficulties, expected to start out in lower level positions related to their professions, and to continue with studies or upgrading. One participant noted:

...I heard when I was back home Bangladesh degree in Canadian CGA they recognize up to certain level. So, I think it's O.K. ... if they recognize our qualifications at certain level it is good, because we are third world. Other level I can pass... (Interview #6, p. 3)

In summary, most of the participants in this study had university educations and were between 25 to 35 years of age. Most chose to immigrate to Canada for better
opportunities for themselves and their families. Most indicated that they anticipated some difficulties with their employment in Canada, but felt confident that with continued studies or upgrading they could work in their field of specialization.

5.2 After arrival

This section explores the immigrants’ and refugees’ first experiences with the Canadian labour market and their perceptions regarding a number of relevant issues. Many participants indicated that upon their arrival in Canada, the face-to-face encounter with the Canadian labour market proved to be a lot more difficult than they anticipated.
Table 2: Activities after arrival

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<tr>
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<td>M.Comm Accounting</td>
<td>B.Sc., Mechanical Engineer</td>
<td>B.Sc., Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work exp. in country of origin</td>
<td>2 yrs journalism</td>
<td>6 mths tech. Assistant</td>
<td>3 yrs in travel</td>
<td>20 yrs as researcher</td>
<td>2 yrs in customer service</td>
<td>10 yrs in accounting</td>
<td>21 yrs in engineer</td>
<td>1 yr as medical doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of arrival (Canada)</td>
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<td>July 95</td>
<td>Jan. 96</td>
<td>Aug. 96</td>
<td>Dec. 96</td>
<td>Apr. 97</td>
<td>March 95</td>
<td>Sept 97</td>
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<tr>
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<td>survival job(s)</td>
<td>not working</td>
<td>not working</td>
<td>not working</td>
<td>survival job(s)</td>
<td>survival job(s)</td>
<td>not working</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL/ C.A.N. Program</td>
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<td>May-June 96</td>
<td>May-June 96</td>
<td>May-July 97</td>
<td>May-July 97</td>
<td>Feb-Apr 98</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Outcome (following ESL/CAN)</td>
<td>Related employment</td>
<td>Related employment (self)*1</td>
<td>Co-op + job offer</td>
<td>Co-op + job offer (self)*1</td>
<td>Co-op + related employment</td>
<td>Related underemployment (self)*1</td>
<td>Related underemployment (self)*1</td>
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<td>July 97</td>
<td>July 97</td>
<td>Apr 98</td>
<td>May 98</td>
<td>June 98</td>
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(*1 = employment or co-op secured by the individual through self-initiative)
Job search techniques

A number of participants indicated lack of knowledge about resumes, cover letters and interview techniques. As the following example indicates, some individuals attempted to enter the labour market right away:

... I started to look for a job immediately. I bought newspapers while in hotel and started to send my resumes. Well, I understand that it was naïve. They were naïve resumes, not according to all these standards because there were no such things as resumes in Russia. And, the whole situation with job market and job search is absolutely different... (Interview #4, p. 2)

Others did not attempt to look for a job, as they felt that they did not have the necessary knowledge of the job search techniques.

Language skills

Prior to their arrival, a number of participants reported feeling that their English language skills were very good. However, as one participant commented:

... when I came to Canada I noticed I have no good English language, even though I thought I did have good English... (Interview #7, p. 2)

Recognition of foreign credentials: education

Most participants reported thinking that they had clear and realistic expectations about their careers in Canada. However, upon their arrival, some found significant discrepancies between existing reality and their earlier expectations. One participant with an incomplete degree in pharmacy had hoped to continue with her studies in Canada. She had observed:

... once I came here, I saw that whatever I did back home wouldn’t be admitted here and I also had to do one year of study of language and it would take me at least 4 years to complete everything. So, it was a long
period of time for me to do that and also as a newcomer once you come it's
very hard because of the financial situation... (Interview #5, p. 2)

Another participant, a foreign trained medical doctor recalled:

... when I got here that I realized it's really tough, more than I
thought... Lots of people back home, lots of my friends back home believe
it's very easy, you just coming here and start practicing. But it's not easy,
it's quite different from what I thought, quite different, tougher... if I was
doing this kind of exam back home I probably wouldn't work because my
parents would be there, they'd give me everything. Over here all day you
have to work. And, when I say work ... if you work back home and other
people know you're in school they probably give you less job to do so you
can have enough time to read. Over here, you have to do your 8 hours. By
the time you get in you're tired... (Interview #8, p. 2)

Cultural adaptation

A number of participants indicated experiencing differences in the cultural and attitudinal
areas. One participant commented:

... it's not exactly what you think about coming to Canada. Having your
thoughts from where you come, you know, you have to change a little bit,
you have to adjust yourself... like in terms of tradition. Every country has a
different tradition, different ways of living and different ... I don't know
exactly how to explain it ... you live in different terms. So coming here is
not the same thing. That's why I'm saying you have to adjust yourself; you
have to think a little bit different than you thought before ... It's a different
country with different people, different traditions... Coming here you can't
behave the way you did at home. You have to behave the way that
Canadian rules and society is behaving, otherwise ... you gonna have
problems if you behave the way you behaved at home... (Interview #1,
p. 5)

Another participant reported feeling extreme difficulties with these adjustments:

... coming to Toronto I was stressed. I understood that I don't know
enough English... Understanding was very hard ... I was worried and feel
that I cannot do simple things... I was feeling that I'm not ready to live in
Canada... I was depressed. It was continuing up to 3 years ... (Interview
#7, p. 2)
Survival jobs

Shortly after their arrival in Canada, four of the individuals obtained survival jobs, mostly unrelated to their professional background. These are some of their experiences:

... actually, I guess the fourth day when I arrived in Canada I started working. I was working in an art gallery, part-time, on computer as a data base operator. They had a huge opening and it was really tough for the owner, so they needed some part-timers for this opening. So, I joined the market right away ... ha, ha, ha. When we arrived, my husband contacted the owner which happened to be Italian. They just start talking, and my husband told him that I speak Italian so we went over, mainly for my husband’s art work. But I asked him, because I was looking for a job, so I asked him if he knows somewhere where I can get a job, so that was the beginning of making new relations and market relations. So that is the way that I got the job... (Interview =1, p. 1)

Another participant described his experience:

... When I came, after 15 days maybe, I got one offer, from in our community, one friend - he said you’re a professional accountant, so he took me to this company. He said they try to hire one Canadian but he wants $2,000 for installing bookkeeping system. So, I said OK, I can do manually, how you keep general ledger, bookkeeping, how to get vouchers. He introduced me, he said he give me some money, actually I didn’t get money. I worked there 7 days, he had a car, he drove me there, he gave me food. Then after few days, maybe 20 days, I got another work, that is still I’m doing that work. That is working in a gift shop as a cashier, selling different types of product... (Interview =6, p. 2)

A mechanical engineer stated:

... I came with quite limited funds, barely enough to basically survive for maybe like 2, 3 months the most. So, of course the first thing was get a job, get any job for that matter. And that’s what I did. The very first job I found was painting and drywalls, that type of things. Through a friend. He knew someone who is in that business and he recommend me. I went there and the guy simply say ‘are you sure you know what you’re doing?’ I said yes, and let’s try for a day and see. He said I’m not promising anything. Obviously that was good enough for me and so I worked at this job. After that, I found some gigs in restaurants, playing guitar, and for some time I was actually doing two shifts: in the morning there is drywall, painting and at night playing guitar. Then I started looking for my job, within the profession. Well, I was not looking for just any job, what I did which was little bit atypical, let’s say, I actually spent quite a lot of time researching engineering field in Ontario to see what is needed and what I’ve got to offer. I spent hours,
hundreds of hours learning new things. I took some additional computer courses, on top of what I already had, just to fit the needs. And that paid off, because the very first job I got was the job that I actually wanted and I'm still there...
(Interview #2, p. 2)

In summary, following their arrival in Canada, most participants experienced difficulties with securing employment. Many indicated lack of job search skills and did not attempt to look for a professional level position. Other difficulties identified were: language skills, recognition of foreign credentials/education, and cultural adaptation. Four of the individuals obtained survival jobs shortly following their arrival.

5.3 ESL/Workplace Preparation Programme/C.A.N.

This section looks at when the newcomers joined the programme and why. Table 2 indicates that five of the participants interviewed had joined the ESL/workplace preparation programme at C.A.N./JobStart within 6 months of their arrival in Canada. Three participants joined between 7-12 months, and one individual did so after 3 years of residency. The main reason cited for joining the programme was to receive assistance with a job or co-op placement. One participant elaborated:

... after the third or fourth month of my job search as mechanical engineer, and after series of 3 or 4 interviews within a month or so, I believed that the only reason I didn't get job at that time, I believe was because of lack of famous Canadian experience. I never accepted that as a real need for employer. I always believed that it was some kind of discrimination. And I tried to fight against that, not to think about that. But again, after 3 or 4 months of being repeatedly axed 'that's fine, that's great, you have those skills, but what about Canadian experience?'. When I mentioned that I don't have any I would be offered like 50% of the pay that equally skilled guy, with any kind of Canadian experience would get. Then I said OK, then
go to any school to get volunteering done, then go back to the market. So that was in that period when I actually decided to join the C.A.N. programme. .... strictly for the volunteering opportunity. Because the first part, about developing job search skills, I did it myself. But what I didn’t have is the volunteer experience... (Interview #2, p. 2)

Another individual added:

... One of my friend, he said go there, after complete the course they look for you for work. So I said OK, it’s good... (Interview #6, p. 3)

Some participants indicated that an opportunity to improve their English language skills was the main reason for choosing the ESL/workplace preparation programme at C.A.N.

One person commented:

... When I first arrived in Toronto, I was very, very afraid of my English wasn’t, is still not good, but I was like ... I feel very small and in a strange city, no friends and it was very difficult for me... (Interview #9, p. 2)

Others pointed out reasons such as the development of job search skills and knowledge about life in Canada. As one person observed:

... I spent about 1/2 year looking for a job by myself ... Well, I understood at that time already that I need something. To know more about this job search, and how to prepare all this papers: letters and resumes... I need to know how to speak with employers. That’s why I looked for this kind of courses... (Interview #4, p. 3)

One participant added:

... My achievement was how to behave, how to speak at the interview, and mainly to understand how to live in Canada. To understand the system ... (Interview #7, p. 4)

Another individual indicated:

... most of the immigrants like myself is always talking to people from your own country who came here before you ... unfortunately most have bad news to tell you, like I’ve been here for 10 years and all I do is drive a taxi. To me that’s not encouragement. So I looked at it, like there should be something for immigrants. Some people advised me that I have to really know what this country is like. And I discovered that the operational
system in Canada is entirely different, so my best bet was to go somewhere
where somebody can enlighten me about what and how to do it, how to
interact with people, how to talk to people. That's why I decided to take
this course, because every job I got so far is basically because of what I
learned there... (Interview =8, p. 3)

As the findings in this section indicate, the majority of individuals chose an
ESL/workplace preparation programme at Career Action for Newcomers/JobStart in order
to receive assistance in obtaining a co-op placement/employment. Other reasons cited
were: job search skills; English language skills; and to learn about Canadian culture.

5.4 Employment experiences after ESL/Workplace Preparation/C.A.N.

This section examines the participants activities in the labour market, following
the ESL/workplace preparation programme. Table 3 provides a concise view of those
activities.
As Table 3 indicates, following the completion of the 8 week ESL/workplace preparation programme at C.A.N., all of the participants interviewed had secured co-op placements or jobs related to their education and/or employment history. One third of individuals secured co-op placements which led to job offers with the same employers. Two thirds of individuals found paid employment related to their professional background. More than half of the participants were self-placing, having found their own employment/co-op placement, while almost half of the participants received assistance from the agency (C.A.N./JobStart).

Of those who participated in co-op placements, two thirds chose not to accept job offers from those employers. In one case, the individual had realized that the position was
poorly paid and based on commission. Hence, she had decided to pursue a higher paying job in a different industry. In another case, the individual felt dissatisfied with the organization and position offered:

... The co-op was very difficult and I was very nervous and tense all the time ... The schedule was very tough, 11 hrs. working day. I was not prepared for the job of project manager. My language skill is not to the mark, my knowledge of this formal relations between different companies, my experience in negotiations and how to arrange business plan, and all this stuff I was not prepared ... He asked me to prepare project proposal and it was too difficult. I couldn’t do this ...(Interview #4, p. 4)

A large majority of the participants had reported strong satisfaction with their jobs. One person commented:

... this is exact job I was looking for. It’s a big company with a very big position in the industry, where they’re willing to train people. It’s like high end aerospace industry. And I’ve been actually very well accepted there ... I was not looking for just any job. I actually spent quite a lot of time researching engineering field in Ontario to see what is needed and what I’ve got to offer. I spent hundreds of hours learning new things and looking for a fit ...(Interview #2, p. 6)

Others were less optimistic:

... sometimes I like it, sometimes I hate it. Especially because I have to work on weekends. I don’t like that ... And I don’t think there is future there, just like two or three years and that’s it ... (Interview #3, p. 2)

A foreign trained doctor, pursuing qualifications towards a Canadian medical license remarked:

... I’m not satisfied, not until I get there! Because if I’m satisfied now, I may be forced to forget what I’m really aiming for. So, I refuse to be satisfied ...(Interview #8, p. 6)

Another newcomer remarked:

... I’m trying to do everything in one direction, to be able to work in my field. But, at the same time, there are so small opportunities and it’s so
difficult that I don’t know if I can do this... I’m very much frustrated right now ... (Interview #4, p. 6)

Hence, some individuals secured positions which were extremely well suited to their education/employment background, while others accepted related positions in their industry of choice.

Table 3 shows that two thirds of all participants remained with the same initial company and/or job for an extended period of time and predicted that they will continue to do so. Others had varied experiences. One individual faced lay off after six months on the job. Another person went through two more job search programs at other agencies, two more co-op placements, a series of survival jobs, and was underemployed at the time of interview.

While on the job, the newcomers reported experiencing many challenges. One of such challenges was language. One participant remarked:

... English was a challenge, a big challenge. Comprehending and speaking is different. It’s a lot of frustration at the beginning ... ” (Interview #7, p. 3)

Another challenge which many had faced was one of interpersonal relations. One person described it as:

... when you’re in a job in Romania, you’re more friendly with people, you become friends easier. Here, you’re just coworkers and when you go home these people are not your friends... There’s a lot of demand on the job, so nobody has time for nobody ... (Interview #1, p. 7)

Another individual pointed out the challenge of working with people from different cultures:
... problem is multicultural... In my office you find different cultures: Japanese, Canadian, Sri Lankans, Indians. So many countries. So, it’s difficult to cooperate with everyone ... (Interview #6, p. 5)

Others had indicated that the work environment in Canada is significantly different. In their former countries, many individuals had worked within a hierarchical structure where “... you need to respond to orders of your manager only ...” In Canada, many participants experienced a work environment where the relationships with boss and coworkers is very informal; employees are encouraged to ask questions and to make suggestions; employees need to make decisions independently and take initiative; duties and responsibilities are more varied. Many of these elements are outside of the immigrants’ experiences from prior work environments.

Furthermore, all participants mentioned the challenge of continual learning. For instance, one person noted that:

... the industry where I work is high tech, one of the world’s biggest manufacturers and you’re always right there on the edge. So on one side, it’s extremely interesting, but on the other hand, it’s very demanding ... Just to barely survive in the market you have to be on the edge. So it’s very exhausting, you have to take tons of courses. Even when you’re not taking courses you still have to read ... (Interview #2, p. 6)

Another person added:

... First of all, the job was different. The job was totally different than what I did before... Not being here for years, I had to learn about legislation for all those years ... So I had to go back in the library and do a lot of research in my overtime, like extra research ... Since I’m here in this job, software has changed three or four times. So you have to learn on the job, get new skills, upgrade your skills all the time (Interview #1, p. 5)

Lastly, some participants pointed out the challenge of dealing with large volume of information. One individual described it as:
The problem that I had back there where I came from was gap in information. Problem in Canada is to filter all that and to make the right conclusion. So that's one of the skills I had to learn, and I have learned fast. How to retrieve information and how to filter it to make conclusions valuable ... (Interview #2, p. 5)

Most of the newcomers indicated that they wish to remain in their professional fields and intend to upgrade their skills by taking relevant courses. Two individuals pointed out that they are considering changing their careers to other fields which offer better opportunities.

In summary, following the completion of an ESL/workplace preparation programme at C.A.N./JobStart, six of the individuals found paid employment related to their education/work experience, while three individuals secured co-op placements leading to employment offers. Two thirds of those chose not to accept the job offers. Furthermore, more than half of the participants were self-placing, having secured their own paid employment or co-op. Others received assistance through the agency. Finally, most of the participants remained with the same company for an extended period of time, and expressed satisfaction with their employment. The participants offered their views and insights on some of the challenges that they faced on the job: English language difficulties; interpersonal relations; multicultural work environment; and necessity for continual learning.

5.5 Perceptions on barriers

Canadian Experience

All of the participants identified 'Canadian experience' as a major barrier to labour market integration. A male engineer from Yugoslavia remarked:
... after series of 3 or 4 interviews within a month or so, I believed that the only reason I didn’t get job at that time, I believe was because of lack of famous Canadian experience ... (Interview #2, p. 2)

However, after four weeks one of these interviews proved to be successful and he was offered an engineering position, a position which he described as ideal, exactly what he was looking for. He attributed his success to strong language skills, thorough research and a good network. As he put it:

... It probably helped there were already 7 or 8 of my alumni working there from the same university, and that probably helped to be accepted smoothly and to get some real job opportunities at the very beginning... (Interview #2, p. 4)

Although all of the participants indicated that they perceived lack of Canadian experience as a major barrier to employment, none reported experiencing it themselves. As one Peruvian designer notes:

... I think it’s difficult to get a job without Canadian experience ... I know employers will ask you for Canadian experience... but I think it’s not important for me... (Interview #9, p. 4)

Furthermore, she added that she was never asked for it herself, and in fact, the interviewer showed great interest in her international experience.

Many participants noted how their understanding of the term ‘Canadian experience’ changed when they had an opportunity to obtain some work experience in Canada. Initially they believed that ‘Canadian experience’ meant having any work experience in Canada. Over time, their definition of Canadian experience expended to include: communication and interpersonal skills, ability to fit in, commitment to continual learning, ability to cope with change, computer literacy and ability to work in a multicultural environment.
In the beginning, many believed that Canadian experience was used by employers to keep the immigrants out of good jobs. Later on, their perceptions expanded to include:

... I think employers are afraid of hiring newcomers cause they think their system was different and it might get difficulties at work and they have to teach them all over again ... (Interview #5, p. 5)

Another participant added:

... I must admit it might make some sense in a way that people are actually asking for references .... Employers are interested in whether you are a person able to fit within the organization, sometimes they put it as team player. I believe that is what Canadian experience refers to ... " (Interview #2, p.3)

Financial

Many participants indicated that finances were another major obstacle to employment.

Some needed to upgrade their skills by taking relevant courses such as AutoCad and other computer courses. Hence, some took on survival jobs right away. Financial considerations were perceived as a significant issue for advancing one’s career.

Continual learning

Most participants identified difficulties around this issue. Many found their first job/co-op extremely demanding and requiring a great deal of learning, learning which frequently took place after work hours. Some noted a conflict with other family obligations. Others felt that age played an inhibiting role. All participants agreed that the accelerated learning led to greater overall stress.
**Stress**

Many participants identified stress as one of the barriers to their employment. Many identified: cold weather, isolation, lack of family support, lack of network, lack of friends as some of the variables contributing to this condition.

In summary, all of the participants identified lack of Canadian experience as a major barrier to employment for foreign trained newcomers. However, following a period of time in the labour market, their understanding and insight about Canadian experience had changed. Some of the other significant barriers mentioned were: financial; need for continual learning on the job; and stress.

### 5.6 Suggestions for other new foreign trained professionals

As Table 4 indicates, one of the first suggestions made by the participants was to enroll in an ESL/workplace preparation programme. Some of the participants emphasized the benefit of entering the programme as soon as one arrives in Canada. Many stressed the benefit of language practice and learning about the Canadian culture. One individual commented that it’s your first step in the door. Another participant indicated that the information he acquired about job interviews helped him to secure his first job in Canada:

> ... during the programme time, before finishing, I got 2 interview. And, second interview was my successful interview, actually. One was where I’m working now ... i got whatever programme give me idea about interview questions. Same questions I found at the interview, almost same. I surprised. I was so confident that time. Maybe that reason I was successful for the job... (Interview #6, p. 3)
Table 4: Suggestions for new foreign trained professionals

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A Peruvian industrial designer, who found her own job shortly after completing an ESL/workplace preparation programme noted:

...The only suggestion for newcomers is like ... sometimes we think I can go through this big training programme because I can get a co-op placement, but I have to finish. And they think all this ... I am losing my time because I only want to get this job. But this time is like investing your time and learning all these thinks is very important. For me it was very important, not only because I got a job, it's because I learned things that help me in the work environment... (Interview #9, p. 6)

Another suggestion which the participants contributed was to obtain Canadian experience.

One person indicated that it is important to have Canadian experience on one’s resume. A
Romanian journalist pointed out that newcomers have missed a lot of information by being new to Canada and therefore need to catch up:

... *Canadian experience is like you're not here for years, right, so you don't have that experience... After 1½ years I knew what what people were talking about. Cause before they were talking about issues that I never heard in my life. So I had to go back in the library and do a lot of research... Not being here for years... it's like a black hole that I had... Maybe in other jobs, like programmers, it's just computer so you know what to do, so it's fine. But if you're dealing with people that's different. That's a lot different, cause it's different attitude and different relation...* (Interview #1, p. 7)

A foreign trained engineer pointed out the need for employment as practice:

... *My advise, it's very important to work, not as volunteer but to work in real job, real position, to get real experience. You know, because book is book, to get real experience you need to work in real position. It's very good to study, to know, but to use it's hard. I compare to using English. When reading I understand almost everything, cause I know a lot of words. But when speaking... what to say!* (Interview #5, p. 5)

An accountant from Bangladesh suggested that newcomers take any related job:

... *if a professional accountant want a good job in future, if he get any job like office job, it's better to take that opportunity. Because, in Canada, they don't accept any other country's office job experience. They say 'no, our system is different'. Because back home we never used computers... Here style is totally different. Even in my job place I saw reporting, computer, everything different. We did different way... Sometimes people they say 'no, I had good work, I worked in this or that job, manager, so why I go for data entry or this that...' You have to get office experience. If you enter any level office job, if you open your eyes, you learn...* (Interview #6, p. 6)

Another suggestion made for newcomers was to believe in oneself. A foreign trained engineer suggested that immigration is like a second birth and that it is important to:

... *not be worried, keep good feeling... because it's your future country and you have to be ready to live here and... how you say it in English... to contribute to society...* (Interview #7, p. 6)
Others suggested that new immigrants experience a lot of frustration and rejection. A Cuban English major suggested:

... You really have to fight. Even though you went to the best university in your country or whatever, you really have to fight. So be persistent and never give up. If you go one day for one interview and it turns that it’s not good, keep on going and keep on doing whatever you have to do. If you just go home and sit, forget it. (Interview #3, p. 3)

Some of the other suggestions were to upgrade one’s professional knowledge and skills, to conduct thorough occupational research and to improve communication skills. As an employed mechanical engineer pointed out:

... What I can say is that I tried and it worked for me. That means brush up language and communication skills. Not just pure grammar of the language, but little bit more. Try to learn to understand the body language and other things which are very, very important... The problem that I had back there were I came from, was gap in information. Problem in Canada is to filter all that and to make the right conclusion. So that’s one of the skills I had to learn and I have learned fast. How to retrieve information, and how to filter it to make conclusions valuable... (Interview #2, p. 5)

A couple of individuals, a Nigerian medical doctor and an accountant from Bangladesh, both felt that it is important to get a Canadian degree. The medical doctor commented that a Canadian degree is more respected in the medical field. He suggested that even ten years down the road, if a University of Toronto graduate doctor competes for the same position with a foreign trained doctor, the U of T graduate will always get the first chance at a job. Furthermore, he suggested to new foreign trained doctors:

... Get into medical school as soon as possible. The other thing is get into basic sciences: pathology, pharmacology, anatomy. You do a master’s degree and end up in the hospital labs. Go into research. (Interview #8, p. 7)

Finally, two of the participants recommended looking at alternative employment options. In one case, the recommendation was directed at an older immigrant:
... I’m young, but I can sympathize with 40s, 50s coming down here ... Like I met an older relation from Nigeria, a friend of my family, just came into the country... He’s into engineering. I said it’s gonna be tough, the man is kind of old, he’s almost 50 so you can’t start that professional thing now. I told him why don’t you be a superintendent. So he was able to go to school where he got training and the guy got very good job now. He’s in one of those new condos. He’s very fortunate... The first four months he was doing odd jobs in industries where they say don’t come tomorrow. You know those kind of places. Well, right now as a super, his wife is employed too. The wife takes care of the accounting, he takes care of the maintenance of the building. So the children go to school and they get free accommodation. A lot of people don’t understand this cause there’s not a lot of awareness... (Interview =8, p. 7)

In summary, most of the participants recommended an ESL/workplace preparation programme for newly arrived, foreign trained professionals. They suggested taking such a course as soon as possible after arrival, and outlined the benefits of English language development, learning about Canadian culture, and developing necessary job search techniques. Another recommendation was to obtain a related position in one’s industry, to obtain Canadian work experience. Finally, the participants emphasized: the significance in believing in oneself and perseverance; upgrading professional knowledge, skills, occupational research and communication skills; obtaining a Canadian degree; and considering alternative employment options.
5.7 Recommendations for ESL/Workplace Preparation Programme

Table 5: Recommendations for ESL/Workplace Preparation programme

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Most participants suggested that an ESL/workplace preparation programme should cater to the immigrants’ needs. As Table 5 indicates, the primary need identified was that of language and communication skills. Secondly, many participants felt that an ESL/workplace preparation programme should provide information and training in the area of the Canadian work environment. As was demonstrated earlier in the findings, many participants felt that the Canadian work environment consists of: interpersonal relations, fitting in with corporate culture, team work and multiculturalism in the work place.

Some participants felt that an ESL/workplace preparation programme should facilitate opportunities in: job interview practice; researching occupational information, telephone work and co-op opportunities.
Finally, some participants pointed out the salient role of confidence building. As one participant observed:

... I think ... it's not only giving all the information about the trends and market, it's also giving like ... making the immigrant like more confident with themselves. Because sometimes it's that. You have to be confident with yourself to start... (Interview #9, p. 6)

In summary, majority of participants indicated that an ESL/workplace preparation programme should assist new immigrants in developing English language and communication skills. Furthermore, they identified the importance of understanding the Canadian work environment: interpersonal skills; fitting in the corporate culture; teamwork; and working in a multicultural environment. Other elements outlined were: job interviews; occupational research; telephone work; co-op placement; and building confidence.

5.8 Concluding remarks

As the findings indicate, most of the foreign trained professionals interviewed in this study were highly educated, most were under the age of 30 and childless. They chose to immigrate to Canada for a variety of reasons: instability in the home country; better opportunities for self and family; and an opportunity to gain first world experience if they decide to return to the country of origin.

Most of the participants indicated that they had a clear picture of what they might expect of their careers in Canada. Many felt that they would need to take a lower level position and to upgrade their professional knowledge and skills. Most indicated that they had hoped to resume a similar position within one or two years of being in Canada. Upon
arrival, however, most participants experienced many unexpected difficulties: lack of relevant job search skills; problems with English language and communication; difficulties with cultural adaptation; and difficulties with credentials/educational recognition. Four of the nine individuals secured survival positions unrelated to their professional backgrounds immediately upon arrival. All of these jobs were secured through contacts in their own community. Most of these individuals chose the survival jobs as an economic necessity and in order to finance upgrading courses needed for their profession.

Most of the participants, five of the nine, joined the ESL/workplace preparation programme / C.A.N. within six months of arrival. The reason most cited for joining the programme was to receive assistance with a co-op/job placement. Development of English language skills, job search skills and knowledge about life in Canada were amongst other reasons. Most participants revealed that they believed ‘Canadian experience’ to be their greatest barrier to employment in Canada. The findings show that their initial perception of the Canadian experience was ‘any work in Canada’. However, over time, the perception of Canadian experience was expanded to include: communication and interpersonal skills; ability to fit in within a multicultural, team-based workplace environment; commitment to continual learning; ability to cope with change; computer literacy; and, references from Canadian employers.

Following the completion of the eight week ESL/workplace preparation programme/C.A.N., all of the participants secured paid employment (6/9) or co-op placements (3/9) which lead to job offers. Five of the nine individuals were self-placing and four of the nine received assistance through C.A.N./JobStart. Most of those
Interviewed reported feeling strong satisfaction with their jobs and expressed a desire to remain with the same company/position for an extended period of time.

The participants made a number of suggestions for other newly arrived foreign trained professionals, mainly: to take an ESL/workplace preparation programme as soon as possible after arrival; get Canadian experience through any related position; believe in oneself; upgrade professional knowledge and skills; conduct occupational research; improve communication skills; get Canadian education; and, for older immigrants it was suggested to look at other options which may be easier to attain. They had also made a number of recommendations for an ESL/workplace preparation programme: develop English language and communication skills; introduce the Canadian work environment; offer an opportunity to practice for job interviews; provide support and help build self-confidence; and lastly, provide co-op opportunities. It is interesting to note that a co-op opportunity was initially listed as the primary reason they themselves chose to engage in an ESL/workplace preparation programme/C.A.N.

The following section includes a discussion of the findings as they relate to the existing literature on immigrants' experiences with the Canadian labour market and language training.
6. Discussion of findings

In the current study most of the participants had university education, and came from ethnocultural groups (Latin American, African, East European and Asian) designated as having the highest unemployment rates. The literature on immigrants' experiences with the Canadian labour market (Ornstein, 1996; Lo et al., 2001) indicates the severity of this issue and reports that more recent immigrants have the highest unemployment rates. Studies by Aycan (1996) and Brouwer (2000) outline the human, social and economic impacts resulting from Canada’s failure to recognize the credentials of immigrants. It is suggested that immigrants who find themselves shut out of their occupations may feel individually and collectively alienated and as victims of institutional discrimination. Furthermore, longer duration of unemployment in Canada contributes to an erosion of skills, loss of technical language competence, acculturative stress, negative self-concept, alienation from the society, adaptation difficulties, and mental and physical health problems related to stress. The findings from the present study are generally consistent with the previous studies. However, the present study offers further insight into the newcomers experiences with the Canadian labour market, their perceptions regarding Canadian experience and other barriers, and offers suggestions for other newcomers and ESL/Workplace Preparation Programmes.

The findings support the literature findings in that following their arrival in Canada, most foreign trained professionals experienced severe difficulties with securing employment. Most of the participants indicated that they anticipated some difficulties with their employment, expected to start out in lower level positions related to their
professions, but felt confident that with continued studies or upgrading they could work in their field of specialization.

The findings from the current study demonstrate that the newcomers experienced difficulties with job search techniques in Canada. Many did not know how to prepare a suitable resume, and most were not familiar with the interviewing procedures. Furthermore, most participants reported feeling that their English language skills were not good enough. Some of the newcomers expressed disappointment and frustration with recognition of foreign credentials/education. A foreign trained medical doctor noted:

... when I got here that I realized it's really tough, more than I thought ... it's quite different from what I thought, quite different, tougher ...
(Interview #8, p.2)

The literature on access to professions and trades acknowledges that accreditation and certification is a major barrier to employment for foreign trained professionals. Mata (1994) states that limited access to fair accreditation and access to trades and professions contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and provincial human rights legislation. Finally, a number of participants indicated difficulties with cultural adaptation.

The findings indicate that four of the nine individuals obtained survival jobs following their arrival in Canada. All of these were obtained through inter-ethnic contacts and tended to be short term and unrelated to the individuals' education/work experience. These findings support Ooka and Wellman's (2000) study which indicates that the Toronto-area labour market is ethnically segmented and that the resources that people can find within ethnically homogeneous networks can be limited.
The current study indicates that all of the participants joined an ESL/workplace preparation programme at C.A.N./JobStart. Five of the nine participants had joined the programme within 6 months of their arrival in Canada, three between 7-12 months, and one after 3 years of residency. All of the participants indicated that they joined the programme in order to receive assistance with a co-op or employment in their field. In my observations as an ESL instructor, I have witnessed most programme participants cite co-op opportunities as the main reason for joining the programme. At this stage, all of the individuals felt that lack of Canadian work experience was the major barrier to their employment in Canada. As one foreign trained mechanical engineer noted:

...after the third or fourth month of my job search as mechanical engineer, and after series of 3 or 4 interviews within a month or so, I believed that the only reason I didn't get job at that time, I believe was because of lack of famous Canadian experience... (Interview #2, p. 2)

This finding is consistent with other studies which identify lack of Canadian experience as one of the greatest barriers to newcomers’ employment. Furthermore, this finding points to a perception among newcomers that ESL/workplace preparation programmes are not relevant to foreign trained professionals. After all, most individuals joined the programme for the purpose of obtaining a co-op placement. This finding suggests that some foreign trained professionals may exhibit resistance to the programme and the information. In my experience as an ESL/workplace preparation instructor I have observed significant resistance to some topics such as information interviews and cold calling of perspective employers.

Following the completion of the programme, two thirds of individuals found paid employment related to their professional backgrounds, and one third
secured co-op placements which led to job offers with the same employers. More than half of the participants were self-placing, having found their own employment/co-op, while less than half received assistance from the agency (C.A.N./JobStart). These results are consistent with the C.A.N./JobStart overall participants’ placement rate. Two thirds of all participants remained with the same initial company for an extended period of time and predicted that they will continue to do so. A large majority of the participants had reported strong satisfaction with their jobs. Others were less optimistic, some changed jobs and companies, others changed or intent to change their careers altogether.

As the findings indicate, although all of the participants noted that they perceived lack of Canadian experience as a major barrier to their employment, most reported not having experienced it themselves (except for a mechanical engineer who made reference to lack of Canadian experience as a main barrier to his employment, but received a job offer with the same company). Furthermore, many participants noted how their understanding of the term ‘Canadian experience’ changed following the completion of an ESL/workplace preparation programme and an opportunity to work in Canada. Initially many believed that ‘Canadian experience’ meant having some work experience in Canada. Over time, their definition of Canadian experience expended to include: communication and interpersonal skills, ability to fit in, commitment to continual learning, ability to cope with change, computer literacy, ability to work in a multicultural environment, and references. As one participant observed:

... I must admit it might make some sense in a way that people are actually asking for references .... Employers are interested in whether you are a person able to fit within the organization, sometimes they put it as team
player. I believe that is what Canadian experience refers to ... " (Interview #2, p.3)

The literature on the labour market in Canada, such as reports by Hiebert (1998), Foord Kirk (1996), London (1998), Naylor (1988) and Campbell (1994), suggests that changes and restructuring have taken place in the world of work. Hence, different job search strategies and different skills are required in order to secure employment and to ensure one's long term employability. The findings from the current study support these findings.

Many foreign trained professionals identified the need for job search skills and various employability skills such as: communication and interpersonal skills; ability to cope in a multicultural environment; and continual learning.

The results from the present study show that most individuals recommended an ESL/workplace preparation programme for other newcomers. They suggested taking such a course as soon as possible after arrival. Furthermore, the participants of the study offered insight into the content of such a programme. The majority of participants indicated that an ESL/workplace preparation programme should assist new immigrants in developing English language and communication skills. Furthermore, they identified the importance of understanding the Canadian work environment: interpersonal skills; fitting in the corporate culture; teamwork; and working in a multicultural environment. Other elements outlined were: job interviews; occupational research; telephone work; co-op placement; and building confidence. The literature review on adult ESL and workplace preparation suggests lack of programme coordination, review, support and training. (Burnaby et al., 2000; Spencer, 1991). Furthermore, due to government cutbacks, the working conditions in these programs have been reported to be highly unfavorable. The
literature on adult career development and intervention strategies reveals many of the complexities involved in adult career development and highlights the fact that training in job search skills increases self-efficacy, which then leads to more extensive job search behaviour and a higher rate of reemployment.

The findings from the current study illuminate some issues concerning foreign trained professionals obtaining employment in Canada, some of the challenges which many faced on their jobs, and offers recommendations for career education in adult ESL programmes. The findings from the present study are generally consistent with those of previous studies which call for the need to pay heed to the changing face of the labour market and the kinds of employability skills that are required (Gow et al., 2000; Hiebert, 1998; London, 1998). Furthermore, the findings suggest that an ESL/workplace preparation programme should be designed in such a way as to support the development of autonomous learning, initiative, problem solving, adaptability etc. The findings support the need for instructor/staff development programmes and the need for partnership building between various stakeholders such as: newcomers, employers, policy makers, educators, and other staff.

The findings from the current study do not support gender differences with regard to employment practices for newcomers. However, due to the fact that the ESL/workplace preparation programme at C.A.N./JobStart is a full-time programme without daycare facilities, it may present access difficulties for foreign trained women with young children. Hence, further research in limited opportunities to participate in an ESL/workplace preparation programme due to time, length and access is warranted.
7. Conclusion

Much of the research on immigrants’ participation in the Canadian labour market points to the severe problem of high unemployment and identifies lack of ‘Canadian experience’ as one of the most significant barriers. The results of this study illustrate that many foreign trained professionals also perceived lack of ‘Canadian work experience’ as the most significant barrier to their employability. However, this study reveals that newcomers initially perceived ‘Canadian experience’ as ‘any work experience in Canada’, and over time this perception had changed to include: relevant English language and communication skills; fitting in with the Canadian workplace environment; commitment to continual learning; ability to cope with change and stress; computer literacy; and references.

This study suggests that many newcomers, upon arrival in Canada, discover that their English language and job search techniques are not adequate. Some individuals attempted to find suitable employment on their own and faced repeated rejection, leading to reduced self-confidence. In addition, this study reveals that many newcomers took on survival jobs shortly after their arrival. Many did so for economic survival and in order to finance courses necessary for entry into their professions in Canada, for example, engineers who upgraded their skills in AutoCad. These jobs tended to be unrelated to their professional backgrounds and obtained through inter-ethnic networks.

The results of this study demonstrate that participation in an ESL/workplace preparation programme/C.A.N./JobStart assisted the individuals in labour market integration. All of the participants secured related employment or co-op placements which
led to job offers. Hence, they were able to overcome the barrier of 'Canadian experience'. Although this study was not intended to evaluate such a programme, it does offer insight into the learners’ needs. It reveals that: English language, communications, Canadian workplace culture, research of occupations and industry, computer literacy, job search skills, and support in dealing with stress are significant aspects of such a programme.

This study offers some insight into the difficulties that many foreign trained professionals face upon arrival in Canada, and the effects of unemployment/underemployment which goes beyond capital investment and borders on emotional and physical health. Due to the small sample of participants in this study, it would be most beneficial to conduct further research with a larger sample.

In addition, further research into ESL/workplace preparation programmes could give valuable insight. It would also be beneficial to research newcomers’ accessibility to such programmes.

Another area for further research would be one from the employers’ perspective. It would be very beneficial to learn from the employers about their experiences with newly hired immigrants and to learn whether there are any unmet needs. This information would be extremely useful for developing programmes and intervention strategies.

Finally, further research is needed on policy issues at the level of governments and institutions as they relate to education, language learning and teaching.
7. Bibliography


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**Newspaper articles:**

Appendix: A

Interview questions

Background:
1. When did you come to Canada?
2. What country did you emigrate from and was this your country of origin?
3. Why did you immigrate to Canada?
4. Tell me about your family situation at the time of immigration.
5. Tell me about your educational background and work history in your former country.
6. Before coming to Canada, what were your beliefs about your career in Canada?

Arrival in Canada:
7. So, you arrived in Toronto in .........., 19...... What happened then?
8. What were your beliefs about your career in Canada at this time?
9. What barriers (if any) did you encounter in obtaining a position in your profession?
10. Why did you chose to attend an ESL/Workplace Preparation Programme at C.A.N.?
11. How was the programme helpful for you?
12. When did you start your first job/coop?
13. How did you get this job/coop?
14. Tell me about this job/coop.
15. How satisfied were you with this job/coop?
16. What happened after that?

Present:
17. What are you doing presently?
18. How is your current position related to your education/employment background?
19. How satisfied are you with your current occupation/salary?

Future:
20. Where do you see yourself two and five years from now?
21. How confident do you feel about achieving those goals?
22. Can you tell me about some barriers to achieving your goals?
23. What suggestions would you make to newly arrived, foreign trained professionals seeking work in Canada?
24. What suggestions do you have for an ESL/Employment Preparation Programme?