



The Work and Learning Network for Research and Policy

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

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The **Work and Learning Network for Research and Policy**, from January 2007 to December 2007, continued to undertake and stimulate relevant work and learning activities in its fifth year of operation. Activities were intended to support the three main areas of focus that define the WLN. They are:

1. Identify, support and disseminate findings of research projects on various issues related to work and learning.
 2. Give visible presence to research integrating work and learning issues through seminar series and conferences.
 3. Encourage collaboration and partnerships among researchers, practitioners and policy workers involved in the network.
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WEBSITE

The Work and Learning Network website (www.wln.ualberta.ca) in 2007 site includes:

- Information about the Network – mandate, research interests, activities, a list of board members.
- Upcoming events and archives of seminars and conferences.
- A resource center which includes abstracts and full text versions of relevant research papers and links to other resources.
- A members' list which includes members' practice and research interests.

New in 2007

- The WLN annual reports
 - An archive of the monthly broadcasts which started June, 2007.
 - A search feature
 - A hit counter which has indicated 150-200 hits per month on average
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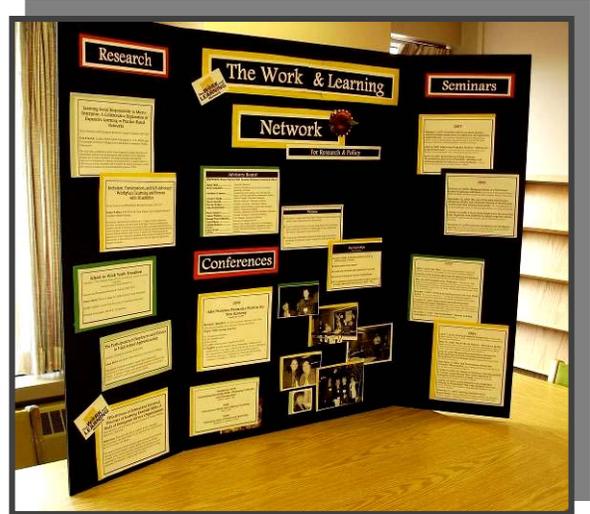
NEW WLN ACTIVITIES IN 2007

MONTHLY BROADCASTS

The WLN monthly broadcast initiative to the WLN mailing list was launched June 15, 2007. In this broadcast, Director Alison Taylor, informed members of its purpose which is to share information about upcoming events (e.g., conferences, meetings, seminars) and publications (books, articles, reports) related to work and learning. Members of the WLN are invited to participate in these broadcasts by forwarding items of interest related to work and learning to Julie Salembier (WLN Administrative officer) at wln@ualberta.ca. Broadcasts An archive of broadcasts is available on the WLN website at www.wln.ualberta.ca.

POSTER:

A tri-fold poster was created by the administration officer in 2007 and brought to seminars and symposia to display who WLN is and what they do. In addition, the poster was presented at the Educational Policy Studies Research Day on April 17, 2007. The purpose of the event is to showcase students and faculty research work and/or other activities.



SEMINAR SERIES

The WLN was very active in 2007 hosting five seminars and two symposia. The seminars are as follows:

February 7, 2007: Disability effective inclusive policies: student and staff perspectives on experiences throughout the student lifecycle

Presenters: Ann-Marie Houghton, Director of REAP, Dept of Educational Research Lancaster University and Pamela Hoare, Director, Centre for Continuing Education, University of Sussex. The paper presentation explored five issues - disclosure, transition, funding, legislation, and careers - that disabled students face as they progress through higher education and into employment. Data from interviews with disabled students and university staff was presented and considered how the higher education experience influences progression into employment. Twenty-two were in attendance.

April 18, 2007: Unprotected lifelong learning and the politics of hope: A feminist perspective.

Presenter: Jill Blackmore, Professor of Education, Deakin University, Australia. Drawing from international and Australian research, this seminar addressed how Lifelong Learning policies impact on women and other equity groups. The dominant discourse of Lifelong Learning promises much to many people in the new work and education order. This politics of hope is dulled when it meets with the reality of the possibilities arising from current policies of lifelong learning. Attendance was fifteen.

May 9, 2007: Addressing Workplace Realities - Putting you in the Driver's Seat Presenters: Ann Wilson of EPCOR and David McPhail of TELUS

This session was designed as a networking and dialogue opportunity. The topic of multi-generations and their learning and work styles, career aspirations and thoughts related to work/life balance was presented. How and what workplace learning and organizational

effectiveness groups are doing to tackle these changes were discussed. Participants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and practices in addressing current workplace realities. Attendance, because of the time of year, was low at seven.

May 11, 2007: Research on Work and Learning

Presenters: Tara Fenwick, Sarah Hoffman, Janice Wallace, Alison Taylor, Robert McGray & Bonnie Watt-Malcolm.

Research topics covered were: **a) WLN Research - what does the workplace have to do with education?** A quick overview of the questions and themes that have been guiding the research of the Work and Learning Network. **b) Dis/abilities in the Workplace - challenging ableist norms and learning to create able-ing environments for all.** A report on the conclusion of its first phase, the issues around ableism and ability in the workplace, reported by activists and researchers in critical disability studies. **c) Partnership as a site of struggle.** A report was given on the specific partnership that was developed to promote apprenticeship in Fort McMurray within the broader context of industrial and workplace relations in order to promote a conception of partnerships as sites of struggle. There were twenty people in attendance.

November 1, 2007: The Temporary Foreign Worker program: Impacts on Alberta

Presenter: Shannon Marchand, Executive Director of Immigration Policy and Programs, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry. He gave an overview of the operation of the Government of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker program, the role of the federal and provincial governments in its administration, and current issues associated with the program and potential future directions. Forty people were in attendance.

SPRING SYMPOSIUM

June 4, 2007 - Labour Symposium on Youth Apprenticeship Training.

Planning

The Symposium planning committee members were Alison Taylor, Joan Schiebelbein, Bonnie Watt-Malcolm, Ursule Critoph, and Julie Salembier

Report

On June 4, 2007 the Work and Learning Network (WLN) for Research and Policy of the University of Alberta hosted the *Labour Symposium on Youth Apprenticeship Training*. Representatives of six unions attend this symposium.

The intent of the symposium was:

- a) to discuss what is currently being done by Alberta labour unions in the area of youth apprenticeship training and
- b) to generate ideas for future collaborative research between university researchers and unions on the topic of youth apprenticeships.

In August 2007, a summary report was sent to the participants as well as other union organizations that could not attend. Attached to this report was a follow-up questionnaire. We contacted the receivers of the questionnaire via telephone to increase the response rate. For those participants that attended the symposium, we asked them if there were additional comments they

wanted to add. Some of the ideas generated by means of the symposium and the follow-up questionnaire directly related to youth apprenticeship in Alberta are numerous.

First, many high school students are not aware of Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) even if it is offered at their school. Only about 1% of high school students are involved in RAP. Furthermore, the present secondary education system is too restrictive in their timetabling because schedules do not allow students the option to travel to workplaces.

Second, there are concerns that the skills learned during work experience programs and RAP are limited. Essential skills such as document use and numeracy are foundational competencies that need to be included in training programs.

Third, RAP is not suitable for all trades. For example, some shop work can be very dangerous for anyone who has not had adequate safety training.

Fourth, RAP students are typically hired by non-union employers. Employers can be reluctant to hire young apprentices and often prefer to hire lower-paid labourers. Wages are high even for people who are not apprenticing. High school youth can be hired as labourers and be paid more than a RAP student. Thus, there are few incentives for youth labourers to change their status to RAP apprentices and pursue a formal training program.

Last, even though employers may be reluctant to hire young workers, employers sometimes hire RAP students as free (cheap) labour. They are glorified labourers. On the jobsite RAP students often encounter a “pay your dues” attitude.

The **next steps** are to: 1) continue to build relationships and partnerships with labour, 2) get a clearer picture of the stakeholders in youth apprenticeship and defining the structures and institutions, 3) document current and projected work that various groups are doing in Canada, and 4) design a research proposal that builds on the work to date.

~submitted by Bonnie Watt-Malcolm

FALL SYMPOSIUM

December 6, 2007 - Finding a home in the global economy: Temporary Foreign Workers in Alberta

Purpose

On Thursday, 6 December 2007 the Work and Learning Network (WLN) hosted the symposium, ‘Finding a home in the global economy: Temporary foreign workers in Alberta.’ The purpose of the symposium was to share information about issues related to temporary foreign workers (TFWs) in Alberta from a variety of perspectives and encourage discussion about research that is needed to inform policy decisions.

Planning

The planning committee included WLN board members Alison Taylor, Joan Schiebelbein (University of Alberta) and Jason Foster (Alberta Federation of Labour), Julie Salembier (WLN Administrator), Winston Gereluk (Athabasca University and International Confederation for Free Trade Unions), Mildred Klassen (Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry), Nickela Anderson (Graduate research assistant, WLN) and Jim Gurnett and Val Cudmore (Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers). The committee expected about 25 people to attend the symposium. However, over 100 people registered and roughly 115 attend. They came from

academia (professors, graduate and undergraduate students), labour, government, social service and immigration serving agencies, community groups, and employers.

The individuals who were invited to speak at the symposium also represented a variety of areas. They included representatives from the three government departments involved with TFWs in Alberta (Service Canada, Canadian Immigration and Citizenship, and Alberta Employment, Industry and Immigration); individuals who provide advocacy and support services for TFWs (Alberta Federation of Labour, Catholic Social Services and United Food and Commercial Workers); and academics. They along with members of the audience raised and discussed a number of key issues affecting TFWs in Alberta. The feedback from the participants was very positive and demonstrates that there is a real need for research in this area.

~submitted by Joan Schiebelbein

RESEARCH

One research project initiated in 2004 came to a conclusion in 2006 and two others will be completed in 2007.

1. *Learning Social Responsibility in Micro-Enterprise: A Collaborative Exploration of Expansive Learning in Practice-Based Networks*

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2004-2007

Tara Fenwick, Lynette Shultz, Elizabeth Lange (Concordia University-College), Lee-Anne Ragan (Community Works, Vancouver) and Research Assistant - Tara Gibb (U of A). Research is complete.

This study uses a collaborative action research approach to study corporate social responsibility practices that develop among small business owners. One group began meeting in Vancouver, November 2004. Another group started in Edmonton in 2005, with focus group dialogues and individual interviews completed in 2006. The project purposes were to: (1) to create a network of self-employed people to develop and experiment with practices of corporate social responsibility tailored to micro-enterprise; (2) to identify effects (economic, personal, social and ecological) of CSR practices in micro-enterprise; and (3) to examine the learning processes by which self-employed Canadians develop and implement practices of CSR. Outcomes were:

Lange, E. & Fenwick, T. (2008). Moral Commitments to Community: Mapping Social Responsibility and its Ambiguities among Small Business Owners. *Social Responsibility Journal*, April.

Fenwick, T. & Gibb, T. (in press). Conflicts in Social Responsibility: Experiences of Canadian Small Business Owners. *Journal of Business Ethics*.

Fenwick, T., Gibb, T., Shultz, L. & Lange, E. (2006). Balancing Contradictions: Social Responsibility, Work and Economy, *Work and Learning Conference: Precarious Work in the New Economy*, University of Alberta, Edmonton, October 16, 2006.

- Presentation to the Academy of Human Resource Development, February 2005
- Presentation and paper to the Adult Education Research Conference, June 2005

3. *Inclusion, Participation, and Self-Advocacy: Workplace Learning and Persons with Disabilities*

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2005-2007

Janice Wallace, Tara Fenwick, Dick Sobsey, Katy Campbell, Research Assistant: Sarah Hoffman

The specific objectives of this project are to 1) begin to build a collaborative university-community network to share knowledge, resources, and perspectives related to the role of learning in increasing inclusion, participation and self-advocacy in the workplace of persons with disabilities; 2) identify significant issues and leading research findings informing these issues; 3) identify new research questions and approaches towards a larger grant proposal; and 4) promote the work of the network more widely to draw attention to these issues within the larger work-and-learning research community

Outcomes to date:

- A one-day symposium (October 2006) with invited participants from Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and the UK to identify potential themes for future exploration.
- A follow-up consultation process and information sharing session with potential research partners in Ontario and the UK during the first week in February, 2007.

4. *The Participation of Employers and Unions in High School Apprenticeship.*

Canadian Council on Learning, 2006-2008

Alison Taylor & Bonnie Watt-Malcolm (U of A).

This project investigates industry factors that influence the effectiveness of high school apprenticeship programs in Alberta and Ontario. A number of high school apprenticeship initiatives involving a variety of construction trades and partners are explored.

5. *“School-to-Work Youth Transition” sub-grant of ‘The Changing Nature of Work and Lifelong Learning in the New Economy: National and Case Study Perspectives’*

Sciences and Humanities Research Council. 2003-2007

Alison Taylor, Project Leader for “School-Work Youth Transition”. SSHRC Initiative on the New Economy, Collaborative Research. Principal Investigator: David W. Livingstone. \$2,984,424.

This case study examines policy and practice related to school-work transition (SWT) programs within the K-12 education system in Ontario and Alberta. Recent educational reforms in these provinces include initiatives aimed at improving student transitions. The objective is to learn more about how work education programs work in order to inform policy and practice. It

addresses the lack of information in research literature about the experiences of historically disadvantaged students (cf. Levin, 1999) and the perspectives of organized labour and community groups (Taylor, 2002).

Details at: <http://www.wallnetwork.ca/research/taylor5pager.pdf>

Outcomes to date:

- **Three Book Chapters:** By Dehli, K. and Taylor, A. (2006); Taylor, A., Shultz, L. & Leard, D. (2005); Heinz, W. & Taylor, A. (2005).
 - **Eleven Journal articles** (2005 – present): Authored or co-authored by A. Taylor, B. Watt-Malcolm, L. Shultz, S. Brigham, D. Wishart, and H. Krahn.
 - **Eight reports** (2004 – 2005)
In *CAREERS the Next Generation* by A. Taylor, A. Sabetghadam, E. Steinhauer & S. Brigham
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INFRASTRUCTURE

Board

The WLN Board met three times in 2007 to oversee *WLN* activities, provide advice and approve expenditures and decisions about seminars and symposia. .

In 2007:

- Tara Fenwick, WLN founder and director, moved onto her new position at UBC and left the Board in July.
- Ursule Critoph took a leave from the board in September to study in Toronto. She will continue to be involved as a liaison with Centre for the Study of Education and Work, Toronto.
- Katy Campbell stepped off of the board to pursue other projects.
- Bonnie Watt-Malcolm completed her Ph.D and joined the faculty of Secondary Education. She continued as a director in a new designation as a representative of another faculty department at the University of Alberta.

New board directors for 2007 are:

- Christine Couture, Executive Director, Labour Force Development, Alberta Employment, Immigration, Industry
 - Mildred Klassen (an alternate), Senior Policy Analyst, Labour Force Development Branch, Alberta EII
 - Walter Archer, Research Office, Extension Specialist, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta
 - Jason Foster, Alberta Federation of Labour, Director of Policy Analysis
 - Janice Bell, Director of Volunteer Edmonton (a program of The Support Network)
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FUNDRAISING

The WLN received funding support from the Dean of Education for the amount of \$35,000.

The Department of Educational Policy Studies continued to support WLN with in-kind donations of office staff, administrative support, office space and access to internet/printer.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Alison Taylor met with David Livingstone and Peter Sawchuk in November 2007 during a trip to Toronto and discussed possible future collaborative work with the Centre for the Study of Education and Work (CSEW). Ursule Critoph (a former WLN board member) is currently a doctoral student at OISE and has been hired to liaise with WLN. We also discussed the possibility of CSEW and WLN alternating the organization of annual conferences on the topic of learning and work.
- WLN continues its partnership with the Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI) [<http://www.labourhistory.ca/>] through Joan Schiebelbein's connection.