

**Economic Immigrant Parents' Educational Involvement  
in Prince Edward Island**

A Thesis

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## ABSTRACT

As a strategy for addressing the issues of aging population and economic development, the Canadian government collaborated with provinces and territories and continued to develop policies and programs to recruit substantial economic immigrants in recent decades. Many economic immigrants choose Canada as a destination country because of its quality education systems and services for their children, and they also eagerly search opportunities to engage in their children's schooling after landing in Canada. The purpose of this study was to investigate economic immigrants' parental involvement in their children's education in Prince Edward Island (PEI), Canada. Specifically, this research examined (1) immigrant's obligations and expectations while involving themselves in children's education; (2) immigrants' parental involvement in children's education; (3) the essential challenges and issues influencing immigrants' parental involvement; and, (4) immigrants' perception for their educational involvement in public schools. Answers to these topics are critical for schools, educators, and parents as they will eventually inform the best policy, program, and practices supporting immigrants' parental involvement in education.

Informed by Epstein's (2001) Parental Involvement Framework, McNeal (1999) and Coleman's (1988) Social Capital Theory, this research study adopted a qualitative research design to understand economic immigrants' experiences and perception of their parental involvement in Canadian public schools. Eight immigrant parents from five different countries voluntarily participated in the study. Data analysis revealed four major sources for immigrants to collect needed information, eight challenges and five requests calling to inform their parental involvement in education. The immigrants not only hold high expectations for their children, but also actively involve themselves in home-based learning and parent-teacher communications.

However, these parents scarcely had opportunities entering the role of leadership and not engaging in community collaboration mainly due to language barriers and culture differences. Recommendations generated from the findings include offering immigrant parents workshops on Canadian education and cultures, and fostering cross-cultural sensitiveness for family-school communication through professional development for educators.

*Keywords:* economic immigrants, parental involvement, social capital

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	i
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	v
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	1
Overview of the Thesis	1
Coming to Prince Edward Island as an Economic Immigrant parent	2
Research Purpose and Objectives	4
Research Significance	5
Limitations of the Study	6
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	8
Economic Immigrants in Canada	8
Economic Immigrants in Prince Edward Island	9
Defining Parental Involvement in Education	11
Parent Involvement Initiatives in Prince Edward Island (PEI)	16
Epstein's Six-Dimensional Framework for Parental Involvement	19
Social Capital Framework for Parental Involvement in Education	21
Summary	25
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</b>	27
Qualitative Research Design	27
Purposeful Sampling of Participants	28
Data Collection Methods	30
Data Analysis	32
Summary	35
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS</b>	36
Research Participants' Demographic Profile	36
Immigrant parents' Motivations and Reasons for Immigrating to Canada	38
Immigrant parents' Experiences in Educational Involvement in Prince Edward Island	41
Immigrant Parents' Resources and Support for Educational Involvement	45
Immigrant Parents' Issues and Barriers in Educational Involvement	49

Immigrant parents' Perception and Understanding	54
Summary	61
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	64
Restate the Research Purpose	64
Response to Research Questions	65
Theme 1: Devoted Parents and High Expectations	65
Theme 2: Loss of Social Capital and Differential Parental Involvement	68
Theme 3: Information Channel, Culture Differences and Communication Gaps	72
Theme 4: Community Service Provider's Significant Support for Immigrant Parents	76
Theme 5: Struggle to Thrive	77
Theme 6: Critical Perspectives in Established Immigrant parents	81
Conclusion	84
Recommendations	86
Recommendations for Future Research	87
Final Thoughts	89
<b>REFERENCES</b>	91
<b>APPENDICES</b>	102
Appendix 1: Letter of Invitation for Immigrant parents	102
Appendix 2: Poster of Invitation for Immigrant parents	103
Appendix 3: Research Information (in English)	104
Appendix 4: Consent Form (in English)	105
Appendix 5: Research Information (in Chinese)	106
Appendix 6: Consent Form (in Chinese)	107
Appendix 7: Interview Protocol	108
Appendix 8: Demographic Survey	109
Appendix 9: Research Approval	110

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

In this introductory chapter, the researcher provides an overview of the thesis, including the research context, purpose, and research objectives. The last section of the chapter outlines the significance and limitations of the study.

### **Overview of the Thesis**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher introduces the context, and background that inspired her study. Then she presents the research purpose and objectives of the study; later the chapter ends with the research significance and limitations. In the second chapter, the researcher presents bodies of literature covered by historical and contemporary research of immigrants' parental involvement in education, as well as the studies on economic immigrants in Prince Edward Island context. The researcher concludes the second chapter with the theoretical frameworks that were used to guide the investigation.

The third chapter describes the methodology for the research. The first section presents the research design and specific methods that were used to recruit participants. Then the next section includes a description of the research purpose and four research questions, as well as the approaches that were used to improve the trustworthiness of the study. To conclude, the researcher outlines the detailed methods that she used to collect, code, analyze, and interpret the data.

The findings are presented in the fourth chapter. The chapter begins with presenting the research participants' demographic information, and follows by the themes and related topics categorized from research data. Illustrative quotes taken from the interviews were used throughout this chapter to present how the parents were involved in their children's education. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings.

The researcher concludes this thesis in chapter five, which presents the discussions of major findings in reference to the four research questions and literature review in chapter two. In this chapter, the researcher proposes recommendations to schools, teachers, administrators and school boards to improve immigrants' parental involvement. Suggestions on possible avenues for future research the researcher's reflection on conducting this study are also presented in the final chapter.

### **Coming to Prince Edward Island as an Economic Immigrant Parent**

Canada is a nation of immigrants, and its multi-cultural society reflects the contributions from many immigrants. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people immigrate to Canada from all over the world. In seeking better future and education opportunities for their children, more and more parents submit their Canadian immigration application through various streams, including the most popular federal and provincial nominee programs.

Prince Edward Island (PEI) is the smallest province in Canada and considered an Anglophone community with the largest percentage of descendants from Scottish, English, Irish and French backgrounds. Eighty per cent of the city population in PEI was Canadian-born, and only 10.3% people identified themselves as foreign-born (Statistics Canada, 2011). To meet the challenges caused by aging population, the loss of labour force due to interprovincial migration, and seasonal business and employment opportunities in farming, fishing, and tourism sectors, Prince Edward Island government introduced a Provincial Nominee Program (PEI PNP) in 2001 to pursue greater international immigration, as well as its strategy of growing labour force and stimulating local economy. At a rate of 9.1 per thousand, the province has the fourth highest international immigration rate in Canada (Prince Edward Island Statistics Bureau, 2015). Most immigrant families resided in formal municipalities and the urbanized regions such as

Charlottetown, Summerside, Stratford and Cornwall (Randall, Desserud & MacDonald, 2015).

Charlottetown was selected as the research site for this study.

My interest for conducting a study to investigate and understand economic immigrants' parental involvement in their children's education grew from my personal experiences as an economic immigrant parent in Prince Edward Island. In 2007, my family and I immigrated to Canada from Taiwan through the Prince Edward Island Provincial Nominee Program (PEI PNP). Seeking quality educational opportunities and experiences for our children has been one of the most important reasons for our family's decision to immigrate to Canada. From my conversations with other newcomer parents in PEI, I realized that many immigrant families, particularly those who immigrated to Canada through economic categories, shared similar aspirations and motivations in choosing Canada as the destination country for immigration. As an educator, I have always wanted to and been actively involved in my children's education. Through comparing my parental involvement in my children's education in Taiwan and Canada, I found tremendously different expectations and experiences regarding parental involvement among schools, teachers and parents. I wonder to what extent other immigrant parents are involved in their children's education in PEI and how they perceive their parental involvement in the Canadian educational context.

In my search for channels to get involved in my children's education, I became aware of the PEI *School Act* (Prince Edward Island Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture. 2010), which clearly underscores parental involvement as an important mechanism to enhance students' learning outcomes, school performance, and the quality of provincial education system. Detailed strategies for engaging parents in education are absent from the *PEI School Act* and other information sources and channels. In recent years, there have been surveys investigating parents'

educational involvement in PEI (Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation, 2013, 2008).

I came to realize that neither survey was designed to understand immigrant parents' experiences and their level of engagement. This study was inspired by immigrant parents who anxiously seek enhanced engagement in their children's education in PEI schools. I believe a deeper understanding of the immigrants' parental involvement in their children's education is important for all stakeholders in education, mainly because this new understanding will enhance the immigrants' parental involvement in education, and ultimately improve immigrant children's schooling experiences with more effective parental support.

### **Research Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this study was to investigate immigrant parents' experiences and perceptions of the involvement of their children's education in PEI schools. The objective of this study was to gain a deeper and enhanced understanding of immigrants' parental involvement in children's education by inviting them to share their experiences. The following questions guided this study:

1. What are immigrant parents' obligations and expectations of parental involvement in children's education?
2. How are immigrant parents involved in children's education in PEI?
3. What are the essential challenges and issues influencing immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education?
4. How do immigrant parents perceive their educational involvement in the PEI public schools?

By collecting, analyzing and presenting experiences and perceptions from eight immigrant parents' educational involvement, the researcher gained new insights on immigrant parents'

educational involvement in Canadian education system. The researcher also explored the challenges immigrant parents encountered that they believed influenced their parental involvement.

### **Research Significance**

There has been abundant research on immigration and the social, cultural, economic and educational inclusion of new immigrants in Canada; however, very few studies have focused on the immigrants who have landed in the Atlantic provinces, particularly in Prince Edward Island. By focusing on immigrant parents' educational involvement experiences in PEI, this research and its findings contribute to the body of literature on immigration, parental involvement and its impact on newcomer students' schooling in small and rural communities in Canada and beyond. This study also underscores the issues and challenges associated with immigrant parents' education involvement, specifically for the increasing numbers of Canada's recent economic immigrants.

As Canadian federal and provincial governments will continue to recruit economic immigrants and their families, sustainability of immigration becomes a progressively important issue for Canada. This study provides a deepened understanding of economic immigrants' challenges for educational involvement, their needs of connections and networks, and the support newcomers need to integrate and thrive in Canadian society.

In order to engage increasingly diverse students and parents in rural Canadian schools, the department of education and community stakeholders need to understand the parents' perceptions and expectations, too. This study helps educators and school communities raise awareness for immigrant parents' backgrounds and opinions about parental involvement in Canadian schools. It also helps teachers, administrators and principals to recognize the issues and challenges existing

in immigrants' parental involvement at schools. Findings of this study will also fill the gap in educational research, where economic immigrant parents' viewpoints concerning their goals and parental involvement in Canadian public schools are not presented.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This qualitative research was conducted in one small municipality—Charlottetown, PEI. As Prince Edward Island is the smallest Canadian province and located in the Atlantic region, it has unique social, economic, geographic, and cultural characteristics distinctive from the other Canadian provinces and territories. Findings generated from this study may or may not be applicable to other provinces where immigrants come from more diverse backgrounds and categories. During the past decade, the majority of the immigrants in PEI come through the economic immigrant stream. Therefore, this study focused on economic immigrant parents' educational involvement experiences. With the majority of the respondent immigrants who came through the Prince Edward Island Provincial Nominee Program (PEI PNP), there was only one person from the category of Federal Skilled Worker (FSW), findings generated from the participants in this study may not completely reflect those parents who come to PEI through other immigration streams, such as refugee and family connection programs.

The largest ethnic group of economic immigrants in PEI are Chinese; this reality is mirrored in the research participants' ethnic backgrounds in this study. The researcher's familiarity with the Chinese culture and traditions helped her explore deeper cultural issues related to the questions under investigations. On the other hand, this reality might have hindered a deeper understanding of those immigrant parents from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds due to the linguistic and cultural barriers. As Charlottetown is a small urban centre, it is also possible that some parents worried about being identified or judged by the closely connected Island

community. As a result, they may have felt hesitant to fully express themselves on certain topics. Although the researcher tried to recruit both fathers and mothers in the study, only two fathers agreed to participate in this study. The fathers who were interviewed have certainly added their unique perspectives to the findings. However, compared with the participating mothers who are usually perceived to be more involved in children education, the fathers' participation rate is fairly low. Because of economic, cultural, and personal reasons, many immigrant families are in temporary single-parenting situations supporting their children after immigration. This study did not focus on the influence of absent parents in the household and their perceptions of educational involvement.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the literature review conducted for this study. It starts with the background on economic immigrants in Canada and PEI, followed by the literature on the significance and approaches of parental involvement in their children's education. Then the chapter presents current literature on the ethic and cultural similarities and differences in parental educational involvement, and the challenges immigrant parents face in their educational involvement in local Canadian context. Finally, this chapter presents Epstein's Parental Involvement Framework, McNeal and Coleman's Social Capital Theory, and discusses how these theories informed the design of this study.

### **Economic Immigrants in Canada**

On average, every year Canada receives around 125,000 immigrants. The number has increased dramatically. In fact, the statistics show that in 2013 a total of 259,025 people immigrated to Canada (Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, 2014). In addition to those popular metropolitan cities, new research indicates that some immigrants are no longer using the rural provinces merely as an entry port, but as their first home in Canada (CBC News. 2011). The influx of immigrants directly contributes to the provincial population growth of the Atlantic provinces between 2006 and 2011, including Prince Edward Island (+3.2%), New Brunswick (+2.9%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (+1.8%) (Statistics Canada, 2012). From the latest Prince Edward Island population report, international migration has become an important factor contributing to the Island population growth for PEI (Prince Edward Island Statistics Bureau, 2015).

It is notable that among the recent immigrant population, 62% of the total newcomers to Canada were categorized under the term of "economic immigrants" (Asia Pacific Foundation of

Canada, 2014). The term has been developed to represent the people who applied through and were recognized under the immigration category of “economic immigrants” (Cortes, 2004; Waters, 2003). The economic immigrants were specifically recruited through various immigration policies and regulations to meet domestic labor market needs; these latest economic immigrants are composed of skilled workers, entrepreneurs, self-employers, and business investors. In other words, they were selected on a specific basis of their potential such as creating jobs, contributing capital to the Canadian economy, and stimulating economic activities (Citizenship and Immigration Canada. 2012). As most of the families are bringing their school-aged children, the influx of this categorical immigrant population certainly has changed and reshaped the educational demography profile of Canada; in 2011, one out of five (20.6%) young Canadian school children (fourteen years of age and under) were foreign-born (Statistics Canada, 2014).

### **Economic Immigrants in Prince Edward Island**

Prince Edward Island (PEI) is the smallest of Canada’s ten provinces both in terms of population and geographic area. Being a heavily resource-based and seasonal economy, PEI is experiencing an aging population due to declining birthrate and the out-migration of many young and educated people. To respond to the increasing challenges in provinces such as PEI, the Federal government adopted the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) in 1998; in 2001, the PEI government introduced PEI PNP to initiate its own immigration criteria and objectives. This program focused on immigration as a mechanism to achieve population and economic objectives.

The PEI PNP consists of four components: skilled worker category; immigrant connections category; immigrant entrepreneur category; and, immigrant partner category. The program aims to expedite the Canadian immigration process, respond to the labor market’s needs,

stimulate the economic environment and contribute to population growth. Studies show that over the 2001 to 2010 period, the PEI PNP accounted for 94% of all immigration to PEI, bringing the total percentage of economic immigrants to 96% from as low of 30% in 2001 (Thornton, 2012). Investments made by newcomers have brought much needed capital into Island businesses and the immigrants' contribution have directly enabled capital investments, population growth and job creation. According to the PEI PNP evaluation result, the investments made through the program have been estimated to total \$106 million, with a GDP impact of \$60.4 million, as well as federal and provincial tax contributions estimated at \$11.5 million (Thornton, 2012). That was why Federal government concluded that the PNP has distributed a larger proportion of economic immigrants outside Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia compared to other economic programs. As a matter of fact, in addition to Manitoba and New Brunswick, PEI was one of the three provinces that was associated with significant increases in immigration flows to the smaller provinces in Canada (Pandey & Townsend, 2011). In every aspect, economic immigrants belong to a specific group of people relocated to Canada. According to the point system<sup>1</sup> Canada adopted in 1967, the successful economic immigrant candidates must be accompanied by evidence of the individual's age, health, education and other demographic information. Civil servants use the information to decide on the economic prospects of applicants and issue the immigration visas to those who meet certain standards, as well as to ensure they are healthy and do not pose a security threat (Grubel, 2013). Needless to say, qualified economic immigrants with high education levels and sufficient language skills were assumed to be able to adjust easily to the Canadian changing labor market conditions. What is unknown, though, is the situation of vast majority of economic

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<sup>1</sup> The original points system was used to access immigrants on qualifications including education, language, experience, age, arranged employment and adaptability. Applicants who wish to immigrate to Canada must obtain at least sixty-seven points (Library of Congress, 2014)

immigrants and their wellbeing in the immigration aftermath, specifically, their settlement in the rural Atlantic provinces. When investigating the factors affecting the immigration decision to invest in PEI, more than half (69.6%) of these economic immigrants declared that the access to the Canadian education system was their reason for immigration (Thornton, 2012, p. 32).

Research has shown that immigrants arriving in Canada for the past two decades have been experiencing declining entry wages (Aydemir & Skuterud, 2005). In addition, among Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and PEI who benefited from the significant immigrant flow, PEI has the highest unemployment rate of 14.3% for landed immigrants (Pathways to Prosperity: Canada, 2014). Besides the low entry wages and high unemployment rates that challenge newcomers to PEI, the strong, interrelated bonding connection between the Islanders creates another barrier for PEI communities to embrace *CFAs*—people that *Come From Away* (Baldacchino, 2012). Although PEI has consistently demonstrated comparably high levels of informal and formal volunteerism in Canada (Vézina & Crompton, 2012), the same rich social capital has nevertheless produced negative outcomes. Islanders' firmly unreceptive to new ideas or arguments was one of them. In a more recent study of immigration wave from PEI PNP, the closed-mindedness of Islanders was identified as the most common single explanation for people who were actively planning to leave PEI (Baldacchino, 2006).

### **Defining Parental Involvement in Education**

There is a rich body of literature on parental involvement in education; however, the definition of the term is contested and complex. Traditionally, parental involvement in education refers to parental participation at school-based activities, such as scheduled parent-teacher conferences, school celebrations, home-school committees, volunteering in non-academic school assignments, and serving as chaperones of school sanctioned activities (Peña, 2000). Other

studies also defined parental involvement as home-based activities like helping children with homework (Hoover-Dempsey, Dallaire, Green, Sandler, & Walker, 2005). Additionally, the involvement has been examined through parental expectation stemming from the familial view of education value (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). The programs involved with parents and their participation, however, have been critiqued that they typically reflected the assumption that a beneficial family environment incorporated mainstream North American values and behaviors (Laosa, 1983; Ramirez & Cox, 1980). Generally, parental involvement “refers to parent behaviors related to the child’s school or schooling that can be observed as manifestations of their commitment to their child’s educational affairs” (Bakker & Denessen, 2007, p. 189).

### **Cultural and Ethnical Differences in Parental Involvement in Education**

Though it may appear to be a consistent manifestation of parental involvement, the findings about cultural and ethnic differences of the involvement are inconsistent. Evidence of cultural and ethnic differences in parental involvement at schools have been reported in several studies. For example, an American study found that in comparison with White parents, Black and Hispanic parents have higher levels of involvement with parent-teacher conferences, and Asian parents have lower levels of involvement (Muller & Kerbow, 1993). Nevertheless, later studies found that race differences in parental involvement are mediated by students’ academic performance. Though Black high school students’ parents are involved more than White students’ parents, the significant difference is only displayed among students in the remedial track. Additionally, Asian high school students’ parents are involved more in the remedial track than those of White counterparts, and Asian parents are involved less when their students are in the college preparatory and general tracks (Crosnoe, 2001).

The parental education involvement for immigrants differentiated between practices and cultures. In a study comparing immigrant students to the native-born counterparts, Kao (2004) found that foreign-born parents are less likely to talk to their adolescents about schools, but more likely to talk to them about colleges. In another study, Nord and Griffin (1999) found that Hispanic and Asian immigrant parents are less involved themselves at school than native-born White parents. Meanwhile, there is substantial variation in the forms of involvement. For example, immigrant parents appear to be less likely to volunteer at their children's school than the native-born parents, but both of those parents are equally likely to attend parent-teacher conferences (Nord & Griffin, 1999).

### **Influential Factors of Immigrant Parents' Educational Involvement**

In addition to the ethnic differences in parental educational involvement, parents' education levels, communicative languages and inter-personal communication styles also affect their involvement experiences and outcomes (García & Marks, 2009). In their study, Carreón, Drake, and Barton (2005) report that Hispanic immigrant parents want to be engaged in their children's schools but are hindered by the cultural and linguistic challenges (Carreón, Barton, & Drake, 2005). Other studies made the same points. For example, the parents of Puerto Rican and South-East Asian students prefer more informal, slower-paced, supportive interaction and communication. They may feel uncomfortable to engage in direct, questioning approach displayed in the Anglo (White) parental style of formal conversation (Harry, 1992).

Despite the factors affecting immigrant parents and their behaviors when involved in educational functions, most parents act on their role and tasks according to the resources and opportunities they have (Muller & Kerbow, 1993). Parents' Socio-Economic Status (SES) often signals their resources and opportunities in education and is reported closely associated with

parental involvement in school (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). Numerous studies indicate that higher income and greater educational attainment parents are more involved than those of lower SES (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Crosnoe, 2001; Desimone, 1999; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1987; Lareau, 2000). It is reported that the economic factors affect immigrant parents' ability to participate in school volunteer activities and parent-teacher interaction (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch & Hernandez, 2003). Additionally, time availability, family structure and multi-generation residential arrangements also affect parental involvement in their children's schooling (Bengtson, 2001; Crosnoe, 2001; Muller, 1995). Parents are more likely to be involved if a flexible working schedule, supportive spouse or partners, and important familial resources (e.g., child-care assistance) are in place.

### **Challenges Immigrant Families and Students Face in Educational Involvement**

Parental educational involvement contributes to students' positive schooling outcomes, such as high rating of student competence, positive grades and achievements (Hoover-Dempsey, et al, 2005). The standardized test scores of some immigrant students may lead to some perceptions amongst ethnic families and their cultures, such as outstanding mathematic performance in some areas in Asia and Middle East. However, there is increasing recognition that the phenomenon may overlook the challenges existing among immigrant students who are failing or dropping out of schools, suspended or expelled, and diagnosed with various behavioral and learning issues (Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet & Walters, 2010; Glick & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Kao & Tienda, 2005).

The absence of parents in the immigrant family household has also been reported as a challenge for immigrant students. In her study on the economic immigrant families in Vancouver, British Columbia, Waters (2003) illustrates the picture of 'astronaut families' and

‘satellite kids’ from the Southern-Asian communities (Hong Kong and Taiwan). The term ‘astronaut families’ refers to those male adult family members who immigrated to Canada to advance their financial circumstances, but left their children at the home country and are sending regular remittances. The satellite kids, on the other hand, indicate a situation where the adult members of the family (parents) return to the country of origin following the migration, whilst the children continue to reside in the receiving country. The phenomenon implied in both terms indicates a complicated familial arrangement that could place immigrant students in vulnerable and risky situations. Although relative risk ratios are varying by country of origin, on average, immigrant students experience significantly higher rates of school failure, dropout, and risk for disability, such as physical disabilities, depression and posttraumatic stress (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). To solve the issues beforehand, as Chavkin (1993) declared, “One promising method that research has shown to be efficacious is increased parental involvement in education” (p.3). Quite often, the immigrant parents are equipped with rich individual and collective resources, and their participation could contribute to the overall positive result for all students involved.

Different schooling experiences and understandings of teaching and learning create challenges for immigrant parents’ involvement in education. Studies report that a large portion of teachers in the Canadian school system are White, middle-class women who have had less up-and-close contact with immigrant families, nor have been prepared sufficiently to work with them (Bernhard, 2010; Graue, 2005). In her study of pre-service teachers, Graue (2005) state that teachers believe they have normative knowledge about child development, technical and theoretical knowledge about teaching, and the wisdom of experience garnered from having worked with many children. As newcomers to Canada, immigrant families are often considered

outsiders of the community and unfamiliar with the norms of community and educational engagement. It is also notable that immigrant families in Canada come from all over the world; specifically, immigrants inherit and practice different languages, cultures and religions, with which they display a wide spectrum of SES backgrounds (Scott, Selbee & Reed, 2006). Unlike the native Canadian parents, most immigrant parents do not have the opportunity to learn about the schools and community by participating in or observing Canadian educational practice (Graue, 2005; Lortie, 1975).

Immigrant parents do not necessarily have a pre-established community upon their arrival in Canada; therefore, they often form closer connection with other immigrants who share the same or similar experiences as newcomers. These shared experiences often include difficulties in finding jobs that measure up to their pre-immigration credential, learning the official languages, and dealing with various forms of discrimination (Ali, 2008). These challenges often negatively influence immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education.

### **Parent Involvement Initiatives in Prince Edward Island (PEI)**

In last decade, the Prince Edward Island Department of Education, Early Childhood Development and then three school boards developed a three-year Student Achievement Action Plan. According to this plan, family and community engagement was one of the five identified areas that needed to be strengthened. The provincial government committed \$9 million over three years (2006-2009) to support the plan and designated the Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation (PEI HSF) to lead the development of a province-wide Parental Engagement Initiative. During that time, PEI HSF partnered with researchers Mait MacIsaac and Sandra Rendell to design the Learning and Reading Partners (LRP) in order to support parental involvement in Island public schools. With this focus and a grant of \$50,000, PEI HSF supported twelve diverse

pilot projects for twelve Island schools. There was one initiative that helped immigrant parents understand the school system (Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation, 2012). Among the initiatives, only one project conducted in a Charlottetown junior high school was specifically designed for the teachers and parents to help new immigrant parents to understand the curriculum.

During 2008 and 2013, PEI HSF conducted two parent engagement surveys guided by Epstein's (2001) six dimensional parental involvement framework. Both surveys indicated that parents in PEI were very involved in communications with the parent-teacher meetings (90%); in the survey of 2008, the school newsletter, school handbook and school websites were identified as the most effective forms of communication between parents and schools.

Based on the surveys, the most common parental involvement activities included fund-raising events and activities at their children's schools, classroom volunteering, field trips, food programs and transportation support.

Both surveys identified work commitment and busy schedules as the most significant challenge for parents being involved in schools. Meeting other children's needs, having little information about the opportunity and issues of transportation were additional challenges in parental education involvement.

In Prince Edward Island, parents are responsible for sending their children to the school from age six and are expected to be involved in the school advisory council (Province of Prince Edward Island, 1999). However, the current educational policies or plans do not reflect the increasingly diverse population in schools and Island communities. How and in what ways should immigrant parents act on their behalf to be actively involved in PEI public education remains unclear and under-investigated.

## **The Significance of Immigrant Parents' Educational Involvement in Prince Edward Island**

For immigrants, transitioning to a new country perpetuates a constant challenge to their parenting practices. In addition to the language barriers and perceived discrimination, Sluzki (1979) documented that the great majority of parents who experienced downward social mobility were those who had stable, middle-class jobs back home. The challenges multiplied after family migration as immigrant parents constantly faced the parental roles and expectations prescribed in different cultures and education contexts. It is especially problematic when there are conflicts between parents' values and the implicit values of the schools (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Raeff, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2000; Valdés, 1996). Therefore, most of the immigrant parents were often struggling to adapt themselves in parental involvement for the receiving communities.

As an Island community, Prince Edward Island used to have a very homogenous ethnic population with the vast majority population coming from generations of British background (Statistics Canada, 2011). Though the steadily increasing number of immigrants has added to the Island demography profile, a study in 2014 suggested that an underlying sense of exclusion to socio-economic opportunities persists among newcomers. This includes lack of access to employment and investment opportunities regardless of the immigrants' skills, expertise and financial capital. Exclusion from existing social networks was also identified as a shared experience of newcomers (Randall, et al, 2014).

Because the influence of parental involvement on students and student's learning is significant, literature has emphasized the importance of understanding how parents perceive and interpret the concept of parental involvement, and then act to exercise their rights and responsibilities according to their perception. In conjunction with school- and home-based parental involvement, researchers typically include both parental aspirations and expectations as

strong indicators for positive academic outcomes (Juang & Silbereisen, 2002). Specifically, a survey across a nationally representative sample of European American, African American, Asian American, and Latino students indicated that parental aspirations for children's education was positively associated with students' academic motivation (Fan, Williams & Wolters, 2012). Recently, there is growing evidence showing that immigrant parents hold higher expectations and aspirations for their children's educational attainment than White (Anglo) parents (Areepattamannil & Lee, 2014; Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Hernandez, Denton & Macartney, 2007; Raleigh & Kao, 2010), and that these immigrant parents are more likely to maintain high expectations and aspirations for their children's educational attainment over time (Raleigh & Kao, 2010). Involving immigrant parents in education not only benefits the students' academic achievements, but also contributes to the schools' over all learning outcomes in the long term. The dramatically increased immigrant-student's population in PEI public schools calls for effort from teachers, school administrators, and community stakeholders to actively engage immigrant parents' educational involvement for an enhanced educational achievement and outcome for all students in Prince Edward Island.

### **Epstein's Six-Dimensional Framework for Parental Involvement**

As parental involvement is multidimensional, the role that parents play in school is not consistently defined across the literature. The most commonly described role is related to practices associated with parents' involvement in their children's schooling and their relationship with the school (Hoover-Dempsey, et al, 2005). Epstein (1992, 2001) proposed a framework that consisted of six dimensions made up of several parental practices. For every dimension, Epstein presented a series of activities or practices that parents adopt when they are involved in their children's education (see Table 1).

Table 1

Dimensions	Practices of Parents
<b>Parenting:</b> Family obligations and support of their children's education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure the children's well being: physical health, nutrition, clothing, and hygiene.</li> <li>• Spend time with the children</li> <li>• Participate in the parenting education group</li> </ul>
<b>Communicating:</b> Home-school communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain contact with the teacher</li> <li>• Attend information sessions</li> <li>• Subscribe and respond to school's reports</li> <li>• Obtain support for parents from the school</li> </ul>
<b>Volunteering:</b> Family involvement in school life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend school activities</li> <li>• Attend extracurricular activities</li> <li>• Visit the classroom</li> <li>• Volunteer</li> </ul>
<b>Learning at Home:</b> Parental involvement in the children's schoolwork at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervise and support homework</li> <li>• Support the work of the teachers</li> <li>• Mentor or tutor children for informal learning</li> </ul>
<b>Decision-Making:</b> Parental participation in the decision-making process and in the management and defense of the children's interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support school programs</li> <li>• Sit on decision-making committees, organizational boards, parents' committees at the school commission</li> <li>• Engage in advocacy for children's interests</li> </ul>
<b>Collaborating with Community:</b> partnership with the school, businesses, and other local organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with businesses, social clubs, community organizations</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with community organization to improve schools</li> </ul>

Though these practices represent the roles that parents usually play, they do not necessarily delve into the roles based on their various parental perspectives. In her study, Seginer (2006) stated “parental involvement varies with immigration status, ethnicity, and within ethnic minorities by level of education” (p. 35). In other words, some immigrant parents more likely prefer home-based parental involvement, and limit their participation in schools (Ceballo, Maurizi, Suarez & Aretakis, 2014). Parents apply the practices they consider to be appropriate and necessary in order to carry out their roles effectively.

Numerous research had previously adopted Epstein’s multi-dimensional parental involvement frameworks (Fan & Chen, 2001; Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000; Lee & Bowen, 2006; McWayne, Fatuzzo, Cohen & Sekino, 2004); however, very few studies used the framework on parental involvement for economic immigrant parents. In a study for immigrant parents in Quebec, some researchers argued that by applying Epstein’s six dimensional parenting framework, the result might be able to reveal what dimensions were more important than others for immigrants (Beauregard, Petrakos & Dupont, 2014). As the primary objective of this study is to explore economic immigrant parents’ practice and experiences in educational involvement, Epstein’s framework of parental involvement was adopted as the conceptual framework to analyze parent’s perceptions and experiences in their children’s education.

### **Social Capital Framework for Parental Involvement in Education**

As an American sociologist who left extensive studies on the social capital theory, Coleman (1988) claimed that social capital represents a resource involving the expectation of reciprocity, and goes beyond any given individual to involve wider networks whose relationships are governed by a high degree of trust and shared value. Kinship is one of the significant relationships where profound social capital can be found and developed accordingly. Further,

theorists Perna and Titus' (2005) study defines social capital as a resource that parents may draw upon as needed to enhance productivity, facilitate upward mobility, and realize economic returns. To summarize, social capital enables a parent to gain access to various resources, including institutional information and support in their educational involvement (Coleman, 1988; Perna & Titus, 2005). In his work, Bourdieu (1987) explained the class structure in twentieth-century French society; he also stressed that social capital consists of networks and connections. And they both were informed by hierarchical power structure for resource distribution. Borrowing and viewing through these theorists' perspectives, investigating how immigrant parents establish their social capital while involving in children education will further deepen our understanding of their "ability to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures" (Portes, 1998, p. 6).

As parental involvement is one area that frequently studied, its influence on students' learning outcomes or parents' parenting practice is not always clear. This study aims to explore economic immigrant parents' educational involvement, thus the focus is on immigrant parents' experiential and social construct in their children education. Some scholars conceptualized parents' involvement in their children's schooling as a form of social capital (Lee, 1993; McNeal, 1999; Yan & Lin, 2005). How exactly it can be conceptualized was unclear. This study draws on the work of McNeal (1999) and Coleman (1988) to apply social capital and its components to further examine the construct of parental involvement.

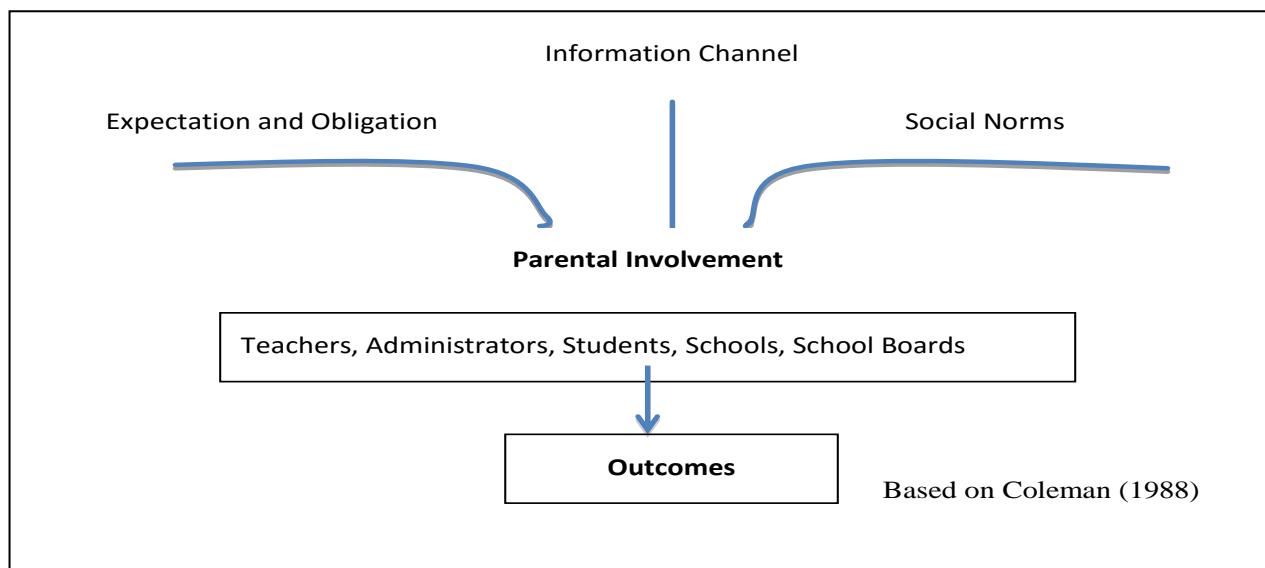
Both McNeal (1999) and Coleman (1988) stressed the similar three elements to conceptualize social capital: *form, norms of obligation and reciprocity, and resources*. By *form*, McNeal (1999) indicated the structural aspects of social ties and relations, including "the breadth of the network, the depth or intensity of the relations...and the nature of relation" (p.119). This

element directly relates to Coleman's (1988) theory regarding social capital as a form of information channel. With respect to education, information becomes crucial for families and students when seeking schools, effective teachers, college applications and financial aids. Information affects and necessitates student's outcomes but is not easily obtained. As a result, relationships in networking and connection prescribe how effective and efficient information parents can accumulate from their social capital. On the other hand, Coleman (1988) asserts that parents can provide social capital to children by spending time together or promoting activities contributing to children's educational outcomes. Here, Coleman's (1988) social capital theory informed this study by investigating how immigrant parents apply this element, as a form, to gain needed information in education and accompanying their children.

The second element of his social capital theory, McNeal (1999) proposed the norms of obligations and reciprocity with a focus on kinship. He entailed the sense of investment with the expectation of a return on that investment, pertaining to a sense of trust, obligation or a norm of reciprocity. His second element in social capital mirrored Coleman's (1988) theory that an individual's relationship with another person provides a set of obligations and expectations between two or more individuals. For the norm of obligation and expectations, Coleman (1988) describes, "When a norm exists and is effective, it constitutes a powerful, though sometimes fragile, form of social capital" (p.104). In various cultures, such as the societies of America and Canada, the norm of investing in a child's development and education is well established. For immigrant parents who were active agents in parental involvement, their obligation and expectations for children in education after immigrating to Canada thus become the core interest of this study.

McNeal (1999) proposed additional characteristic of the third element in social capital—resources. Apparently, parents have various levels of different capitals to invest in their children. Bourdieu (1987) clearly articulated it when he argued that social capital is actually a multiplier of an individual's own capital as a result of the resources, as well as other forms and stocks of capitals available through the collectivity. Many immigrant parents realize the important relationship between children development and education resource; in fact, they were actively invested and involved themselves in children's education. This study intended to explore how they access to needed resource from extending their social connections to schools, teachers, parents and communities. Given this framework which was informed by Coleman (1988) and McNeal (1999), parental involvement can clearly be conceptualized as three elements of social capital: form (information channel), norms of obligation and reciprocity, and resources.

Figure 1



## Summary

This chapter presents the research context as well as bodies of literature on parental involvement in education. It also reviews the parental involvement that was regulated and promoted through initiatives of the education department of PEI provincial government. The researcher summarized the Island-wide surveys conducted by PEI HSF, as well as presented the research on immigrant parent involvement, and the literature clarifying the barriers for immigrants' education involvement in general and for the specific Island context. It is notable that numerous studies mentioned that the socio-economic status, immigrant background, and racial and cultural differences have prevented immigrant parents from continuing to involve themselves in education to certain degrees.

Other than the barriers in PEI local parents' involvement that were identified by the Island-wide surveys, immigrant parents have their very unique barriers that weren't included in those survey results. For example, when immigrant parents are navigating a new education system, additional assistance like interpreter and translator services is required but has not been employed mandatorily.

Generally, immigrant parents' education involvement has been influenced by various factors at various levels; plenty of research shows that parental involvement is positively related to students' learning outcomes. On the other hand, immigrant students become vulnerable to many learning issues and behavior risks, and it is the parent's involvement that would establish the relationship between families and schools to improve the overall learning outcomes and school performance. The researcher also described phenomena that are frequently observed in immigrant households, like satellite kids and astronaut parents, to illustrate the complexity of familial arrangement amongst immigrant communities.

Unlike the Island parent participants in those surveys, the greatest barriers for immigrant parents' communication with and involvement in schools was language. Additionally, teachers' perceptions to immigrant parents' background and different schooling experiences added difficulties to the parent-teacher communication. In the PEI local context, immigrants faced exclusion from the socio-economic opportunities as well as a share of social capital in Island networking. From the existing *School Act*, surveys, and the studies regarding parental involvement in education, there is very little knowledge or understanding that is built from the perspectives of parents, specifically, the immigrant parents.

Since most of the studies in this literature review seldom addressed the complex phenomenon on immigrants' parental involvement in education, this field of inquiry still needs exploration. It is also clear that most of the initiatives or plans for parental involvement in past few years were either based on the schools' expectations for parents, or focused on immigrants' weakness and deficit. There is obviously lacking the vision of immigrants' cultural heritage and developmental potential. If the economic immigrants who come with various capitals and most likely adapt successfully to the receiving community fail, other newcomers and communities would suffer for the same result. Consequently, a significant gap exists to understand what economic immigrants have to say about their parental involvement in Canadian education.

Informed by Epstein's (2001) six-dimensional parental involvement framework, McNeal (1999) and Coleman's (1988) social capital theory, this study intended to fill the gap in literature by exploring economic immigrants' parental involvement experiences in Prince Edward Island, Canada.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This study was a qualitative exploration of economic immigrants' parental involvement in children's education in Prince Edward Island (PEI). This inquiry aimed to develop a greater understanding of immigrant parenting practices, experiences and their perception about involvement in childrens' education. This chapter presents the rationale of the qualitative design of the study, the methods used for data collection and analysis, and a discussion of the reliability and trustworthiness of the data.

### **Qualitative Research Design**

This study adopted a qualitative design because this inquiry approach allows the researcher to explore the complex meaning of a central phenomenon and understand the context within which the participants act (Maxwell, 2012). By focusing on the process rather than outcomes, qualitative design allows the researcher to collect detailed views of participants and offers the opportunity to identity unanticipated phenomenon and influences. In addition, qualitative research design enables a collaborative, participant-centered inquiry approach and it recognizes the participants' expertise and their own experiences pertaining to the subject of investigation (Rodwell, 1990). The purpose of this study was to investigate and explore immigrant parents' educational involvement as a social phenomenon, as well as particularly interested in their educational involvement and experiences. Further more, the study intended to obtain "*participant perspectives*" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997, p. 7) of their expectations and obligations as parents, their access to educational information, as well as their practices while engaged in children's schooling. Because the purpose of qualitative research is not only to describe and explore the phenomena being studied but also to explain and develop a complex

picture of the phenomenon through studying many ideas with few participants and sites, it is the most appropriate inquiry approach for the purpose and objectives of this study. With the above understanding, the researcher applied a qualitative approach to interview economic immigrants in order to discover their experiences, elicit adequate data from their reporting, and understand how they perceive the social world in which they lived (Psathas, 1973).

### **Ethics Approval**

Prior to beginning this research study, on October 21, 2014 the researcher completed the ethic tutorial (TC PS2), and later received the ethical research approval (Appendix 1) from the University of Prince Edward Island Research Ethics Board (REB). Following that approval, the researcher forwarded the letter of research invitation (Appendix 2), recruitment poster (Appendix 3), research information and consent forms (Appendix 4, 5 in English, Appendix 6, 7 in Chinese) to two local community organizations: Community Language Center of Holland College and the Prince Edward Island Association for Newcomers to Canada (PEI ANC). The reason to provide an additional Chinese version was to purposely recruit more Chinese participants as Chinese is the largest ethnic group coming to PEI through economic immigration category.

### **Purposeful Sampling of Participants**

Purposeful participant sampling is often used in qualitative research design as the number of participants is small. In purposeful sampling, as Creswell (2012) described, the researcher intentionally selects individuals to learn or understand the central phenomenon under study; in this case, immigrant parent education involvement. The standard used in choosing participants is whether they are information rich and knowledgeable about the subject(s) of the study. As this research project intended to present multiple perspectives of immigrant parents and the complexity of their immigration journey, as well as to maximize the search of potential

participants, the researcher also issued an invitation letter and invitation poster forwarding to the following immigrant service providers: immigrant social network channels like immigrant community websites, organization such as the PEI ANC, and newcomer's language program providers like Holland College and Study Aboard Canada. Having worked with these organizations as a volunteer and paid instructor, the researcher has maintained a frequent and close relationship with them for the past few years. The letter which stated the research purpose, target participant criteria and project statement provided necessary details to the perspective respondent.

After receiving the letter of invitation, recruitment poster, research approval and consent forms, the staff at the two local community organizations displayed the posters in their office building and language training center and offices where many immigrants regularly visited or walked by. In the letter and poster (see Appendices 2 and 3), the researcher clearly stated the research purpose and the criteria of research participants. The criteria of target participants were: (1) from the economic category of immigration application at either Federal or Provincial level; (2) remain in the family residence in PEI at least four months for the past year; (3) currently had their children enrolled in the public schools (from kindergarten to grade 12); and (4) can be interviewed in English or Mandarin. The researcher later contacted the potential participants through phone calls and emails after they responded to the research request through phone-calls and emails. After confirming their backgrounds, the researcher provided the research approval, invitation letter and consent forms for the potential research participants' review. Later the researcher started to arrange appropriate schedule and location details to proceed with the interviews.

## **Data Collection Methods**

Qualitative research design allows the researcher to collect data through observation, interviews, documents, audio and visual materials. To better understand the immigrant parents' experiences, this research study collected data by using demographic survey data and semi-structured interviews. The demographic survey (Appendix 9) provided the background information of the participants and prepared the researcher for the interviews.

### **Demography Survey Design**

In viewing the need to recruit the participants according to the research design, the researcher thus developed a participant demography chart (Appendix 9) to ensure that the respondents were the target participants for the study. The items included (1) name; (2) gender; (3) country of origin; (4) category for immigration; (5) time/year stayed in Canada; (6) ethnicity; (7) education; (8) relations with children; (9) language in use; (10) number of children; (11) children age or school level. Informed by the confidentiality in the research design, all the participants' names were replaced and coded later. Later the researcher found that the ethnicity of the research participants was either from Asia or Middle East regions; this item was discarded in accordance with suggestions from the thesis supervisor.

**Semi-Structured Interviews.** Each participant participated in one interview (typically lasting between 1 and 1.5 hours) to share their perceptions and experiences related to their involvement in their children's education. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with an open framework, which involved conversation that was focused on both conversational and a two-way communication. The conversational process allowed for the giving and taking of information in both ways. This form of interview started with a more general topic or question, and the majority of questions were created during the interview; the researcher usually followed

the interview protocol but encouraged the participants to express their opinions relevant to the main topic. This process allowed the interviewer and interviewee to probe for details or discuss more issues. The semi-structured interviewing was guided only in the sense that the research questions and themes became embedded throughout the process. As a result, the researcher believes that the semi-structured interviews added its trustworthiness to the results of this study.

After the both potential participants and their recruiting criteria were met accordingly, the researcher explained the research study in oral and written forms. Then the two interviews were scheduled at the public settings and the most convenient time for each research participant. In each interview, the researcher carefully explained the research project; the research participants had a chance to review the research information and consent forms, and signed the documents. Through the demographic survey and semi-structured interview approach, the participants answered the questions and talked about their parental involvement experiences at home or in the Canadian schools. Sixteen hours in total were spent on the interviews. When conducting interviews, the researcher audiotaped and took notes throughout the interview process. By the end of each interview, she expressed her gratitude to the research participant and answered their questions. All the audio recording files and notes were secured in a computer hard-drive protected by a password? and in a locked cabinet. The data transcription was delivered back to the participants if they had specifically requested in the interview draft for review after the transcription completed.

**Interview logs.** Throughout the beginning of data collection, the researcher kept an interview log of all the people, places, dates and field notes involved with the study. The researcher also kept the notes for on-going ideas, updated information and reflection about the qualitative study. The researcher documented the parent presence and their reaction to the

interview questions. The notes were later used to enhance the researcher's findings and to ensure that she was aware of her perspectives and potential biases. As the researcher continued to compare her notes and transcription from the interviews, she also became aware of her perception and how it affected the study. For example, immigrant parents valued education across many cultures.

### **Data Analysis**

After the interviews were completed, the researcher applied the following five steps of qualitative research analysis procedure (Creswell, 2012) to analyze the data that had been collected: (1) prepare data for analysis; (3) read the data; (4) code the data; (5) code the text for description to be used in the research report; and, (6) code the text for the themes to be used in the research report.

The researcher first manually coded the transcription and generated the emerging themes, and later wrote up a rough copy for the finding; later she found that a further research tool was needed to capture more information from the raw material. Therefore, during the analysis process the researcher applied the Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software program, to code, group and identify the relationships between emerging themes. After transferring the audio files and interview transcription to the software project data base, she used code manager and network manager to generate the topics, keywords and themes that were most frequently mentioned in the transcripts. The network manager automatically demonstrated the diagrams by showing correlation between the research questions, participants' response and their relevancy. The researcher then used the diagrams to categorise the topics for discussion. When all the findings were categorized and organized, she began to report the research results.

The goal of this qualitative research was to understand immigrants' parental involvement in Canadian schools, their experiences and perceptions. Using parent descriptions of their education participation in their children's schooling, this study explored whether immigrant parents' descriptions and practices match Epstein's (2001) six dimensional parental involvement framework: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and involvement with the community. The researcher transferred the result from the software to individual Microsoft Word documents according to the research question guideline. Then she compared the participants' responses to the questions, and marked the similarity and difference in the response to the specific questions. The researcher created a spreadsheet by Microsoft Excel to record participants' self-reporting practices in these six dimensions, and to aid in the display of data. She also looked for the key-words that related to McNeal (1999) and Coleman's (1988) social capital framework, such as 'communication', 'information', 'obligation' and 'expectation', and cross-examined some of Epstein's (2001) parental involvement framework. The researcher found that with these conceptual frameworks, the immigrant parents' involvement and their experiences were distinctively categorised and presented later in the report.

As mentioned, the researcher purposely selected a specific community and the organizations to recruit the target participants based on her several years of residency in the city. She had a prolonged and intense exposure to the issues and phenomenon to establish a report with the participants. The semi-structured questions guide the interviews with immigrant parents were designed so that she could probe their responses. The participants received drafts of the transcript revealing their response to the research questions and how the data was presented, quoted and interpreted. The researcher used two digital audio recording devices that allowed her to ensure verbatim transcriptions of the audio recording. Only one participant revised her notes and

comments to clarify her opinions, though the researcher delivered the transcription as an attached file to every participant who requested for the member-checks.

### **Researcher's Role and Ethical Considerations**

The researcher of this study instrumentally facilitated the immigrant participants to express their experiences throughout the project. Honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness are what the researcher has borne in mind while conducting the study.

In this research, the researcher sought profound description of parents' experiences in education involvement. The participants were asked to reveal and discuss private details of their immigration journey, familial arrangement, and social networking activities over a period of time. Thus this process required a sufficient level of trust based on a significant level of participant disclosure. Under various circumstances and consideration, some immigrant families did not want to reveal details with respect to their concern about privacy and security. Others might have felt unsure about voicing their issues and opinions regarding the current education system in Prince Edward Island.

The estimated probability of these risks was low because all the participants and their identities in this study will remain anonymous and confidential. In addition, the researcher had explained in appropriate languages about the research intent, project details and ethical principles prior to the interviews. The information and consent forms (Appendix 2) were provided to inform the study as well as all the participants.

### **Confidentiality**

The data were collected and secured in a locked cabinet, and were not revealed to anyone except the researcher and the research supervisor. All the participants' identities were coded and remained anonymous.

## **Summary**

This chapter outlines the research design, methodology and methods that were used to design and conduct this qualitative study, and documents the specific tool that was used to identify, collect and analyze data. In the next chapter, the researcher presents the analyzed data that revealed from the immigrant parents' responses regarding their parental involvement in children's Canadian education.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research study was to understand the economic immigrants' parental involvement in education in PEI. This chapter presents the findings in response to the questions as following: (1) what are immigrant parents' obligations and expectations of parental involvement in children's education? (2) how are immigrant parents involved in children's education in PEI? (3) what are the essential challenges and issues influencing immigrant parents' involvement in children's education? (4) how do immigrant parents perceive their educational involvement in the PEI public schools? All major themes are generated from the data collected through demographic surveys, interviews, and the researcher's interview logs. In addition to reporting the themes that emerged through my inquiry, this chapter also includes the unanticipated themes and issues that emerged from the research data.

To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, all names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.

### **Research Participants' Demographic Profile**

Research participants' background is critical for a deeper understanding of their educational involvement experiences in PEI. Therefore, each participating immigrant parent was asked to complete a demographic survey. Eight immigrant parents participated in this study, including six mothers and two fathers. They all arrived in Prince Edward Island (PEI) through the categories as economic immigrants: seven applicants were from Prince Edward Island Provincial Nominee Program (PEI PNP), one was from the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSW). Their residence in Canada ranged from four months to eight years when interviewed. Reflecting the fact that China is the number one source country for the economic immigrants in PEI, four parents

were from Mainland China and one from Taiwan, and the other three participants had originally resided in Middle East regions. English was the second or third language for these parents; more than half of the parents used Mandarin as their first language. The majority of the parent participants had gained their post-secondary degrees, and three of them had studied in colleges. These parents' children were enrolled in PEI public schools at various levels from kindergartens to high schools, or above. Table 2 summarizes the demographic information of all the participants.

Table 2

*Demographic Profile of the Research Participants*

* Name	Gender	Country of Origin	Category for Immigration	Years in Canada	Education	Role	Language	No. of children
Ahmet	M	Turkey	PEI PNP	6	Bachelor	Father	Turkish French	2
Faeze	F	Iran	FSW	2	Bachelor	Mother	Farsi Arabic	2
Far	F	China	PEI PNP	2	College	Mother	Mandarin	1
Han	M	China	PEI PNP	6	Bachelor	Father	Mandarin	2
Hsu	F	Taiwan	PEI PNP	8	College	Mother	Mandarin	4
Jia	F	China	PEI PNP	2	College	Mother	Mandarin	2
Mei	F	China	PEI PNP	0.3	Bachelor	Mother	Mandarin	2
Raja	F	Syria	PEI PNP	3	Bachelor	Mother	Arabic	2

\* The participants were coded with and represented by pseudonyms in this research study.

## **Immigrant parents' Motivations and Reasons for Immigrating to Canada**

The first section examines parents' reasons for immigration, as well as their obligations and expectations that was rooted in their decision on immigrating to Canada. In terms of this research study, the researcher intended to explore the immigrant parent's obligations—their decision for immigration, and expectations—their dreams after immigrating to Canada. While presenting findings in the following sections, the researcher also explored how the immigrants acted on their parenting roles while performing their obligations, as well as establishing their expectations to children after immigrating to Canada. The participants also provided their reflection by comparing previous and current cultures in education.

The majority of the participants responded that their primary reasons for immigration was for their children. More specifically, they immigrated for their children's education. Some parents felt that the education services of their home country failed to meet their children's needs; others found that the test-driven and competitive education systems loaded tremendous distress on children, teachers and parents. Some parents had sent their children to private schools, but they were stressed by the expensive tuition and negative outcomes.

In this study, the parents immigrated based on their concern for children's future: employment opportunity, access to education resources, grasp for the second language skills, and citizenship. It is notable that Canadian government and immigration policies played important roles in attracting immigrants. Many participants expressed their positive image and understanding of Canada. The safe, worry-free, easy-get-around and affordable living standard of the Island community was appealing, too. PEI PNP, on one hand, has expedited the procedure of becoming the Canadian permanent residents, and the program initial investment and lead-time was a good match when the parents had applied.

## **Immigrant parents' Obligations and Expectations for Educational Involvement**

Literature in parental involvement in education discusses and confirms the cultural differences in parents' obligations and expectations. Therefore, it is important to understand the participants' obligations and expectations as a threshold of understanding their experiences in educational involvement.

All research participants expressed their profound obligation and commitment to their parental roles and tasks in their children's schooling. Faeze drew a typical picture of her as a mother before and after immigration:

(in Kuwait) ... I used to get home by 4, I had no time for change or eat because they had to go to bed like 6 to 8. I had to sit from 4 to 6:30 working hard to cover the homework like memorizing; I was like studying all over again the grade with them. When they grow, the high schools there were like nightmare. Everything about high school was about the percentage or score for graduation, everyone was on hold on who got how much; it was a nightmare for parents.

After immigrating to Canada, she involved herself to the next level:

Basically, I tried to do a lot of research about our immigration and education to understand their enrolment... I've read a lot of information... with PEI ANC's assistance and guidance, we followed steps to go through the process...I knew all this information and the process on when, who and how to do it...I sat there with them and their school counsellor, and we had understood what these two boys want to go from there... To that level, I was involved with them. (Faeze, interview participant)

In addition to assisting children during the transition period, other parents also reported their roles as to spending time with children, conducting home-based and informal learning after school hours, and supervising children's homework.

When asked what they expected from their parental involvement throughout the immigration journey, Mei said that all she wanted was her children enjoying a better sleep, and having time to play and making friends. Faeze agreed, "Miracle" was the word she described how much her sons enjoyed their schooling after immigration.

Some parents shared their findings of the different expectations between teachers, education settings and teaching approaches. Mei found that the Canadian schoolteachers do not heavily focus on students' grades; Han realized that the Canadian teaching approach is to cultivate decent human beings. For these findings, Jia attributed the differences to education cultures, "What the primary education focus here in Canada is the emotional and social development. In addition, schools emphasize on literacy...The point is not how much been taught, but how far students can learn for themselves" (Jia, interview participant).

Gradually settling down in Canada, the parents reviewed whether their goals for immigration had been met, and what their expectations for children will be accomplished in Canadian education systems. Mei was satisfied that her two daughters were able to finish the breakfast, take buses to schools and both have lots of fun. Raja was pleased that her sons now have chances to choose what they want to do for their lives. Accompanying her son, Far expected her son to master English language skills and befriend with his peers at schools. Ahmet's expectation for his children is more academic: he expects his son and daughter to enter the good university, and further become global citizens of our society.

Parents' obligations and expectations were often changed or challenged by Canadian educational system and practices, which are usually very different from the ones in their home countries. During the transitioning from homeland to Canada, most participating parents in this study reported that they naturally compared children's different schooling experiences. For the parents with young children, most parents' experiences were positive and joyful. Han noticed that treating people with manners and attitude is an important part of the school education in PEI. Mei found out that her two daughters were more relaxed in PEI schools as they were over-occupied with homework and not able to enjoy their childhood in China. For students from other countries,

like Raja's sons, attending high schools in Canada meant a lot more to learn: labs, extra-curricular activities and other curriculum content which they didn't necessarily have in Kuwait. Comparing the education between Kuwait and Canada, Faeze recognized the stress that had laid on her sons, "(They) don't enjoy their education (in Kuwait). It's the pressure that kills the children and their parents" (Faeze).

For the parents who came with children at junior high and high school levels, they expressed their mixed feelings. Ahmet said he was shocked to realize that his children learn little from the Canadian schools. Faeze and Raja also noticed that the education in their homeland had built a strong foundation for the subjects like Math and Science. Raja described her two sons studying in Canadian high schools "They came from a system asked them do lots of homework on daily basis, and they used to do it in order to get good grades...I didn't see them put lots of effort on study and they graduated" (Raja, interview participant). Most of the parents in this study recognize the great differences between their homeland and Canada; as parents, they immigrated to Canada in order to fulfill their obligation, and maintain specific expectations for children throughout the family migration journey.

### **Immigrant parents' Experiences in Educational Involvement in Prince Edward Island**

How do immigrant parents become involved in their children's education? Informed by Epstein's (2001) parental involvement framework, McNeal (1999) and Coleman's (1988) social capital theory, the following major themes emerged from the data.

#### **Heavily Involving in Parenting and Communicating with Schools**

Most of the immigrant parents, if not all, agreed that they were able to contribute more time accompanying their children than before the immigration. With two teenage sons, however, Faeze found it was challenging for her to keep them around. There is no doubt that participants

were deeply concerned about their children's wellbeing, and they cared for children's behaviors and performances. As for the source of the participants' parenting education, most of them claimed that they had learned from their parents and family members. The research data indicated, though, the parent participants rarely received educational opportunity for parenting skills in Canadian local context. The research participants indicated the following sources beneficial to their parenting skills and practices:

- parents and families in country of origin
- The multi-generation living arrangement
- Self-learning or job-related training
- The faith groups, local organizations and Canadian friends

The participants constantly received school notes, announcements, agenda, letters and forms from teachers. Most of the parents learnt to maintain frequent contact through emails, school notes and teachers' blogs; for them, parent-teacher meetings were the only way to engage conversation with children's teachers in person. The parents always participated in the information sessions or related functions provided by schools. They usually received invitations from the school through school auto-communication system or emails. Jia was the parent who received support from her daughter's school which expedited the application for diagnosis. For Hsu, however, she received very little information from schools,

### **Participating Little in Volunteering Tasks**

Most of the parents received schools' invitation to assist the functions like fund-raising and festival celebration events, but they seldom responded to the volunteering tasks. Some parents encouraged their children to participate in school extracurricular activities like sports and chess club, but didn't report their volunteering for those events. Few parents have visited

classrooms; some parents visited the children's classrooms while parent-teacher meetings took place or at the beginning of the semester.

For parents with younger children, they volunteered as the chaperone for field trips and festivals like Halloween, if the school invited them to volunteer. Very few of the parents with teenage children received that invitation from schools. Far recalled:

I would volunteer if I have chance. I brought the food to school for the graduation ceremony last year, no one ever noticed... most of our absence was due to the lack of information. Nor do we understand the school culture" (Far, interview participant).

Volunteering at schools, Far and other immigrant parents expressed their awkward and alienated feelings when their effort wasn't recognized.

### **Devoting to Children's Learning-at-Home**

Most of the parents were very involved themselves in helping children's homework before immigration. After immigrating to Canada, the parent participants have different decisions.

The data indicate that the parents became involved more in education when they felt capable to help, "When my son started the French immersion program, I helped him because I speak some French; when my daughter started her school at young age, she and I worked together too" (Ahmet). Some parents preferred not to involve themselves in children's homework, Raja justified that "There are important reasons for me not to supervise my children's homework.

According to my sons' words, the education level here is low, they are not suffering and everything was easy for them" (Raja, interview participant). While all Han's daughter wanted him to help was to log in the computer for her, Hsu described her unique parental involvement for this task. "I seldom voluntarily helped my children's homework...instead, my older children sometimes would share their findings or ideas while doing their homework" (Hsu, interview participant).

Hsu is one of those parents who continued to support children in this direction. Other parents facilitated their children to learn specific topics or skills at home related to faith, home languages and cultures. Other than the purposes to sustain their home language, some parents also practiced the faith study in their ethnic languages on a regular basis. Finally, almost every participant claimed that they fully supported their children's teachers.

### **Dissociating from Roles of Leadership or Advocacy in Canada**

Some parents were engaged themselves in the home and school committee in their country of origin, like Hsu, Mei and Raja. The data indicate that some parents were willing to engage themselves, like Han and Mei. While most of the parents were not familiar with advocacy, or didn't consider the role as desirable nor necessary. Jia was willing to voice her concerns for her daughter \*June (pseudonym): "I think I've been always involved in a role (similar to) an advocate... I have never stopped to present June's needed services to people who involved themselves in her education program" (Jia, interview participant). However, neither she or others reported whether they would commit themselves to roles as leaders and advocates.

As for supporting school programs, almost all of the participants agreed because they believe the programs help children's cultural integration and some of them appreciated that the school initiated the topic for the parents, especially for parents like Faeze and Raja. For Jia, however, this task was associated with more training tasks for her older daughter who has special needs, she said "For her, I've been highly involved in her home-based learning process to support her Individual Education Program (IEP)" (Jia). In Canada, IEP details the support and services a school will provide to meet the individual needs of a student with a disability who qualifies for special education.

## **Immigrant Parents' Community Engagement**

Participating parents expressed challenges and difficulties in community involvement in trying to support their children. Several factors were identified for the challenges. Limited residence time in PEI is one of the challenges for many participants. “It takes some years to start involved in the community...So far I have not had the experience of the collaboration with community and organizations” (Ahmet). Lack of opportunity to engage in school events was another critical issue. Mei contributed the immigrant’ quick migration out of PEI to be one of the reasons. She said “I don’t think the school wants to invite us newcomer parents because...they prefer to have some parents who have long-term commitment to stay and work on parent committee” (Mei, interview participant).

When there were opportunities to engage in community events, most parents preferred community activities with purposes over events with social functions. Some participants indicated that they would bring children to their job-related social functions or faith groups. Other parents participated in community activities organized by adult language learning centers in Holland College. As a parent of a child with disability, Jia has been actively involved in the Autism Society with her daughter June.

## **Immigrant Parents' Resources and Support for Educational Involvement**

For this section, the researcher presents the themes generating from the participants' responses, and used the third research question to guide the following paragraph: what are the essential experiences or issues influencing immigrants' parental involvement. The findings were grouped into four categories: (1) schools and teachers as the information source for parents and students; (2) parent-teacher meetings as a communication exchange platform; (3) digital

communication as critical channel of engaging parents; and (4) support from community organizations.

In seeking information, the parents usually search the newspaper and radio on a frequent basis. Being bilingual and able to collect information from multiple sources, Jia was able to apply her mother tongue to interpret the medical jargons, contextual terminology and her children's development from the documents in English. The majority of parents in this study have access to Internet, emails, poster mail and phone line to receive important information from the schools.

### **Schools and Teachers as the Information Source for Parents and Students**

When in search for education information, the majority of parent participants asserted that the school has become the one, if not only, most influential information provider for parents and students. The parents had access to various school resources: school newsletters, school boards, related websites, just to name a few. One most important reason for parents to maintain rigorous communication with schools is to understand children's development, as well as whether their needs have been met. Coming from China where she used to track her daughter's training progress on a daily basis, Jia sometimes felt frustrated by not receiving timely and responsive updates on her daughter June's development from her school.

For immigrant parents, it is the schoolteacher that they considered to be the key person for education related information. Though Raja, Han and Mei all agreed, not every teacher keeps parents in the loop. Mei described the sharp differences between her daughters' teachers:

I think to keep a constant and frequent communication with schoolteachers are most important...I do receive a lot of information from teachers and the school websites. Some teachers would share more than others...Not many teachers keep their blogs updated on daily basis. (Not like my younger daughter's teachers). I can only understand my older daughter's school experience though chatting and parent-teacher meetings. (Mei, interview participant)

Relying on schoolteachers as the direct source, immigrant parents have little access or control over their needed information.

### **Parent-Teacher Meetings as a Communication Exchange Platform.**

The parent-teacher meetings became the most important vehicle for parents to collect education information in person. Mei shared her thought, “Most of the newcomer parents have language barriers...they may not take the initiative to participate or make suggestions to the school. The most possible communication would be in the parent-teacher meetings” (Mei). However, even the parents without language barriers had problems to collect information from the parent-teacher communication. Ahmet said, “When going to the Parent-Teacher meeting...I can’t get real feedback from the teachers” (Ahmet). For parents, not having sufficient information was one part, but not being able to connect with teachers in a timely fashion was more problematic. Mei shared her friends’ experience from the Parent-Teacher meeting:

I have a friend who was told by the teacher that her son failed to submit his Math assignment twice; she was very surprised to learn it, not because of the late submission, but the fact that it was not until the parent-teacher meeting that she knew about it. She would’ve made effort to prevent this from happening sooner if the teacher had told her earlier. (Mei)

Most of the parent-teacher meetings operated on a first-come-first-serve fashion and a prearranged schedule for parents as a group; schoolteachers usually prepare and report student’s performance at school to parents in general. Raja suggested that an individual and private meeting would be needed to be scheduled between parents, school counsellor and parents when high school students face difficult decisions for the future.

In addition, some extracurricular activities were conducted in schools; the events provided opportunities for parents to obtain needed information. Based on her experiences, Mei suggested that the staff who conducted the extracurricular activities invite parents to be part of the function.

“In China, there was ‘open day’ for parents to visit and attend some functions of their children’s extracurricular activities so the students’ family will have chance to be involved” (Mei). To sum, the school administrators can use school related events and functions to effectively engage immigrants and their families.

### **Digital Communication as Critical Channel of Engaging Parents**

As technology and social media became viral amongst the newcomer community, the digital communication has significantly improved the parents’ accessibility to education information. For example, Raja check emails, school websites and sometimes she just simply went to school if needed. For Mei, she recalled her experience before immigrating to Canada:

In China, we (parents) can leave our cell phone numbers and schoolteacher can update the school status through social media platform. Teachers will send out notes, homework reminding, quote for the day. Sometimes teachers will keep parents in loop about their children’s other issues, like performance and attitude problems. The Chinese teachers used social media like a check-list for parents to monitor their children’s homework and progress. (Mei)

For immigrant parents who were not familiar with the cyber security and privacy regulations in Canada, education on these important topics becomes essential to protect their access to needed information.

### **Support from Community Organizations**

Besides schools, community service providers like the immigrant services organization became the important information sources. Take PEI Association for Newcomer to Canada (PEI ANC) for example, this organization has become known to serve newcomer parents from the first day on their arrival. Far and Han agreed that PEI ANC continued providing them the educational information. With a heartfelt thanks, Mei recalled, “I was contacted by PEI ANC... Yes. They said that they’d come over to help if my daughters encountered problems at school. I’d look for their assistance first if we have problems with schools”.

Aside from the immigrant services provider, the community adult language centre also offers its programs and services. “Holland College (HC) Language Centre where newcomer parents gathered and exchanged information; I often benefit from the conversation occurred on the campus” (Far, interview participant). In fact, currently HC provides English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs, as well as Enhanced Employability Essential Language Skills (EEELS). The data from this study show that educational institutions can support immigrants in a multi-functional fashion.

### **Immigrant Parents’ Issues and Barriers in Educational Involvement**

Guided by the third research question, the researcher collected and categorized the following issues and barriers that challenged immigrant parents: (1) culture shocks; (2) concerns about the quality of education in PEI; (3) language barriers; (4) the initiative of inquiry charged on students rather than parents; (5) difficult adaptation to Canadian communication cultures and school dynamics; (6) experiencing social exclusion; (7) Lack of immigrant parents’ involvement and leadership in schools; and (8) Lack of immigrant parents’ involvement and leadership in schools.

#### **Culture Shocks**

The majority of parents experienced their primary phase of transition—culture shock. Some described their surprise that the level of school curriculum delivery fell behind the ones in their countries of origin when children enrolled the Canadian schools. The school dynamics also surprised some parents and children, too. Hsu said her children were upset by seeing their classmate’s attitude against their teachers in schools, such as any excuse could be taken for student’s absence from attending classes. Mei described her older daughter’s first day of school, “my daughter was also surprised to see grade nine students wearing make-up, girls and boy

hugged all the time in public. It was not unusual for her to see the behaviour in China but not in school or in public" (Mei). For parents transitioning from Middle-East to Canada, Faeze recalled her teenage boys' tough experiences, "They were never being with girls in the same class since age five or six. All of sudden, there were pretty young girls all around on campus." She also mentioned that for some families, relocating from metropolitan cities to rural PEI was more difficult than culture shocks. She said "For us, the change of life styles is a major, big change for a family like ours. Therefore, the first year for my younger son was that he spent most of his day on sleeping. He had nothing to do" (Faeze).

### **Concerns about the Quality of Education in PEI**

In addition to the shock, some parents started to analyze and question themselves. Ahmet asked himself the questions like 'Did I make the wrong decision on coming here?' or 'Was it a bad idea to come here?' Later he asked himself 'Is the PEI education not efficient?' or 'Maybe other provinces provide a better education...'. Later he became more frustrated after trying to discuss his questions with teachers, the result was unsatisfactory for him. Ahmet later discovered that "Now I know that it is more important of teaching behaviors than learning itself. In other words, to teach students how to learn, as well as personality development" (Ahmet). Some parents reinvented their parental involvement in Canadian education context. Jia said, "From my perspectives, I think the Canadian education in early years focus on joyful and positive life experiences...With this approach, I found that it helps me to be stress-free, and enjoy the time when they were young...". Far also stated, "I like the way it offers to foster independent personality and judgement...I feel that the education system here in Canada helps my child understand what he wants for future and pave his development road for himself" (Far).

## Language Barriers

The issue that most prevented parents' participation from children's education was the language barrier. "In Canada, I always felt inadequate to express myself in the second language...English language barrier is the major problem prevents the immigrant parental participation "(Hsu). For some parents, the difficulty was in and to various levels of listening comprehension and oral expression. "I can comprehend what teachers tried to tell me, but I found that I cannot make myself clear" (Han, interview participant). Furthermore, the language barriers had prevented immigrant parents from their continuum of parental involvement, Jia explained:

We as parents need to know to which extent we foster our children so they can best develop themselves. We have language barriers and don't have in-depth understanding about Canadian culture, we can't understand the critical issues during my children's developmental process. (Jia)

Language barriers affect not only the communication between schools and parents, but also the opportunity for parents to be involved in leadership roles and advocacy. Jia was never retreated from her advocating for children with special needs. However; she said "I have never sit on decision-making position because I don't have confidence on my English skills. I felt that language barriers are there for sure" (Jia). Far shared the same feelings, "I have a lot of ideas...we as newcomers don't (*have*) (italics added) sufficient information, and we also have language barriers" (Far).

## The Initiative of Inquiry Charged on Students Rather than Parents

Coming from various cultural backgrounds, immigrant parents have difficulties to understand that most of students' responsibilities are loaded on the individual, rather than schools or parents. Faeze said that if students didn't initiate their inquiry, they couldn't claim the services. Some parents, like Hsu and Far, trusted and charged their children to initiate the inquiry. Most unfortunately, Far felt that she was withdrawing from her parental involvement at all levels.

Though the parents regarded it as part of value and expectations in Canadian education, Ahmet believed that parents' guidance become helpful for children when seeking their opportunities, "Sometimes there are some events that didn't get the children's attention but they are important...If the student take the opportunity, it might benefit his/her in pursuit his/her interest. There should be someone to advise the student that this opportunity is valuable and important" (Ahmet).

### **Difficult Adaptation to Canadian Communication Cultures and School Dynamics**

As a result of inherited expectations and approaches from their cultures, the parents encountered numerus gaps when communicating with schools and teachers. Ahmet said sometimes he had doubts on teachers' report; "In Turkey teachers always told you what was wrong with your children. In Canada, it's not the case. They always said positive things" (Ahmet). Hsu was unsure about the conversation neither, "Our conversation remained at surface level; the topics like social connection, peer relationships were rarely mentioned" (Hsu). As mentioned, some parents may feel reluctant to address these gaps in their conversation with schools based on their cultures and their learning experiences.

Being well informed from his homeland education system, Ahmet compared his experiences on acquiring needed information. "The teachers (in Turkey) will describe how the child behave in class... so they would give more concrete suggestions...Here, sometimes we don't seem to be able to ask schools contribute that much" (Ahmet). The differences exist not only within cultures or dynamics, but also between teachers. Mei explained "Every teacher has his/her way to teach and work with the students; teachers' teaching styles are various as well...The difference and the levels of openness between teachers are huge" (Mei). Though she had difficulty to track her daughter June's development from the shifting and turn-over of

education assistants on a frequent basis, Jia commented, “The good part about the staffing flexibility and resource distribution is that students become adaptable to personnel arrangement. At some point, it reinforces student’s social adjustment” (Jia). As result, different school dynamic and curriculum delivery created road blocks for parents ensuing answers for their inquiry.

### **Experiencing Social Exclusion**

Some parents felt that they didn’t have the opportunity to connect with teachers or parents; Ahmet said that in Turkey he used to keep in constant contact with other parents, and here in Canada the parents rarely contacted each other. He also considered it was natural for him to contact other parents if there was something wrong with children. Faeze agreed, “My children have friends, but I don’t have direct connection with them or their parents” (Faeze). Some parents felt disconnected with children, schools and community. Like Far and Hsu, they handled the issues by themselves and felt isolated.

For immigrant parents, they also felt for their children who might share the similar experiences. Faeze remembered the first year her younger son used to sleep for a whole day because there was nothing he could do; Far and Ahmet were concerned about that their children who seldom socialized with their peers. Mei, on other hand, considered that the social integration didn’t happen in schools though it related to children’s need by being identified and accepted. Mei’s daughter described her local Canadian friends as polite and friendly, however, making friends and becoming a native student’s friend is another issue, and a difficult one, too.

### **The Issue of Parent-Teacher Communication through Children**

Some participants, Hsu and Far, withdraw themselves from the communication functions with schools and schoolteachers. Instead, it was their children that took over the job as a message bearer. Hsu recalled,

In first five years, I was the only parent accompanied my children...Since coming here, I can't seem to fully engage conversation with my children's teachers; most of the time, the communication between us was carried back-and-forth through my children...I rarely participate any school functions. (Hsu)

Neither Hsu nor Far was the only parent who shared the education conversation with children who were yet to fulfill the task. Like it or not, many immigrant-students tackled the role when their parents were constantly absent from the home-school conversation.

### **Lack of Immigrant Parents' Involvement and Leadership in Schools**

It is not unusual to see new immigrants' leaving PEI for another province; it has been a concern for Mei, "There is little representation to voice for the newcomer community; the Island schools will less likely receive suggestions or involvement from people like us, too" (Mei). In fact, she didn't think the school wanted to invite newcomers because the parents usually stayed only a short period of time on Island. The phenomenon does not take place only in immigrant communities, but this finding intrigued the researcher to probe further into immigrants' interpretation and understanding for their parental involvement experiences in PEI.

### **Immigrant parents' Perception and Understanding**

In this section, the researcher continued to present the themes emerging from the participants' responses, and used the fourth research question to guide the following paragraph. The themes were arranged under these two categories: (1) immigrant's growth in parental involvement, including the topics of redefinition of parental involvement, and personal gain and loss; and, (2) immigrant parents' interpretation and understanding; the topics include the justification for high academic expectations, Immigrant parents' gains from positive Canadian learning experiences, and expectations to improve education through parental involvement.

## Immigrant's Growth in Parental Involvement

**Re-define parental involvement.** Being the latest landed immigrant parent in this study, Mei said, “We really enjoy living here. We feel relief by not pressuring our children to learn, and our children like the schools here better than the ones before” (Mei). She and Han considered there were little differences between Canadian public schools whether on Island or elsewhere. Though Han noticed the disproportionate exposure to education services at the high school level and in communities. “There is difference at high school level between Island graduates and others... I think it is the spectrum of knowledge and education resource like museums or programs that are not provided in rural region like PEI” (Han). Parenting two children at elementary level, Han was glad that teachers always encouraged students; therefore, students and parents were happily involved in education. “I felt that my children are happy, this is the way they want for their childhood...I felt that this is part of my reason for immigration and I have achieved it” (Han).

Living with two young daughters in Charlottetown for more than four years, Jia vividly described her experiences for volunteering in her daughters’ elementary school:

I felt that school atmosphere for parents is inviting, friendly and cheerful. Whenever I go visit the school, students I know or don’t know of always greeted me... From the experience I realized that they had equal share of respect for everyone. And that moved me.... I would say that for education in early years, the setting benefits children’s development. There is no pressure. (Jia)

Not every parent agrees that school education has met their children’s needs. Hsu found that she needed to strengthen her home-based training onto her teenager children. “I think the (Canadian) program wasn’t attractive enough for my children...I consider the home-base education is more important...If they hold positive attitude toward their learning and work hard,

whatever they do is OK" (Hsu). On the other hand, Mei found that the student, not parents or teachers, was the key-player in education. She said:

From my two daughters I learned that teachers teach to their best, the key is whether you want to learn or not. So the teachers are willing to teach, but the motives and drive to learn between individuals can be very different. (Mei).

Disagreeing with the notion on out-migration among the newcomer community, Mei said that many of her friends had advised her to move to the metropolitan areas like Vancouver or Toronto because they thought the education there would be better than here in PEI schools. She actually made up her mind after relocating to PEI. For Mei, she preferred not to settle in a place with significant presence of her ethnic Chinese community, because it would not benefit students in learning the second language, English; she was confident of her decision, too. "In my opinion, the community here is relatively safer than the big city. The safety of school students should be one of the issues that parents put into consideration for their family settlement" (Mei).

**Immigrant parent's personal gains and loss.** For Faeze, in her culture, parents never need to ask permission to discuss children's study with school staff. "It was tough, it was challenging, and it was a big learning experience. It also helped us to change our vocabulary and conversation about education" (Faeze). After two years on the Island, she concluded, "To move the older children, you have to mentally prepare to accept certain things that (are) against your culture, and to be more open to your children while things that deny your systems". In terms of the systems where immigrant parents are from, Faeze explained, "The (*Canadian education*) (italics added) system was like an easy way out, it is up to you whether you attend the class or not, and they are allowed not attend the class if they choose to" (Faeze).

It is not only challenging for immigrant parents to mitigate their authoritative role when parenting their children, but also to continually involve themselves in their teenagers' schooling

and decision-makings under such circumstances. As a father, Ahmet said that he didn't necessarily involve himself in children's decision-making processes; however, "I like to know the school background. Like what average of my child's several projects, or maybe some guidelines to work with... the school doesn't necessarily give parents feedback" (Ahmet). In other words, the parents not only requested solid information from schools, they also searched for meaningful conversation to improve their involvement in education.

Not every parent shared the gains with regard to their parental involvement in Island schools. Some parents, like Hsu and Far, felt disconnected and isolated from their children and community; further, similar experiences were shared between the parents with less language barriers. Raja did not like her her parenting role after immigration. She said "I'd really like to talk and discuss with my children regarding their daily life in schools... Most of the time, we trust the school and believe they were doing their job" (Raja).

### **Immigrant parents' Interpretation and Understanding**

**Justification for high academic expectations.** When asked their expectations in Canadian education, Faeze attributed to cultures; Ahmet affirmed that overall immigrant parents were very involved themselves in children's education. He stressed that immigrant parents expect their children do well and complete higher education at the university level. Upholding high expectations toward children's academic achievements, Raja regarded high school graduates to supposedly be prepared for the university and shouldn't have room for doubts.

Mei said the general Chinese parents take the college entrance examination seriously, because they consider good grades would determine the odds on entering the post-secondary education institutions. After immigrating to rural area in PEI, Ahmet explained why he was concerned about children's academic achievements. He said,

Many Island students feel satisfied after graduating from high schools. They would do their best job working as farmers or fishermen...For the newcomers who didn't come from rural areas...we don't expect our children to do farming or fishing as the local youth. So our children must continue to pursue further jobs. Therefore, you'd need more information regarding how to help them achieve their goals. (Ahmet)

Raja had the same idea. She said: "Maybe it is because the different cultures and different expectation. Here in Canada, high school graduates are not necessarily going to the university or college, or they might pursue it later" (Raja). Mei also said,

The local families... their children have various opportunities with or without going to colleges or universities...it all depends on whether it's a good option. Chances are there and never being less, so the local parents do not rush their children for early (*academic*) (italic added) decisions." (Mei)

For some parents, their expectations were simple. Jia, for example, expected her two daughters to be self-reliant and happy. For Mei, she expressed her expectations based on her growing experience, and said "I always think that everyone has his/her individual character and talents, and everyone should follow and develop their interest with free will" (Mei).

**Immigrant parents' gains from positive Canadian learning experiences.** Though they were hindered by various communication barriers, Hsu and Far felt pleased to witness their children' gains from the positive Canadian learning experiences. For others, they have mixed feelings. Some were happy about their choice on immigration; others expressed great distress and hardship they've experienced as the first immigrant generation. "Based on what I have said, as the first generation immigrant we all bear tremendous pressure...I hope that our children will not have to go through the way we have been through" (Jia). Expecting their children to achieve and earn a better life was never her own idea, but shared between immigrant parents. "I think our decision is correct. However, for the middle aged immigrants like us, we realize that staying and making here as our home is not easy...They (my children) would be better off than our

generation” (Hsu). For these immigrants, they dedicated themselves to secure children’s best interest; it was and continued to be the gains from their parenting practices.

**Expectations to improve education through parental involvement.** Some parents considered it was more on immigrants, not the schools or teachers, to adapt to the Canadian culture and education. In that case, Ahmet reinstated the importance in providing the guidance in documents for the parents to help children before they start carrying their full responsibility. And he considered it was the government’s responsibility, because the schools’ goal is to educate students, and schools have limit resources. The data reveal that parents required more specific information on where their children have developed comparing to their peers, and Ahmet didn’t consider any wrong of sharing the data and it should be helpful for everyone involved.

Specifically, the participating parents required more information on parenting guidance for newcomers; immigrants, refugees, parents and students are all alike. Ahmet expected the information to help parents by guiding their children for their future. As the school staff and teachers knew immigrant children at many levels, their knowledge and guidance became very useful for both parents and students. For Jia, she charged the school to guide newcomer families in helping their children integrate to Canadian cultures, as well as to inform immigrant parents’ understanding regarding the Canadian education culture and perspectives. Jia considered that the parents shouldn’t be separated from their initial education sources—schools and teachers. She asked:” If the school boards can expand the education from newcomer students to newcomer families, and include the students’ families as part of the education receivers, it would most benefit the newcomer students’ integration process” (Jia).

Trying to help her son socialize with peers, Far hoped schools to initiate and expand newcomer-students’ social participation. In fact, Far expected the parents to be included as well.

“The opportunity should give the parents prior to students because the parents can help to motivate the student involve themselves” (Far). Not only assisting parents and students at school level, Raja considered that it is the provincial government’s accountability to help high school students close the learning gaps in higher educations. She said “The provincial government didn’t prepare the students for the universities or colleges...It is about how to manage the school work and study; they don’t have this kind of management” (Raja).

In addition to these requests, Mei hoped the provincial government invested more in education. Though the PEI PNP had attracted many immigrants to Island, the problem was the low retention rate. She commented that 90% of immigrant out-migration was because of the education: PEI was at the lowest place among other provinces and countries in the international standard test report. She thought that if the government can improve the status quo, plus the positive factors like the International Baccalaureate Diploma program (IB) and French Immersion programs, newcomer-families would love to stay on the Island; it was because the family would stay if the students stayed. Mei said “Eventually, the economic will turn better for everyone. Only when newcomers settle down, they are able to contribute themselves to the community” (Mei).

In order to facilitate immigrant parents that have scarce prior knowledge of Canadian education, the function like orientation has become necessary. Ahmet said “I mean we need the orientation: what to expect from our education, how to approach questions or problems for education... I’d prepare myself better if there was an orientation regarding education for me” (Ahmet). Ahmet stressed that the opportunity to understand Canadian education is important for both students and parents. Faeze shared the similar idea and proposed, “I think that when my boys know what to do with their future education and career is most helpful...It would be helpful

that schools or PEI ANC educate parents to learn how important to assist students find their direction” (Faeze).

In specific terms, some parents expected to have more transparent and comparative data to measure students’ learning outcomes. Faeze concluded that 99% of immigrants came here for their children’s education. Teachers should be aware of immigrant students’ diverse background because the needs and expectations were there. She said. “I think this is good foundation for those who sit in the position for curriculum, the role of parents in education, how to prepare newcomer parents before (*they*) (italic added) coming to Canada”. She concluded “PEI is the smallest province in Canada, the number of newcomer students will impact the schools. Yes, the province shape will change gradually” (Faeze).

### **Summary**

The data present that these participating parents immigrated to Canada for their children’s education and their future. After fulfilling their obligation for children by immigrating into Canada, they expected their children to thrive and reach their goals in future. After immigration, these parents continued to support children’s education, and were very involved in home-based and informal learning as they regarded the task to be an important dimension for the parental involvement. Most of the parents intensively participated in home-school communication, while some experienced disconnected with school community. Despite some parents who were involved in home-school committee and casual school tasks before, very few of them were recognizing or participating in volunteering tasks at schools. Only one parent eagerly advocated for her daughter’s special needs, but none of the participants claimed the leadership roles or were involved in collaborating with community. Two parents speculated the immigrants’ absence from the community involvement was because: (1) the time resided in Canada was short; (2)

opportunities for entering the leadership roles were rare; (3) the out-migration phenomenon reduced the immigrant representation in the local community. The findings also show that the parents would purposely participate in some activities like the job-related events, faith groups, adult language learning centers, and speciality organization like Autism Society.

The majority of participants relied on the following four sources to collect needed information:

- Schools and teachers as the information source for parents and students
- Parent-teacher meetings as a communication exchange platform
- Digital communication as critical channel of engaging parents
- Support from community organizations

Some parents were frustrated by the quantity and quality of information they'd received from schools. For immigrants, the significant differences existing in what and how education information was shared and distributed between schools and teachers. They also identified the following issues and barriers:

- Culture shocks—curriculum, school dynamic, and relocating from cities to rural areas
- Concerns about the quality of education in PEI
- Language barriers
- The initiative of inquiry charged on students rather than parents
- Difficult adaptation to Canadian communication cultures and school dynamics
- Experiencing social exclusion
- Parent-teacher communication through children
- Lack of immigrant parents' involvement and leadership in schools

The majority of participants were satisfied by achieving their goal for immigration, because they have witnessed their children's positive, safe and stress-free learning outcomes in Island schools. Some parents considered that little differences existing in public schools in Canada, and the English-speaking community has provided immigrant-students opportunities for their second language acquisitions. Other parents insisted in informal learning at home, and expressed their concern with regard to the scarce education resources compared to the metropolitan areas. Meanwhile, some parents recognized their withdrawal from an authoritative role after immigrating to Canada, and others felt disconnected from their children and community that were once closely attached. However, based on the odds of local employment opportunities for young immigrant-students, immigrant parents have to uphold their high expectation for children's academic achievements. Therefore, the participants sought concrete information and meaningful conversation to inform their parental involvement:

- Provide immigrant parent needed guidelines
- Offer orientation to introduce Canadian education,
- Support immigrants' social participation and cultural integration
- Include parents in education programs
- Encourage collaboration between schools and organizations to facilitate young students to find their future

Finally, immigrant parents expected the government, school boards and schools to bring forward the data of students' learning outcomes in a transparent and measurable manner.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher presents the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations that generated from this study. The chapter begins by restating the purpose of this research. Next, guided by the research questions, the researcher discusses the topics and emerging themes revealed from the study. After the discussion, the conclusion was guided by what immigrant parents have been involved in education, and what they expected to improve their parental involvement in their children's schooling. Then, the researcher proposes the recommendations on how the Prince Edward Island provincial government, school authorities and community organizations can further include immigrant parents to improve overall learning outcomes. Finally, this chapter ends with recommendations and suggestions for future studies, and the researcher's reflections on the academic journey.

### **Restate the Research Purpose**

This qualitative research studied parents' involvement in education from the perspectives of the economic immigrants landed in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. The purpose of this study was to investigate immigrant parents' experiences and perceptions of their parental involvement in their children's education in PEI schools. The objective was to gain a deeper understanding of immigrant parental involvement by inviting them to share their experiences and perspectives.

By applying Epstein's (2001) parental involvement framework, McNeal's (1999) and Coleman's (1988) social capital theory, this qualitative research study was able to investigate and present the economic immigrants' parental involvement, experiences and perception in Canadian public schools. The researcher interviewed, examined, and documented findings from eight

immigrant parents and their parenting practices in Charlottetown, PEI. The researcher then analyzed the parents' responses, compared and categorized the emerging themes from the scripts. Guided by the four research question, the frameworks and theories, the researcher was able to gain further understanding of the inquiry.

### **Response to Research Questions**

In order to understand immigrants' parental involvement in their children's education in PEI public schools, the researcher followed the four guiding questions throughout the research process.

1. What are immigrant parent's obligations and expectations while involving themselves in children's education?
2. How are immigrants involved in children's education in PEI?
3. What are the essential challenges and issues influencing these practices?
4. How do immigrants perceive their educational involvement in the PEI public schools?

In the following sections, the researcher generates the themes and topics that emerging from the research findings to address and respond to the questions.

### **Theme 1: Devoted Parents and High Expectations**

As educational opportunities are increasingly differentiated by regions geographically, Canada amongst others offers parents the gateway to access its education resources on a global scale. Being recruited at both Federal and Provincial levels, the latest landed economic immigrants have been furnished with some unprecedented characteristics such as advanced education attainment, qualified language proficiency, substantial establishments and economic potential, just to name a few. On one hand, they are capable, and expected to contribute positively to the demographic and socioeconomic profile of the receiving community in Canada. On the

other hand, most of these highly mobile immigrants dedicated their accumulated capitals to the family global migration project for a similar purpose—immigration for education opportunities.

As a result, the study findings responded closely aligned with the literature as well as both McNeal's (1999) and Coleman's (1988) social capital theory throughout their immigrating journey to Canada. The immigrants not only acted on their roles as parents, they were also much involved themselves within immigration processes which illustrated them as very active agents of parental involvement. There are two major themes which emerged from and reflected on their roles and practices throughout their immigration journey: obligations and expectations. The following paragraphs explain how these two forms of social capitals, obligations and expectations, inform their parental involvement in the family migration project—immigration.

### **Theme 1, Topic 1: Parental Involvement Presented in Obligations**

The studies have shown that immigrant parents' perceptions of their parenting role and of school is closely related to their personal history (Lahaie, 2008; Lopez, 2001). Regardless of the test-driven education systems that loaded intensive stress on students, or expensive and private education added financial burden to parents, all parents grew and raised families in their homeland. They don't necessarily immigrate or relocate to somewhere else until there is clear and present danger threatening children and their future. For the Chinese parents, the threat was socially and educationally systematic exclusion from equal access to balanced and good quality education; for Iranian parents, it was the expatriate status and unrecognized academic credential that restricted the youth development. For others, the threat is situated in the saturated labor market that exhausted potential employment for young people in future. The data collected from the first-dimensional parenting task, parent education, indicates that the immigrants grew and learned their parenting skills from their families, cultures, ethnicities, communities and home

countries. Logically they might have also inherited their parental obligation that had been introduced to them from the same sources. Data illustrated that the parents were deeply involved in the immigration decision-making for the family. It was clear that the immigration was their obligation to apply their accumulated capitals and secure children's best interests in education. In this study, the obligation was to apply immigrants' social capital and educational involvement to meet the parent's expectations, and that was why they conducted their global migration project with a focus on education. The parents certainly felt the weight of parental obligation not only from their inherited personal history, but also built on their expectations for their children. Therefore, in addition to their existing parental tasks, immigrating to another country has become these parents' obligation to warrant their children a better future.

Canada, a country that promotes diversity of cultures and human rights, advertises globally for its immigration policies. It offers ready and available immigration programs at Federal and Provincial levels, and has become a favorable option for immigrant parents. The parents in this study decided to immigrate to Canada because it was able to lift most of their concern for their children's education.

### **Theme 1, Topic 2: Parental Involvement Presented in Expectations**

Numerous studies indicate that children's education is very important to immigrant parents (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Trumbull & Rothstein-Fisch, 2003; Valdés, 1996). In fact, the participants in this study confirmed that it was their reason for immigration. The data also indicate that these parents often have very high expectations for their children. Therefore, they encouraged children to pursue their school education. There were a few reasons. First of all, they perceived and trusted the school to be a rich source for education services and information, as well as an important means of social advancement. Another reason

was for children's cultural integration. For example, most of the parents in this study supported the school programs that were not necessarily offered in their countries of origin. Because their children are going to live in Canada, they even accepted the programs and topics despite some were against their cultures.

Aside from immigrant parents' high education expectations for children's school education, the data show clearly that the parents who immigrated with teenage children displayed more specific expectations for children's academic achievements than their counterparts. For instance, three parents in this study highly expected their teenage-children to extend their studies in post-secondary education after high schools. The immigrant parents with younger children, however, expected their children to gain a balanced and stress-free learning experience. Nevertheless, the positive school learning outcomes were mentioned persistently throughout all parents' statements regardless of their children's age.

Both parental obligations and expectations were rooted in immigrants' personal history, as well as in their global migration project—immigrating to Canada. These immigrant parents intended to extend the parental practices from their homeland to the receiving county, Canada. Their parental involvement practices in the Canadian context will be examined in the following paragraphs.

### **Theme 2: Loss of Social Capital and Differential Parental Involvement**

Epstein's (2001) six-dimensional framework of parent involvement was applied to investigate the differential practices adopted by immigrant parents; the researcher also used social capital theory informed by Coleman (1988) and McNeal (1999) to examine how immigrants collected education information and connected to local community. Previous studies that were associated with Epstein's (2001) framework have not particularly focused on issues or

participation related to immigrant families who have to adapt to a new country and school systems. Data collected in this study indicate that most of immigrant parent's practices in educational involvement were similar as those covered by the framework. The findings of this study were consistent with Epstein's (2001) model, though there are two adjustments to make on explaining the data findings. The first one is that the researcher considered all the parents in this study secured their children's wellbeing; in fact, every parenting task in Epstein's (2001) frameworks were built on the first dimensional parenting tasks—parents spent time with children, and applied their parenting skills to secure children wellbeing. Therefore, the discussion will focus on the rest of parental involvement categories. As well, in order to examine how immigrants applied their social capital to their parenting practices which is communication between parents and schools, the second adjustment is to remove the second dimension of parental involvement, communicating, and put it in the final section of the paragraphs.

### **Theme 2, Topic 1: Unfamiliar with Social Norms of Parental Involvement**

Coleman's (1988) argues that social norms, the sets of behaviors and expectations, are an important form of social capital that contribute to or hinder the productivity of individuals and group members. As newcomers to Canada, immigrant parents very likely lose their social capital in educational involvement because of the differences in the norms and expectations of educational involvement. They don't necessarily have prior knowledge or are familiar with the social norms related to parental involvement in Canadian schools. Findings from this study confirm that the language barriers and cultural differences between the host community and immigrant families implicitly or explicitly weakened immigrant parents' social capital and impeded their involvement in children's education. As 44% of Canadians aged fifteen and older volunteered for not-for-profit organizations (Sinha, 2015), volunteering at schools is perceived as

a way of parental involvement expected from Canadian schools and communities. However, very few immigrants understood that they were expected to participate in school functions and extracurricular activities as volunteers, nor they realized their roles and contribution in education were part of their parental involvement at schools. Three parents recalled the events and activities their children were involved in schools, but never reported their parental participation as volunteers to that extent. There were occasional events for parents to volunteer while their younger children were at schools. For example, two mothers reported their volunteering as chaperones once in a while when invitations were initiated by the schools. Although some parents expressed their willingness to volunteer if the school had invited them, the inadequate volunteering experiences reported by the immigrant parents in this study indicates the lack or loss of social capital in parental engagement in education.

### **Theme 2, Topic 2: Loss of Social Capital in Parental Involvement in Education**

Many immigrant parents actively involved themselves in their children's education through parent committee and community organizations before immigrating to Canada. However, none of the parents in this study reported that they practiced their parental involvement to that extent in Canada regardless of the time they had stayed in Canada. For example, there was scarce presence of immigrants entering the roles of leadership and advocacy at schools, or involving any sort of collaboration with community organizations to improve schools. Factors like the time stayed in Canada, opportunities to engage, and immigrants' out-migration were speculatively mentioned by the parents to explain the immigrant social absence from the hosting community. Interestingly, all these factors—time, opportunity and presence—were directly associated and correlated with the immigrants' social capital. Although the relationships between these factors and immigrants' lack of leadership roles in community cannot be determined by this study, it is

clear that immigrant parents perceived leadership and advocacy as important social capital to meet their children's needs for quality education. Very few parents, like Jia, strived hard to use advocacy as a form of social capital to voice concerns for their children's special needs. Most immigrant parents considered no news from the children's schools was good news and passively accepted the loss of social capital in parental involvement as a price paid for immigrating to Canada.

### **Theme 2, Topic 3: Immigrant Parents Play Significant Roles in Home-Based Learning**

The majority of the parents in this study were very much involved in supporting their children's homework and learning at home before immigration. In fact, half of the participants regarded these types of practices as their most important and committed parental involvement among others. The data show significant opinion-divide between the parents who continued to do so and those who withdrew from the task after immigrating to Canada. In this study, one reason that had been mentioned was whether the parent felt comfortable to provide homework assistance. In other words, the parents involved themselves more when they felt competent for this task. The second reason was whether children were confident in studying their homework; parents stopped supervising homework when they thought their children were doing well. The last one was whether the parents delegated the homework to children as their responsibilities. Some parents attributed the homework not to parents, but to children as their role and commitment. To summarize, the immigrant parents continually helped their children's homework after immigration, but to which degree they were involved was dependent on their confidence in tutoring homework, children's learning outcomes, and their parental perception on individual responsibility for homework,

As for informal learning at home, the data show that every parent in this study encouraged their children to practice their first language at home. Some parents applied more than their first languages to secure children's multiple language acquisition. For example, Ahmet taught French to his children while communicating in Turkish at home; Jia instructed her daughters in both English and Mandarin through various supplementary study materials. Some immigrants in this study conducted family rituals related to faith, culture and home language in their home-based, informal learning routine. Hsu and her children studied the Bible in Chinese every morning, Faeze and her sons practiced the convocation with her faith community in Arabic and Farsi. As immigrants usually experienced tremendous uprooting and loss during transitioning from their homeland to the receiving country, they dedicated themselves significantly to keeping mother tongues, home cultures, and the sense of homeland through parental practices. This finding is consistent with Coleman's (1991) theory that social capital is particularly expressed in intimate and primordial ties such as kinship. It also confirms what Falicov (2003) described that these home-based rituals were able to form a coherence that "contain both sides of the ambiguity—presence and absence, connection and disconnection, gain and loss, ideal and real" (p. 292). Other parents viewed learning at home not only as a complimentary parental practice to supplement school work, but also the opportunity for their children to learn life skills that schools do not necessarily teach.

### **Theme 3: Information Channel, Culture Differences and Communication Gaps**

Withholding high expectations and parenting obligation for children's education, the immigrants regarded communication with schools as the most essential parental practices next to supervising homework and informal learning. Despite multiple challenges and barriers, parents invested great efforts to keep themselves well informed. These efforts included, but were not

limited to, attending parent-teacher meetings and information sessions, exchanging information through community organizations, and working with immigrant service providers, just to name a few. The data indicate a few divides and gaps existing between the current immigrant community and schools.

**Theme 3, Topic 1: One-way communication from single information provider—the school.**

Despite the parents obtaining massive and frequent education information from schools in their homeland, here in Canada schools have become the most, if not only, available and feasible education source of information for immigrants. In this study, the first divide existed between parents' participation in parent-school communication practices: some parents applied tools like telephone, emails, school websites and letters to keep track on children performance at schools on a regular basis, while others seldom responded or initiated contacts with schools. It was not unusual to locate the communication gaps amongst immigrant parents who rarely contacted schools. The second divide was located between school's services and parent's inquiries. All the parents in this study confirmed that schools frequently delivered education related information to them, but the content did not necessarily meet their needs. In other words, parents weren't able to improve home-school communication through the schools' one-way communication approach.

Ahmet and Far failed to find their needed information for youth social functions, Jia was frustrated for inconsistent communication with her daughter's special-care educators, and Mei could sense the huge differences between schoolteachers' deliberate approaches to share education information. These divides not only created gaps and holes in parent-school communication, they also prevented immigrants from networking with broader parent communities, and directly caused the absence of their volunteering participation and collaboration

with community. In short, one-way communication minimizes the opportunity for immigrant parents to foster social capital in gaining needed information.

**Theme 3, Topic 2: Technology and social media segregates information distribution.** Some parents in this study reported their shared experiences in applying technology and devices, like social media and cell-phones, to improve communication with schools in their countries of origin. Here in Canada, teachers and schools also applied their technology savvy through media and technology at various levels. However, the parents discovered a significant discrepancy regarding contents and distribution of school information between Canada and immigrant's countries. In other words, immigrant parents not only need to learn *what*, but also *how* to exchange and distribute education information in the Canadian context. For example, Ahmet was wondering why other parents' IP addresses were hidden from schools' delivering group emails. It will be helpful to inform immigrant parents about school's policy for online safety. Additionally, with the fact that only a few parents reported their participation in digital communication with schools, it is reasonable to doubt whether the usage and accessibility to information through technology and social media created significant divides in parental involvement between languages, cultures, socio-economic status and ethnicities. A further investigation is needed to identify the divide and address the issues that hinder immigrant parents from contacting schools.

As technology facilitates information feeding and exchanging on an unprecedented and globally-wide pace, immigrants actually stayed connected with their families and communities across borders. They also used their social media to network and collect needed information. For example, Jia was able to improve her understanding of medical jargons and concepts through sources both from China and Canada. To sum, the challenges in communications invite parents

and schools to collectively join for solutions; further research studies are required to eliminate divides for better communication between immigrants and schools.

**Theme 3, Topic 3: Cultural differences in academic expectations between teachers and immigrants.** Language barriers and cultural differences influenced communication between schools, teachers and immigrant parents. The findings are consistent with the previous studies (García & Marks, 2009). While the parent-teacher meetings offer the opportunity to engage parents in conversation with teachers personally, not every parent benefits from the prescheduled, first-come-first-serve meeting arrangement. Some parents felt they were inadequately prepared to express their opinions and requests to teachers; others would prefer some changes. For example, Ahmet wondered if teachers provided sufficient and solid information to his inquiries, and Raja preferred individual and private meetings to discuss options for high school students.

The parents in this study were able to perceive the cultural differences in teachers' comments and expectations between Canada and their home countries. Most of the immigrant parents noticed it when they received teachers' comments orally or in written forms. They also developed strategies to improve children's learning performance. To prevent her son from failing again in the school tests, Faeze strategically asked the teachers to raise their expectations to her son's next test-score with oral comments, and therefore improved his following test performances.

Homework was another chip that parents brought to the negotiating table. More than half of parents in this study tried to negotiate the homework with schoolteachers. They not only bargained for the study-load but also the content of homework given by teachers. Far expected teachers to specifically provide her son with second language learning resources, while Faeze and Ahmet hoped to raise the expectation on the level of homework accomplishments. Interestingly, after their schoolteachers refused to add more homework, Hsu and Han changed their ideas by

providing children with appropriate study materials at home. In comparison to the schooling experiences before and after immigration, the immigrants generally felt the Canadian education to be slow and lax, and they considered that it was because schoolteachers' low expectations on both student learning outcomes and homework accomplishments contributing to the result.

#### **Theme 4: Community Service Providers' Significant Support for Immigrants-Parents**

Immigrants benefit from various services stemming from the local Canadian communities. For example, the majority of parents in this study, if not all, recalled the tremendous support from local immigrant service providers such as the Prince Edward Island Association for Newcomers to Canada (PEI ANC), and how the services and information delivery enhanced their parental involvement in Canadian schools. Mei mentioned the PEI ANC staff checked in with them immediately after their arrival; Faeze, Far, Jia and Hsu were involved in several meetings with schools through PEI ANC's assistance. The organization sometimes offers interpreter service for immigrants and their parent-teacher meetings on volunteering basis, and constantly delivers information to its newcomer community networks. Additionally, two parents also mentioned about schools' extracurricular activities and the newcomer language center in Holland College respectively, which had helped networking immigrant parents to exchange education information. Living in a relatively small and closely connected community like Charlottetown, the immigrant parents agreed that they have easy access to programs and services through the out-reach initiatives offered by the community organizations.

To conclude, the immigrant parents were attentively participated in home-based, informal learning to exercise their parenting practices. And they felt obliged to maintaining their communication channel for collecting information from schools, schoolteachers and parent-teacher meetings. However, they were more in a role of passive-recipient of education

information, rather than actively expanding their network connecting with broader community stakeholders. This is correlated with the significant absence from other parental practices, such as volunteering at schools, or collaborating with community organizations. Various divides exist in communications between parents and schools: the school's one-way communication approach, various language barriers, the different cultures and expectations, just to name a few. Despite the communication divides, the participants in this study tried to bond and bridge with other parents but felt that they were not encouraged to do so in Canadian schools. Among all these factors that hindered immigrants' from better communication with schools, it is notable that technology and social media has differentiated the parents' access to information and widened the divides between languages, cultures, socio-economic status and ethnicities. Their stories illustrate how vulnerable the immigrant parents have become when they pursued and inquired the critical education information for their children in the receiving country, Canada.

### **Theme 5: Struggle to Thrive**

The findings of the third research question were consistent with the previous literature reviews. To make the comparison clear, the following subtitles were used to describe issues and challenges for immigrant parents' education involvement in PEI public schools: (1) culture shocks, doubts, questions and transformation; (2) language barriers and culture differences impeded immigrant's education involvement; (3) inquiry initiative on individuals reduce parents' influence on important choices; (4) experiences of isolation from parents, schools, children and community; and, (5) immigrant out-migration reduce their representation and influence in Island community.

**Theme 5, Topic 1: Culture Shocks, Doubts, Questions and Transformation**

Comparing to where most of the immigrants were from, PEI posses very unique and drastic Island characteristics at many levels. While some of the participating parents were attracted by the Island's slow-pace and stress-free life styles, more than half of them were struck by culture shocks when involving themselves in children's schooling. Some were caught in dismay by teachers' academic expectations and curriculum delivery, some were embarrassed by the teenager sexual expression and fashion statements; one parent and her children were offended by student's negative attitudes and class attendance against schools. Meanwhile, the quiet and tranquilizing rural community can be problematic for immigrant-youth transitioning from big cities to a rural province like PEI. Some participants turned to question themselves critically while they encountered issues and challenges that they never would have experienced if they remained residing in their homeland. But there was more than the scenario that triggered their self-questioning. Studies show that schools "facilitate the exclusion of ...parents by establishing activities that requires specific majority culturally based knowledge and behavior about the school as an institution" (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, p. 21). For many immigrants, they need explicit instructions culturally and socially to inform them about Canadian school education. Quite often, as Faeze stated, it was the parents, instead of schools or teachers, that were left to resolve the issues and challenges they faced on a daily basis. No wonder some parents hoped that their children would never need to undertake the same hardship like they had been through as the first generation of immigrants.

**Theme 5, Topic 2: Language Barriers and Culture Differences**

Language related barriers significantly reduced immigrant's participation in parental involvement in Canada. Specifically, some parents felt that they were unable to express

themselves clearly enough in English. As a result, they felt alienated from their children's schooling. The data also indicate that the language issues affected immigrant's opportunities to engage in community leadership roles and advocacy, despite how much they were willing to be part of the role and in the community.

Though this study finding is consistent with the study about the language issue and its impact on immigrants' communication with schools (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005), it is notable that the parents who didn't report this issue still had difficulty to communicate with schools. In this case, the communication became difficult not because of the language but because of the cultural languages, such as accent, vocabulary, syntax, referents and educational context which was different from immigrants' homelands. Take Ahmet for example. He couldn't understand why his son's teachers refused to provide other students' assessment that was comparable to his son's score. In Turkey, parents could easily tell their children's development status by comparing them to other students' test results. Faeze's son was asked to drop his Engineering program in the university due to the misunderstanding of program requirements in a critical time frame. In short, immigrants encountered challenges not just for languages barriers, but also frequently struggled in different contextual and conceptual constructs in languages. That was why Jia insisted that "We have language barriers and don't have in-depth understanding about Canadian culture, we can't understand the critical issues during my children's developmental process" (Jia). Additionally, the difficulty in understanding teachers' curriculum delivery and school dynamics is beyond language barriers. Studies have shown that in addition to parents' education background and communicative language; immigrant parents are often hindered by the cultural challenges existing in school settings and inter-personal communication styles (Carreón, Barton, & Drake, 2005; Harry, 1992)

**Theme 5, Topic 3: Inquiry Initiative on Individuals Reduce Parents' Influence**

Coming from various cultural backgrounds, immigrant parents have difficulties to understand the responsibility of inquiry, like consultation for post-secondary school options, is loaded on individual students rather than on schools or parents. Therefore, the parents felt they have little influence on children's choices or decisions which potentially affects them in the long term. For parents like Faeze and Ahmet who were well informed on every step of their children's development, they felt frustrated that their children either initiated the inquiry or they wouldn't receive needed service at all. Other parents, like Hsu and Far, gradually withdrew and charged children to bear messages back and forth between homes and schools, or became distantly alienated from their parental involvement. In some cases of this study, children usually took over the responsibility and became the message-bearers. As a result, the parents couldn't realize their children's performance at schools and became dis-engaged in children's education.

**Theme 5, Topic 4: Experiencing Isolation from Children, Schools and Community**

Having broad and deep networks back in their homeland, Ahmet and Faeze felt that in Canada the parents rarely contacted each other. For Far and Hsu, they felt isolated when they had to deal with issues without support. Hsu said "More than often, I worked out my children's problem by myself, and only with myself" (Hsu). For immigrants, feeling isolated was not inclusive for parents; Mei also mentioned her daughter's difficulty to befriend with local students.

In addition to many adjustments that immigrants have to make and overcome, the immigrant parents encountered a variety of challenges to parenting their children after immigration. Some parents developed their critical perspectives on Canadian education, and thus informed their parental involvement practices.

**Theme 5, Topic 5: Immigrant Out-Migration Reduce Their Community Representation**

Based on various reasons, it was not unusual for immigrants to arrive in Prince Edward Island (PEI) and decide to quickly relocate to another province. As a matter of fact, the survey Citizenship and Immigration Canada conducted in 2008 indicated that PEI recruited 95% of its annual immigrants from the PEI PNP, but only 37% of them were remained staying on Island for the year. And with 23% of PNP immigrants among other categories, the retention rates in the provinces like Alberta and British Columbia were over 95% (CBC News, 2012). No wonder that Mei was concerned whether the schools prefer to have more committed parents, rather than immigrants, to be involved in education.

**Theme 6: Critical Perspectives in Established Immigrant parents**

For better understanding on how immigrant parents interpreted their parental involvement, the following emerging themes were arranged into three categories: (1) developing a critical perspective of parental involvement in Canadian education. (2) immigrant parents justified academic expectations in Canadian education context; and, (3) Immigrant parent's expectations to inform parental involvement in Canadian education to conclude this section.

**Theme 6, Topic 1: Developing Critical perspectives of Parental Involvement**

With all these above mentioned challenges and barriers, some parents started to question themselves on their decision for immigrating to Canada, and examined whether their goals and expectations had been met. From there, the participants developed their critical perspectives based on their parental involvement in education. Faeze admitted that it was a tough and challenging learning experience for her and her sons, she said it would be better for immigrant-parents to open themselves to challenges that were not in line with their cultures and values. In terms of cultures and values, Faeze explained that the Canadian education system seemed to be

‘an easy way out’. Her conclusion explains why more than half of the participants felt the Canadian education system to be slow, easy and lax. Based on the reasons that the participants had provided for immigration, it seems to be contradictory to what they have found in Canadian education. Nevertheless, other parents provoked their new discovery in parental involvement. Take Ahmet for example, his critical and personal retrospectives emerged from what he’d observed in rural PEI public schools. He realized that it was equally important to help students’ personal development and teach them how to learn. For the parents who came with their teenage children, like Raja, Faeze and Hsu, they found that Canadian educators expected and charged students more for their responsibility on decision-making, as well as inquiry to inform their personal development. On the other hand, the parents had a hard time on withdrawing their levels of influence or control over student’s decision, and re-adjusting the obligations and expectations they had inherited from their countries of origin. However difficult it must have been, some immigrant parents developed family rituals to re-establish their cultural roots and beliefs, like Faeze and Hsu. Further research is required to investigate how such family rituals support immigrants to connect their both/and, not either/or, perspectives after immigration.

### **Theme 6, Topic 2: Immigrant parents’ Justification for Their Academic Expectations**

Some parents felt that they have met their goals for immigration; others found that their Canadian parenting practices after immigration informed their perspectives in educational involvement. Interestingly, the high expectations for children’s learning outcomes have become the most common theme in this study; after all, it was the reason for the parents immigrating to Canada. Some parents proposed a clear vision for their children’s future. Like Ahmet, Mei, Faeze and Raja, they not only expected the children do well at schools, but also expected children to pursue higher education opportunities. In this study, the participants validated their

expectations with their observation of PEI's slow labor market and scarce employment opportunity. Raja recalled the different expectations between the immigrants and local parents. Ahmet and Mei explained that it was because the immigrant students have little access to jobs offered in the local trade like fishery or farming as the local students; therefore, their children will have to pursue further credential and certification to secure their employment opportunities. Mei said that the local families have various job prospects with or without college education. Ahmet asserted that immigrant-students must continue to pursue further jobs. Consequently, the parents need more information to help children achieve their goals. With regard to the career counselling services offered at schools and community organizations, the researcher wondered if the service provider had included the immigrant parents' concerns regarding the challenging career path for immigrant-youth. She also wondered if the faculty of higher education institutions had incorporated employment-related information and training opportunities for immigrant parents who promoting academic achievements and supporting their children for certification. Immigrant parents in this study justified their high expectations for children's learning outcomes because they had observed the unique challenges for immigrant-youth and people Coming From Away (CFAs), which may not apply to Islanders. Immigrant parents came to realize that time, effort and opportunities are all critical to bond and bridge social capital into closed-connected Island communities. Future research is required to further investigate and identify better programs and services to grow Island newcomers' social capital in Canadian rural communities.

### **Theme 6, Topic 3: Parents' Perspectives and Requests**

Immigrant parents care and are concerned for their children. They devote themselves to their parenting role and obligations regardless of the issues and challenges they have encountered

after immigration. However, rarely has their voice of concern been told or heard. The researcher provides the summary of their requests.

Immigrant parents need the guideline, tools and information to improve their communications with schools, schoolteachers and community stakeholders. The Guideline includes a map for immigrant-families to navigate among Canadian education systems, as well as procedures for immigrants to develop their learning plans and explore Canadian school cultures. The tools such as parenting skills and school curriculum delivery, are also critical for immigrant parents to help their children learning at schools and at home. As for the information, it includes the resources that support immigrant parents to become better involved in their children's education, such as guiding students in making decisions and developing human skills.

At heart, immigrant parents expected to be included into the education community and education-related trainings, such as parenting workshops and information meetings. They considered that if home-school communication was facilitated with a focus on cultural sensitiveness and inclusiveness, it would ultimately benefit teachers, parents, students and the increasingly diverse Island community. For the same reason, to engage more immigrant families, parents and students has become extremely important to improve their social participation and cultural integration in a sustainable Canadian society.

### **Conclusion**

The objectives of this study aim to deepen the understanding of educational involvement experiences of immigrant parents in Prince Edward Island (PEI) public schools, and their perceptions on the experiences and issues that influenced these practices. By applying the six-dimensional parenting practice model and social capital theory, the researcher was able to articulate the parental involvement and experiences provided by the immigrant-participants. The

findings have provided a snapshot of immigrants' parental involvement in Island schools and their households. With or without support, these economic immigrants eagerly established their connections with Islander communities. The study shows that they tried to bond with other parents through schoolteachers and extra-curricular activities. There was no doubt that developing their social capital in the Canadian context was crucial for the immigrants as well as their children. Being parents, they expected education to be an effective means in helping students build social skills, and engaging in shared norms and rules. For the context of this study, specifically, the immigrants' parental involvement in education can be "vital in supporting and nurturing virtuous norms and behaviors such as co-operation with others...and in promoting economic efficiency, equity and civic engagement" (Field, 2003, p. 127). Interestingly, the research findings not only reveal which of the parenting practices in Epstein's (2001) framework was more important than others for immigrants, data also indicate the reality immigrants had encountered while bonding and bridging with the strongly interrelated and connected Island community.

There was a significant absence of immigrants' participation in connection with the Island community at many levels, specifically in the roles of leadership and advocacy. There are increasingly substantial divides, barriers and challenges for immigrant parents in obtaining needed information to improve their parental involvement in Canadian education. The researcher also learnt that the immigrant service providers and community organizations offered their support to facilitate immigrants in learning English, as well as the services in helping newcomers adapt into Island community. In this study, however, the data indicate that issues and challenges were beyond these existing services in parental involvement. When re-examining the previous statements, the researcher came to realize that many services and initiatives that were provided by

the stakeholders were focused on the immigrants' weakness and deficits, not their strengths and potential.

Nevertheless, the parents recognised the needs to support the Canadian education values and cultures so the children have better integration into Canadian society. Along the same lines, they also maintained the connection to their cultural roots through family rituals and informal learning at home. The dilemmas of personal, familial and social transformation challenge immigrant parents' capacity to find "both/and" solutions, instead of "either/or" choices about incorporation of cultural change (Falicov, 2003). The dual perspectives are not only displayed in their strategy on sustaining multiple culture, faith and language supporting systems for children, but also in asserting their persistently high expectations for children's learning outcomes. Despite their experiences in culture shocks or social exclusion, immigrant parents wanted to continually involve themselves in their children's education. This study indicates that their parental involvement is valuable for sustaining cultural identities in Canadian diversity community, and nurturing children's positive social participation and distinctive achievements in Island public schools.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and discussions, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations to enhance immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education in PEI. First, all the stakeholders involved (provincial government, schoolboards, universities, community organizations, etc.) could team-up and develop a greater awareness to close divides, fill gaps and promote collaboration between immigrant families and schools. The joint-effort should not only be reflected in policies and documents, but also carried out through training programs and services for all stakeholders. For example, professional development workshops on the family-school

relationship with a specific focus on cross-cultural communication would help future teachers to best facilitate the parent-teacher conversation.

Secondly, great efforts should be made to support the development of social capital of immigrant families, including networking and connecting with local parents, families, and educators. This can be achieved through broadcasting and promoting the parent-teacher meetings via social media and Internet, and fostering coalition between schools and community organizations to support newcomers. At the same time, school personnel and educators can make a more conscious effort to understand parents' perceptions of parental involvement in multi-cultural contexts, as well as to explicitly inform parents about schools' expectations on parental involvement in education and enhance their involvement. Finally, teacher preparation and education programs should provide pre-service and in-service teachers more training on cross-cultural understanding and skills in working with immigrant students and their families. It is important to prepare Canadian teachers readily for the increasingly diverse community, as well as for the global citizenship of our life-long learners.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

By reviewing the scope and findings of this study, I would like to make the following recommendations for future research:

Other than the small number of samples in one municipality, future research can benefit from using a larger and more representative sample from schools across the region and from a variety of schoolboards. Here, four new lines of inquiry emerged for future research.

First, a study using a larger and more inclusive sample of immigrant parents from different cultures, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds would be very beneficial to identify the common issues experienced by all newcomer-parents and students. The future study could

include immigrants coming to Atlantic Canada through refugee, family, skilled-worker, or international students/professional categories. This effort can start with the next provincial-wide parental involvement survey as a means to motivate the community organizations and school volunteers in supporting parents to present their voice. The expanded participants should reflect the increasingly diverse population in rural provinces.

Second, absence of parental involvement in households is a common phenomenon in Atlantic provinces because of the aging population, inter-provincial migration, and international migration. A study on the absence of parental involvement in children's life and education will identify and address critical social and economic challenges faced by both many community members in Atlantic Canada.

A third topic would be to investigate the immigrant parent's expectations for children's achievements in a longitude research design. It would be a study to examine how cultural integration influences the parent's expectations and student's learning outcomes over time.

A final area of inquiry would be to investigate how school principals, teachers and community organizations perceive the immigrants' parental involvement in public domain. This study did not include the perspectives from the local communities and stakeholders; however, the researcher believes that they have profound influence on promoting immigrant social participation at both local and national scales.

## Final Thoughts

Throughout the research project, I was able to engage in meaningful conversation with the parents and examine our ultimate concern—Canadian education in Island schools. I realized how privileged I was by being able to offer the education opportunity to my children through immigrating to Canada in addition to the ones in our homeland, Taiwan. As an immigrant parent and a researcher, I felt grateful that I could investigate what it meant for immigrant families and the support for their children in Canadian education systems. The success of this research project must attribute to these immigrant parents who shared their experiences with trust and confidence: the developing trustworthiness while conducting the study not only rooted in our shared experiences, but also stemmed out to invite more studies on Island parental involvement in education.

I hope that the result of this study can help policy-makers, principals and teachers to create an open conversation with immigrant parents by providing assessable tools to foster their social capitals when they become involved in children's education. While digital technology and social media serves in-time information exchange, it is no doubt that schools and parents can benefit from the informed, up-to-date and responsive conversation in education.

For me, Prince Edward Island plays a pivotal role in my family migration journey. In his book “Chinese Islander—making a home in the new world”, the renowned Chinese Island author Hung-Min Chiang (2006) used “Tao Hua Yuan” as a metaphor for PEI. This term portrayed an idyllic pastoral community where people live in peace and prosperity, as well as a resource for them to escape from time of turmoil in the world. It was indeed the picture which illustrates why we chose PEI as our first home in Canada. However, being members of the Island community invites us to contribute the best of our culture to make Canada a better place for everyone. Here I

conclude my reflection of this chapter by sharing Chiang's quote from the former Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, David Lam. He said and Chiang (2006) quoted,

Coming to Canada is like being invited to a potluck dinner; if everyone brings leftovers, we'll have a left over dinner. But if one spends some of one's time, picks one's best recipe, and is prepared to give one's best, we will have a feast. (p.157)

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### **Letter of Invitation for Immigrant parents**

Dear friends,

My name is Hsiao Yu (Kathren) Liu, I am a graduate student for the Master of Education program at the University of Prince Edward Island.

I like to take this opportunity to invite immigrant parents who had applied for the economic categories and successfully become the Canadian permanent residents to participate this research study. If you are one of them and you also accompany your child or children study at the public schools (from kindergarten to grade twelve), additionally you have resided here in PE more than one and a half years, please read the following paragraph and consider participating this research project.

This study is to investigate the economic immigrant parental involvement. The study purpose is to understand the immigrant parents' experience while they connecting and networking with schools, parents and students for their children's education. The research participants are from the landed immigrants who had applied through the economic categories, such as skilled-workers, entrepreneur, business investors, etc.. Every participant will take part in two interviews for 1.5 hours respectively; all the interviews will be conducted in a study room with the closed door at the UPEI or public libraries, and the content will be audio-recorded, transcribed and stored in a safe storage space. The research information and consent form will be provided for the participant before starting the interview process.

This research study will help people understand the immigrant parents and their education involvement; as more and more newcomers migrate and settle in Canada, the finding of this research will provide in-depth understanding of the diversity immigrant communities.

If you are interested in joining this project, please contact me through emails or telephone, and leave your name/contact numbers.

All the best,

#### Researcher Information

Name: Hsiao Yu (Kathren), Liu. Telephone:(902) 367-xxxx. Cell Phone(902) 314-xxxx  
 Email: [hliu@upei.ca](mailto:hliu@upei.ca)

## Appendix 2

### Poster of Invitation for Immigrant parents

**Are You an Immigrant parent or Legal Guardian?**

**Do you accompany School-Aged Children Here for Past 1.5 Years?**

*If so, Let's Talk!*



**Who? – You Can Participate If You:**

- ✓ Previously applied your immigration through skilled worker category, or PEI Provincial Nominee Program.
- ✓ Have resided in PEI 18 months for past two years.
- ✓ Accompany your school-aged child or children (kindergarten, elementary, intermediate or high schools).

**Where & When?**

- ✓ Interview in a study room with closed door at the Charlottetown public libraries this October.
- ✓ There will be two interviews.
- ✓ Each interview will take 90 minutes.

Want More Information?

Call or Email for more about this project and ask questions.

For questions or more

information please contact

Kate Liu:

(902) 314-xxxx

[hliu@upei.ca](mailto:hliu@upei.ca)



## **Appendix 3**

### **Research Information (in English)**

This study is concerned with immigrant parents who are involved in their children's education at schools, at home and/or elsewhere.

This study will involve two interviews, each lasting for an hour to an hour and a half respectively in a public location, such as the library. The interviews will be audio-recorded for research analysis.

You have been asked to participate because you are specifically suitable to provide data for the study. You are asked to sign the consent form to agree that you accept participating the interviews of this study. You will have the option of withdrawing before the study commences or discontinuing after data collection has started. There will be no clue to the participant's identity appearing in the thesis, and any extracts from participant's quote in the thesis will be entirely anonymous. The audio-record and notes of the interviews will be taken with your permission to allow the researcher use the data for this study.

The information given will be kept confidential from the third parties for the duration of the study. On completion of the thesis, data will be retained for a further six months and then destroyed.

The research results will be presented in the thesis. My supervisor will have access to it as well. The thesis may be read by future students and published for academic purposes.

As the researcher for this study, by the end of the interview I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you subsequently feel distressed, you could contact my supervisor; the contact information is listed below.

The Department Ethics Committee must give approval of this study before studies like this can take place. This approval has been received.

If you need any further information, you can contact me; the contact information is listed below.

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form.

#### Researcher Information

Name: Hsiao Yu (Kathren), Liu  
 Telephone: (902) 367-xxxx  
 Cell Phone: (902) 314-xxxx

#### Research Supervisor Information

Name: Linyuan Guo  
 Telephone: (902) 620-xxxx  
 Email: liguo@upei.ca

## Appendix 4

### Consent Form for Research Participants (in English)

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in Hsiao Yu (Kathren) Liu's research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in oral and writing.

I am aware that I will discuss the research topics that there is potential risk to disclose my family/personal privacy; I also realize that I am participating this study voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with Hsiao Yu (Kathren) Liu's to be audio-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that I will be able to review transcripts of my interviews, if I so wish.

I understand that I can contact the UPEI Research Ethics Board at (902) 620-5104, or by email at reb@upei.ca if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.

I understand that the information will be kept confidential within the limits of the law.

I understand that I can keep a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

I understand that I will be notified upon the completion of thesis and I have options in requesting copies of the study.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview.

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview.

I want to have a copy of the transcription send to my email address as following:

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5

### 研究參與者資訊 Research Information (in Chinese)

這個研究主要針對陪伴在學孩子的移民父母群，以及他們在家，在校及在不同所在地的教育參與。

訪談共計兩次，每次約一個多小時，地點是公共場合比如圖書館，訪問時會錄音以供研究分析。

之所以邀請您參加，主要是因為您是最適合這個研究的要求；同時也請您簽署參與研究的同意書。您可以隨時在研究開始前或進行中終止參與。論文中會隱沒您的身分識別，所有引述您的話語都是不記名，也無從辨識。當您簽署同意書後，您的錄音與摘錄才會被研究人員分析使用。

這個研究過程中，所蒐集的資訊會保持私密，不外洩給第三方獲知；論文發表六個月後，原始資訊會被銷毀。

研究的結果會呈現在我的論文裡，我的指導教授有機會審閱。論文發表刊印後將供學術界的學者或學生引用及分析。

作為一個研究人，我會在訪問後跟你討論你對訪談過程的感想與感受，如果整個過程讓你感受過大壓力，你可以與指導教授直接聯繫，她的連絡資訊如下列。

任何研究進行前必須獲得核可；這項研究已獲得愛德華王子島大學論文道德規範委員會核准。如果你同意參與這項研究，請在下述同意書簽名。

#### 研究生資訊

姓名：劉曉瑜 Hsiao Yu (Kathren), Liu

電話：(902) 367-xxxx

手機：(902) 314-xxxx

電郵：hliu@upei.ca

#### 指導教授資訊

姓名：郭琳媛 Linyuan Guo

電話：(902) 620-xxxx

電郵：[liguo@upei.ca](mailto:liguo@upei.ca)

## Appendix 6

### 參與研究同意書 Research Participant Consent Forms (In Chinese)

我\_\_\_\_\_同意參與劉曉瑜 Hsiao Yu (Kathren), Liu 的研究訪談 · 這項研究的本質已經在文字及口述中解釋給我了 ·

我知道我會討論有關這項研究的主題，討論中或多或少涉及我家庭與個人隱私；我也知道我是自己願意參與訪談的 ·

我授權劉曉瑜 Hsiao Yu (Kathren), Liu 錄製我與她的訪談過程 ·

我知道我可以在訪談前／訪談過程中／訪談結束後，隨時可以終止參與，不需解釋 ·

我知道整個文字表述中會隱沒個人資料 ·

我知道如果我要求，我可覆閱我的文字訪談內容 ·

我知道若我對這項研究執行規範有所顧慮時，可跟愛德華王子島大學論文道德規範委員會聯繫 · 電話是(902) 620-5104, 電郵是 reb@upei.ca

我知道相關資訊會根據規範保密，卻也有其限制 ·

我知道我可以保留同意書的副本 ·

我知道當論文完成後會通知我，而且我可要求保留副本 ·

我知道論文引述我的言語(隱沒我的身分辨識)，會被使用發表在論文之外，還可能引述發表在後繼的學術論文裡 ·

當我簽名後代表我同意認可以上論述 ·

請勾選

我同意從我的訪談擷取片段並發表

我不同意從我的訪談中擷取片段或發表

我希望以電郵寄給我訪談語錄

被訪者簽名:	日期:
訪問者簽名:	日期:

## Appendix 7

### Interview Protocol

Individual interviews will follow the general, semi-structured questions. Slight modifications in wording, may be necessary at the time of the interview depending on how the participants respond to the individual questions.

**Researcher:** This research is to investigate the economic immigrant parental involvement. The purpose of this study is to understand the immigrant parents' experience while they connecting and networking with schools, parents and students for their children's education in PE

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed for approximately one to one and a half hour, but not more than 90 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded so that I can transcribe it and analyze it at a later time.

Whether you participate or not is entirely voluntary and will not affect any of the services you may receive from schools or organizations. You will have the right to stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. I will keep your identity and comments confidential throughout and beyond this study. When I have completed the transcription of this interview, I will provide you with a copy of the transcript should you request for your interview. You will have the chance to delete or change any comments that you do not want to remain a part of the study. You will have the right at any time to remove or alter any quotes or comments that you feel are inaccurate. I will give you a made up name in all written or oral summaries.

You can indicate that you understand the nature of the study and the conditions for participating by reading and signing the letter of consent that I will provide for you. Please read over the letter and feel free to ask me any questions that you might have. When you are ready, you may sign the letters and we will begin the interview.

*When the participant has signed the letters, the researcher will proceed with the following comments:*

**Researcher:** I will ask you several questions, and I would like you to say as much as you would like to help me understand your responses. If possible, please provide examples to help explain your response. (Turn on the recorder and test it.)

Questions:

1. Why do you decide to immigrate to Canada? Please describe your immigration decisions.
2. What is your expectation of your child's education before and now in Canada?
3. What do you perceive your role as a parent for your child(ren)'s education in Canada?
4. As a parent, how do you involve yourself in your child(ren)'s education? (*by using Epstein's six dimensional framework as guideline for this question*)
5. Where and how do you access important information about your child(ren)'s education?
6. What would be helpful or difficult for you to be involved in your child(ren)'s education?
7. Please describe your experience while involving yourself in education at schools.
8. What is your understanding from your parental involvement in Canadian schools?

(Thank the individuals for their participation.)

**Appendix 8**  
**Demographic Survey**

1. First Name:	Last Name:			
<hr/> <small>(used for collecting purpose. Names will never be used in reporting of data)</small>				
2. Gender	Female      Male			
3. How old are your (child) children?				
First child	Second child	Others		
<hr/> Age	<hr/> Age	<hr/> Age		
4. In what country were you born?		<hr/>		
5. In what country or countries is your current citizenship? <hr/>				
6. What is your current immigration status in Canada? <hr/>				
Citizen	Permanent Resident	Others:		
<hr/> 7. What category you had applied for your immigration to Canada?		<hr/>		
Federal Level	Provencal Level	Other		
8. What is your ethnicity?		<hr/>		
Asian	African	Hispanic/Latino	Caucasian	Others
9. What is your highest level of education?		<hr/>		
Senior High	Post-secondary	Bachelor		
Master	Doctoral	Others		
10. What is your current marital status?		<hr/>		
Single	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed
11. Please list the language you speak?		<hr/>		
<hr/> 12. You are your child (children)'s		<hr/>		
Parent	Guardian	Relative		
Friend	Others	<hr/>		

## Appendix 9

### Research Approval



550 University Avenue  
Charlottetown  
Prince Edward Island  
Canada C1A 4P3

October 21 2014

Ms K Liu  
Faculty of Education

Re: REB Ref # 6005977

#### **“Economic Immigrant Parents in P.E.I.: Their Involvement in Education”**

The above mentioned research proposal has now been reviewed under the expedited review track by the UPEI Research Ethics Board. I am pleased to inform you that it has received ethics approval. Please be advised that the Research Ethics Board currently operates according to the *Tri-Council Policy Statement 2: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* and applicable laws and regulations.

The approval for the study as presented is valid for one year. It is your responsibility to ensure that the Ethics Renewal form is forwarded to Research Services prior to the renewal date. The information provided in this form must be current to the time of submission and submitted to Research Services not less than 30 days of the anniversary of your approval date. The Ethics Renewal form can be downloaded from the Research Services website ([http://www.ypei.ca/research/reb\\_forms](http://www.ypei.ca/research/reb_forms)).

Any proposed changes to the study must also be submitted on the same form to the UPEI Research Ethics Board for approval.

The Research Ethics Board advises that **IF YOU DO NOT** return the completed Ethics Renewal form prior to the date of renewal:

- Your ethics approval will lapse
- You will be required to stop research activity immediately
- You will not be permitted to restart the study until you reapply for and receive approval to undertake the study again.

*Lapse in ethics approval may result in interruption or termination of funding.*

Notwithstanding the approval of the REB, the primary responsibility for the ethical conduct of the investigation remains with you.

Sincerely,

James E. Moran, Ph.D.  
Chair, UPEI Research Ethics Board