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ADULT AND WORKPLACE LEARNING IN NEW SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXTS

In the 21st century, adult and workplace education is facing a number of new realities: Globalization and intercultural learning; economic instability and the need for life-long learning; the preparation of people to work in multiple workplaces and with multiple disciplines or professions; and the challenge of bringing about deep, transformative learning in adults facing difficult situations like chronic illness.

The current issue describes some of the ways in which educators are responding creatively to these challenges. It draws upon expertise both here in the Faculty of Education and in partner institutions. It is my hope that they will inspire you in your own educational practice, whether you work with adults or other learners.

In the first article, Dr. Angus McMurtry and Kelly Kilgour (MSc, RN) examine recent developments in interprofessional education and how people with very different frames of thinking can learn to work together. Lynnda Proulx (MA) and Dr. Claire Duchesne then examine the integration of young adult immigrants within college settings, addressing both obstacles and possible solutions. The third article is by Dr. Maurice Taylor and Dr. Karen Evans, co-director of *Centre for Excellence in work-Based Learning for Education Professionals* in the UK. In it, they describe a new approach to workplace training that is more sensitive to context than typical “knowledge-transfer” approaches. Finally, Dr. Judy King and Dr. Claire-Jehanne Dubouloz discuss how healthcare professionals can facilitate transformative learning in the lives of their patients, for example, those facing traumatic or chronic health conditions.

– Angus McMurtry, PHD

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INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: HELPING PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES TO LEARN AND WORK TOGETHER

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Climate change, poverty, the diabetes epidemic... Solutions to today's complex challenges require input from multiple disciplinary or professional perspectives. A doctor prescribing medication, for example, won't solve diabetic patients' underlying problems unless nurses, nutritionists or social workers also help them to make better nutritional and lifestyle choices. Interdisciplinary and interprofessional teamwork is thus becoming essential.

But how can we teach people who look at the world through very different professional lenses to work together? Can we as teachers still play the role of expert when our classes cover such a broad range of expertise? These are among the challenges faced by those in *interprofessional (IP) education*, a new area of adult, postsecondary and workplace education that has grown in recent years—especially in the healthcare sector, as governments across Canada have embraced IP teamwork as a means for better patient care.

Why IP education is challenging

Traditional education is divided into discrete subject areas like math, history or physiology (these areas are often referred to as “disciplinary silos”). Each has a relatively coherent set of theories and methodologies. And the teacher is someone who, through previous education and experience, has become an expert in one area.

IP education intentionally crosses these entrenched boundaries, bringing together and juxtaposing multiple—often sharply contrasting—theories and methodologies. This can make IP education an uncomfortable place for both teachers and learners. As a teacher, you must relinquish your status as “expert” on topics discussed in the classroom and embrace negotiation, discomfort and a degree of uncertainty. Teachers in IP contexts typically act as facilitators rather than traditional, didactic instructors.

Students in IP courses ideally come from a diverse range of professional backgrounds. In healthcare, for example, an IP class may include

people from medicine, pharmacy, nursing, therapy, psychology, social work or spiritual care. Like their teachers, these students are invited to leave their narrow professional comfort zones and consider all the biomedical, sociocultural and experiential aspects of complex cases like substance abuse or end-of-life care. Adding to these challenges is the need to explicitly address group dynamics. Personality conflicts, gender relations and power imbalances can affect IP teamwork just as much as professional differences. As a result, IP courses usually have units on role awareness, communication skills, conflict resolution and leadership. It is essential that an educator model these skills in her or his own class, for example, by collectively establishing fair and effective rules for discussions and decision-making.

Innovative teaching strategies and curricula

IP teamwork is oriented toward dealing with messy, real life situations. Not surprisingly, teachers make use of innovative, experiential strategies like problem-based learning, case study, role play and simulation. For instance, students in police, paramedic and child and youth worker programs might get together to role-play IP team members dealing with a simulated domestic abuse case. In the Ottawa area, local academic and student groups have organized an annual *Interprofessional Student Games* event, in which students test out their IP team skills.

These sorts of experiences present rich opportunities for reflective learning. Acting as a facilitator, an IP educator will debrief students, inviting them to think about how they felt, their effectiveness as a team, group dynamics, how various sorts of professional knowledge were negotiated, and so on. Often models of effective teamwork will be introduced in this context rather than through didactic instruction—though students usually like hearing IP educators' stories about their real-world experiences on IP teams.

In more advanced courses, students may get the opportunity to observe or even work with a functioning IP team. Educators may also provide students with conceptual frameworks designed to help them think about complex situations and integrate the various sorts of professional knowledge involved. There is no agreement yet on what conceptual perspective offers the best “meta theory” for IP teamwork. In recent years, however, thinkers have advanced a variety of candidates including holistic thinking, complexity science, cultural-historical activity theory and post-structuralism.

Why this matters to all educators

As current headlines about ecological crises, intercultural tensions, global communication networks, and entrenched social and physical ills remind us, our world is complex, interconnected and multifaceted. There are no simple, uni-disciplinary or uni-professional solutions to our biggest problems. The most important skills students can have in such a context are open-mindedness, teamwork, cultural and intellectual pluralism, a refusal to grasp at simplistic answers, and a commitment to dealing with complexity.

The groundwork for such intellectual pluralism is not only being laid in IP courses. It is also taking place in interdisciplinary studies courses in Canadian secondary schools as well as interdisciplinary programs in colleges and universities. These latter areas are, however, fairly new and offer relatively few exemplars of “best

practice”. A lot of educators and students still feel uncomfortable leaving their comfort zones in traditional subject areas. As a result, many supposedly interdisciplinary initiatives fail to engage deeply with differing perspectives.

Because of its real-world focus, commitment to diversity and innovative teaching strategies, IP education provides other educators with useful ideas, tips and techniques for exploring this new territory. Interdisciplinary and interprofessional journeys will always be daunting, but it helps to know that someone has been there before and left behind some useful “maps”.

Further reading on interprofessional and interdisciplinary education

- Journal of Research in Interprofessional Practice and Education (JRIPE)
www.jripe.org
- Association for Integrative Studies (AIS)
www.units.muohio.edu/aisorg
- Canadian Interprofessional Health Collaborative
www.cihc.ca
- Ontario Curriculum: Interdisciplinary Studies
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/interdisciplinary.html

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THE INTEGRATION OF YOUNG ADULTS FROM MIGRANT BACKGROUNDS INTO THE COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT: BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS

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For young adults attending La Cité collégiale, this training environment acts simultaneously as a workplace, an education facility and a platform for social networking. Many first-generation immigrant students attempt to find their place in this environment, but encounter barriers to their integration. This article reports on recent research on this topic and proposes potential solutions for supporting the integration of these young adults.

Barriers to integration

La Cité collégiale is an Ottawa arts and applied-technology college that serves a Francophone population living in a minority context. There are over 4,000 full-time students in its post-secondary training programs. Close to 27% of this population is comprised of students from cultural communities, practically all of whom are immigrants (La Cité collégiale, 2011). Antonio is one of the immigrant students who attended this school and integrated successfully despite the difficulties they experienced.

In order to succeed in their studies – a success confirmed mainly by graduation –, immigrant students must overcome barriers related to socialization and learning. The goal is not only to successfully complete the courses, but also to establish a social network they can rely on (Tinto, 1993). That means developing links inside and outside the school environment in order to foster academic perseverance, the eventual acquisition of a diploma and the establishment of links to the workplace. Some immigrant students may have a family that supports them outside of school, but many of them, like Antonio, arrive alone and cannot rely on the family safety net to provide necessary support when hardships arise. Immigrant students often find themselves isolated in a school and social environment where everything is different and new to them. These differences and newness concern the school system, and in particular, the mode of classroom instruction, linguistic variations used by teachers and classmates, physical space, learning tools, technology, and the way people socialize. Immigrant students must learn to master these new elements in order to succeed in their studies. This constitutes an overlap of multiple cognitive experiences, which can cause the immigrant student to start losing

steam and can lead to frustrations (Gaudet & Loslier, 2009).

Possible solutions

Solutions come from two main sources: The training institution and the students themselves. By virtue of its socialization function, the training institution ensures the planning, the implementation of professional development mechanisms for its employees, and the installation of places and services that allow students to create and develop social networks (Gaudet & Loslier, 2009). Although the initial greeting of students is crucial to successful orientation, some training institutions ensure that students are actively supported throughout the school year. An example of such ongoing support is the intercultural matching of a Canadian student with an immigrant student attending an Ontario institution for the first time. La Cité collégiale has been offering this intercultural matching service since September 2011. It allows the immigrant student to meet his or her most immediate needs, such as understanding how to interact with the teacher during class. These pairings speed up the process of integration into the school environment, and even into the region's Francophone minority community. For the immigrant student, being matched with a Canadian means not only a new friendship, but also an open window on the country's culture and immediate access to Franco-Ontarian culture. In a way, the matching allows the immigrant student to learn the rules, codes and mechanisms of the institution as well as those of Francophone culture.

As for the students, their responsibility is to do their job as a student by learning and mastering the teaching codes used in post-secondary education as well as the mechanisms and rules of the institution in which they are studying (Coulon, 2005). Their integration is dependent on their individual initiatives to actively participate and engage in this new environment.

Antonio is a good example of an immigrant student who was able to overcome the obstacles related to learning his role as a student. He did not have an easy time in college, but he managed to find solutions that helped him fit in and ensured his academic success. During his

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Claire Duchesne has been an assistant professor in Teaching, Learning and Evaluation at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education since 2004. Her research interests focus on the training and professional development of teachers, the professional induction of new Neo-Canadian teachers, issues related to the training, learning and development of adults and to qualitative research methodologies.



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three years of study at La Cité collégiale, he had a scholarship and therefore, had no financial worries. Despite this, within months he realized that isolation and his difficulty understanding the culture of the school environment would have a negative effect on his studies. To break this stalemate, he decided to volunteer at the Montfort hospital and to offer his services as a math tutor in the homework club of a French elementary school in his community. In his second year of study, he became a member of the student association's executive committee and was responsible for the college's internal affairs. These experiences quickly led him to understand how to establish contacts and develop professional relationships. The ties he forged eventually facilitated the development of

his social network and his access to professional resources. His involvement resulted in him contributing to the environment in which he is still evolving. Today, Antonio is finishing his university studies and works as a teacher at La Cité collégiale.

Volunteer work and the intercultural matching service are some of the successful strategies for students' academic and social integration in their school environment. Occasional meetings between teachers and immigrant students would foster ongoing academic monitoring and would constitute another excellent strategy for the successful integration of immigrant students in their new environment.

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PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

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It's time for some fresh thinking about how learning and training can be transferred from the classroom back to the workplace. Employers who usually pay for these types of training programs and workshops often wonder if they are getting their return on investment. They also want to know if any of their employees' new knowledge is actually being put to use when they return to the workplace. The same holds true for instructors; they want to make sure that what was learned in their courses is put into practice outside of the classroom.

For years, research in this area has looked at different "transfer of learning" theories as a way of providing evidence that learning has actually happened. Some of these theories look at individual characteristics of the learner, while others focus on program design or the actual workplace environment. This research is often confusing, expensive and inconclusive.

New Approaches from the United Kingdom

An interesting initiative is taking place in the United Kingdom, at the Centre for Work Based Learning, located in the Institute of Education at the University of London. This project is called *Putting Knowledge to Work* and challenges assumptions about how learning is "transferred" from one setting to another. Evans, Guile and Harris (2009) have developed a new approach that concentrates on the ways in which different forms of knowledge are 'recontextualised' as people move between sites of learning in colleges and workplaces.

This new thinking has been extended to a wide range of work-based higher education including medicine, nursing, midwifery, staff development and teacher education. The aim is to improve practice by researching how the subject-based and work-based aspects of a curriculum or training program can become integrated. This research has shown what is involved in such an integration, as well as how to use teaching strategies as a way of engaging learners in educational institutions and workplaces.

The starting point of the *Putting Knowledge to Work* initiative is that there is no such thing as 'context-free' knowledge; all forms of knowledge are embedded in particular contexts or communities of practice. These may take the form of workplace settings, schools of thought, or life experiences. The context-dependent nature of knowledge, however, presents a challenge to the notion of "knowledge transfer". How can knowledge generated in one context be put to work in new and different contexts? The key, according to those behind the initiative, is the concept of *recontextualisation*.

What does recontextualisation mean?

It refers to the idea that concepts and practices change as we use them to connect with different contexts. At the same time, these concepts and practices change that new context. Recontextualisation also draws upon Bernstein's (2000) view that concepts change as they move from their disciplinary origins and become a part of a curriculum and van Oers' (1998) idea that concepts are an integral part of practice which vary from one workplace to another.

These ideas can be applied to real-life learning and training programs through the integration of subject-based and work-based knowledge. This recontextualisation may take place in four ways:

- content recontextualisation (putting knowledge to work in the program design environment);
- pedagogic recontextualisation (putting knowledge to work in the teaching and facilitating environment);
- workplace recontextualisation (putting knowledge to work in the workplace environment) and
- learner recontextualisation (what learners make of these processes).

Recontextualisation can also be thought of as a chain of responses (CoR) with each response

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strengthening the previous ones. The research has shown that there are at least 7 chains of responses in the process of recontextualisation. These are: building multi faceted partnerships; diagnosing workplace problems; ensuring the gradual release of new knowledge; learning conversations between mentors and employees; using workplace materials; using industry educators as knowledge brokers; and accessing an accreditation system. For a further explanation see Evans, Guile & Harris (2009).

Evidence from Adults with Low Skills

This new way of thinking has proven to work for adults with higher skills. But what about adults with lower skills? To answer this question, the *reconceptualization* approach was tested in a local district school board in Eastern Ontario which offers programs for adults with low literacy. Three workplace programs were examined: a childcare assistant program, a customer service worker program, and a personal support worker program. All of these programs had both classroom-based and workplace instruction.

An analysis conducted across the school board programs showed that the four modes of recontextualisation were very apparent. Many of the CoR elements were also observed, including the importance of multi faceted partnerships; the gradual release of new knowledge to the learners; utilizing company resources in the curriculum; and using industry specialists as knowledge brokers during the workplace practicum (Taylor, Evans & Pinsent-Johnson, 2010). What's interesting about the testing of this novel framework on Canadian soil is that it consolidates all of the key factors associated with knowledge transfer into a more holistic process. In other words, it



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offers a way of understanding transfer of learning without the confusion of discrete variables.

Another interesting finding from the local school board research was an interrelationship between human capital and social capital. As learners were acquiring their new knowledge, skills and competencies, they were also developing networks of reciprocity and social connection. This, in turn, led to variety of social outcomes of learning, such as using the resources embedded in the training group to seek out employment opportunities. The idea is now being further explored in another project with a wider range of work sites from Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Ontario.

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TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

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People might not think of health care professionals as educators, but they are. Everyday health care professionals provide education to patients and their families. The goal is to equip them with information to make informed choices for their care, and to help them live with changes in their health.

Definition of Transformative Learning

Transformative learning is a key adult learning theory. It helps us understand the process by which adults change or transform how they think about their lives as they encounter new challenges (Mezirow, 1991). Certainly change is a constant in our lives, including changes in our health. Sometimes a health change can be so influential that it acts as a trigger and starts a process of change in the way we view ourselves and our world.

This trigger could be being diagnosed with (and living with) a chronic health condition, or living with the physical or mental consequences of a major trauma. A chronic health condition is a condition such as asthma, diabetes or arthritis, in which a person will need to learn to change their lives to deal with the symptoms of the condition throughout their lives. Trauma could be a motorcycle accident that physically paralyzes the person for life, resulting in the need for the use of a wheelchair. As a result of these events, there is a restructuring of the illness experience and restructuring of self, which leads towards new rules, behaviours, feelings, beliefs, perspectives and identities (Mezirow, 1991).

Although all health care professionals provide care, including patient education, to people with chronic health conditions, key members of the health care team are occupational therapists and physiotherapists. These rehabilitation experts work closely with patients over many weeks and months to help them learn how to modify and adopt new behaviours to live with their chronic health conditions.

Why is Transformative Learning Important for Patients and their Families?

Transformative learning has been used in re-

search to understand the process of change for adults living with chronic health conditions like rheumatoid arthritis (Dubouloz et al., 2004; Ashe et al., 2005). One model that has been developed to illustrate the complex transformative process that people undergo in such rehabilitation programs is the “Process of Transformation Model: Rehabilitation of Chronic Illness and Disability” (Dubouloz et al., 2010). It has three phases: *trigger*, *process of change*, and *outcome*.

In the *trigger phase*, experiences such as physical limits and losses, the diagnosis, and interactions with the health care system prompt individuals to think about how their illness or disability is affecting them and start a personal critical reflection. *The process of change* begins when the individual develops feelings of discontent and chaos; critical assessment of these feelings leads to transformation in the individual’s “meaning perspectives”. *The outcome* of this transformative process is a revised belief and value system with new rules, feelings, beliefs, behaviours, perspectives, and perhaps even a new identity. Other important factors in promoting transformative learning in the context of chronic illness may include the knowledge available, how the individual seeks it out, and support from family, peers, and health care professionals (Dubouloz et al., 2010).

How can Health Care Professionals Facilitate Transformative Learning?

One thing that the Process of Transformation Model highlights is the fact that health care professionals in rehabilitation programs can either be facilitators or barriers for patient transformations. This is because there is often a disconnect between the goals or outcomes expected by health care professionals, and the actual change enacted by the patient. As well, the model reveals that transformation is not just an outcome; it can also be seen as part of the process of patients’ learning to live with a chronic illness (Dubouloz et al., 2010).

Transformational learning in general, and the healthcare-related research described above, have many implications for education. In the first place, they illustrate the complex processes

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involved in deep, life-changing learning and how we as educators may nurture such learning. These ideas will also help those working with learners who are experiencing chronic illness such as diabetes and arthritis. The Process of Transformation Model specifically may help educators gain insight into what learners are going through, how chronic illness affects lear-

ning, and how learning affects chronic illness. Studies with adult learners in literacy programs, who also had chronic illnesses, have found that as the learners attended class and improved their literacy ability, they felt more comfortable and confident in interacting with the health care system and health care professionals (King & Taylor, 2010).

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