

The header features a collage of colorful gears in red, yellow, and green, interspersed with various fruits including apples and a large green leaf. The logo for 'The WORK and LEARNING Network' is positioned on the left side of this collage.

The **WORK** and
LEARNING
Network

FOR RESEARCH AND POLICY

The Work and Learning Network for Research and Policy

ANNUAL REPORT 2006

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INTRODUCTION

The *Work and Learning Network for Research and Policy*, from January to December 2006, continued to undertake and facilitate relevant work and learning activities in its fourth year of operation. Activities were intended to support the three main areas of focus that define the WLN. They are:

1. To identify, support and disseminate findings of research projects of various issues integrating work and learning.
2. To give visible presence to research integrating work and learning issues within the University of Alberta and among collaborating individuals, organizations and institutions.
3. To encourage collaboration and partnerships among researchers, practitioners and policy workers engaged in work and learning issues.

WEBSITE

The Work and Learning Network website (www.wln.ualberta.ca) in 2006 experienced some minor changes to the navigation buttons, resizing of the banner and re-positioning of the logo. Using the existing design, the site was placed into a template for easier one-step editing. The 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 their practice and research interests.
- The members' online information was updated in December, 2006. The number increased from 48 to 76.

SEMINAR SERIES

Although there was yet another change to the WLN administration, as well as a transition to a new director and a labour intensive conference, four seminars were offered to the membership this year. They were:

February 27, 2006: Managing Change as a Professional Learner: Challenges and Issues

Panel Discussion with: Terri Schindel, Director of Continuing Pharmacy Education; Helen M. Madill, Graduate Programs Coordinator, Centre for Health Promotion Studies; and Katy Campbell, Associate Dean, Faculty of Extension. The key issues discussed were: the role of social support in achieving learning goals, dilemmas faced by professional women learners and the importance of informal learning in practice contexts.

September 27, 2006: The role of Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) and vocational learning in boosting post -16 education rates among young people.

(Reflections on current policy making in Britain)

Presenters: Dr. Susan Maguire and Dr. Prue Huddleston, Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick. This paper explores the role of vocational learning in boosting post-16 education participation rates among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Britain.

October 24, 2006: A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Bank: Beginning from Disability to Explore Corporate Culture

Presenter: Dr. Kathryn Church, Associate Professor, School of Disability, Ryerson University. Her research explores the work-learning relations that shape and are shaped by disabled employees in the financial sector. Twenty people were in attendance.

November 15, 2006: Corporate Perspectives on Workplace Learning

Presenters: Ann Wilson, Senior Manager, Workplace Learning and Communication, Energy Services EPCOR, and David McPhail, Director Performance Culture, Learning and Development TELUS in Edmonton. Insights into corporate learning were shared. Twenty-five people attended.

CONFERENCE

The largest and the most labour intensive activity in 2006 was the conference held on October 20- 21, 2006 entitled, **False Promises: Precarious Work in a New Economy.**

With roughly 60-70 attendees, this event connected researchers, educators, government workers, organizations, businesses and non-profit groups. Papers and panels examined the way in which work has been reorganized and become increasingly precarious in the new economy. (A full Conference Report is available.)

Planning

The Conference Committee was chaired by Judy Sillito and assisted by: Julie Salembier (WLN Administrative Officer), Sharlene Baergen-Fladager, Carol Bolding, Tara Fenwick, Joan Schiebelbein, Bruce Spencer, Alison Taylor, Janice Wallace and Bonnie Watt-Malcolm.

Program

- The keynote address on Friday evening was given by Dr. Ron Saunders, Director of the Work Network at Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN). The title of his presentation was *Making Work Pay* and focused on issues around the large share of the workforce in Canada who continue to earn very low pay with limited employment benefit, and little opportunity to upgrade their skills.
- On Saturday, there were 18 presentations (paper and panel), one poster and 2 dramatizations and included presenters who were, in large, local and Canadian but also a few from as far away as Australia and Denmark. Some of the topics were: barriers facing immigrants; trading my health for money; low wage workers in the service sector; challenging the organization of skilled trade work; a response to building and educating tomorrow's workforce: Alberta's 10 year strategy.
- A dramatization, *Postmodern worker's theatre: A quest for character in the new economy* was presented during lunch on Saturday while another dramatic presentation, *Skilled in vulnerability: An ethnodrama on learning in the racialized culture of contingency* was offered as a plenary session to all registrants at the end of the conference also on Saturday.

General Feedback

Since there were no paper evaluation forms, committee members in their conversations with registrants had the following feedback and comments about the conference:

- “The feedback I received from the participants was great. They enjoyed the session topics and the food”!
- “I heard really good things from conference delegates about how well organized it was and the quality of discussions and food”.
- “I heard very positive comments regarding the conference and I enjoyed it also”!
- “I thought the conference was very well done...the sessions I sat in on were interesting, the speakers were excellent and I was overall very pleased with the experience (not something I say about all conferences)...my only regret is that I didn't have time to attend more of the sessions (I won't let that one happen again!). Bravo, well done to all of you”!!!!
- “I thought the presentations were great...high quality, interesting, relevant”.
- Some participants said that the drama at noon was enjoyable while one remarked that it was too much.



Conference Committee members

RESEARCH

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

1. *Effectiveness of Formal and Informal Processes of Learning Essential Skills: A Study of Immigrant Service Organizations*

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada: Strategic Initiatives, 2004-2006.

Shibao Guo, Tara Fenwick, Katy Campbell, with Ev Hamdon, Zenobia Jamal, and Tara Gibb (U of A), and Yan Guo with Elizabeth Kuva (University of Calgary)

This project focuses on both formal (classroom-based) and informal learning processes related to employability that occurs through volunteer work, classes and client counseling at immigrant service organizations. Four case studies of service organizations are being conducted in Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver.

Outcomes:

One Workshop:

Delivering essential skills to immigrants: The role of immigrant service organizations.
Developing Essential Skills: Changing Contexts and Perspectives (Chaired by T. Fenwick).
April 25-27, 2005, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Conference Papers

In 2006, there were five **conference papers** prepared by K. Campbell, T. Fenwick, S. Guo, Y. Guo, T. Gibb, E. Hamdon, E. Kuva, and Z. Jamal presented at the following conferences:

- 36th Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults, 2006, Leeds, UK; 25th Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE) Conference, 2006, Toronto; 8th National Metropolis Conference, Immigration and Canada's Place in a Changing World, Vancouver; Conference of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) and the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics (CAAL), 2006, Montreal.

Two Book Chapters

- By Guo, S. (2006). and Guo, S. & Andersson, P. (2006).

One article in a Research Journal

Guo, S. (in review). In *Canadian Ethnic Studies*.

Eight Conference Proceedings:

Eight conference proceedings' documents produced by the research team along with other participating researchers in 2005 and 2006.

2. *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, Sarah Pocklington (U of A), Beth Lange (Concordia University-College), Lee-Anne Ragan (Community Works, Vancouver). Research is in progress.

This study uses a collaborative action research approach to study corporate social responsibility practices that develop among small business owners. One group has been meeting in Vancouver since November 2004. Another group is about to start in Edmonton. The project purposes are: (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 to date:

- 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-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.

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

INFRASTRUCTURE

Board

The *WLN* Board met three times in 2006 to oversee *WLN* activities, provide advice and approve major expenditures and decisions.

Tara Fenwick, director of *WLN*, was on sabbatical leave from July 2005 until July 2006. During her absence Alison Taylor took on the role of director and she and Janice Wallace alternated chairing the Board meeting.

During 2006, the paid administrative support officer changed again. Sherry Seymour left the position at the end of February, 2006. The position in early April was filled by Julie Salembier.

At the end of 2006, two board members (Mark Biddle and Val Mayes) gave notice that they will be leaving the Board in Jan, 2007.

FUNDRAISING

Contributions by Athabasca University, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Extension, and Department of Educational Policy Studies were made to offset the cost of the conference.

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

- WLN supported the proposal from OISE/UT for the creation of a Lifelong Learning and Work Network (LAWN). It was submitted to SSHRC's Strategic Knowledge Clusters Program, November 2006. If the application is successful, Alison Taylor will be a member of the LAWN Steering Committee, which will provide excellent opportunities for future partnership activities.
- WLN continues its partnership with the Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI) [<http://www.labourhistory.ca/>] through Joan Schiebelbein's connection.