

False Promises: Precarious Work in the New Economy

2006 Conference Proceedings
October 20 & 21, 2006

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Making Work Pay..... By Ron Saunders

Dr. Ron Saunders, Director of the Work Network at Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN)

Despite strong economic growth, a large share of the workforce in Canada continues to earn very low pay with limited employment benefit, and little opportunity to upgrade their skills. This leads to outcomes that most would regard as unfair and wastes people's potential. A multi-faceted policy response is needed.

PAPER PRESENTATIONS

1. **Here today, but what about tomorrow?** by Janet Lane, Literacy Alberta and Suzanne Koersen, NextStep Community Training and Development (PowerPoint Presentation)

Not only are contingent, part-time and contract labourers facing precarious work situations; so are many of those in full-time permanent positions. 'Here today, but what about tomorrow?' focuses on the precarious work situations of individuals with low literacy in today's ever evolving knowledge-based economy. It brings forward the current, daily and future challenges for those members of the workforce and also examines the hard facts of literacy and its impact on the world of work

2. **Full Participation in Canadian Society Continues to be a Challenge for Immigrant Women** by Dr. Fay Fletcher, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta

Immigrant women face many challenges when attempting to participate and integrate with Canadian society - lack of recognition of credentials, difficulty accessing adequate upgrading and language programs, isolation, partial citizenship and discrimination, all contributing to a lack of self confidence and self esteem. This research is based on interviews completed with immigrant women in 2004.

3. **Learning on the edge: Connecting people and l(e)arning in the everyday to policy and practice possibilities** by Terrie Lynn Thompson, University of Alberta

Workers perched on the edge of the workplace - self-employed contractors and consultants - are often left on their own to create a place and space for their learning activities. This paper explores how these workers participate in informal learning, specifically, how they use (or do not use) web-based technologies to tap into communities of practice. We need to better understand how technology facilitates or frustrates everyday knowledge-building practices that unfold in these types of web-based communities.

4. **Through the Looking Glass Ceiling : Reflections of the Disabled Work Experience** by Robin Slater, Cubic

In the New Economy one is defined by what you do not who you are; what you have is more important than what you give; your value as a human being is secondary to the value of your equity; and finding a job and accommodation takes precedence over discovering one's gifts and soul. It's the topsy-turvy world of being down the Rabbit-Hole, where values and priorities are turned upside down. Whether impeded through genetics, trauma or aging, this has always been the case for the disabled, synonyms for being powerless, demoralized, ineffective, and disqualified. These labels describe much of the present-day paid workforce as well as those of us working just to survive another day.

5. **Putting Women in the Picture** by Deanna Yerichuk, A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW) (PowerPoint Presentation) \

This presentation discusses a research action project being undertaken by **A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women** (ACTEW) in Ontario to sustain and enhance community-based employment and training services for women in the context of the recently signed Canada-Ontario Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and the Labour Market Partnership Agreement (LMPA). The presentation discusses how federal and provincial labour policy development has increasingly excluded more marginalized workers over the last ten years, disproportionately affecting women.

6. **Precarious Work - a New Challenge for the Danish Trade Unions** by Dr. Anders Siig Andersen and Janne Gleerup, Roskilde University, Denmark

The paper focuses on work conditions in Danish home care organisations. The "precarious work" is not yet widespread throughout Scandinavia. Nonetheless, there are several characteristics of the precarious work such as uncertain and straining conditions, which also pertain to, for instance, permanent positions in the lower end of the public sector's job hierarchy. The emphasis of this paper is on the elucidation of educational and developmental initiatives in the home care sector. The example demonstrates that the offer of educational space and creative activities may enable the participants to articulate - based on their own experiences - how the work in home care settings may be developed in a more sustainable direction.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Making Work Pay by Ron Saunders

Thank you for the opportunity to address this conference, *False Promises, Precarious Work in the New Economy*. In light of the federal spending cuts announced on September 25th, the term "precarious work" has taken on new meaning for me,... but I won't dwell on that this evening. Rather I will talk about who is being left behind by the labour market and what we should do about it.

John F. Kennedy, stated, more than once, "A rising tide lifts all boats."

The tide in the labour market does seem to be rising, in Canada overall and especially in Alberta. The unemployment rate in Canada in September was 6.4%, a much lower rate than even a few years ago, let alone what it was in the last recession, which ended well over a decade ago. Average hourly wages rose 3 percent in Canada between Sept. 2005 and Sept 2006, higher than the year over year increase in consumer prices of 0.7%.

In Alberta, the labour market picture was even rosier. Unemployment in September was 3.5%. Wages rose on average by 7.7% over the past 12 months. Some of that was eaten up by a relatively high increase in consumer prices, of 3.7%, but real wages still grew substantially, on average.

When people talk about “work” today, it’s about skills shortages – workers are in demand. Unfortunately, however, the rising tide is not lifting all boats. Large numbers of workers are being left behind—struggling to make ends meet amid a buoyant labour market.

Let’s review some of the evidence.

I’m first going to present some data on low pay in Canada derived by Statistics Canada from the 2000 Census. These data are admittedly a bit old. But they allow us to link demographic characteristics, pay rates, and family incomes in a richer way than do other data sources. And while the overall picture might be a bit less gloomy today, you will see that we have a long way to go to ensure all workers have access to decent pay and working conditions.

In its research on low pay from the 2000 Census, Statistics Canada focused on people who worked mainly full-time. This is not to say, of course, that we don’t have a problem with involuntary part-time employment, or that everyone who would like a job can find one. But the focus on full-time workers is useful because it allows us to focus on the adequacy of wage rates. Are pay rates high enough that at least people who work full-time can avoid poverty? Let’s take a look at the data.

Review slides on low pay (Slides present data on the incidence of low-pay among full-time workers, by demographic group. Low-pay is disproportionate among women, youth, the less-educated, recent immigrants, lone mothers.)

We have seen that large share of the national labour market experiences a quite low rate of pay. Recent studies by Statistics Canada suggest that, for the country overall, this share had not improved by 2004, although it did improve a bit in Alberta and Saskatchewan compared to the year 2000.

The longer historical trend is not encouraging. The share of full-time workers earning under \$10/hour, in year 2000 dollars, actually grew in Canada between 1980 and 2000, from 15.4% to 16.3%. This happened despite that fact that real GDP per capita grew by a cumulative total of 43% over that period. Average educational attainment also rose markedly over this period. Moreover, real median wages in Canada were stagnant over the period between 1981 and 2004, showing some gain in 2005 but none in 2006. (The story for mean, or average, wages looks better than for median wages, because the disproportionate gains for high earners lift the average.) Even in Alberta, the gains in median wages in 2006 have been quite small. And inflation-adjusted earnings of young, less-educated men in Canada, despite some improvement in recent years, remain below the level in 1980.

The people at the bottom of the labour market are not being lifted by the rising tide.

Low pay is not a new phenomenon. Low-paid work has represented a large share of the Canadian labour market for a long time. But it is persisting in the face of economic growth and a more educated workforce.

Some people say that most low-paid workers live with other wage earners or those who have other sources of income, so we needn't worry. There are a couple of responses to that. One is that it is questionable to expect people to rely on another earner to avoid poverty. Family units are not as stable as they once were, and there is value in each wage-earner having a capacity for independence. However, even if one accepts that we should look at family income, the Statscan data indicate that about 30% of those full-time workers who were low-waged in the year 2000 were living in households with combined family income less than the low-income threshold. That is still a very sizeable number.

Also, other work by Statistics Canada has shown about half of people who were low-paid in the year 1996 had not risen above that five years later. And the percentage is much worse than half for women.

Of course, as you are well aware, the problems facing people at the bottom end of the labour market go well beyond wage rates.

Many are working part-time involuntarily, so they can't get enough work hours to have decent earnings.

Own account self-employed—people who work on their own and do not employ others-- not only experience low earnings, on average, but also lack coverage by employment standards laws. Some regular employees do not benefit from the laws because of lack of compliance with them. Non-standard and low-paid workers have little access to extended medical coverage or employer pension plan. We say we value publicly-funded health care, yet we allow low-paid working people to be impoverished if they have family members with a chronic need for pharmaceuticals. That's weird. We insist that social assistance recipients have drug benefits, but in most provinces we don't do the same for low-paid workers. That's also weird.

It is also the case that relatively few low-paid workers are union members. (See slide)

Low-paid workers who would like to upgrade their skills have great difficulty doing so. A recent CPRN study by Myers and de Broucker shows that our adult learning systems are full of holes and difficult to navigate. Access to learning opportunities, whether through second chances in the formal education system, through government-funded programs in the community, or through employer-sponsored training, is generally poor for less-educated adults in Canada. Yet 9 million Canadians aged 16 to 65 years have literacy skills below the level considered necessary to live and work in today's society.

Changes in Unemployment Insurance rules in the 1990s have made it very difficult for new entrants or re-entrants to the labour force to gain enough hours of work to qualify for benefits. Overall, less than half of the unemployed in Canada benefit from EI. What will that mean for our resilience when the next recession hits?

One in six Canadians is unable to afford decent housing.

Affordable child care remains scarce in most provinces.

So a lot of workers are left in a highly vulnerable position, a “precarious” position: their well-being is at risk notwithstanding that they are regular participants in the workforce.

Vulnerable workers are locked in a Catch 22 situation. They cannot earn enough to make a decent life, they have limited access to training and education which would improve their chances of a good job, and many are excluded from basic social protections (such as employment insurance) by outmoded eligibility rules.

Why do we have such a large part of our workforce in such a precarious position? A number of factors are involved. Employers, faced with the pressures of global competition, have shifted risk to employees. More work is temporary, or part-time, or contracted out, than in the past, and the demands on many regular employees have intensified. More work is in smaller firms and in the service sector, where unionization rates and wages have tended to be lower. Governments, in an effort to reduce or eliminate fiscal deficits, have cut back on social supports. In other words, choices have been made that shift risk away from employers and governments and onto individuals, particularly the less well-off.

I would like here to emphasize the word “**choices.**” Some commentators have implied that with the globalization of the economy, employers and governments are compelled to adopt a model in which there are minimal protections for workers. One hears people citing the problems that Germany and France have had with low employment rates, particularly among disadvantaged youth, as illustration of the need to adopt an American-style labour market. However, as the OECD has recently pointed out, there are other countries, such as the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, with both high employment rates and a more active labour market policy, and with a relatively low percentage of the workforce earning low wages. And there is research evidence, such as from Graham Lowe’s work on job quality in Canada, that when workers are treated fairly, absenteeism and turnover fall and commitment to the employer improves. This, in turn, encourages both workers and employers to invest in developing people’s skills.

The human resource strategy of too many Canadian firms is based on a low cost/low productivity approach. That is, a large part of the workforce is paid very low wages with few employment benefits and little effort to upgrade their skills or support them with advanced technologies. The low wages and benefits allow this to be sustainable. We need employers to break out of this approach and recognize the opportunities for better wages through higher productivity (and reduced absenteeism and turnover), even in jobs that are seen as not highly skilled.

The agenda for reform here is motivated not only by considerations of fairness. The fairness argument is important to be sure. From CPRN’s dialogues with Canadian citizens about the kind of Canada they want, we know that most Canadians believe that it is unfair for people who work full-time to be poor. But our current policies and practices also waste people’s potential to fully contribute to the economy and to their communities.

What can we do to allow vulnerable workers to realize their potential?

Since the problems faced by vulnerable workers are multi-faceted, we need a multi-faceted response. No single instrument is sufficient.

In developing our recommendations for action, CPRN consulted with people in government, in the business and labour communities, and in organizations working with vulnerable workers on the front lines. Not surprisingly, there was no consensus among those whom we consulted. Based on our diagnosis of the problem, the ideas we heard, and our review of the literature on what has worked in North America and elsewhere, we recommended action to achieve four objectives. These objectives are:

1. **Adequate income.** The combination of market wages, plus any government income supplements for the working poor, should be enough for someone working full-time and living by themselves to avoid poverty.
2. **Basic protections regarding conditions of work.** All employees should have real access to basic protections (such as minimum wages, overtime and vacation pay, public holidays, and job-protection for maternity or parental leave).
3. **Basic social benefits.** All workers (and arguably, all individuals, whether working or not) should have access to benefits and supports that are important to well-being.
4. **Opportunities to move up.** Workers who are low paid or able to find only part-time work should have opportunities to improve their labour market prospects.

Our **recommendations** are illustrated by this pyramid (slide- illustrates the need for a multi-layered response).

The layers represent both objectives and different policy platforms, from universal (at the bottom) to more targeted programs as one moves up.

The recommendations regarding more universal benefits help make the overall package affordable for employers.

Some details on minimum wages and income supplements: The research evidence also tells us that there is room for higher minimum wages in Canada with almost no risk of job loss among adults, and the job loss for teenagers could be mitigated by increasing minimum wages more for adults than for teenagers. People who insist on referring to minimum wages as job killers need to pay more attention to the evidence, including studies by the OECD.

We did also recommend a modest income-supplementation program for the working poor, which I know isn't a popular idea with many people here. I wish we didn't need it, because in an economy where the labour market is structured to support decent wages for all, we wouldn't need it. But we do. We cannot expect minimum wages here to carry all of the freight. However, we must insist, as does the OECD, that income supplementation programs be accompanied by higher minimum wages. Otherwise the supplements risk being undermined by lower wages offered by employers.

I hasten to point out that only some of our recommendations are shown in the pyramid, and I don't really have time to go through all of them tonight. For those who are interested in the details of our recommendations, please go to our website and download the report, *Risk and Opportunity: Creating Options for Vulnerable Workers*. One area that I do want to call attention to

is the need to facilitate collective action. I don't think we can expect major changes to collective bargaining legislation, such as requirements for sectoral bargaining. But we should push for some modest changes, such as instructing labour relations boards to allow non-standard workers to be included in the same bargaining units as regular, full-time employees. We should also encourage unions to take the initiative on broader-based bargaining within the current legal framework, for example by simultaneous efforts to organize businesses within a particular sector and a particular community. Governments should also provide more support to community groups that help vulnerable workers.

There are many steps that need to be taken so that workers are treated fairly and are given a full opportunity to contribute. This is not, it must not, just be a 'left-wing' agenda. This is an agenda for inclusion and prosperity, for fairness and productivity. And some business people are recognizing that we have a problem, such as those who participated in the Task Force on Modernizing Income Security for Working Age Adults (MISWAA). That Toronto-based Task Force included representatives from major employers, labour unions, policy institutes, academia, community organizations, advocacy groups, foundations, and individuals with first-hand experience of income security programs. Everyone involved agreed that the current income security system is broken.

We should resist complacency on the basis that the demographic shift will solve the problem. The ageing of the baby boom cohorts, coupled with the decline in birth rates, does mean that labour will become scarcer. This will likely benefit those who are seen by employers as highly skilled. But we cannot be confident that it will lead to better outcomes for those who are less-skilled or whose skills and abilities go unrecognized.

Action is required to ensure that all working people can live decently and contribute fully to the economy and to their communities. I look forward to the presentations and discussion at this conference, which will undoubtedly shed further light on how we can realize the objective articulated by the International Labour Organization of decent work for all.



Paper Presentations

Full Participation in Canadian Society Continues to be a Challenge for Immigrant Women

Dr. Fay Fletcher, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta

Abstract:

Immigrant women have represented approximately 50% of the total number of immigrants to Canada for at least two decades and face challenges created, in part, by gendered immigration policies, underemployment, lack of access to formal education. The following review of literature is a snapshot of the settlement and integration experiences of immigrant women in Canada dating back to 1981 and documents the challenges they face when attempting to participate and integrate with Canadian society - lack of recognition of credentials, difficulty accessing adequate upgrading and language programs, isolation, partial citizenship and discrimination, all contributing to a lack of self confidence and self esteem. Interviews completed with immigrant women in 2004 demonstrate the fact that many women recently immigrating to Canada continue to face these same challenges. In conclusion, I reflect on 1) the way in which the experience of listening to the women's stories impacted my perspectives and, 2) present two follow-up projects aimed at increasing learning opportunities and (informal) skill recognition for immigrant women.

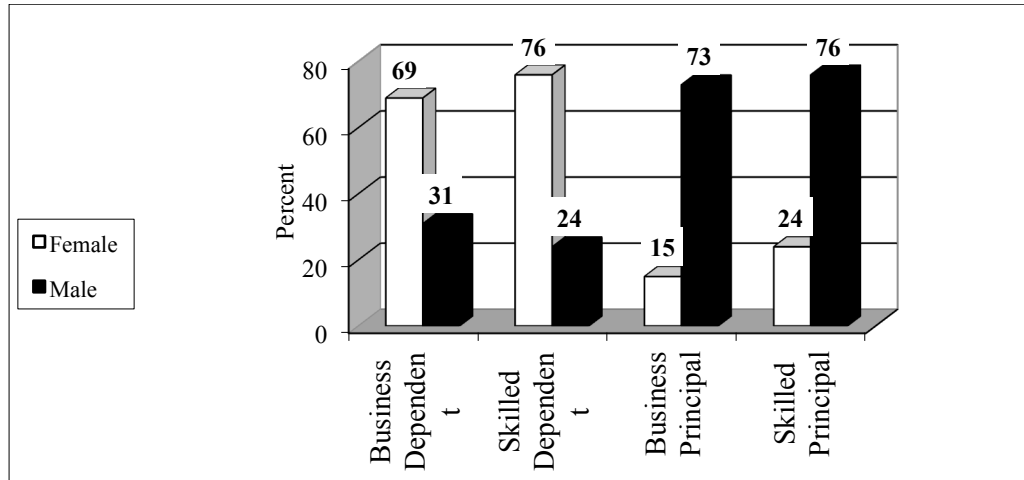
Background

Immigration of Women to Canada

Like the total number of immigrants to Canada, the total number of female immigrants to Canada has steadily increased since the early 1980s. In 1981, there were a total of 128,639 immigrants to Canada. Of those, 65,400 (51%) were women. In 1993, there were a total of 254,817 immigrants to Canada of which 127,800 (51 %) were women (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002). In 2004, 235,823 people immigrated to Canada, with women accounting for 52% of the total immigrant population. Total immigration numbers have steadily increased over the last 10 years, women consistently accounting for approximately half of Canada's newcomers (retrieved November 15, 2005 from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pub/facts2004/index.html>).

The largest share of women who immigrate to Canada do so as sponsored or dependent immigrants. Recent statistics show that immigrant women continue to be over-represented in the dependent categories and under-represented in the independent categories as determined by the point system. Women account for 69% of business *dependent* and 79% of skilled *dependent* workers in contrast with 15% of business *principal (independent)* and 24% of skilled *principal* in 2001 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Independent and Dependent Immigrants by Class and Gender (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2001)



These statistics are significant because immigration status has, and continues to disadvantage women, particularly with regard to the opportunities women can access that may assist with transition and integration in a new society. Gupta (1994), in her historical survey of immigration policy in relation to the experiences of South Asian immigrant women, found that gender relations were reproduced by Canadian immigration policies as well as by the institution of the family, and that immigrant women's experience in paid workplaces illustrate the reproduction of both gender and race relations, aided once again by the Canadian state. More recently, Cote, Kerisit and Cote (2001) found that classes in English as a second language, health care benefits, and access to transition programs are all highly dependent upon immigration status and conditions of sponsorship. "In separating the independent and family categories on the basis of their "economic" contribution, a ranking of the worth of each of these categories became institutionalized..." (Ng, 1993, p.19). The ability of women to gain independence is destined to be undermined until sponsorship regulations begin to recognize the value of unpaid labour.

As long as immigration policy and transition programs continue to be strictly tied to the economic climate and policies of economic reform, there will be power differentials between men and women, and between women and the state (Ng, 1991). Neysmith and Chen (2002), for example, found that "women's vulnerability increased as they lost jobs and incomes and were expected to shoulder increasing amounts and kinds of caring labour" (p. 250). Immigrant women (even more than their native-born counterparts) too often find that their education and skills go unrecognized, their potential unrealized due to limited opportunities for language and skill development. Thus, they remain isolated, too often unable to settle and integrate with Canadian society.

The following review of qualitative studies of immigrant women's settlement and integration experiences coupled with findings from recent interviews with immigrant women, documents the personal and societal challenges faced by women immigrating to Canada between 1981 and 2004. Whether conference proceedings, articles, or interviews, the women's stories tell us that many of the challenges faced in the early 1980s continue to create barriers immigrant women's full participation in Canadian society.

Review of Literature

Conference Proceedings: 1981-1999

In 1981 a conference was organized because, although Canada acknowledged itself as a nation of immigrants, the positive role that immigrant women played at the time was not being recognized. Many of the recommendations from the 1981 Toronto conference, "The Immigrant Woman in Canada: A Right To Recognition", are consistent with those in a report by Seydegart (1985) titled "Beyond Dialogue" and a report commissioned by the British Columbia government titled "Immigrant Settlement and Multiculturalism Programs for Immigrant, Refugee and Visible Minority Women: A Study of Outcomes, Best Practices and Issues" (Lee and Harrison, 1999). The recommendations that appeared in the three reports (a 15-year period) are summarized below. They reflect enduring inconsistencies between policy objectives of integration and full participation, reported attitudes towards immigrant women, and immigrant women's lived experiences.

Immigrant women reported that the positive role they had in the building and maintenance of this country had not received due recognition, that they faced extraordinary challenges, and experienced difficulty and discrimination in all areas of their lives. Despite their commitment to learning the language and skills of Canada, there was little support for the provision of language training for all adult

immigrants. They recommended that universal access be guaranteed as well as the financial assistance to make English as A Second Language (ESL) training possible. Improved access to language and education programs would require government support in the form of quality day-care and secure funding for immigrant women's service organizations. More recently, Sooknanan (2000) critiqued the ways in which the state constructs and orchestrates partnerships in the delivery of immigrant women's programs. "Gaps in service provision of mainstream institutions make community based organizations necessary" (p. 74). In keeping with this, women recommended that the government provide for the initiatives of multiculturalism rather than rely on the volunteer sector (predominantly women) to fulfill the mandate of multicultural policies.

The exploitation of immigrant women was and remains an issue as the employment market 'streams' women into under-valued jobs. These factors are the focus of on-going research into the unemployment status and un-employability of immigrant women, including the lack of recognition of professional skills and education from countries of origin.

Immigrant women continue to call for aggressive strategies to overcome discrimination, in particular, systemic discrimination, racialisation and feminisation.

Research Literature and Interviews

There is a limited body of literature that draws upon immigrant women's personal stories to document their experiences of immigration. The most prolific writers in the area include Roxanna Ng, Evangelia Tastsoglou, Guida Man, Tanis Das Gupta and Baukje Miedema. Although some have chosen to explore the diversity of immigrant women, more often than not, the focus becomes immigrant women from specific countries of origin. For example, Guida Man and Josephine Fong focus on Chinese immigrant women, Tania Das Gupta and Helen Ralston on South Asian women. Despite their focus, researchers discuss experiences shared by all the women that warrant attention.

Employment

Women who are dependent on their sponsors (typically male partners), are vulnerable to domestic violence (Cote, Kerisit, & Cote, 2001), prey to deportation if deemed a "financial burden" to the state, are not entitled to assistance (welfare) or training subsidies (language and job training), and seldom have any alternative but to seek low paying and marginal jobs (Hiebert, 2001).

Immigrant women, subject to the point system as the means of measuring their potential to contribute, most often enter Canada as dependents (on spouse and family), in part because the point system is set up in a way that devalues domestic work and implies that domestic work does not require skills (Abu-Laban, 1998). This does one of two things. First, it reinforces the male-dominated family form (Gupta, 1994) and perpetuates the oppression of women. Alia shares her experiences and opinion of the sponsorship status of immigrant women. Here, she talks about the way in which sponsorship status sets the women's expectations:

[T]he whole business of sponsorship and immigration sets a lot of women up. Even if it is not in reality, legally, but even in their minds. Like, before you come here, you are told you are being sponsored, someone will take care of you financially, the government washes their hands of you. (11-14). At the onset, before they even come, they are told don't even dare to ask for anything from the government because you are sponsored by your husband and he is responsible for you. And if it is a husband who wants a little bit more control, well, he will just reiterate that fact that, don't even bother to ask for help, I am responsible and so on. So there is that preconceived thing at the onset that makes the one extremely dependent and controllable. (2003: 26-31)

The existing point system also reflects Canadian policy makers' ill-conceived ideas of women's roles in society. Immigrant women, contrary to popular belief, are not always coming from less developed countries, but are often leaving behind middle and upper SES, having participated in the workforce as skilled professionals in their countries of origin (Ng, 1995).

Roxanna Ng (1981, 1988, 1993) examines in detail the discrimination women experience with regard to their ability to enter into and stay in the workforce as exemplified in the following studies. In 1989, Miedema and Nason-Clark (1989) found that immigrant women in Fredericton worked in low status jobs despite advanced educational qualifications; employers paid little for the services of highly qualified immigrant women workers. Araba, interviewed about employment and education said:

For my experience with some of my friends who have come here with their Masters or degrees, I think it is *more* painful for them. And it is harder for them to get jobs.... Yes, because they want to be accepted the way they wanted to be. They wanted to do jobs that they are meant to do.. (Araba: 410-422)

Professionals, who were able to find employment, were often under-employed. Elabor-Idemudia (1999) similarly found that African women coming to the prairie provinces experienced systemic and institutional discrimination seen in the lack of skill and experience recognition as well as racial and ethnic stereotyping and representation.

Gender places most women within the 'sexual ghetto' of the labour force, and race further orders the ghetto (Elabor-Idemudia, 1999). Elabor-Idemudia found that Black women's work in Saskatoon often involved cleaning, housework, childcare, caring for the elderly, washing dishes, restaurant work, making beds in hotels and sewing in garment industries. In other words, Black women in Saskatoon held traditionally female, low wage jobs in the service sector. This same employment pattern is seen in the work of Salazar and Signs (2001) in their study of Filipino domestic workers. Salazar and Signs (2001) and Mojab (1999) state that the feminization of the international labour is the result of global restructuring that responds to the demand throughout the world for migrant women to fill low-wage service work. Gupta (1994) has also documented the fact that South Asian immigrant women's experiences in the workforce illustrate the reproduction of gender and race relations aided by Canadian policy. Of the women who participated in interviews in 2003, all had some post secondary education, and two had professional degrees. Regardless, the women were all employed in the service industry, wishing they qualified or awaiting acceptance to education programs.

Elabor-Idemudia (1999) summarizes nicely the often-cited barriers to employment, including: difficulty gaining recognition for education already obtained in country of origin, difficulty gaining access to institutions of higher learning to upgrade their education, lack of access to daycare to enable women to engage in gainful employment, lack of Canadian experience, personal circumstances, lack of support from employment agencies, and lack of knowledge of existing resources.

The women I spoke to reiterated these same challenges. The comments below, however, speak to the importance of employment in their sense of self and confidence.

We couldn't live out life with no job. The feeling is not good - frustrated and no help, no hope. And if you can't find a job you depend on somebody, that feeling is not satisfying. (Xiu)

I have been working since I was 19 years old. In my country, women want to participate in a lot of things and want to work, want to be independent. So I grew up with that idea. And I didn't want to fail. Even in another country you do not want to feel like you are not doing anything. And when I am in a job, I feel like I can be independent and I can feel more confident in myself. (Maggie)

English Language Proficiency

One of the most difficult aspects of women's daily life was their struggle with learning the English language. Gupta (1994) speaks about the importance of language for personal empowerment, taking the discussion beyond one of language solely as a means of employment and placing language more appropriately into the day-to-day lives of immigrant women. "In order to participate effectively in larger political movements, women of colour and working-class women have to be personally empowered. Learning English or French is a very concrete way of achieving that goal" (Gupta, 1994, p. 11).

Immigration policy and programs have never ensured access to or funding for women to take courses in English or French as a second language. This reflects an oversight on the part of policy makers of the role of language in empowerment and participation in daily living as well as an assumption that women are not seen as destined for the labour force (Elabor-Idemudia, 1999).

Warren (1988) also cited the importance of ESL training. Learning the new language becomes of major importance for the emergence of the new or revised self-image of the women for mental health reasons as well as language skills. An argument can be made that such programs are of special importance *even when the women are in the unskilled labour force or unemployed*: language is the only vehicle through which a new self-identity as Canadian is possible. Therefore, she concluded that, although the availability of ESL classes was important, the availability of social opportunities to practice English and gain a sense of rapport with others is of equal importance. The inability to participate with others on a daily basis and/or in the workforce has a negative impact on women's self-confidence and, in turn, increases the likelihood of isolation. Based on her findings, Warren (1988) recommended that 1) opportunities to access language classes should be at least as readily available to women as they are for men, and 2) that appropriate logistical consideration such as fees, day-care, location and time of classes all need to address the reality of the lives of women. Based on her findings, I would suggest that these two recommendations should apply also to classes that provide the opportunity, while using English, to build social skills and rapport with others. Perhaps this may also resolve another often-cited challenge to settlement, that of isolation.

Isolation

Several of the authors refer to either the lack of a support system or the experience of isolation and loneliness. The earliest publications document the experience of isolation (Warren, 1988; Miedema & Nason-Clark, 1989). Two possible solutions are employment and community activities.

Miedema and Nason-Clark (1989), in particular, note that employment serves not only as a source of income but is an important vehicle for avoiding isolation and loneliness. "Work, it must be remembered is not only related to income and status, but may mean the difference for an immigrant woman between being involved in Canadian society or isolated at home" (Miedema and Nason-Clark, 1989, p. 67). Yukiko talks about the role of education in breaking her isolation:

I see more people and talk with people and I get recognized, totally different from staying at home and watching kids. And for me, we go out, not every day, but sometimes we go out and we study together. So we talk more and I talk more. So that is different from talking with your husband and children and school teacher and stuff....I live here and I think that "I am someone they know, someone they will call". (Yukiko)

Man (1995) found that women who are juggling paid work, housework and childcare are often too exhausted at the end of the day to have much of a social (or community) life. In contrast to their life in Hong Kong where they had both social networks and extended family, the women could no longer be involved in social extracurricular activities. The inability to build or access networks was seen as problematic in two ways. First, Elabor-Idemudia (1999) notes that networks may be an effective means

of finding employment. Some of the women who were able to secure jobs did so through information provided by their friends and network members. Second, Miedema and Tastsoglou (2000) found that making friends was a very important step towards integration. Unfortunately, Miedema and Nason-Clark (1989) found that many women felt that they were less active than in their country of origin. "Some women complained that Canadians keep so much to themselves that it is hard to get to know them" (p. 69). Araba's experience in 2003 expresses this same gap between Canadian-born and immigrant women:

There is a big gap between the women of Canada and the women of the immigrant. You have just so many things for immigrant people, but *we don't come together* with the mainstream. There is no network.... There is this gap. Back home, since I was working gender program in the refugee camp, I was the voice for the women in ALL the camp. But if there is a conference I have to go and speak on behalf of these women. Women's International Day, the March for AIDS, is the biggest day in Africa. But when I came here, I get homesick, because in Nairobi, it was so good. It was, like, *in Nairobi, there was a connection of the refugee women with the national women, they don't just exclude us.* (Araba)

Warren (1988) makes the following recommendations for increased contact between immigrant and non-immigrant women. She recommends the presence of strong immigrant women in programs to contribute models of real strength and experience for younger women, more opportunities for new Canadian women to meet with other segments of the community whose positive non-discriminating attitudes could enrich the lives of all Canadians, and public relations endeavors to increase the public's awareness of the present as well as potential of recently immigrated Canadian women to contribute to the fabric of Canadian life.

Partial Citizenship

Many authors speak about the partial citizenship accorded immigrant women. Salazar and Signs (2001) define partial citizenship as the stunted integration of migrants in receiving nation-states due to the fact that they have fewer rights than full citizens. For example, live-in caregivers live as partial citizens in Canada based on their temporary status. Gupta and Iacovetta (2000) similarly cite the plight of immigrant women who are slotted into dead-end jobs, denied basic human rights and made to feel less than human. Even when granted citizenship, immigrant women continue to live as partial citizens. Warren (1986), in one of the earliest accounts of immigrant women's stories, points out that the mere act of being a citizen in a country does not confer the *feeling* of citizenship. Maggie says that: "I feel like, because you are immigrant, you cannot go to some stuff. Like, maybe you know you have *some* rights to do but *you are afraid* to do". (2003)

Discrimination

Warren (1988) found that immigrant women sensed discrimination and believed that, in order to succeed, they had to work harder than others; they had to overcompensate on the job. Miedema and Nason-Clark (1989) found that 15 of the 22 women they interviewed had experienced direct discrimination. "Despite the differences amongst immigrant women, in terms of their countries of origin, their ability to speak English, and the color of their skin, the interview data suggest that the biggest hurdle these women face is "being an immigrant. Overcoming this seems to be an almost insurmountable task" (p. 71). Warren recommended: 1) more opportunities for new Canadian women to meet with others who have positive, non-discriminating attitudes that could enrich the lives of all Canadians and, 2) public relations endeavors to increase the public awareness of the present as well as the potential contributions of immigrant women to the fabric of Canadian life.

Shared Experiences and Low Self Esteem

Immigrant women share common experiences (Miedema and Tastsoglou, 2000) and realization of this often comes through participation in ethnocultural groups. According to Miedema and Tastsoglou, women found that being involved in cultural organizations provided the opportunity to meet other people with similar backgrounds, break the isolation and find a venue for activism. Some said that their involvement had shaped the way they thought and that being involved with many diverse groups had broadened their perspectives on life. For many women, community involvement had been a positive experience that contributed to improved self-esteem as well as their sense of belonging. Community involvement appears to fill the void created by the government's position of subsidizing ESL and other programs only for the "head of the household". The direct result of such policy is that there are very few opportunities for females when it comes to improving skills, confidence, and self-image (Warren, 1988). Despite the inadequacy of program funding for female immigrants, Gupta (1994) found that South Asian women have made major contributions in the history of human rights, labour, and participation in community based service organizations in Canada. While her findings are limited to the population of South Asian women, the same may be found in research with a broader sample of immigrant women. In recent research by Fletcher and Gibson (2003), interviews with Lebanese, Filipino, Chinese, Indian and African women attest to the contributions that immigrant women have made to Canadian society as social service providers, community activists, and bridge-builders between immigrant and non-immigrant women, professionals, and entrepreneurs.

The literature cited in this review documents the on-going impact of policy and program development on the day-to-day lives of immigrant women. Researchers exploring women's experiences of immigration and integration have found that they face sometimes overwhelming challenges including: difficulty accessing ESL and employment training, scarcity of opportunities to gain Canadian experience, ill-informed assumptions regarding their previous education and work experience as well as standard of living, lack of recognition of skills and experience, discrimination, isolation, and decreased self esteem. Women's stories collected in 2004 mirror these challenges to full participation in Canadian society, their day-to-day experiences revealing key shortcomings in current policies and programs. Rather than reiterate these challenges, I will reflect, in the following section, on 1) the way in which the experience of listening to the women's stories impacted my perspectives and, 2) present recommendations for program and policy reform

Women's Stories Impact my Personal Perspective

Twelve women shared their experiences of immigration, most coming to Canada as a result of a decision made by their family or partner. Their initial thoughts on coming to Canada were mixed; some excited by the prospect of life in Canada, some frightened but compelled to follow the wishes of loved ones, and some having no other choice as they escaped poverty or oppression. Once in Canada, the women face the challenges presented above. In the face of discrimination (individual and systemic), the women resolve to 'be strong' and to find the ways and means to secure a more promising future in Canada. One of the most compelling aspects of hearing the stories of these women's integration in Canada was the revelation of my own naiveté. This was made especially clear during the final stages of my analysis, as I reflected on the research process and experience in relation to the work of Ruth Frankenburg. Frankenburg (1993) explores the ways in which race shapes white women's lives. I saw myself throughout her book and am constantly reminded of how race has and continues to shape my life. Despite my early recognition of the diversity of immigrant women and the inadequacy of immigration and multicultural policy, hearing stories of the women's day-to-day experiences exposed my own strongly held misconceptions about race and relationships.

First, I am struck by my naiveté as I look back at the questions posed in light of the information gained from this research. The way in which I posed my preliminary research questions placed the responsibility for increased participation in Canada squarely on the shoulders of immigrant women (both the local immigrant settlement agency I worked with and the individuals), isolating them from the impact of societal attitudes and beliefs. Underestimating the impact of both societal attitudes and beliefs on both program development and day-to-day experiences, I placed too much of the responsibility for generating change on the women themselves. I become acutely aware of my unconscious acceptance of the 'us/them' dichotomy so prevalent in multicultural discourse.

Second, I underestimated the skills, both personal and professional of the women. As a result, I overlooked the aspect of agency and the utility of Paulo Friere's inaugural moment – when possibility and agency meet. These women, with less than three years in Canada, have experienced very low times in terms of their sense of independence and confidence, yet they are determined to succeed in Canada. I would encourage policy makers and those involved in program development to find a ways to capitalize on this moment, when possibility and agency meet.

Third, I had grave misconceptions regarding the women's social status and economic status prior to immigration as well as their control over the decision to come to Canada. I believe that I am representative of many who believe that immigrants to Canada feel fortunate to be here and are experiencing an improvement in their overall quality of life. In fact, though the women express their appreciation for Canada, many of them experience a drop in status and are making extraordinary sacrifices to provide a better future for their children. Ironically, their sacrifices are also Canada's loss. If allowed to retain their social and economic status, these women could contribute far more to our society as full participants, utilizing their skills and resources.

Finally, I am struck by my naiveté regarding perceptions of culture and multiculturalism. While I engaged in the research based on my own beliefs regarding culture and multiculturalism, I was soon to face the stark reality of these women's lives. First, a closing quote from Anthias (2001):
The bringing together of different cultural elements syncretically transforms their meaning, but need not mean that dialogue between cultural givens is necessarily taking place. Moreover, it could be argued that the acid test of hybridity lies in the response of *culturally dominant groups*, not only in terms of incorporating (or co-opting) cultural products of marginal or subordinate groups, but in *being open to transforming or abandoning some of their own central cultural symbols and practices of hegemony*. (p. 630, italics added)

The following conversation with Yukiko reveals my own assumptions about the day-to-day experiences of immigrant women in terms of the response of the 'culturally dominant group' and in terms of 'transforming or abandoning cultural symbols:

F: It sounds to me, tell me if this is wrong, but what you are saying is give me a chance to talk because I know some things too.

Y: Hmm

F: Is it kind of like that?

Y: Maybe. It's a little bit easier to pretend I agree and yea, yea, yea, that is right, and forget about it. Because that is how it happens, part of my life. And that is true, you think "pay attention to me and listen, just for a second, that might make a difference".

F: That is very good.

Y: They measure by their values, they just measure everything based on their Canadian values... whispers –especially truck drivers, they are so rude, they think they have a truck and they have the right of way.

F: That is something that is very profound, as a woman in our culture, or as an immigrant and a woman in our culture to say I have a voice to be heard and I have ideas that are worth listening to. And especially measuring everything according to Canadian values. Maybe we should think that “there are other ways to measure, other ways to look at things”.

Y: That may be, but this is still Canada.

F: But, this is my bias, it doesn't mean that the Canadian way is the way it should be. I think that, I really believe that if we can get all different perspectives and cultures working, we can get the best of everything. I may have some ideas myself, and they are good ideas let's say, and then you have ideas of your own and they are good ideas. But when we get a chance to talk, I think we come out with even better ideas, better understanding. It is like the more heads you put into thinking, the better your solution would be.

Y: Not everyone thinks that way (laughter). But I found that, like, to be able to recognize, to be able to be heard, I have to do good work. Let's say I am working, I do everything fast and accurate, then people start having a little respect, start paying attention. Otherwise, not very many people pay attention to me from the beginning. (Yukiko 2: 563-601)

I became more and more critical of the ideals of multiculturalism as I began to witness what I perceived to be a 'pacifier approach' to policy and program development for immigrant women. Although the theory of multiculturalism is alive and well, the practice of multiculturalism is not. Kymlicka (2001) provides evidence that multiculturalism is very positive, that it is not promoting Balkanization, cultural or linguistic apartheid or partial citizenship. While he has proven quite convincingly that multiculturalism does not promote separatism or apartheid, I am not convinced that it has not been partly responsible for immigrant women's experiences of partial citizenship. The women who participated in this research see the value of Canada's Multiculturalism Act and were drawn to this country because of its policies and reputation. The Multicultural Act is a tool for the negotiation and translation of membership in Canadian society and has the *potential* to create a truly multicultural (versus many cultured) environment.

With the insight gained from hearing the immigrant women's shared experiences of disillusion, of hope, and of courage, comes an obligation to respond to on-going discrimination, idealization of multiculturalism and culturally racist and gendered immigration policies that reinforce stereotypes and pre-conceived ideas of immigrant women.

Follow-up Programs

Since the completion of this research, two projects have evolved that have the potential to provide women access to both formal and informal education. Although both programs provide additional resources to women who have immigrated to Canada, they are still substitutes for formally funded programs and formal recognition of education.

Immigrant Women as Volunteers, Knowledge Development Centre, Imagine Canada

The objective of the proposed research is twofold: first, to explore the benefits of volunteerism to immigrant women's settlement and participation in Canadian society and, second, to foster improved relationships between settlement agencies and non-profit agencies so that more non-profits benefit from the skills, expertise and dedication of immigrant women. In order to better understand and to document the benefits of volunteerism to immigrant women, we will explore a) whether volunteerism

improves their understanding of the volunteer sector as it is structured in Canadian society, and b) whether or not it provides opportunities to increase their work-related skills and likelihood of future volunteerism. The research outcomes will provide information on a population of skilled and dedicated individuals who have, to date, been underrepresented in the volunteer sector. Non-profit organizations will be provided with resources that a) provide accurate information regarding the skills and attributes immigrant women bring to their organization, b) a place of contact from which to recruit immigrant women into volunteer roles in their organizations, and c) a resource to guide them through the recruitment and placement of volunteers.

The ultimate goal of the research is to promote partnerships between settlement agencies and non-profit organizations in the city of Edmonton so that volunteer experiences capitalize on the education and skills of immigrant women, to the benefit of both the women and the local non-profit organizations.

Immigrant Women's Student Awards, Faculty of Extension

Description:

Six successful applicants will receive an education award (participation in part-time, non-degree courses and/or programs) in selected courses offered by the Faculty of Extension.

Purpose:

To provide the opportunity for immigrant and refugee women, who otherwise could not participate, to attend the Faculty of Extension Business seminars, short courses, citations, and certificates at no cost.

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Learning on the edge: Connecting people and l(e)arning in the everyday to policy and practice possibilities

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Abstract

Workers perched on the edge of the workplace – self-employed contractors and consultants – are often left on their own to create a place and space for their learning activities. This paper explores how these workers participate in informal learning, specifically, how they use (or do not use) web-based technologies to tap into communities of practice. We need to better understand how technology facilitates or frustrates everyday knowledge-building practices that unfold in these types of web-based communities. Delving into several discourses, questions and insights emerge around how policy and practice might be

recast to create more inclusive and participatory learning processes in online communities, particularly for these learners situated “on the edge”.

This paper unfolds in three sections. First, I briefly outline the precarious nature of the self-employed – or own-account – workers, including work-related learning and work spaces. I then introduce informal learning and the notion of “becoming” a practitioner as we build understandings of ourselves and work-related knowledges. The third and main section of this paper focuses on l(e)arning. Participating in online communities is one informal learning strategy. Community can refer to a gathering of people online that is organic and driven by a shared interest or need. Others are structured, as in an online course, complete with tightly bounded membership and purposeful design strategies. This paper focuses on the former and the challenges for the self-employed worker engaged in these forums for learning. Throughout, critical questions are posed about the normative and ideological connotations of online communities as learning sites. I conclude with ideas on the role of the adult educators within these types of forums.

The Self-Employed Worker and Precarious Work

According to Industry Canada (2006) a self-employed worker “earns income directly from their own business, trade or profession. ... [as] working owners of a ...business, persons who work on their own account but do not have a business and persons working without pay in a family business” (p. 24). Industry Canada states that in 2004, they represented 15% of all employed workers, a total of 2.45 million people. Slightly over one-third are female. And yes, the self-employed do work longer hours. In 2004, 36% of self-employed persons worked over 50 hours compared with only 5% of employees, which leads me to wonder how these longer work weeks impact their ability to create space for learning projects.

A few highlights from *The Determinants of Earnings and Training for the Self-Employed in Canada* survey conducted by HRDC provide more insight. In addition to identifying push and pull factors towards self-employment (including the absence of suitable paid-employment), the report concludes that it is those people who are traditionally disadvantaged in the conventional labour market that are choosing voluntarily to be self-employed: women, immigrants, and young people aged 25-29 (Devlin, 2001). Furthermore, the report points out that women rely more extensively on informal learning than men (Devlin).

Turning to the work and learning discourse it is clear that knowledge and learning are now key economic commodities. In their book, *Workplace Learning*, Bratton and colleagues trace this to the “ideology of investment in human capital” (Bratton, Helms-Mills, Pynch, & Sawchuk, 2004, p. 40). Foley (1999) outlines how government and business are trying to make enterprises more productive by increasing the flexibility of the labour force. This includes, among other strategies, expanding the secondary workforce, such as contractors and casual workers and vocationalizing education. These strategies fundamentally shape the work and learning opportunities of the self-employed worker.

The life of the own-account worker is contradictory. Drawing from the literature, Tara Fenwick (in press) highlights these contradictions. On one hand, they are seen as and see themselves as free from constrictive bureaucratic structures; active in designing their careers; members of multiple networks and learning relationships; and creators of self-generated boundaries. On the other hand, self-employed workers can be

cast as exploited and isolated; oppressed as a result of the blurring of lines between home, family, and work; and engaged in a lifelong human resource project of shape-shifting to adapt to the changing needs of organizations.

Coffield's (2002) description of the employer's perspective of the ideal "portfolio worker" is provocative: those who "quickly internalize the need for employability, willingly pay for their own continuous learning, and flexibly offer genuine commitment to each job, no matter how short its duration or how depressing its quality" (pp. 185-186). There are three notions we can tease out of this rhetoric as a starting point to better understand the work and learning space of the self-employed worker. The first notion is entrepreneurialism. Fenwick (in press) states that these boundaryless workers believe "it is natural and inevitable that they must be entrepreneurial, marketing their own knowledge and labour". This is du Gay's (1996) notion of the 'enterprise of the self', characterized by "values of self-realization, self-direction and self-management" (p. 138). The outcome is a perception of one's career and accompanying work assets as labour commodities in need of continual regeneration. Fenwick (2003) points out that it is "amidst the discourses of flexibility and individualisation" that this idea of the enterprising self has percolated to the top (p. 168).

Flexibility is the second notion embedded in this rhetoric. Crowther (2004) links this to lifelong learning, stating that this discourse is being used to "socialise workers to the escalating demands of employers" under the guise of "flexibility" (p. 127). Fenwick (2002) explains flexibility as being flexible in skills and pay while also adaptable to flexible (aka insecure) work structures. The third notion is self-regulation and discipline, which leads to docile workers. Crowther (2004) warns of the agenda to "create malleable, disconnected, transient, disciplined workers" (p. 127). Couched within what he refers to as feelings of "endemic insecurity", the only control individuals seem to have is a "willingness to ... learn and relearn" (p. 131).

While the qualities of entrepreneurialism, flexibility, and self-discipline are often regarded as admirable personal traits, when mired in a narrow human capital view of labour they can become problematic. This perhaps even more pronounced for self-employed workers who may be more vulnerable than they realize, despite their positive talk of the freedom, choice, and control inherent in their work.

Informal Learning

Bratton et al. (2004) write that "whereas informal job-place learning was once a taken for granted feature of work, it is now often considered a key job activity and perhaps even a major asset of the corporation" (p. 170). This view of informal learning as an asset available to the corporation to leverage at will extends even moreso to those workers perched on the edge – the self-employed contractors – who are not usually provided with organizationally-funded learning but yet expected by the organization to come equipped with rich learning networks and ability to learn on the fly.

While no one seems to dispute the importance of informal learning, its ephemeral and fluid nature presents challenges for policy and practice. International policy documents, national strategies, organizational mandates and practices, and personal beliefs all interpret informal learning in their own way. The first task is to sort through the quagmire of definitions surrounding formal, non-formal and informal learning and education. David Livingstone (2001) suggests that the primary distinctions are

based on whether the directive control of the learning experience rests with educational agents or the learner.

Livingstone (2001) defines *informal learning* as “any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge, or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria” (p. 5). The objectives, content, learning strategies, duration, and evaluation of outcomes are “determined by the individuals and groups that choose to engage in it” (p. 5). Informal learning is distinguished from incidental learning by intentionality. More diffuse forms of learning are often called *incidental learning*. Watkins and Marsick (1992) describe this “largely unintentional and unexamined” and usually the “by-product of some other activity”; there is no conscious awareness of learning (p. 288). In contrast, intentional learning (i.e. informal learning) requires retrospective recognition that you have learned something and experienced a learning process (Livingstone).

A self-employed worker engaging in informal learner may reach out to any number of online communities – informal, non-formal, or even formal – based on learning needs and resources. Let us take a look at how online community in an informal setting differs from online community in formal and non-formal pedagogical settings. Words used to describe communities in *informal settings* include organic, emergent, and self-sustaining. Not created under the auspices of an organization, informal communities form because someone is interested in a topic and searches for others who are talking about it. Informal communities are ostensibly voluntary. You decide if and how often you participate and are free to opt in and out at will. Challenges in this setting include finding the right online community, making an entrée, wondering if you fit and are welcome, and sorting out your role.

Turning to online community in a *formal learning setting*, one example is an online university course in which the instructor decides that creating a community of learners is a key pedagogical strategy. Learners are slotted into the community when they register for the course. Participation in these communities is often a required course element and marks assigned to this participation. Although a group of learners may interact online throughout the course, whether a “true” community forms cannot be assumed; a question widely explored in the e-learning literature.

Professional associations or workplace established communities are examples of online community in *non-formal settings*. There is some organizational support and belief in the value of cultivating a community, but participation is ad hoc. The organization provides the web real estate and a varying degree of community-building services. Based on my experiences in working with online community in this setting, struggles are competing purposes of the community; tentative moderation of community activities; questions about whether it is indeed voluntary as it is tied to a job, career or a workplace; concerns over who’s monitoring what is happening and how this information will be used; and doubts about how participation will impact job or status within an organization.

As illustrated in these brief examples, online community in informal settings is shaped and engaged in strikingly different ways compared to more formal learning environments. With this framework in mind, I turn to the e-learning literature to examine several issues that impact how online community is built and maintained in informal and non-formal learning contexts.

E-Learning / L(e)arning

A Social View of Learning

I draw on situated learning as a foundation for this exploration. Lave and Wenger (1991) state that learning, thinking, and knowing are found in the “relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world” (p. 51). Communities of practice sprang into vogue with this work. Wells (2002) explains that Lave and Wenger emphasize that “learning is not a separate activity, but an integral aspect of doing things together in a community of practice that involves individuals with different types and degrees of expertise” (p. 123). This view of learning has resonance in many workplaces. Bratton et al. (2004) write that increasingly, “our understanding of how ‘learning’ in the workplace is accomplished expands beyond notions of individual cognition and ‘self-direction’ to incorporate awareness of situated communities of practice, mentoring, and the role of social participation” (p. 2).

Questions about Online Community

Self-employed workers, who have already internalized the rhetoric of entrepreneurial self, flexibility, and self-regulation, have also been immersed in the “community of practice” rhetoric. There are four questions and issues to explore.

1. What is it?

“Community” can refer to a reason to congregate: a shared physical space or interests. It also refers to a state of being or state of mind – feeling connected with others with a sense of kinship and camaraderie. Community also encompasses the act of communicating with others in a certain way and/or space. Fernback (1999) frames community as “the communicative *process* [italics added] of negotiation and production of a commonality of meaning, structure, and culture” (p. 205). Although the word “community” has instant resonance, its meaning is often murky. A common thread is the belief is that learning is enhanced when there is a commitment to the collective good and people engage in learning through and with others.

The l(e)arning discourse is replete with references to online communities often described as virtual communities or learning communities. The term *community of practice* was used in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) seminal work on situated learning and later popularized by Wenger (1998) in *Communities of Practice*. Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) proposed a community of inquiry, essential for achieving higher order learning in an online environment. One also reads about knowledge communities and communities of interest. Related concepts include networks, learning webs, and social capital. Trentin (2001) advocates communities of course alumni as an ongoing support mechanism for learners after a formal learning event. Brown and Duguid (2002) introduce the term networks of practice to differentiate more loosely coupled communities. Prevalent in the business literature are references to peer-to-peer (P2P) networks (Fletcher, 2004). Moreover, online community is now a marketable commodity: Groove, Groupee, and CommunityZero are just a few of the many community software applications available. Online communities have become an important element in corporate marketing strategies (Kawasaki, 2006), which one blogger describes as a product community: “the ecosystem of users and abusers that forms organically around a great product” (Sarkar, 2006, ¶1).

2. Can community be “designed”?

Another lively debate focuses on whether virtual communities can and should be designed or are best left to emerge on their own. And moreover, can they be engineered to achieve specific learning outcomes? Wenger (1998) argues that communities cannot be “legislated into existence” (p. 229). This blog posting says it very well: “You can’t create community! To say you’ve created community is like saying you’ve created a tree. ... A better choice of terms would be ‘cultivate’. ...Communities are self-forming: It’s an opt-in list” (Martin, 2006). However, there is a plethora of advice on how to design online community, suggesting that purposeful design is important and we need to learn how to do this. This raises questions: Who is doing the designing? Why? What beliefs are built into the design of the software, the online activities enabled, or the norms of participation? Assuming that people – particularly the self-employed – flock to these online sites for learning reasons, it is valid to question their design. Even so-called organic “informal” communities have an element of design and a degree of engineering – sometimes quite subtle.

3. Is reaching out to others online actually a popular learning approach?

Afonso (2006) advises that the increasing interest in virtual communities is because we find “collective goods in the shape of social capital, knowledge capital, and communion” (p. 156). According to the 2003 *Adult Education and Training Survey* conducted by Statistics Canada and HRSDC the most common informal learning strategies were consulting books or self-teaching. This was followed by, in order, using the Internet or other software, seeking advice from someone knowledgeable, and observation (Peters, 2004). Based on these findings, I wonder how often workers would reach out to others in an online community as an informal learning approach given that these strategies were not at the top of this list. It is important to note however that this data is not specific to the self-employed. Boyd (2006) adds that “interests groups are particularly meaningful to people who don’t have access to people who share that interest in their everyday lives” (p. 7). Because the self-employed are more isolated and independent within their own work environment they might be more likely to reach out to others virtually - looking for others with a shared interest as Boyd suggests. Or would they? What prior learning experiences, technology skills and attitudes, work expectations, and pre-existing relationships would cause someone to reach out to an online community?

4. What is the impact of technology?

Technology continues to bring people together in ways never before possible. Kolko and Reid (1998) write that the “proliferation of virtual communities in recent years has resulted in the creation of new social spaces, and new forms of interaction and identity formation” (p. 212). This is also fuelled by the new so-called *social software*; a group of Web services that are perceived as especially connective: “blogs, wikis, trackback, podcasting, videoblogs and social networking tools like MySpace and Facebook” (Alexander, 2006, p. 33). What do these technologies do? One feature is social bookmarking and networking for referrals and filtering of information or people; for example, del.icio.us or LinkedIn. Wikis are social writing platforms (Alexander) while blogs are used for production and individual ownership of information. E-portfolios are used for selective release of personal data (Anderson, 2006, slide 35). The potential power of how innovative use of these tools *may* re-configure our conceptions of community and online communities as a site of learning is something we have yet to understand and explore.

The Ideology of Online Communities

Policy and practice within the cyberspace elasticity of space, time, body, and relationships becomes complex. The normative and ideological connotations of community present challenges, especially as these communities become wrapped up in notions of work-related learning and identity for the self-employed worker. I have identified three entry points for reflecting on the ideology of online communities, each creating a space for the critical adult educator.

Power and inclusion/exclusion.

Online communities bring power relations and questions of inclusion and exclusion. Jones (1998) writes that “the ability to create, maintain, control space ... links us to notions of power ... Just because the spaces with which we are now concerned are electronic, there is not a guarantee that they are democratic, egalitarian, or accessible” (p. 20). Therefore, we need to question who the gatekeepers are and what kind of gatekeeping goes on. Because communities have borders and margins we need to ask who is being excluded. Tierney (1992) explains that “the social relations of the community are never fixed and permanent, so that a continual struggle exists to comprehend how the community creates its borders to exclude some and give preference to others” (p. 143). He advocates that a critical theory of community “reconfigures centrality, margins, [and] borders” (p. 143).

Different knowledges and difference.

Building community also entails tackling the (de/re)legitimization of different knowledges. This includes questioning whose knowledges are dominant as well as legitimizing local and personal knowledges. Difference must be acknowledged, questioned, and engaged, which is especially important in an online community that links people from various places and spaces. However, Nancy Baym (1998) writes that online communities are often critiqued for their homogeneity and lack of commitment. We can leave the community rather than deal with diversity (Jones, 1998). There are a myriad of issues to explore around the long term implications of this way of (dis)engaging in these spaces and how easily we embrace or avoid difference and diversity.

New online literacies.

Jones (1998) observes that we can “tap into” a community with any number of technologies from wherever we are. “But connection does not inherently make for community, nor does it lead to any necessary exchanges of information, meaning and sense-making at all” (p. 5). Online communication is a very new and nuanced way of dialoguing that includes discussion, conversation, online writing, and chatting – new literacies. We need to question our preparedness for engagement in these communities. Do we know who we are as a social actor in a cyberspace community? Many l(e)arners are wary about how they and what they have to say will be regarded by others. We wrestle with trust and honesty. Second, online communications have a disarming way of making our private worlds public. How aware of this process is each person in the community? Sophisticated technology literacy is essential in the areas of personal security and privacy.

Conclusion

The quote from Freire (1970) seems to capture the spirit of community: “knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing hopeful inquiry [people] pursue in the world, with the world, and *with each other*” (p. 58 italics added). Online communities seem to be a natural extension of informal learning practices. It is easy to think of them as a rich learning space for the self-employed worker and they are, especially for these workers who often do not have access to organizationally sponsored education opportunities and may find formal training not accessible or feasible. I have explored several questions that encourage us, as adult educators, to think more critically about these online communities and their pedagogical value for workers.

If individuals and communities direct their own informal learning, where do adult educators fit? The more we “do” to informal learning, the more we risk altering the essential nature of what it is. The challenge is to shape a role for the adult educator so they support, but not smother, these potentially rich learning encounters in informal and non-formal online communities. I share four recommendations:

- Help construct democratic learning spaces. Oppressive structures can all too easily be replicated within online communities – technology both amplifies and reduces. There is a role for the adult educator to help participants uncover and confront knowledge–power relations and inequities.
- Ensure people can leverage the new technologies (especially the new social software) in ways that maximize their learning opportunities and ability to engage in a meaningful and safe way.
- If involved in “designing” an online community consider less of a top down approach. For example, Boyd (2006) advises design for reinterpretation. No matter how perfect your design, it will be modified, altered or manipulated in use (p. 6). Help an “engineered” community evolve into a more self-sustaining community.
- Continue to question why the self-employed person reaches out to others in an online community. Is this an act of solidarity and wanting to belong or is it merely turning to the only option available? Even in a “community” it is possible some people are solitary and isolated. There may be a role for the adult educator to help facilitate connections and interactions.

In these intersections between l(e)arning and web-based learning technologies, informal learning, and self-employed worker there are tremendous possibilities, especially for people perched on the “edge” of the workplace. Future research and practice should continue to question: (1) What is the significance of online communities for work-related and identity learning?; (2) How does engagement in online communities change work-related knowing and learning?; (3) Do online communities widen access to learning opportunities for the self-employed?; and (4) Does the apparent ease and ubiquity of online community invade the private life spaces of the self-employed; people already challenged to maintain boundaries between work, family, and home? There is more to learn and understand about how the self-employed worker blends their learning – informally and formally, collectively and individually, online and face-to-face – in ways that are purposeful, serendipitous, and subversive and that advance work-related knowing, social actions, and ongoing construction of identity.

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Through the Looking Glass *Ceiling*: Reflections of the Disabled Work Experience

by Robin Slater

Abstract

In the New Economy one is defined by what you do not who you are; what you have is more important than what you give; your value as a human being is secondary to the value of your equity; and finding a job and accommodation takes precedence over discovering one's gifts and soul. It's the topsy-turvy world of being down the Rabbit-Hole, where values and priorities are turned upside down. Whether impeded through genetics, trauma or aging, this has always been the case for the disabled, synonyms for being powerless, demoralized, ineffective, and disqualified. These labels describe much of the present-day paid workforce as well as those of us working just to survive another day.

Existence itself becomes a precarious journey through Wonderland, populated by characters from whom we can learn survival techniques or who are just as likely to shout: "Off With Her Head". Being human grants me dignity and respect; becoming disabled has forced me to fight for these rights and develop ways to reconfigure my world to accommodate an altered perspective. It is possible to live gracefully with a reality that differs from the social norm and fly beyond the glass ceilings that have been imposed on us in Alberta's Wonderland.

Welcome to Alberta's Wonderland. Every time I hear the clip on CBC with Klein saying "welcome to Ralph's world" I see the Red Queen (excuse the pun, no disrespect intended!!) strutting around shouting "*off with her head*" and being an autocratic caricature of a head of state. Somehow, Klein doesn't represent me any more than the Queen did the inhabitants of the Rabbit-Hole, but like Alice, I keep trying to make sense of the upside-down world around me.

Becoming disabled plunges one head-first into a surreal world where reality is off-kilter and consistency is fluid. Much like being part of the economy around us, inhabited by over-sized imaginary characters, where nothing is as it seems. It's easy to imagine you're at the Mad Hatter's tea party when sitting endlessly in an emergency department waiting room. The mayhem of the game on the queen's croquet-ground is not so different from the organized chaos every morning in one of Calgary's church basements that has been the dormitory to dozens of homeless guests benefiting from our Inn From The Cold program.

There's been an ongoing debate in the letters-to-the-editor column of a Canmore local paper that started with a rant about waiting 3 hours for a Sunday breakfast...then it went on to a defence of the service industry...followed by a scathing condemnation of the housing situation and cost-of-living...a

case was advanced for a lack of training...readers are decrying the transient and absentee nature of Canmore's population. It's been back and forth for weeks, and I've missed a few episodes, but at this point it's as ridiculous as the trial of the Knave of Hearts stealing some tarts...What could have been an intelligent discussion of some of the same issues we're examining here has deteriorated into a personal free-for-all. Why isn't the discussion of the economy and its effects more widespread and passionate, especially in a public forum such as the newspaper? Why does economy mean money not satisfaction; why are values and priorities so topsy-turvy?

Take some time to introduce yourselves to the person sitting beside you and find out who this individual really is and what they're all about. Besides the obvious; each other's name, where they're from, what they DO for a living, who will talk about any other kinds of information? Not many of us discuss kids, churches, sports, volunteer activities and subjects hidden beneath our earning capacities. There wasn't one of us who *DIDN'T* find out what our neighbour *DOES!* Maybe our figures are somewhat skewed, because after all we are at a conference about work. But even here the assumption is that when the title says: "Work..." it refers to paid employment. I happen to "work" really hard at just getting thru the day, but not too many people have that interpretation of the title of today's events. And my activities are just as precarious as those of you putting in an eight-hour shift.

"WHO ARE YOU??"

Why is it that when we are introduced to someone and want to get to know him or her, the first thing we ask is: "what do you do?" And by that we all know we mean: what do you get paid for, how do you earn a living? At least women who are running their households no longer say: "I'm just a housewife", but there are few other *excuses* for not drawing a paycheque. After my accident I knew I was no longer employable but because I bought into a work ethic that said a full recovery depended on doing *something* to make *money*, I opened a bookstore. I was *absolutely CRAZY*. I spent 12 years being nuts in a store that was as out of control as I was, and then another 5 getting over the damage it had caused. The only reason I didn't get out of it was because I couldn't, or wouldn't, fire myself. Even then, after all that disastrous behaviour, when some friends finally got me accepted onto the disability pension, I still had to equate my existence with an income value. When new acquaintances asked, it was embarrassing to say I *did* nothing, meaning I did nothing to earn a wage. Instead, I would tell people: "I am retired". When they pushed further and learned about the bookstore it was really hard to keep up the façade, since we all know the financial reality, or *unreality*, of independent bookstores. *That's another rant for another time.*

Now, when I'm asked what I do, I reply: "I'm setting an example of how we will behave in a utopian world". That has become an easy litmus test for weeding out people with whom I won't enjoy conversing or spending time. They *may* be the people I need to *teach*, but they're definitely **not** folks I want to hang around. The income generated by my disability, such as it is, gives me the luxury to do what I value, which also happens to be who I am. Paradoxically, we usually talk about the overlap between people's work, what they do and who they are as being negative because of being caught in an unfulfilling job with no satisfaction. It's a looking-glass vision when I see my *disabled* reflection, which is expected to be shattered and powerless, portraying a fusion of what I do, with who I am, and what I believe. And having learned how to be comfortable with this shattered Humpty Dumpty image, which has been put back together in a new mosaic, I hope to model a paradigm adapted for changing times. In our heated economy "What do you do?" means "what work do you get paid for?" If I answer, "I do disabled" no one understands me and the issue of income determining worth still seems to need a reply. Believe me: "Doing Disabled" is a full time job but unlike most people, I get to choose how I use my

leftover energy. I volunteer where I can, I hunt down deals for my friends, I organize bulk food purchases, I raise consciousness and I raise stink! I'd like to live by a different ethic and separate the perception of activity from a paycheque.

“What DO YOU Do??”

I encourage everyone to get off the treadmill and out of the rat race...

I Do *SLOW*...

I Do *FLEXIBLE*...

I Do *SINGLE TASKING*

I Do *CONSISTENT*

I Recognize my *Limitations*

I Do *AWARE*

I DO *INTEGRATED*

I lead with my *Heart* not my *Head*

I Do *COMMUNITY*

I Do *RELATIONSHIPS*

I Do *POLITE*

I Change my *EXPECTATIONS*

I Re-evaluate my *VALUES* and *PRIORITIES*

And most importantly, *I DO WITH LESS*

It seems that those controlling the job market, as well as those trying to fit into it, are reshaping and restructuring requirements and vision, with little thought of personal integrity or wholeness. Like Alice grabbing at bottles of elixir, pieces of cake, or chunks off the mushroom we are using any method to expand or shrink or transform or alter ourselves into the size or shape or marketability of the day without considering where, or what, we will be tomorrow. To me, this is the insidious misrepresentation of the present economy, which strips us of our humanity.

When you go down the Rabbit Hole and are asked by the hookah-smoking Caterpillar: “WWWHHOO are YYYYOOUU?” you don't want to answer with your CV and job description. You'd much rather forget about your annual income and be able to tell him about the wonderful person you truly are. And then life itself won't be so precarious.

Precarious Work – a New Challenge for the Danish Trade Unions

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Abstract

The paper focuses on work conditions in Danish home care organisations. The “precarious work” is not yet widespread throughout Scandinavia. Nonetheless, there are several characteristics of the precarious work such as uncertain and straining conditions, which also pertain to, for instance, permanent positions in the lower end of the public sector’s job hierarchy. In continuation of this, we argue in favour of an extended definition of “precarious work”. The emphasis of this paper is on the elucidation of educational and developmental initiatives in the home care sector. The empirical example here covers the factors that render the work precarious, how the precarious work is experienced, and the preconditions for changing it. The example demonstrates that the offer of educational space and creative activities may enable the participants to articulate – based on their own experiences – how the work in home care settings may be developed in a more sustainable direction.

Introduction

According to the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, the most important characteristic of the development of a work society is an increase in the prevalence of precarious work. Beck argues that it is possible to register widespread tendencies towards deregulation of work conditions, and that this deregulation leads to an increase in short-term, individualised forms of employment. These employment forms fall outside of the trade unions’ power of negotiation and therefore weaken the trade unions strategically (Beck, 1999). The Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells relates these developmental tendencies to the global development, whereby capital is increasingly disconnected from the national production conditions and is oriented towards the fluctuating possibilities of making profit from global finances and stock markets. In such a situation, unemployment is determined by the supernational capital’s estimation of the possibilities of gaining profit in individual national states. Viewed from the perspective of the employees, the risk of this development is that capital thrives, while the workers are forced into an international competitive struggle to keep workplaces (Castells, 2000). This situation poses new demands on the trade unions with regards to the protection of the wage earners’ interests.

In his depiction of the potential risks inherent in the future development of western societies, Beck points out the emergence of four groups:

1. The global era’s “Columbus class”: the winners of globalisation; the owners of the globally acting capital and its assistants on management level. The price for this power is poverty/ lack of time.
2. Highly qualified people holding precarious jobs: short-term employed, self-employed, single-person companies, etc., who are all relatively highly paid. Lack of staff and working overtime are

just two sides of the coin to them. Spare time is no longer in their vocabulary. He, who cannot be contacted at any time or place, puts himself at risk.

3. Working poor: the so-called under- and unqualified work places are directly threatened by the globalisation. They may be replaced by automatization or outsourcing of jobs to other countries.
4. Localised poverty: those who are bound to the local space, but are unemployed (cf. Beck, 1999, pp. 121ff).

In strong economies such as the US, Canada, and Australia, there are clear tendencies towards a similar polarisation of the work force. There is a rise in the number of 'working poor', that is, the group of low paid precarious workers with short-term training as well as a rise in the groups of highly qualified self-employed people in precarious jobs, and the groups of highly educated and highly paid people (the 'Columbus class'). Meanwhile, there is a decrease in wage earner groups with middle range incomes and 'normal' fairly secure employment conditions. In Europe in general, we observe similar tendencies, especially in the south of Europe, while they are not so evident throughout Scandinavia.

Concerning Denmark one of the reasons for this development is that the Danish welfare model is characterised by financial redistribution via progressive taxation. Another reason is that the particular conditions in the Danish labour market have meant that precarious work is not yet very widespread. At the same time, the Danish model is characterised by the fact that we are on the one hand close to 'full employment' and on the other hand have a large amount of people who are almost permanently marginalized from the labour market.

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to a discussion of the trade unions' possibilities of hindering precarious work conditions from spreading to the Danish labour market. In the paper, we describe the role of the Danish labour market model – the so-called 'flexicurity model' – in relation to the spreading of precarious work. The Danish trade unions have had a significant historical importance in relation to the development of this model and are a central agent in the labour market. They therefore play an important part in maintaining and further developing the Danish labour market model. Several analyses point out that the model is under increasing pressure.

The flexicurity model orientation is to maintain a high degree of employment security in the labour market, i.e. getting new jobs to wage earners who have been dismissed. The model is relatively successful. The Danish labour market is characterised by the fact that every year a large sector of the wage earners lose their jobs and get a new one. Society, the companies, and the wage earners have a shared interest in this flexibility. However, the flexibility can also have negative consequences for the wage earners. This has been described by among others Sennett in the book *The Corrosion of Character*, where the main message is that the increased flexibility in society can be achieved at the expense of people's need for stable modes of belonging (Sennett). In this perspective it is not sufficient for the trade union movement to direct its efforts towards maintaining the elements in the labour market policy, which counteract precarious work. It is just as important that the trade union movement develops initiatives in relation to work places, characterised by a comprehensive use of temporary work, especially in low labour cost areas. Using the public eldercare in Denmark as an example, we describe how present changes in the organisation and management of the public sector may lead to

deterioration in the employees' working conditions, as well as an increase in the spread of precarious work. It is a vicious circle where permanent staff with professional training leaves the field due to deterioration in the working conditions and the influx of uneducated, temporary workers, working for low wages.

The article finishes with a discussion of the challenges facing the trade unions, such as their struggle against the erosion of fundamental elements in the flexicurity model, as well as the further development of job and labour market security for the wage earners.

Atypical Employment Forms and Precarious Jobs in Denmark.

In a Danish context, the prevalence of atypical employment forms is regarded as an important indicator of the extent of precarious work. It is, however, necessary to differentiate between groups of atypical employment forms in order to estimate more precisely whether or not these involve precarious work.

In Denmark, the group of *atypical employees*, i.e. self-employed or temporary staff, amounts to 12% of the overall working population. In a European context, this percentage is relatively high – only surpassed by Finland (13.5%), Sweden (13.5%) and Spain (33.7%). Remarkably lower percentages are found in Belgium (5.1%), Italy (7.3%), UK (6.5%) and Luxembourg (2.9%). The group of “*self-employed*” in Denmark encompasses approximately 3% of the overall working population. A relatively large proportion of this group is male and well educated (53%). Their working conditions resemble those of the wage earners, but they have no collective rights (see below) even though many of them are members of a trade union. A relatively large part of this group is in a Danish context described as receiving low pay (Madsen & Petersen, 2002).

The group of “*temporary staff*” constitutes 9% of the working population and is divided statistically into “temporary employment to solve a specific task”, “short-term contracts”, “temping staff” and “other temporary employment”. A common characteristic of this group is that they are all wage earners, many of them are female, and the work generally involves limitations regarding both assignments and time. A great number of the people in this group earn low salaries. On average, this is connected to a low level of education and the fact that many in this group are not employed all year round. High qualification demands are often associated with short-term contracts, as well as with temporary employment, focused on solving a specific task. The groups of temping staff and other temporary staff, on the other hand, often comprise unskilled workers. Approximately 70% of the temporary staff are organised in a trade union. However, this amount entails large age differences - for instance the low percentage (32%) of organised employees under the age of 30 (Madsen & Petersen, 2002).

The size of the group of atypically employed staff has on the whole been fairly stable in the past 20 years. However, some displacements have occurred within the group. The proportion of highly educated people, finding temporary employment within a wide service field, has in the meantime been on the increase (Madsen & Petersen 2002). In other words, there seems to be a tendency towards the spreading of temporary work to new employment areas.

If we define precarious work as atypical employment conditions, this type of employment covers, as mentioned above, 12% of all employees in Denmark. This share is relatively high compared to other European countries. If, however, we limit the definition of precarious work and only include atypical employments that are furthermore characterised by low pay and a lack of rights, secured by collective agreements, the percentage is significantly reduced. A lot of employees in the group of atypical employment conditions hold a relatively high salary and many are covered by collective agreements and the rights included in these. This pertains, for example, to 88% of the group of temporary staff. If we expand the field of vision to include all wage earners in Denmark, as well as the overall social security for Danish wage earners, we encounter a paradox. On the one hand, there is a large proportion of Danish wage earners, who have very short notices of termination; on the other hand, the Danish wage earners benefit from a very high state guarantee of income security. These are the main ingredients in what is known as *the Danish flexicurity model*. We intend to argue that the relatively limited prevalence of precarious work in Denmark may be understood in the light of this labour market model.

The Danish Trade Unions and the Danish Flexicurity Model

The concept of flexicurity was originally coined in Holland in the mid 1990s. The professor and representative in the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy, Hans Adriaanes, used this concept in 1995 to describe the shift from job security to employment security. Job security encompasses the security of holding a job with a specific employer, while employment security refers to the security of being able to find employment (cf. Andersen & Mailand, 2002). The Danish flexicurity model shares this characterization, but is not based on the Dutch experiences. The Danish “flexicurity mix” has rather been developed *ad hoc*, as well as on the basis of practical experiences, power struggles and learning processes amongst the agents, including the parties related to the labour market (cf. Andersen & Mailand, 2002). Through these struggles and learning processes, the Danish Social Democratic Party and the Danish trade union movement have gained a relatively strong position in relation to securing the interests and rights of wage earners.

Throughout the post-war period, the trade union movement’s politics have expressed an interest in reaching compromises with a focus on shared interests and cooperation with the employers. Furthermore, it has been based upon a very high degree of responsibility for the general development of prosperity and welfare within the society. Compared to other countries, the Danish trade union movement has gained a lot of support. Approximately 80% of employees in Denmark are member of a trade union. This is an important part of understanding the central role, which the labour market parties have played in the Danish labour market. It is, for instance, to a large extent up to the wage earners and employers to settle on collective agreements on salaries and work conditions. The system of collective agreements is based upon a work division between the state and the labour market parties, whereby the state interferes as little as possible in the regulation of salaries and work conditions. The collective agreements determine the work conditions for each individual employee (demands for qualifications, working hours, holidays, salary systems and the actual amount, terms of resignations, and rules for the handling of wage earners’ interests etc.). The employer is also under obligation to adhere to the rules of the agreement, relating to employees within the organisation, who are not organised in a trade union. The trade unions’ strength and focus on cooperation have at the same time been crucial to the

development of labour market politics, where the foundation comprises the so-called tri-part agreement, i.e. the negotiations between the state and the organisations of employees and employers respectively.

The collective agreements and the labour market politics have established the foundation for the Danish flexicurity model. The model involves four basic elements:

- **Relatively High Minimum Wages:**

Via collective agreements with a very high degree of coverage, the trade union movement has achieved a relatively high minimum wage on the Danish job market (approximately DKK 87/ CAN \$ 15 per hour, DKK 14,000/ CAN \$ 2500 per month). Even though this is not a particularly high salary, the minimum wage counteracts the spreading of a class of “working poor”. The minimum wage thus contributes to hindering the phenomena seen in other countries, where the employers pay temporary workers a salary, which hardly covers their material sustenance.

- **Low Job Security**

The Danish labour market is characterised by agreements that regulate the sacking of staff members. From an international perspective, however, these agreements are very flexible. In other words, there is a low job security. The positive effect of this is that employers are not afraid of hiring new staff – they can always get rid of them again. The opposite effect is seen in, for instance, France, where employers hesitate to hire new staff in permanent positions due to the cost and difficulties involved in sacking them. The problem of the low job security is obviously that the employees’ job security is very low. In practice, there is not a marked difference between the security granted to permanently employed staff and temporary workers respectively. The employment of staff in temporary jobs can therefore not be explained with reference to shorter notices of resignations/dismissals. Presumably this plays a part in keeping the prevalence of precarious work so low in the Danish labour market.

- **High Employment Security**

Denmark has an active labour market policy, which is regulated by the state and the parties of the labour market (the tri-part negotiations). The active labour market politics involve, among other things, a right and duty for the unemployed to participate in job training courses and to accept job offers and education (“forced activation”). The active labour market politics furthermore entail the possibility of receiving a state subsidy if a company employs staff with reduced working capacities. The aim of this policy is to secure a high degree of employment security, i.e. to qualify and secure re-employment of wage earners, who have lost their jobs. An indicator of a relatively high employment security in Denmark is the overall rotation on the job market, which comprises approximately 20% of the work force, as well as the fact that the re-employment period is fairly short. At the same time, however, as many as 1/5 of the work force are not part of this job rotation but instead remain permanently

marginalized from the job market. The marginalisation particularly affects unskilled workers, people with short educations, and refugees/immigrants.

- **High-income Security**

A high-income security involves a high level of safety in relation to maintaining one's income, even where there are no jobs available. A high-income security thus diminishes the economic and social risks of the wage earners. In Denmark, this is achieved through comparatively high welfare payments in the case of unemployment. These payments are funded partly by the wage earners and partly by the state. The payments apply to the unemployed people who are insured through an unemployment fund, that is, the main proportion of all wage earners. At the same time a number of social benefits are state funded: health insurance, old age pensions, and early retirement pensions for people who are no longer capable of working. The employers only pay approximately 9% of the social benefits (in comparison, the amount is on average 38% in the EU) (Madsen & Petersen 2002). The high degree of public insurance means that the employers do not save social benefits when employing staff for temporary jobs. In isolation, it seems that the flexicurity system counteracts the spreading of temporary and precarious work. There are, however, clear tendencies in Denmark towards an increase in the share of social benefits financed by employers. This pertains to the area of pensions, where the state previously financed most pensions. Today, pensions are to an increasing extent financed by employers and therefore depend on employment conditions. This contributes to an increase in differences in the life salary and security of wage earners when they retire.

In the public debate, a number of issues have been described as threats to the Danish labour market model, as well as a potential basis for the spreading of precarious work in Denmark. These issues include:

- The fact that the minimum wages are under pressure from international competition and employers from especially the eastern European countries in the EU.
- The fact that Danish companies are first in line when multinational companies need to sack employees, since it is relatively cheap to dismiss Danes as opposed to nationals of a number of other countries.
- The outsourcing of jobs that demand a low level of qualifications may to an increasing degree pose a challenge to the active labour market politics with respect to the continual qualification of workers, which is necessary in order to establish new competitive work places.
- The fact that the Danish system and its collective agreements are under pressure from the EU, which aims at subjecting the labour market to a more extensive legislative system. This will limit the liberty of action in the negotiation of collective agreements and may pose a threat to the tripartite management of the Danish labour market.
- And finally, the fact that the WTO and OECD put pressure on the Danish labour market with respect to liberalisation and deregulation.

The threats against the Danish labour market model involved in these risks may in the worst-case result in a weakening of the security elements of the model, while the flexibility elements are strengthened. Parts of the trade union movements are aware of these challenges and problems and acknowledge that the movement has an important role to play in the aim of counteracting the tendency to erode the fundamentals of the model. Furthermore, they play a crucial part in the further development of the job and labour market security of wage earners.

Inadequate Job Security and the Destabilization of Working Conditions

The development in the framework conditions of the labour market constitutes a significant factor in the basis of the distribution of precarious work. In the text above we have attempted to sketch out specific traits in the Danish labour market model. On the one hand the model contains a high degree of income security and (re)employment security. On the other hand the model contains a, for European standards, very high degree of flexibility and labour mobility. The comprehensive annual job turnover bears witness to this perspective. In the political arena there is a move to increase the flexibility and the mobility. These features of the societal development relate to the question of the extent of precarious work, since the field through these measures open up the possibility of more unstable, temporary types of employment. However, another important factor is the development in the nature of the work itself and in the interaction between the nature of the work and the types of employment exercised in various sectors. In the following we have chosen to focus on the development within a traditional public area of work: the Danish eldercare. We have selected the eldercare, because here we have an opportunity to demonstrate that not just the formal wage and employment conditions, but also initiatives to make changes in the work and the conditions for its execution are significant factors in the distribution of precarious work.¹

Our analysis of the eldercare shows how the interaction among a number of features of the development destabilises the field of work and contributes to the recruitment and retention crises, which characterise the field. Public policies of modernization are an important factor behind this destabilization. The policies of modernization involve cuts. Furthermore new management philosophies pertaining to work and supervision are introduced with a view to create greater efficiency and these contribute to the changes in the nature of the work, as well as to changes in the conditions for its execution. From the point of view of an employee, the steps towards modernization can in many ways be experienced as obstacles for the execution of a meaningful work effort characterised by quality. Another important factor is the public employers' extensive use of temporary employment and work force recruited from temporary staffing agencies. The flow of personnel through a company increases responsibility and work pressure among the permanent workers who experience that the large turnover undermines their possibilities of establishing efficient sustainable work communities, characterised by a high degree of professional quality. A third factor relates to the status of the work performed. The work in eldercare is in general considered to be low prestige and the employees' efforts are often berated in the public debate. The result is that the field to an increasing degree is marginalized as unsatisfactory and unattractive work.

¹ We draw upon yet unpublished empirical studies in the eldercare by ph.d. student Janne Gleerup.

The Danish Eldercare as an Example of the Destabilization of Work Conditions

The universal Danish welfare model implies that the public service in the eldercare field is financed by taxes and therefore free of charges for the individual citizen. Since the 1950'ies the eldercare has gradually been incorporated into the welfare model. Originally unskilled women performed the tasks, but the field has gradually been professionalized through education. Today homecare is an integrated and extensive part of the public service with more than 100.000 employees, unskilled as well as skilled, in permanent and temporary occupation. The main part of the eldercare is the so-called home based eldercare – a service provided in the citizens' own homes. Home-based eldercare consists of care work and practical help and is awarded to the individual citizen on the basis of continual assessment of his or her needs².

A physically and psychologically rough work environment characterizes the profession. This is partly due to the fact that the cleaning work wears the worker out physically, but also in part because the employees on a daily basis need to muster a great psychological surplus in the work with alternately frail, lonely, and ill or dying citizens. In addition a low status, a low degree of education, and a low salary characterize the work in eldercare.

A recently published research project shows that the employees within the field of eldercare consider helping care-needing elderly an important task and a main source of job satisfaction (Borg et. Al 2005). They basically like the work. Further more the analysis shows a great interest among the young people in "working with people", even though the wage level is low. On the other hand the research project also contains a survey showing that more than 45% of the employees are seriously considering changing to a completely different profession. It shows that the employees are under a severe work pressure and that they generally are dissatisfied with their wage and work conditions. It appears that it is not the care work itself that the employees want to leave. Instead the data seem to support the argument that reasons for the recruitment and retention crisis must be found in the very conditions of working in the field of eldercare and has to do with changing of the content of the work and the signification constructed around it.

The Impact of Modernization Policies in the Home-based Eldercare

The Danish home-based eldercare service is a significant expense in the public budget and since the end of the 1990'ies the field has undergone extensive reforms. In a future scenario of demographic combinations there will be large generations of older people and small year groups of working age. This will increase the pressure for reform, and cuts in the eldercare will be legitimized. However, the reforms are not just related to eldercare and they are not of recent date either. They are part of a much larger

² The dominant group of recipients is the elderly. However, young patients and handicapped people can also qualify for help.

public rationalization and efficiency improvement project, which has been underway since the beginning of the 1980'ies.

Already in the late 1970s, the welfare model was criticized for being too expensive, bureaucratic, and inefficient. An extensive restructuring process entitled *modernization* was therefore initiated with the purpose of rationalizing and increasing the efficiency of the public service production. During the past 25 years, a gradual implementation of novel financial and organizational models has taken place inspired by a number of development and management concepts. Moreover, new information technologies, management approaches, strategies for staff development, as well as new individualized salary policies, have all been implemented. This process has had far-reaching consequences for the function and service production of public organizations, as well as for their employees, whose working lives change in the implementation of – and the interplay between – different aims and means involved in the process.

In the following we shall describe how elements in the public modernization process change the conditions of the employees in a way that paves the road for more precarious work in the Danish home based eldercare.

Cuts – when the Messenger Is in the Line of Fire

The main content of the reform initiatives in the public modernization process has been an effort to slow down the development in the public expenditure. For this reason efficiency improvement and cuts often go hand in hand. Some cuts are implemented indirectly in connection with organizational and administrative restructuring processes, while others take the shape of more direct delimitations of the public service offering. The eldercare experiences both types, i.e. there is less time available for the service in question and the policy of modernization entails reprioritizations in the organization of the work and in the emphasis on the various service offerings. The latter results in a gradual concentration of help to the care-intensive home based elders, while the cleaning help has been reduced. In the words of the care personnel, the modernization has created many more “heavy clients”, while the “ordinary” clients, who receive less intensive care and cleaning are gradually marginalized with regard to the obligation to render service. This experience reflects a political wish to delimit the expenses in eldercare and therefore a declared goal in recent years has been that elders in need of care “remain at home for as long as possible,” as the slogan goes.

Regardless of the nature of the cuts, revised ambitions in the arena of welfare politics mean that the employees need to lower their professional standards in cleaning and considerate care. We shall elaborate on this source of frustration below. An employee explains that for years she has washed a client's stairs and now suddenly she will have to get used to the fact that:

“Apparently it is not really important any more... even if the stairs get dirty as usual.”

As the direct and immediate link between the clients and the system, it is the individual employee who is confronted with the disappointments, which the reduced standards entail for the clients. In this relation the employees often feel caught in a cross pressure, since they on the one hand represent the system and on the other hand cannot live with the reductions in the service, brought about by the cuts. An employee describes their experience with the words: “There is open season on the messengers who carry bad tidings.”

The Impact of the New Public Management Concept

Besides the actual cuts, the politics of modernization also embody work-intensifying objectives. These initiatives are to a large extent inspired by principles of organization and management, which are often described by the umbrella term New Public Management (NPM)³. In the following we shall clarify how the fundamental rationality in New Public Management in several ways conflicts with the employees' conception of the nature and significance of the work. From the point of view of the employees several initiatives are actually experienced as *barriers* to the execution of a quality oriented effort.

From Welfare to Merchandise

The reasoning and recommendations of the NPM tradition are characterized by the attempt to implement organizational, management, and salary policies that stem from the private labour market. In NPM the fundamental assumption is that public service production in principle does not differ from the production of private merchandise. Gradually the mechanisms of the market force are introduced into the public production of welfare and with the roles of "salesman" and "customer" the public welfare goods are transformed to *merchandise* and the citizens become *customers*. Efficiency must be implemented via tools such as increased competition, benchmarking, and output management. The work is subjected to standardizations and quantifications, which streamline the services rendered. The purpose is among other objectives to create homogeneity, transparency, and comparability in the services rendered, with a view to inviting tenders for the care projects from private enterprises (Klausen:1998). As a consequence of these initiatives, a commodification of the care work takes place and it is accompanied by an instrumental and technical rationality, which collides with the employees' more care-oriented interpretation of the fundamental nature of the work.

Care Rationality versus Technical Rationality

Along with the tools and discourses of the private labour market comes a kind of technical rationality that contains a taylorization of the work. The technical rationality cannot encompass or integrate the employees' understanding of the nature of useful and care-oriented eldercare. When the employees' care rationality is delegitimized and replaced by the new much more technical and quantitative standards of work, the employees' experience that their professional expertise is undermined. The technical rationality produces loss of meaningfulness in the daily work.

³ The modernization process also involves the influence of more "soft" development oriented concepts such as the *Human Resource Management* tradition (HRM). This encompasses a management approach, where the aim is to develop and intensify the use of human resources possessed by the work force. The access to these resources is sought through novel and strategic staff policies in order to advance employees' sense of responsibility as well as identification with the work place. The HRM tradition is less widespread in home care, while NPM on the other hand permeates most reform activities.

The Danish eldercare researcher Krogh Hansen formulates the problem as a binary opposition between on the one hand intentions of making eldercare more rational, flexible, and socially and politically efficient, and on the other hand providing a good daily routine for the elderly (Krogh Hansen 2006:16).

Strict Control and Time Management Systems

The NPM tradition is based on the assumption that the workplace is characterized by the so-called “low trust principal – agent relations” between the management and the employees. The assumption draws on the theories of the “economic man” or the “rational man”, and suggests that the employee basically wants to avoid work, just as the theory contains the assumption that motivation stems from economic interests mainly. Along with these assumptions come severe and strict control and time management systems and other bureaucratic measures. In various critical analyses the process is interpreted as the spread of logics from the industrial society and labour marked. With a reference to the German work sociologist Oscar Negt, Krog Hansen calls the changed work conditions “the disciplinary space where everything is locked in controllable and functionally determined time-spaces”. (Krogh Hansen 2006:17). The employees’ experience seems to concur with this. The employees argue that rigorous time management combined with comprehensive demands for documentation and control systems preclude flexibility in the cooperation with the elderly and – most importantly – they steal time from the main purpose: care. They explain how “the rule of time” – and the lack of time - makes it difficult to be present in a respectful way in the social relation with the elderly. From an employee perspective the strict control and time management systems are interpreted as lack of trust. Such negative experiences among the employees undermine the work satisfaction and provoke antagonistic relations between the employees and the management.

Top Down Policies and Loss of Influence on Daily Work

Another negative consequence of the politics of modernization is that management concepts, based on theoretical models, are often implemented top-down. This means that the employee can neither influence the content nor the organization of the work. The employees find it extremely demoralizing, when they experience that their practical knowledge about the work is not applied. This is also the case when they are unable to raise objections against unfair (unbalanced) distributions of home care and unrealistic calculations of the time consumption relative to the work projects. With this perspective in mind the employees argue that it would be advantageous for everyone if they were involved in the planning and the prioritizing with reference to their professionalism and their thorough knowledge of the citizens. In a similar way it is argued that also the elderly themselves could be involved in the visitation process. However, the political goals of paving the road for outsourcing involve rules, which prevent this type of participation in the prioritization and planning of the work.

Such consequences of the NPM initiatives have a devastatingly destructive effect on the employees’ experience of providing a meaningful and useful work effort. The initiatives are in many cases experienced as a dequalification, and at the same time many find it difficult to handle the psychological pressure, which accompanies taylorization and technical rationality. Such frustrating experiences

increase the risk of marginalization and exclusion from the labour market. At the same time the well-resourced employees tend to leave the care sector, if possible.

Employment Policies in the Home-based Eldercare

The eldercare is characterized by a high degree of personnel flow. One reason among others is that there is extensive use of temporary employment. Due to personnel shortages there is also an increasing use of temporary employment agencies.

The fact that the profession is characterized by a large turnover of staff and extensive use of temporary employment agencies is among the core employees considered as a threat to professional standards and the quality of work. The permanent employees point to a number of negative aspects and consequences resulting from extensive use of temporary employment.

In the first instance it is time and resource consuming to train new personnel, and only too rarely is the necessary time for fundamental training granted. In the second instance the core personnel experiences that new employees, trained and untrained alike, lack the necessary qualifications. This creates insecurity among the employees, as well as among the clients. A third point follows, where it is clarified that a consequence of these problems is that several mistakes occur, when the replacement staff are not familiar with the work or the clients they encounter. Finally it is brought to attention that the temporary staff neither forms attachments to colleagues, nor to the work projects, because they are there for such a short time. It is difficult for them to develop responsibility and as a result the systemic effort in the care project suffers. From the point of view of the elderly the constant change of home care staff creates confusion and insecurity. Furthermore there is a higher risk of mistakes and criticism when inexperienced temporary labour and replacement staff do not know the clients and their situation. On the other hand the core staff also point out that it is difficult for those with temporary employment to bond, particularly because they are treated as temporary labour not worth "investing in".

In an overall view this means that the extensive use of temporary workers makes it difficult to establish efficient and sustainable work communities. Furthermore the unstable day-to-day routine has an excluding effect on the most vulnerable employees and the well-resourced employees, who are able to apply for other jobs, gravitate from the work place.

Part Time Employees or Employees with Reduced Working Capacity

Recruitment problems mean that from time to time employees are hired, who are not sufficiently competent to manage the job. It is also well known that the extent of part time employed staff and the hiring of employees with reduced working capacity is higher in this profession than in other public work fields. Among the permanent staff the so-called numerical flexibility calls for internal ambivalence. The dilemma consists in the fact that on the one hand they wish to express solidarity with colleagues who – as a consequence of a severe wear exposure, determined by their profession – are subjected to less strain in the form of part time employment or employment on special conditions. On the other hand the part time positions are experienced as a delimitation of the work colleagues' possibility to make a flexible work plan. At the same time it is argued that the price of solidarity with vulnerable colleagues is

that those who are fully fit for work are exposed to increased work pressure and thereby to an increased danger of professional wear exposure. An employee explains:

“Yes, but if resources are not supplied, then you push the problem ahead of you. In that case you wear down the fit workers. If one worker puts in 70 %, then someone else has to work 130 %.”

By extension the employees voice a critique of the management. The management is accused of hiding the wear problems and preventing flexibility via part time employment, as specified in the following statement:

“All too often one is not employed full time and then one cannot make ends meet. But they dare not make full time positions, because they know that our physiques cannot take that.” Or: “But the work entails wear exposure. Why do you think they avoid hiring full time staff? It is because they know that nobody can actually take that kind of wear. It must be the management’s responsibility to comprehend what kind of pressure the individual worker can handle and then plan accordingly”.

The quotes illustrate the workers’ difficulty in establishing solidarity in their work community under these circumstances. Here slogans, designed to promote organization among the workers, refer to *a work place with room for everyone*. This is, however, transformed or decentralized to a demand for *the capable worker*.

The employees lack tools to handle the problems concerning employment policy described here. This creates frustration and contributes to an impulse to leave the field, expressed by the able-bodied and well-resourced sector of the work force. This creates a danger of a negative spiral, which increases the extent of precarious work in eldercare.

Internal and External Lack of Social and Economic Recognition

In later years actual care education centers have been established. This has supported a revaluation and an incipient professionalization of the care work as such⁴. Nevertheless salaries and employment conditions in eldercare are still among the lowest ranking in the public hierarchy – as far as salary and status are concerned. Recent investigations show that for example the position as nursing home assistant and home help are among the least prestigious jobs in Denmark (Ugebrevet A4, November 2006). The low status and the low pay are experienced as unfair and have a negative effect on the employees. By way of example one employee explains how her husband, who has recently been employed in an unskilled flexjob, is paid more than her, although she has 15 years of seniority in home care. The employees register how there is a minimum of investment in home help, whereas nurses are treated as valuable resources. This is evident in for example the educational policies, but also in cases of long term illness, where the employers are quick to dismiss the less educated home help. The employees demonstrate through various examples the low status and lack of recognition. As an employee states:

“They did a lot for that nurse. But home helpers – you just want to get rid of them when they are ill. It tells you something about status. You are not worth much”

In an external perspective budget cuts and increased workload are among the reasons why the employees are often exposed to critique in the public debate. Media scandals are for example produced by the use of candid camera and such disclosures have a tremendously negative impact on the workforce. Humiliation engenders shame and the employees try to hide which profession they are engaged in.

What to Learn from the Employee’s Experiences?

The present deficit in the work force and in the number of students in the field of care giving, combined with the threatening demographic development, have lead to political interest being created in the development of new strategies in the retention and recruitment of work force in the eldercare sector. Consequently advertising campaigns have been launched with a view to recruiting employees in segments such as unskilled housewives and young, ethnic women. In the text above we have attempted to show how our own empirical research, as well as other similar investigations, indicate that the recruitment and retention crisis cannot be solved only by commercial campaigns targeting new hitherto overlooked groups. As it is, the recruitment crisis seems to stem from more fundamental problems,

⁴ Presently there are two types of education in eldercare: social and health care assistant (two years) and social and health care worker (one year). By adding course modules to these two professions it is possible to become a nurse.

which emerge when we combine structural analyses of the labour market with analyses of developments in the work and in the conditions for its execution.

Conclusion

We introduced this paper by outlining a risk scenario, involving the global distribution of precarious work. We documented statistically that the share of precarious work is not yet very prevalent in the Danish labour market, among other reasons because of the Danish flexicurity model. At the same time we pointed to a number of threats to this model.

We then changed perspective from a focus on the labour market's significance in the development of precarious work to a focus on the influence, which deteriorating work conditions could have on this development. The advantages of the Danish flexicurity model are not motivated by job security, but by employment security. There is a focus on mobility instead of on stability. Needless to say it is positive that wage earners have the possibility to find new employment, if they lose their job. The high turn over could, however, be a threat to the quality of the work. This would apply especially in the job descriptions including compassionate nurture and in situations where a large personnel turn over will create negative consequences in relation to the clients. An equally important factor is that stable work communities can be of great importance to the individual wage earner. To many people a profession constitutes a primary relation in their lives, allowing for the fulfillment of fundamental needs for social relations, as well as for a meaningful contribution to society. The job insecurity constitutes a significant factor. As demonstrated by the eldercare example, the combination of public policies of modernization, inadequate societal recognition of the work, as well as an employment policy based on numerical flexibility, it is extremely difficult to maintain the work place as a sustainable, social work community. We have described this as a vicious circle, where an increased workload, a reduced influence on the work, and an inadequate societal recognition can result in an increase in the number of workers employed on a temporary basis, and in an increase in the use of temporary employment agencies.

For the trade union movement it is naturally important to contribute to the development of the labour market policy. The objective is to prevent the spreading of precarious work. At the same time it is important that the trade union movement contributes to the improvement of the working conditions in the companies, one purpose among many being to retain the permanently employed, skilled staff. It is furthermore important that the union engages local situations, where permanent and temporary staffs co-operate, in order to promote teamwork and mutual solidarity. The intention behind this initiative is to secure the quality of the work, the employees' professional satisfaction, and the working conditions. Empirical research carried out by us, as well as by other researchers, shows that the employees have great insight into which features of the development destabilize their professional field. However, their reservoir of experience, in the form of critique and good ideas, is voiced only too rarely in the discussion about the direction of the development in their professional field. With this perspective in mind, we should like to encourage co-operation with the staff in the development of new strategies relative to the recruitment and retention of employees in eldercare.

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