BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY OF LIFELONG-LEARNING COMMUNITY

André P. Grace
University of Alberta

ABSTRACT

This paper conceptualizes a pedagogy of lifelong-learning community. It locates adult educational practice as a cultural practice that incorporates notions of culture as community and culture as knowledge. It examines the pedagogical role of academic adult educators who educate frontline educators to assist displaced citizen workers.

INTRODUCTION

In Canada, diverse change-force factors, appearing like constants, perennially reconfigured life, learning, work, and their possibilities during the twentieth century. These alterations, which in this essay are taken up with respect to the economic and the cultural, were particularly pervasive after World War II (Grace, 2000). During this period, Canada, as a resource-rich and impressionable neighbor to the North, was deeply affected by the emergence of what Daniel Bell (1960) called postindustrial society in the United States. This society heralded the military-industrial complex as a signifier of economic and cultural transitions that generated a knowledge economy in which the acquisition of new and unfolding techno-scientific skills became associated with postindustrial progress. Canada seemed bent on occupying rooms in this complex in order to stimulate its postwar economy and advance its own dominant cultural agenda, which was the expression of a desire to locate the country as a techno-scientized postindustrial nation. The modern practice of Canadian adult education continued to emerge in this milieu, where calls to engage in lifelong learning became more resounding as diverse change forces techno-scientizing the dominant culture became more pronounced.

As each postwar decade passed, these calls reverberated, matching time and tides in relation to economic swings and cultural transitions. However, they generally upheld the value of techno-scientization and, concomitantly, the value of instrumental forms of adult education, which, of course, were needed to aid and abet this process. One consequence of this emergent Canadian state-of-affairs – mirrored in many advanced postindustrial nations – has been a positioning of lifelong learning as a banner phrase and advantageous modus operandi for an adult-education field in genesis. Lifelong learning has been hailed time and time again as a raison d'être and a cultural lifeline for a historically marginalized field of study and practice seeking to achieve more space (a recognized and useful presence) and place (a respected and valued position) in increasingly techno-scientized national economies and cultures. In Canada, a focus on lifelong learning has been an integral part of a field of politics of representation designed to shape adult education as a valuable economic and cultural enterprise. Lifelong learning has been presented as an educational medium useful to help expand Canada's economy by providing the skilled citizen workers needed to advance a knowledge economy and extend the parameters of a techno-scientized culture. In their work to enhance the cultural presence of the field, Canadian academic adult educators have been among the most vocal in presenting lifelong learning as a responsible and responsive educational project attentive to the knowledge-and-skill needs of citizen learners in a postindustrial world. They have often engaged in lifelong learning as both a reaction and a response to federal initiatives to meet the needs of citizen workers displaced by change forces. These diverse forces have altered what it means to live, learn, and work in the intersection of the economic and the cultural.

Any discussion of lifelong learning as an educational bandwagon in Canada would be remiss if it did not emphasize the importance of a federal presence in adult education. This presence became noticeably marked during the War on Poverty in Canada in the 1960s (Grace, 1997a) and, in light of this precedent, has been maintained – if not strengthened – in subsequent decades. As the Canadian federal government has continued to turn to adult education as a way out of economic and cultural upheaval, the field has continued to turn to lifelong learning as a way out for citizen learners and workers. For example, in the early 1990s displaced fishers in Atlantic Canada needed food-on-the-table instruction to acquire new skills for new jobs after their jobs as fishers disappeared with the failure of the cod fishery and a subsequent moratorium banning cod fishing. This

socioeconomic predicament was used as an instance to tout the value of lifelong learning in an economic and cultural milieu where job security was supplanted by job risk. Fishers would now have to walk on the training treadmill and return periodically for skill upgrading. Such piecemeal learning was caught up in a politics of dominant cultural practicality. Fishers had to engage in instrumental retraining of some kind in order to receive federal-government assistance. In general, this kind of education took place outside of any real concern with the social and cultural factors marking fishers' lives and affecting their opportunities and possibilities for life, learning, and work in their home communities. Retraining frequently meant that fishers already displaced in work would also experience displacement from communities and even families as they were forced to move to places – often in 'have' provinces in central and western Canada – in order to find work using their new skills. These workers could be considered the 'lucky' ones, for retraining often seemed to take place outside sufficient analysis of job-market opportunities. Consequently, many fishers were added to the ranks of an alienated contingent of functionally unemployable persons in the country.

This retraining of fishers, and its consequences, provide a critical learning incident for academic adult educators who work to educate educators who will engage in such frontline work. It demands that we think about our own work as educators, and how we might focus our own theorizing, research, practice, and service around building an inclusive pedagogy of lifelong-learning community. In this paper I examine aspects of building this pedagogy. I begin by conceptualizing what it might look like. I build on this conceptualization by speaking about adult educational practice as a cultural practice in the context of Raymond Williams' understandings of culture as community and culture as knowledge. Next I examine the role of academic adult educators in building this pedagogy and advancing themes to make it inclusive and encompassing. I conclude with a perspective on work that has ramifications for how we think about lifelong learning and its cultural practice in a new century.

CONCEPTUALIZING A PEDAGOGY OF LIFELONG-LEARNING COMMUNITY

A key aim of a pedagogy of lifelong-learning community is to help persons become critical, responsive, and responsible citizen learners and workers who are able to think, speak, and act in life, learning, and work situations. This aim, from Giroux's (1993) perspective, would amount to locating pedagogy as a form of cultural production and a form of cultural work. It would place issues of democracy, equity, and citizenship at the heart of developing emancipatory pedagogy. It would guide the unfolding of democratic learning cultures, where citizen learners explore their roles and responsibilities in classrooms, workplaces, and other cultural sites conceived as democratic learning communities. Lived out in everyday adult educational practice, a pedagogy of lifelong-learning community is about invigorating contextualized learning in the intersection of the ethical and the political, and contesting instrumentalized forms of education that leave ordinary people out. It is inclusive pedagogy that brings history and politics to bear on economics and culture as it counteracts the impotency of decontextualized techno-scientific learning boxed in by the supposed neutrality of expertise and the myopic controls of specialism. This is not to say that contextualized lifelong learning downplays or ignores the acquisition of technical skills, which is a core part of food-on-the-table instruction and education for survival. Rather, it means that such learning embeds skilling in a broader learning process in which citizen workers also learn diverse life and political skills necessary to navigate workplaces and other cultural spaces where matters of context, relationship, and disposition play out.

Thus a pedagogy of lifelong-learning community is about more than technique. Simon (1992) argues that pedagogy as a purveyor of power and knowledge has both epistemological and political dimensions that help reveal what is at stake in the unfolding of the pedagogical moment:

> "Constituted within cultural technologies, pedagogies stress that the realities of what happens in classrooms organize and are organized by how a teacher's work within an institutional context specifies a particular version of what knowledge is of most worth, what it means to know something, and how we might construct representations of ourselves, others, and our physical and social environment" (p 56-57.)

A pedagogy of lifelong-learning community takes up how education is implicated in the production of knowledge and truth through the language and images that are produced, made accessible, and legitimated in educational practice (Simon, 1992). With identity, difference, meaning, value, and desire hanging in the balance, the politics of representation become crucial. The language and images presented must transcend isolated instrumentalism to be embodied and embedded in the social, historical, and political contexts shaping life, learning, and work in the intersection of the economic and the cultural. This effort to contextualize what citizen learners learn is vital cultural work. It involves citizen learners in a

critical examination of the 'naturalness' of dominant ways of knowing and the ways they resist it (Simon, 1992). It considers desirable changes and the intricacies of change processes that might realize these changes.

From this perspective, an encounter with the community at large is a crucial part of building a pedagogy of lifelong-learning community as a cultural production and cultural work. Citizen learners need to know their rights, responsibilities, and liabilities as members of the democratically constituted communities where they live, learn, and work. In this regard, an encounter with the community at large by academic adult education, which uses vehicles like practicum projects to mediate such encounters, amounts to a kind of action research that is vital to the process of educating future adult educators who will also take up roles as cultural workers. These projects provide prospective educators with opportunities to make connections between adult education as a field of study and a field of practice. Recognition of the mutuality between theory and practice can help them to analyze contexts, relationships, and dispositions locating a community and shaping its problems. This integrative approach is "a pedagogical practice that embraces all social and cultural spheres engaged in the production of texts, images, knowledge, values, and identities" (Giroux, 1993, p 23). It is also a risk-taking venture in contemporary times when education for "critical citizenship has become an unprofitable, if not subversive category" (Giroux, 1993, p 15).

A pedagogy of lifelong-learning community has unrestricted parameters in the sense that it is concerned with educating in the intersection of the instrumental, the social, and the cultural. It is a borderland where questioning is crucial to expose ways in which learning is inhibited and to explore ways in which learning might be enabled. Questioning what is and what is possible recasts the pedagogical moment in critical terms. Giroux (1994) aptly describes such unbounded critical pedagogy:

> "There is no absolute sign under which pedagogy can be defined. Instead, pedagogy refers to the production of and complex relationships among knowledge, texts, desire, and identity; it signals how questions of audience, voice, power, and evaluation actively work to construct particular relations between teachers and students, institutions and society, and classrooms and communities" (1994, p 29-30).

A pedagogy of lifelong-learning community cannot be reduced to a method, a process, or a standard, and it cannot exist outside of contexts, dispositions, and relationships of power. It is a cultural production and cultural work in which the actions and voices of citizen educators and learners matter in the learning process. It is cultural work to reveal structured absences in cultural forms like learning spaces and workplaces. This work is about possibility and creating the conditions necessary to achieve inclusive forms of education that are not yet reality.

ADULT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AS A CULTURAL PRACTICE: CULTURE AS COMMUNITY AND CULTURE AS KNOWLEDGE

Tierney & Bensimon (1996) emphasize the need to analyze the cultural context so aspects of performance are determined broadly, and not simply instrumentally, for example. For them, rendering culture open to interpretation becomes a means to advance it. This idea undergirds an inclusive pedagogy of lifelong-learning community. It helps us to understand and locate adult educational practice as a culture practice in which knowledges, truths, realities, discourses, and relationships of power can be interpreted and, as necessary, openly contested. One way to engage in this cultural analysis is to use the typology that Raymond Williams developed in his work in cultural studies as part of his search for a lived and knowable community. His typology is built around two ideas: culture as knowledge (where, with the advent of postindustrial society, valued knowledge has been cast as techno-scientific knowledge) and culture as community (where, from social and cultural perspectives, valued knowledge remains associated with work, popular culture, class, and community relationships) (Grossberg, 1997).

Culture as knowledge has been deemed integral to the progress of postindustrial society. Our pedagogical engagement with it demands that we interrogate how adult educational practice as a cultural practice is variously enabled, enhanced, or limited by the techno-scientization of knowledge. This requires that we understand the new ways in which knowledge is produced, exchanged, and distributed in the field and between the field and the larger community. It necessitates that we question the notion of techno-scientific knowledge as *the* knowledge with most worth. Since holding this notion would be tantamount to engaging in pedagogical terrorism, it is important that adult educational practice as a cultural practice also take up the notion of culture as community, which focuses on the meaning and value of popular knowledges of people living in the everyday. This engagement, crucial to ways of knowing and living community, requires that we value community knowledges produced in local, regional, and

national contexts. This helps us to understand community as a living cultural space where different people, different knowledges, and different understandings of education and society make community a fluid and even contested notion. It also helps us to understand that pedagogy has to dwell in cultural space that is shifting, indeterminate, permeable, and variegated, and that community emerges in the intersection where differences collide.

Thus, building an inclusive pedagogy of lifelong-learning community, requires that we struggle over and understand these two conceptualizations of culture, which expand both the spaces that culture can occupy and the bases constituting knowledge. By taking up culture as community, we build popular knowledges associated with differences including work culture, customs, and community attachments. This helps us to interrogate social relationships formed, lived out, and represented in cultural spaces like workplaces. By taking up culture as knowledge, we can come to terms with formalized knowledges with worth in the intersection of the economic and the cultural. From Williams' perspective, juxtaposing these knowledges amounts to navigating learning spaces as cultural border zones where we can expose the problem of living between culture as knowledge and culture as community. This juxtaposition demonstrates the inextricable link between culture and power, and it indicates that culture is a site of struggle, where the relationship between culture and power is always changing. Grossberg (1997) offers this overview of Williams's perspective:

> "Culture then defined a problem of place and belonging or participation. ... Power was not seen as something external, eliminatable, a mere interruption of some idealized image of cultural processes. Instead, [culture and power] ... began with an assumed distance between culture [as knowledge] and [culture as] community, with the notion that power always fractures culture. Hence culture was always more than just a process, for it involved struggles between competing sets of practices and relations, and that sense of struggle meant that it was inevitably tied up with relations of power" (p 249).

ACADEMIC ADULT EDUCATORS AS CULTURAL WORKERS: LIVING OUT A PEDAGOGY OF LIFELONG-LEARNING COMMUNITY

If adult education is a vocation as Collins (1991) argues it should be, then one way academic adult educators can live out this vocation is by being cultural workers who shape adult education and public life as democratic cultural sites. This work is at the heart of a pedagogy of lifelong-learning community. It emulates what Giroux (1993) calls a pedagogy of place, which addresses "the specificities of the experiences, problems, languages, and histories that students and communities rely upon to construct a narrative of collective identity and possible transformation" (p 121). In engaging this pedagogy, academic adult educators must reflect on the politics of their own locatedness as they come to terms with the politics locating citizen learners and workers. A focus on these politics is part of a process "to make clear the power, limits, partiality, and indeterminacy of the sites which inscribe and enable one's sense of place, identity, and possibilities for action" (Giroux, 1993, p 78). This process reveals the intricacies of cultural practice.

Building an inclusive pedagogy of lifelong-learning community as a pedagogy of place requires academic adult educators to examine their historical and cultural roles in the larger community. These roles include helping citizens adjust to new cultural formations that alter learning and work, and helping them create partnerships with other cultural workers in communities and government. Academic adult educators must think about the kinds of instrumental, social, and cultural learning that citizen learners need in our contemporary change culture of crisis and challenge. No citizens or groups are immune to the effects of this culture. Indeed this culture has challenged academic adult education itself. For at least the last decade, academic adult education in Canadian universities has been subjected to significant structural reorganization. In my estimation, the outcome of this difficult process holds promise. Academic adult education has been integrated into departments with titles like Educational Policy Studies, or the more cumbersome Adult Education, Community Development, and Counseling Psychology. Academic adult educators (whether by choice or design) now have increased opportunities to use intra-disciplinary (turning to discourses in public-school and higher education) and interdisciplinary (turning to discourses in sociology, psychology, and other disciplines) approaches to frame teaching, research, practice, and service. These opportunities can support their roles as educators and cultural workers.

As part of building an inclusive pedagogy of lifelong-learning community, academic adult educators might explore four broad themes reflecting Freire's (1998) call to think the practice. First, lifelong learning is an inclusive educational project shaped in the intersection of instrumental, social, and cultural education (Grace, 1997b). Citizen learners and workers concerned with

security and survival in contemporary change culture need to engage in all three forms of adult education so they can accrue ways of knowing that enable them to navigate diverse cultural spaces. This engagement helps citizen learners to theorize technique, which is a linchpin of community as knowledge. Academic adult educators can turn to social and cultural theory to help them demonstrate that instrumental learning and the technological fix are neither transparent nor apolitical. They are complicated by contexts, relationships, and dispositions. Thus, for food-on-the table instruction to be a more inclusive educational practice, it must take place in the intersection of culture as community and culture as knowledge.

Second, lifelong learning is an intra-disciplinary educational project shaped by theory, research, and practice in public (schooling for children), adult, and higher education. Building community in adult and other learning spaces involves adult educators speaking to, and working with, other educators across the educational spectrum to shape a project of critical education that draws on the diversity of colleagues' lived and learned educational and cultural experiences. The knowledges exchanged and distributed can help academic adult educators concerned with building a pedagogy of lifelong-learning community to further theorize and contextualize their projects.

Third, lifelong learning is an inter-disciplinary learning project shaped by turns to diverse discourses including those in history, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. However, we must proceed mindful of the limits of academic disciplines, which develop, of course, within particular practices (Giroux et al., 1988). Disciplines comprise knowledge depots that incorporate certain methods and reflect the social, cultural, and institutional requirements that give them space and place in universities. When they operate in isolation, disciplines limit possibilities for discourse because "to be part of a discipline means to ask certain questions, to use a particular set of terms, and to study a relatively narrow set of things" (p 146). Thus, using an interdisciplinary approach to build inclusionary pedagogy, must include critical analysis of disciplines as culture-power discourses as we traverse disciplinary boundaries to access ways of knowing and understanding that help us think educational practice.

Fourth, lifelong learning is an educational project where matters of location (context, relationship, and disposition) contour the learning terrain and frame its inclusionary and transformative characteristics. As educators, Apple (1993) challenges us to construct learning communities and practices that empower students as "*co-responsible subjects* [his italics]" (p 3) who think and act with the intention of building cultural democracy. The citizen, and how the citizen is located, are at the heart of this cultural and political work. Thus, communicative learning must engage matters of location. This is uneasy learning fraught with conflicts and risks. However, it is a vital engagement because it keeps diversity and the impact of the culture-power nexus upfront in the process of building a pedagogy of lifelong-learning community.

CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVE

Today with work becoming increasingly more precarious, a pedagogy of lifelong-learning community is useful to enable what Canadian adult educator J. Roby Kidd (1973) has called the process of being-becoming-belonging in education and culture. This is a vital process in light of the ongoing assault on the integrity of displaced citizen workers who are affected by what Aronowitz & DiFazio (1994) call the "sci-tech" revolution. They purport that this revolution, which has radically reconfigured forms of work, skill, and occupation, ties knowledge, not skill, to capital and technology. It positions knowledge as a "free-floating commodity to the extent that it is transformed into information that requires no productive object" (p 17). They relate that joblessness, partial and permanent unemployment, declining wages, and the displacement of full-time work are the "dystopian consequences" (p 31) of this generalized shift. This challenges academic adult educators to arm citizen learners with the instrumental, social, and cultural knowledges necessary to navigate a reconfigured work world. It is in responding to this challenge that we help to build a pedagogy of lifelong-learning community as a pedagogy of place.

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