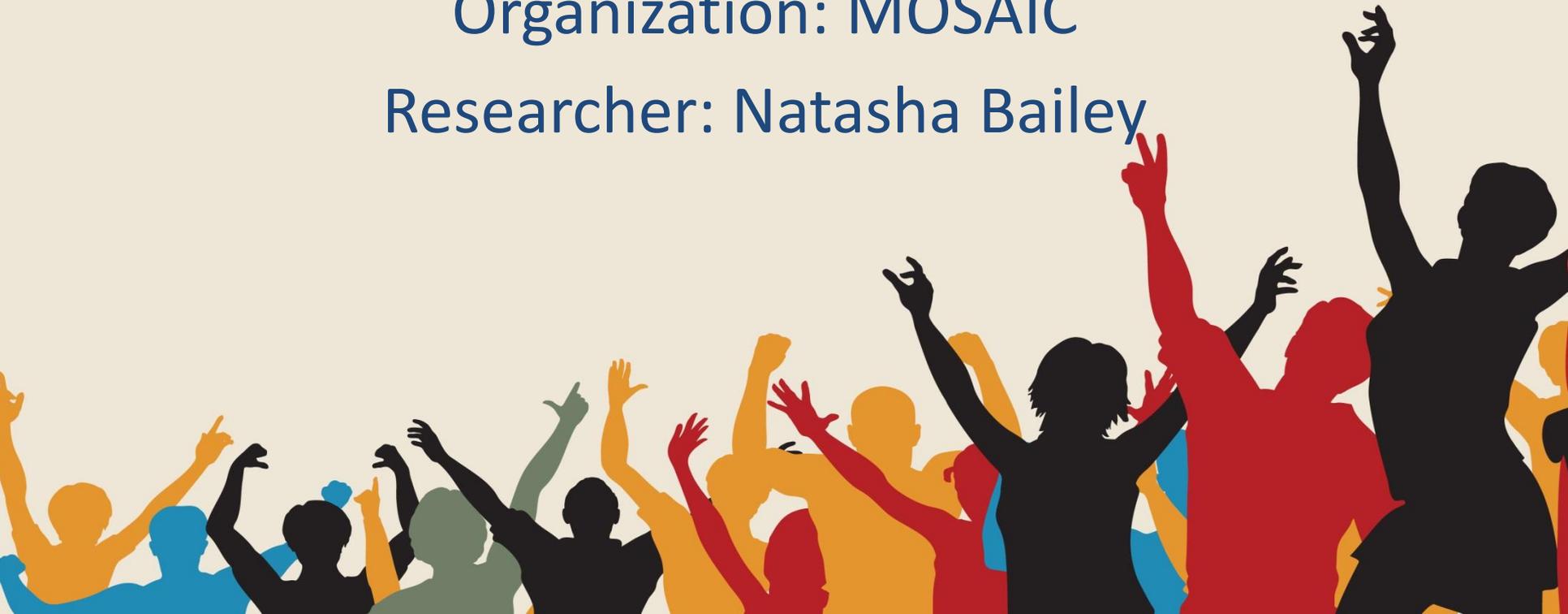




The Role and Value of Short-term Paid or Unpaid Work Placements for Immigrant and Refugee Youth

Organization: MOSAIC

Researcher: Natasha Bailey



Context

- Unemployment rate for immigrant and refugee youth double that of total labour force in Vancouver (16.8%)
- No research about cohort's awareness and experience of employment services
- Need to highlight distinct experiences of refugee youth
- Little research on outcomes of specific elements of youth employment programs, such as work placements

Methodology

- Focus group with program staff
- In-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with 22 young people who had participated in employment programs with a work placement element (paid or unpaid, three months or less)
- Work placement “imagination exercise” with youth
- Tracking of outputs and outcomes for work placement through “Benefits” checklist
- Semi-structured interviews with 11 host employers

Benefits Checklist Areas

- Career Development
- Basic Skills
- Job Search Skills
- Succeeding on the Job
- Self-confidence and Personal Skills
- Integration

Integration Benefits			
a. Increased my sense of belonging to my community		d. Understand how communication styles differ between here and my country of origin	
b. Feel more integrated into Canadian society		e. Started to volunteer	
c. Understand skills for adapting to the Canadian work environment		f. Made new friends	



Youth Participants

Average Age	22			
Average Age at Arrival	18			
Average Time in Canada	4 years			
Country of Origin	Asia	Middle East	Other	
	7	7	8	
Immigration Class	Family	Refugee	Skilled Worker	
	8	11	3	
English Language Level	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	
	2	13	7	
Education	HS Pre-arrival	HS Post Arrival	BA	Diploma
	8	14	2	1
Work Experience Prior to Arrival	13			
Employment Outcome	Full-time		Part-time	
	5		7	
Program Engagement	PAWS	Skills Link	Other	
	7	9	6 (Moving Ahead – 2) (Job Options – 1)	



Employers

- Non-profit (n=5)
- Retail (n=2)
- Film and TV. production (n=2)
- Recruitment agency (n=1)
- Health care service provider (n=1)



Samaan's Story

- 21 year old refugee
- Dropped out of High School
- 5 week work placement in post production
- One consistent supervisor and work buddy
- Contributed to integration to Canada
- Working at two part-time jobs, planning to study film at Capilano, making a short film with peers for Sundance



Michelle's Story

- 27 years old, arrived 3 years ago as Skilled Worker - Dependent
- 5 week work placement – data collection and database organization
- Still in contact with supervisor at this work placement
- Work placement helped her to challenge herself to break out of restaurant industry, foster English confidence
- Ultimately, needed to progress into another employment program to secure current employment in IT Industry



Findings – Expectations for and Experience of Work Placements

- A successful element of programs
- Priority outcomes: English, employment, community connection, skills for field of interest, Canadian experience
- Also fosters transferable skills
- Intermediate step towards a longer-term goal
- Placements in diverse workplaces are important
- Enhances settlement and integration



Findings - Employment Barriers

- Youth barriers echoed those in the literature resulting in lack of career preparation - ethno-racial discrimination; lack of effective bonding and bridging social capital; language barriers; lack of labour market information; cultural adjustment and adaptation, and lack of foreign credential and work experience recognition
- Could educate employers on range of barriers experienced
- Employers take extra time to address language barriers
- Gender is important



Findings – Career Development

- High educational and career aspirations
- Funder emphasis on employment challenges program focus on longer-term career development
- Youth require more support to attain goals
- Parents are important



Findings – Program Supports and Employer Engagement

- Employers could increase capacity in relation to placement supports
- Support needs of some youth could be a deterrent for employers
- Employers could benefit from understanding how hosting youth contributes to workplace diversity
- Potential for deeper employer engagement
- Promote youth special skills to employers

Recommendations – Programs

- Continue to provide placements
- Use the “Benefits” checklist
- Involve parents
- Find work placements that maximize: English confidence, skills for field of interest, fit to cultural background
- Connect young people to mentors
- Promote workplace diversity and existing special skills of youth to employers
- Deepen employer engagement: communication, input into content, demand-led

Program Recommendations (con't)

- Tailor work placement to English level – ensure adequate opportunity to interact with customers and/or other staff
- Carry out basic English for Work (EFW) training, encourage further ESL training
- Apply job search skills to acquisition of placement
- Develop a long-term action plan for youth
- Emphasize importance of case management at WorkBC Centres



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