

Recruitment and retention of bilingual professionals in francophone minority settings

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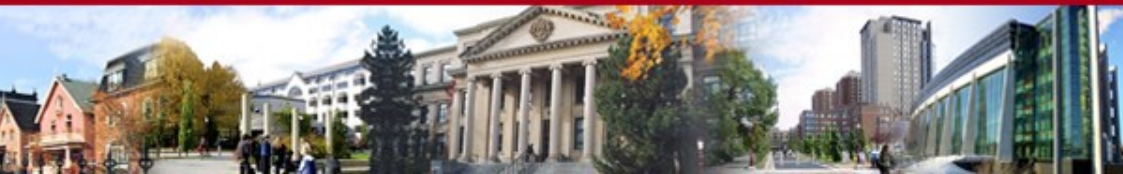
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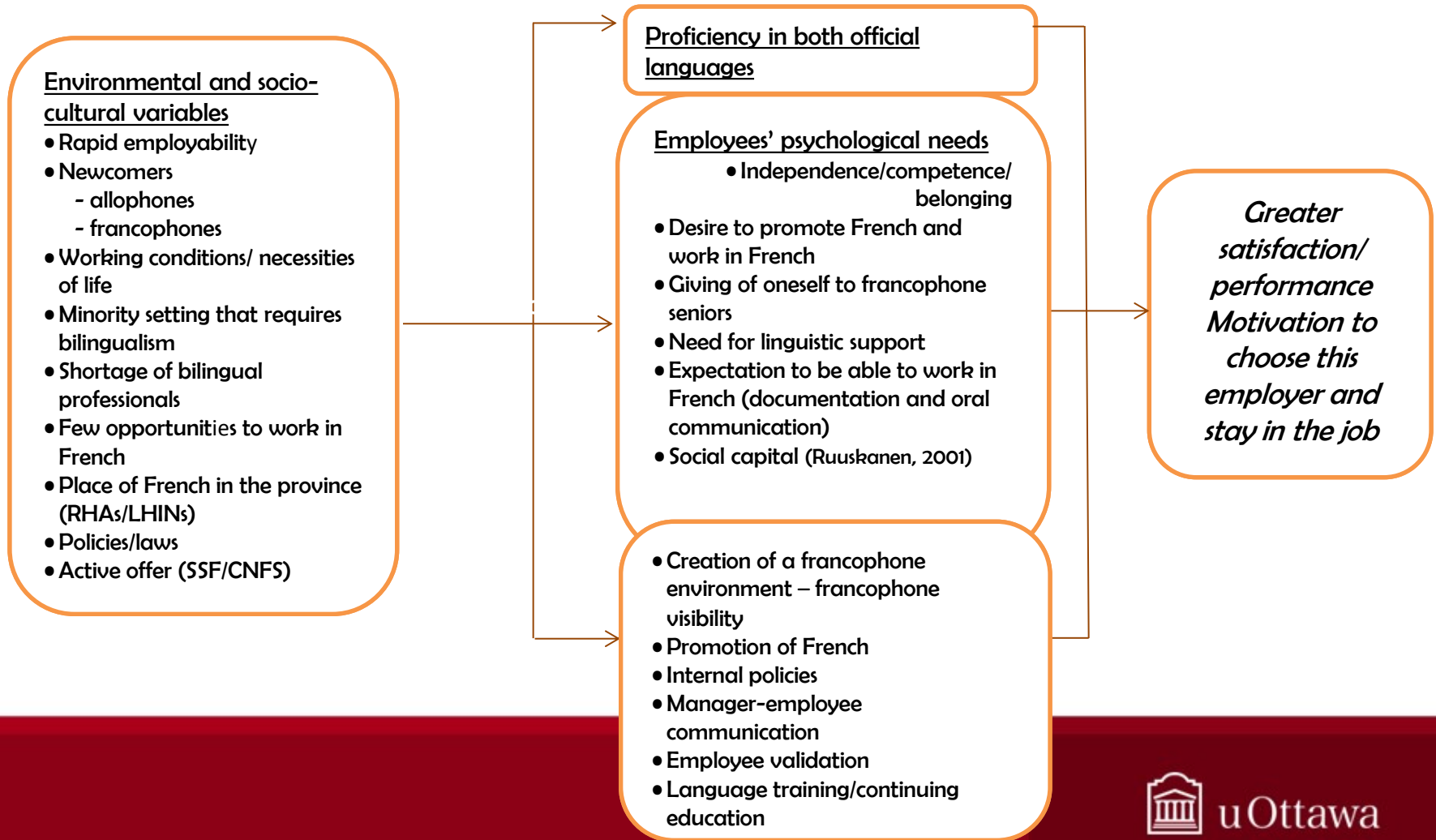
Objectives of the study

- Document the realities of working in a bilingual health and social services institution
- Identify the challenges that bilingual health and social services professionals face in those environments
- Identify the factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of bilingual professionals in those environments
- Recommend possible avenues to developing specific strategies for recruiting and retaining bilingual professionals

Methodology

- Two study locations: Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Ottawa, Ontario
- Health services for seniors (long-term care homes and supportive housing)
- Six focus groups with orderlies (60%), nurses (30%) and social and other workers (10%) (n=55)
- Topics covered:
 - Factors contributing to their recruitment
 - The realities of the bilingual workplace
 - Employee engagement
 - Recognition and support

The factors associated with employee recruitment and retention (after Dolea and Adams (2005) and Landry et al. (2008))



Factors contributing to recruitment and retention of bilingual professionals

- Sense of francophone pride
- Opportunity to work in both official languages
- Relationship of trust and emotional attachment to the residents
- Quality of the work environment
 - Relationship with bilingual co-workers
 - Linguistic and ethnic diversity
 - Interdisciplinary work
 - Compassion
- Familiarity with the environment through internship

The challenges of working in a bilingual environment

- Variable proficiency in the two official languages
- Non-bilingual executives or managers (especially in Manitoba)
- Dominance of English
- Differences in what is considered a francophone or bilingual space
 - In Ontario: greater cohesion between bilingual workers; use of French more common
 - In Manitoba: few bilingual managers, little language training in the two languages, and little follow-up on language training
- Lack of promotion of francophone culture
- Excessive workloads
- Fewer opportunities for career advancement

Proposed strategies

1. Bilingual employees
 - Act as Francophonie ambassadors
 - Request support
2. Bilingual institution employers
 - Be an agent of promotion for the Francophonie
 - Bring employees together
 - Make bilingualism valued, even mandatory
3. Governmental and institutional bodies
 - Advocate for francophone rights
 - Fund language training and support continuing education in French
 - Establish an association of bilingual health and social service workers

Conclusion

- To ensure that employees remain bilingual in their work environment, linguistic support in both official languages is needed.
- An institution that is designated bilingual and is recognized as providing service in French must create a work environment in which employees, clients and their families always feel comfortable communicating in the official language of their choice.
- The ability to recruit bilingual staff and thus provide minority francophones with services in their language depends not only on management practices of health and social service institutions, but also on engagement of the entire francophone community.

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