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# **The Library Settlement Partnerships: A Case Study**

**Abstract:** This in-progress doctoral dissertation research is a qualitative exploratory case study of the *Library Settlement Partnerships*, a federal government program that consists of partnerships among service providing organizations and public libraries in Ontario. The study explores the ways that service provision in cross-sectoral collaborations is being negotiated among the various stakeholders.

**Résumé :** Cette étude doctorale en cours repose sur une étude de cas qualitative et exploratoire du Partenariat d'établissement par l'intermédiaire des bibliothèques, un programme fédéral constitué d'un partenariat entre les fournisseurs de services et les bibliothèques publiques de l'Ontario. Cette étude explore comment les différents intervenants offrent leurs services dans le cadre d'une collaboration intersectorielle.

## **1. Overview**

Providing new immigrants with access to settlement services through partnerships with local service providers is a critical component of Canada's national Integration Program. Administered largely through Federal-Provincial agreements, investment in this sector has more than doubled from \$180M in 2005 to over \$500M of projected spending in 2011<sup>1</sup>. In Ontario, where more than 50% of new immigrants to Canada choose to settle, the aim of the *Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement* (COIA) is to produce "a seamless network of services that support newcomer integration" (CIC 2007). In this regard, cross-sectoral partnerships are increasingly common and consequently, so too is the introduction of many non-traditional service providers at the community-level such as public institutions like schools, hospitals, and libraries. This dissertation research is an exploratory case study of the *Library Settlement Partnerships* (LSP), a cross-sectoral partnership introduced in Ontario by what was then Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in 2006 that combines the resources and expertise from two sectors: settlement and public libraries. The study of LSP offers the opportunity to explore how the landscape of settlement service providers in Ontario is being negotiated at the community-level from the perspective of partner stakeholders and to consider, in particular, the ways that different professional and institutional values and practices influence how and what services are delivered.

## **2. The Library Settlement Partnerships**

In 1999, Citizenship & Immigration Canada (CIC) began a program that placed settlement workers in public institutions, first in public schools with *Settlement Workers in Schools* (SWIS) and later, in 2006, in public libraries with the *Library Settlement Partnerships* (LSP).

LSP evolved directly from SWIS. When schools closed during the summer months, many of the participating SWIS agencies temporarily placed their settlement workers in nearby public libraries. The libraries were quick to see the value of this arrangement as an opportunity to increase the scope of their user base and to enhance their knowledge of immigrant groups within the community through the expertise of settlement workers. In 2006, pilot projects were formally launched in Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa in a total

of 17 branch locations (and one bookmobile). In 2008, Citizenship & Immigration Canada (CIC) expanded and formally launched LSP across the province of Ontario where settlement workers can be found in 49 public library branch locations, which include the original pilot sites and the additional cities of Windsor, London, Kitchener-Waterloo, Brampton, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, and Markham.

LSP “is a unique program that brings together the settlement and public library sectors with Citizenship and Immigration Canada to provide improved and extended settlement services for new immigrants” (CIC 2008 p 4). Through direct one-on-one service, group sessions and programs, and outreach, LSP is intended, “...to help serve the initial settlement needs of new immigrants, assist with integration into the community, encourage civic participation and at the same time help new immigrants understand how libraries can assist with their settlement needs” (CIC 2008 p 7). LSP is designed to foster integration by combining the resources and expertise of local service delivery providers, in this case settlement workers and librarians, to ensure, in particular, that “[public] libraries become interwoven into the community planning approach to integration” (Wong & Poisson 2008).

### **3. Research Questions**

The objectives of this research are to document ‘what is LSP?’ and the context from which it emerges. Further, it explores how service delivery is being negotiated at the community level between the settlement and public library sectors. Specifically, the research examines LSP from the perspective of policy makers and senior administrators in terms of program-wide design and implementation, and also from the perspective of partnership managers and frontline workers. The research questions that guide this research are:

1. In what ways is service delivery conceptualized in LSP? Why is it conceptualized this way?

While the component parts of LSP are individual organizations, the focus here will be on the perspectives of stakeholders and the experiences in managing LSP at the level of each of the individual partnerships examined. Attention will be devoted to exploring the processes that result in the negotiation of new or modified practices (e.g. services). Consequently, the second research question is:

2. In what ways is LSP enacted in practice? Why?

### **4. Conceptual Framework**

In this study, understanding the ways and reasons that LSP is conceptualized and enacted in practice is framed by three contextual factors. First, the influence of the neoliberal funding regime that, since the mid1990s, has dominated Canadian public policy development and program implementation and has governed the decentralization of public services delivery to, in particular, the community sector. While the negative effects of short-term, program-based funding on organizations in the nonprofit and voluntary sectors is well documented (Scott 2003), what is of particular pertinence to understanding LSP is that partnerships are often required to be eligible for funding. Second, partnerships among government and local service providing organizations in the settlement sector have been a critical component in CIC’s program delivery since the mid1970s. Public libraries, however, are municipally funded and are relative newcomers to working in formal partnerships that deliver public services. Finally, LSP needs to be understood in the context of the professional and organizational differences inherent in the settlement

and library sectors in terms of differing institutional mandates and professional values and practices.

## **5. Methodology**

This is a qualitative, exploratory multi-site case study that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin 2009, 18). In the research design, data collected from participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document review will be triangulated and analyzed at two levels: Program-wide and at the level of each of the 8 individual partnerships.

At the first level, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with senior administrators to capture *program-wide* perspectives. Further, participant observation has been underway since September 2008 at various LSP and sector-specific events such as LSP Advisory Committee meetings, training workshops and professional conferences.

The second level of study is each of the eight LSP *partnerships*, which are defined largely in terms of their respective geographic service provision areas: Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Brampton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Windsor, London and York Region. LSP is a large, complex program that spans the province of Ontario. Each of the 8 partnerships is a unique configuration of stakeholders in management and service provision from the library and settlement sectors. The stakeholder organizations are: 11 library systems, 49 library branches and, 23 service providing organizations (SPOs). Each partnership configuration typically consists of a library system or systems, the library branches participating as LSP sites, the service providing organization(s) (SPO), and one steering committee to manage local partnering issues. While the component parts of LSP are individual organizations, the focus on participant observation here is on the management structures (i.e. local Steering Committee meetings) and activities that are unique to each of the 8 LSP partnerships, such as local ad hoc planning meetings and program/service delivery to newcomers at LSP sites. Processes that result in the negotiation of new or modified practices (e.g. services) will largely be captured in the perspectives of specific functional positions in LSP such as LSP Coordinators, branch-level librarians, and frontline workers.

LSP Coordinators, for example, in particular represent pivotal actors in that they liaise with each of the three stakeholders. They are SPO employees, either currently or formerly settlement workers, who are charged with the responsibility of managing SPO staff (i.e. frontline workers) that is working remotely at LSP sites (i.e. library branches). Consequently, the LSP Coordinator is the conduit for frontline worker issues to be brought to the attention of Library Branch Managers and also to the local Steering Committee Meetings. Further, in many cases, LSP Coordinators are often also the primary contact with the CIC regional office with regards to the negotiation of the agency’s funding through a contribution agreement.

Document review will include LSP-related materials produced either by CIC or by the participating stakeholders. Analysis focuses on comparing official discourses about LSP with those that reflect the practices of participants. While participant observation and document review is ongoing, semi-structured interviews are scheduled to begin in June 2010. Dissertation defense is planned for 2011.

## 6. References

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<sup>i</sup> Jason Kenney, Minister, Citizenship, Immigration & Multiculturalism Canada. *Metropolis, Keynote Plenary Address*, Montreal, QC, March 19, 2010.