

Hard Lessons Newcomers and Ontario Private Colleges

Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership

Funding provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Summary

This report focuses on the experiences of newcomers with private colleges in Ontario. It relies on the insights of frontline staff of agencies that serve newcomers in the central Toronto region, and offers their impressions of newcomers' encounters with private colleges: their motivation for seeking out private colleges, recruitment and admissions practices, financial issues, the educational and training process and eventual outcomes (i.e. employment outcomes). The findings indicate that newcomers often prefer private colleges for various practical reasons (i.e. length of program, easy acceptance, rolling enrollment, etc.), however, interviewees indicate that the employment outcomes of the newcomers they served often did not improve after completion of their diploma. This is not an investigative report but rather is an attempt to shine some light on the experiences of newcomers with private colleges and to stimulate further inquiry and action.

Scope and Methodology



This report relies on a review of existing secondary literature regarding private colleges and an analysis of 22 key informant interviews with frontline staff which includes settlement workers and employment counsellors at 16 immigrant serving agen-

cies. Two interviews with previous private college management professionals were also conducted. All participants information and comments were kept anonymous.



Findings

Why are newcomers attracted to private colleges?

Private Colleges are often used by those seeking a quicker route to specific skills or accreditation, or by those seeking re-training. It is also an option that attracts newcomers who often experience barriers to the labour market due to their lack of "Canadian experience" and are thus interested in gaining Canadian credentials quickly to improve their employment outcomes. Private colleges also offer more flexibility than community colleges and/or universities. For example, rolling admissions is a characteristic of the majority of private college programs.

Poor Employment Outcomes

Most of the interviewees stated that clients who attended private colleges often experienced less success in finding employment than their communi-

ty college and university counterparts. Interviewees also indicated that employers are often wary of private college education and training due to a lack of school name recognition as well as a general aversion to private career college diplomas.

Other concerns identified by interviewees include: **Deceptive and/or questionable practices, lack of placement/practicum opportunities for students, substandard quality of education/instructors/curriculum/facilities, and low standards for language assessments of newcomer students**

Recommendations

1. Pay more attention to the quality of the education provided at private colleges
2. Require Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of private colleges, similar to community colleges
3. Increase enforcement activity
4. More awareness for prospective students
5. More research and studies about private colleges

Resource Toolkit

This report includes a **Resource Toolkit** for Newcomers and frontline staff. The toolkit includes the following information sheets: **1)** Recommendations; **2)** Executive Summary; **3)** Top Five Challenges; **4)** Private Colleges: Student Rights; **5)** Private College Checklist/More Information on Community and Private Colleges; **6)** Glossary of Terms

This research report and the Resource Toolkit can be found at the Toronto South LIP's website: www.torontolip.com.