INTRODUCTION

Adult education is a broad field which comprises many subfields such as language learning, popular education, vocational and skills training.

➢ Many adult immigrant learners feel excluded from adult education because they are treated with the ‘sameness’ approach.

➢ Refugee and immigrant young adults face the daunting prospect of being in school for long periods.

➢ Syrian refugees tended to arrive in Canada with a low level of education and very limited knowledge of English or French. With the arrival of young adult refugees with disrupted education, the dynamics of adult education centers in Quebec have changed.

➢ Many Syrian youth and young adults have been outside of formal education for extended periods of time.

➢ In Quebec, as new arrivals, refugee students are encouraged to first attend French-cultural integration classes (welcoming classes) either in high schools (-16) or specialised adult programs (francisation), and then can attend Adult Education (+16).

➢ Considering the disrupted nature of their education, we are interested in understanding the experiences of adult education practitioners to determine whether better support services can be offered to these students to enable them to thrive.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study is part of a larger research project funded by the Quebec government’s research council (FRQSC) which aims to advance our knowledge and understanding of the support needs, psychological well-being and extent of distress of young adult Syrian refugees, and similar at-risk youth, enrolled in adult education centres in Quebec.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

This paper is based on data from 12 semi-structured in-depth interviews with adult education practitioners such as adult high school teachers, francisation teachers, psycho-educators, orientation counselors, and administration.

We had ethics approval from McGill University and from three school boards in the Montreal metropolitan area.

Most of the interviews had two members of the research team present. They were audio recorded from which a transcript was written.

Analysis of data was a collaborative and iterative process. Notes were taken individually by the interviewers. Notes were then compared with the insights developed through an inductive analysis by another team member which led to categories.

After close reading, collapsing, and expanding of categories, data excerpts were separated into specific categories, and ultimately collapsed into five themes.

Themes will outline the challenges practitioners feel young adult refugee students face, the strategies currently in place to support them as well as the strategies and resources needed to expand support to enable students to persevere, thrive and reach their goals.

FINDINGS

Parental Importance

➢ Practitioners reported significant influence of parents in their students’ ability to study, their focus, and their aspirations for the future

➢ A sense of responsibility and duty to their parents and family, including financial support

Practitioners’ role

➢ Teachers are the first line of support but stress the importance of team work to be able to best support students

CONCLUSION

➢ Young adult Syrian refugees enter adult education from integration programs ill equipped in terms of academic content and language skills

➢ Despite active efforts from practitioners, these do not address the systemic gaps within and between education levels.

➢ Given the recent influx of young adult refugees to their classrooms in cities such as Montreal and Laval, the current approach to adult education needs to be adapted to their special needs.

➢ Necessity for greater funding for the adult education sector for several resources.

The French Language

➢ French is a complex language to learn and this can slow their pace of progress through the education system

➢ The GAP: despite having learnt French through welcoming classes or francisation, such courses do not prepare refugee students for academic level work needed to get through Adult education.

Funding limitations

➢ Adult education is not a priority as it does not receive enough funding to ensure all of the support services students and teachers need

Practitioners’ recommendations

INCREASE the number of pedagogical days to provide time for psycho-educators to work more closely with teachers

INCREASE levels of French that contribute to the credits required to finish school.

INCLUDE parents in the process and guide young adults more, although it is not a common practice in adult education.

REQUEST for increased funding for adult education