

A social capital inventory for adult literacy learners

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to assess the current scholarship on adult learning and social capital with specific attention to research in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. This review provided the foundation to develop and pilot a new measure called the Social Capital Inventory (SCI) in an adult high school custodial training program. Cronbach alphas were computed to assess the internal consistency of the items for the total scale and for each subscale. The total scale showed good reliability with $\alpha = .88$. Results of the pilot study seem to suggest that how we measure social capital may be intrinsic to the adult learning process as Canadian born and immigrant trainees begin to realize the social outcomes of a literacy program.

Key Words: adult learning, social capital, literacy, tool development

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Introduction

For countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States, work skills development is a key building block towards international competitiveness. Although each of these countries has crafted its own distinct skills strategy, a common feature across these national workforce policies is the new attention given to adult learning. Such learning allows workers and trainees to strengthen the skills needed to fully participate in a labour market that is being transformed by new technologies. For example, according to Statistics Canada (2010) an estimated ten million Canadians aged 18 to 64 had participated in some form of education or training related to career, job or personal interest. At the same time, however, recent reports also suggest that despite the importance of adult learning, a number of challenges still persist across international contexts (OECD, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2008). Over the past few years, workplace education, essential skills programs and work-based learning have occupied a central place for workers to access and engage in the full range of learning and training opportunities (Taylor, Evans, & Pinsent-Johnson, 2010). Although this continues to be an evolving area in adult learning, there is a growing awareness that measuring the economic and non economic returns of these types of investments is difficult to wrestle down.

Over the past decades, adult and workplace learning has often been seen through a narrow policy lens of preparing for employment and as a means for increasing wages and productivity (Riddell & Sweetman, 2001; OECD, 2005; Machin, 2006). However, with the need for greater social inclusion of several Canadian sub groups such as marginalized adults and workers with low skills, it has now become important to look beyond measures of earning and move towards measures of learning (HRSDC, 2009a and b). According to the Organization for Economic and

Cultural Development (2006, p.15) “a great deal is known about how much people earn after completing an additional year’s schooling, but a lot less is known about outcomes society intends education to provide and even less about the unintended consequences of learning.” Furthermore, the Canadian Council on Learning (2009) maintains that there are considerable gaps in our knowledge of adult learning and ways for understanding and measuring the non-economic outcomes to learning. In addition, the OECD (2005) has acknowledged the fact that human capital theory does link education to economic returns but there is, as of yet, no widely accepted theory linking education to social outcomes.

As suggested by Hudson and Anderson (2006) our understanding of the non economic returns to learning is vastly underdeveloped (p.19). Some early evidence does seem to indicate that learning produces social as well as economic returns to individuals firms and society at large. For example, several empirical studies have attempted to show the causal connections between education and health (OECD, 2007). In a similar vein, Desjardins and Schuller (2006) suggest that continuous learning over the life course has been linked to everything from economic prosperity to greater political participation. It is also theorized that education results in greater civic participation, decreased poverty and crime rates and greater social cohesion. It is this latter idea of social cohesion that warrants further discussion and is the departure point for this article. Given that there are knowledge gaps in understanding the measurement of the non economic returns of adult education, it may be useful to unravel the complex phenomenon of adult learning and social capital.

The purpose of this study was to begin the process of mapping out the terrain of adult literacy learning and social capital theory based on the research from such countries as Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. The investigation explored some of the

conceptualizations of social capital that are instrumental in understanding adult learning and training. Two key questions guided the inquiry: (1) What current knowledge base on adult learning and social outcomes is useful to begin the development of a measure of social capital for adults? (2) What were the results of a pilot study in an adult high school custodial training program that used a tool called the Social Capital Inventory?

Focused Literature Review and Orientating Theoretical Framework

Social Capital Perspectives

For the purposes of this study, a critical appraisal of the adult learning and social capital literature reveals that this new discipline of knowledge has been influenced by three major tracks of research: theoretical perspectives on social capital; adult literacy learning and social capital outcomes and challenges in the measurement of social capital. As a cornerstone of the literature, social capital as a concept begins with the influential work of Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988). Both of these sociologists arrived at a theoretical definition of social capital as a way of understanding the effects of the social environment, the social connections and social relationships through their own applied research.

Bourdieu's focus was on developing a theory of social reproduction. He considered both the material and symbolic resources that individuals and groups use to reproduce conditions in which they live and the relative relationships of power that characterize any given society. According to Bourdieu (1984) there are three main ways or fundamental guises of how resources can be accumulated in order to give individuals in society a head start. He names these usable resources and powers as economic, cultural and social capital. His use of capital signals the important idea of addressing differential resources of power and the linking of the cultural to the economic. For Bourdieu, social capital is not reducible to economic capital or cultural

capital, nor is it independent of them. In his later writings (1986, p. 251) he defines social capital as:

“the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition... which provides each of its members with backing of collectively owned capital.”

Although he significantly contributed to the theoretical debate on social relationships, his work was also criticized. Baron, Field and Schuller (2000) point out that even though Bourdieu's interest in social capital stemmed from a series of studies that attempted to view culture as dynamic, creative and structured phenomenon, it emerged from a metaphor relating to social space. These same authors also maintain that as much as Bourdieu attempted to theorize the reproduction of class relations and repeatedly put social capital at the heart of his analysis, it still remains conceptually underdeveloped.

Coleman's framework (1990, p. 302) was based on his intuition that the social relations characterizing the social structure within which individuals act are also a resource for individuals.. Drawing from his applied research, Coleman was interested in understanding the relationship between educational achievement and social inequality. His empirical work included a number of longitudinal studies of US high school students which were designed to compare outcomes of state schools with those in catholic schools. His earlier findings indicated that students in catholic schools had higher levels of attainment with teachers having higher expectations of their students suggesting that this would be beneficial for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Over the next few years he refined his notion within the educational context as “social capital is the set of resources that adhere in family relations and in community social organizations and that useful for cognitive or social development of a child or young person” (Coleman, 1995, p. 300).

As Castiglione, Van Deth and Wolleb (2008) suggest, this approach of systematizing social capital was a way to reconcile individual action and social structure and self interested behaviour in social analysis. Although Coleman's work inspired much debate, it was also widely criticized. For example, Portes (1998) argued that a clear line needed to be drawn between membership of social structures and the resources acquired through such membership. He also explained that Coleman had overemphasized close ties to the neglect of weaker ties, which might be more effective in providing access to new knowledge and resources (p. 4-5).

In essence, Coleman's contributions explored how resources of social capital might counterbalance low levels of human capital and cultural capital. Through empirical evidence he was able to demonstrate concrete ways in which social capital interacted with other aspects of stratification. On the other hand, Bourdieu used social capital to explain ways in which elite groups used their contacts to produce their privilege as the basis for social reproduction and successful power transference. In other words, his focus was on individual dimension of social capital a resource through networks leading to outcomes. Both of these theories helped to bring the concept of social capital to many different disciplines but it is the work of Putman who popularized the concept in public and political discourses.

Putman turned his attention to the decline of civic engagement in the United States where he identified a secular decline in social capital. Here he refers to social capital as those features of social life networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. (Putman, 1995). However more recently, his definition of social capital focuses on the existence of networks of social connection that produce norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness among individuals (2000). By developing this concept, Putman illustrates how people's motivations and choices are not simply triggered by their individual circumstances, but

also by their social insertion and involvement in community life. Through an empirical state level analysis of the United States, he traces the correlations between high levels of social capital and various types of desirable social conditions such as lower crime rates, higher levels of economic prosperity, better levels of health and happiness and more successful educational outcomes (Putnam, 2000). Both Coleman and Putman view social capital as a public good, a community resource that tends to be undervalued and in short supply. In this view of social capital public good tends to emphasize its potentially positive or functional characteristics while avoiding any discussion of its potential downsides.

Building on this research, Lin (2001) views social capital as a concept and a theory. As a concept it can be seen as investments in certain kinds of resources that are of value in a given society and when viewed as a theory, can be described as a process by which capital is captured and reproduced for returns (Lin & Eridson, 2008). When viewed in this way it is then possible to formulate theoretical propositions for identifying the sources of social capital and the returns to social capital. Lin (2001) defines social capital as “the resources embedded in a social network, resources that can be accessed or mobilized through ties in the networks” (p. 49).

As a network theory of social capital, he proposes three principal sources for social capital. The first source is structural positions, for example a worker’s position and the strength of that position in the organization or company. A second source is the network locations or in other words, a workers influence in the network that has certain features that allow for bridging or openness. Finally, the third source is the purposes of action such as maintaining cohesion or being. Another interesting feature to the network theory of social capital is that is can be described from a micro perspective as well as at the macro level “where the research interest lies in investment, formulation and returns to social capital for the collectives be they associations,

organizations, communities, regions or nation states” (Lin & Eridson, 2008, p.63). Taken together, these theoretical and empirical investigations were influential in the ground work of the pilot study and the conceptualization of the tool –The Social Capital Inventory.

Social Capital Outcomes and Adult Literacy

A second track of literature focuses on adult literacy and social capital outcomes. As the Centre for Literacy (2005) reports, social capital is increasingly being used to discuss literacy as a phenomenon of human relationships rather than individual skills. Some of the underlying principles that help form the concept for adults with low literacy focus on community based settings and networks of relationships and social cohesion in which learning takes place and what is learned is practiced (p. 6). This notion seems to fit in well with the academic approach towards literacy that has gained some momentum recently. Further, this approach represents adult literacy as embedded in contexts of relationships and social values, or in other words in the literacy acts and literacy events that take place within the networks of social life.

The extensive works of Tete, Hall, MacLauchlan, Thorpe, Edwards and Garside (2006, 2008, 2009, 2010) provided the foundational research for understanding the benefits of adult literacy and numeracy learning through a social capital lens. As a way of operationalizing social capital, Tete et al. (2006) have defined it as the processes between individuals that establish norms, networks and trust to facilitate mutual benefits. In a study of over 600 basic education learners and 75 tutors in 9 geographical areas of Scotland, they found that this combined effect of trust, networks norms and reciprocity created both strong communities and a sense of social efficacy. Findings also seem to suggest that there is a need for active and willing engagement of individual learners in the creation of social capital. For example, MacLachlan, Hall and Tete (2009) found that respondents in adult and numeracy courses had very high social capital as

they generally liked their neighbourhoods, were well integrated in their communities, voted and looked for opportunities for more local involvement. The researchers go on to say that the increase in self confidence was linked to social capital, prior experiences of learning and correlated to the ability of learners to acquire new skills and network with peers.

In support for using social capital as a relevant framework for understanding participation in learning, Strawn (2005) has argued that the discourse of particular communities around education is an important component of social capital because it is a function of interpersonal interaction over time. Her research has indicated that people who live in communities where education is seen as advancement are more likely to participate in adult learning programs. In a similar vein, Maclachan, Tett and Hall (2009) further explain that social capital also has its dark sides. That is, what was originally perceived as beneficially supportive arrangements such as mutually reinforcing ties have also been recognized as binding shackles in some circumstances for some groups in society (Croll, 2004). However, the national Scottish study results seem to indicate that on the whole, the learners had quite high levels of social capital at the start of their learning and this increased as the networks in both their courses and ties to the communities grew.

Related studies in Australia conducted by Balatti, Black and Falk (2002, 2006, 2007, 2009) further confirmed that the pedagogy a teacher uses is a factor that influences social capital outcomes experienced by participants in adult literacy and numeracy courses. In one particular study, Balatti et al. (2006) conducted 75-face-to-face interviews with teaching staff and 57 learners across three cities in Australia. A set of 12 indicators drawn for the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) social capital framework (2004) was used to measure social capital. These indicators measure change due to participants' interaction in new networks. Examples of such

indicators were change in the level of trust and the participant's willingness to receive or provide support to others. Results of this empirical investigation seem to indicate that there are three types of networks that students become members of through program participation. The first network is the formal network, the clearly observable structure and operation of the class. The second network is the teacher-based network, which involves the direct participation of the teacher and student within and outside of the classroom. Finally, the third network is the informal network, which can be defined as the informal network between student and student outside of the formal in class learning environment.

Within each of these networks, the individual participant, through their interaction can experience a change in trust, an increased level of confidence, authentic engagement, respect for others, and various other social outcomes. These potential outcomes are intensified by the pedagogical approach chosen by the teacher. Balatti, Black and Falk further describe the practice field, or the fostering of new identities and knowledge resources, and bridging, that is, the connections between the learning that take place within the classroom and its application outside the classroom as pedagogical strategies and techniques that serve the function of building social capital. Therefore, this "practice field" and the "bridging" that takes place, determines the "extent to which students risk new kinds of interaction in the networks that comprise their lives ... (and) the nature of the networks formed not only in providing the conditions for them to grow but also by influencing the nature of the memberships and the interactions of the participants" (2007, p. 258).

Measurement of Social Capital

A final theme of literature for the purpose of this study is situated in the measurement of social capital and starts with a meta-synthesis of the social capital measurement literature in

elementary and secondary education by Dika and Singh (2002). This review even though it was done a number of years ago does point to some emerging trends in this field. Still in its infancy, social capital research and its connection to educational outcomes has substantially evolved in the last two decades. As part of their review, Dika and Singh explore the literature in an attempt to determine whether there is empirical and theoretical support for claims linking social capital to educational achievement, educational attainment and psychosocial factors that affect educational development. This is done through an examination of trends in conceptualization, design, methods, and measurement of outcomes during three time periods: 1990-1995, 1996-1998, and 1999-2001.

The first two periods consist of the earliest educational studies in social capital research. During the period 1990-1995, the common focus seems to be on educational achievement with minority populations and includes such work as Smith, Beaulieu and Israel (1992); Furstenberg and Hughes (1995), and Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995). Issues in this body of literature are examined through the lens of outcomes which varied and, often times were not grounded in theory. The subsequent period (1996-1998) saw a prevalence of social capital studies through survey design. Collectively, these studies also defined outcomes but in terms of educational achievement measures such as grade point average, achievement test scores, and educational attainment measures which included dropping out, high school completion, years of schooling and college enrolment (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997; Lopez, 1996).

The last period in the review article (1999-2001) points to an increase in volume and diversity of social capital studies in educational research literature. Dika & Singh (2002) cite 21 studies that testify to the various qualitative and quantitative methods employed to look at indicators of social capital such as in the works of Fritch (1999a and b); Israel, Beaulieu, &

Hartless (2001); Lareau (1999); and Morrow (2001). The trends that emerge are largely methodological in nature and include the increased use of case study and other qualitative designs like observations, document analysis and focus groups. The common indicators demonstrated by this group of studies which mainly focus on children and adolescence include: family structure, parent-teen discussions, parents' aspirations and expectations of their teens, parental education, and intergenerational closure.

From a lifelong learning viewpoint, other investigations have also been conducted. These studies can be seen from various perspectives due to definitional diversity and issues of validity of the concept. For example, Baron Field, and Schuller (2000) suggest that questions of measurement can be categorized into three main issues: the methodological challenges of measuring social capital; the problems of explanation across time and the problem of aggregation of data from individual levels to social structural levels (p. 26). From a different perspective, Castiglione, Van Deth and Wolleb (2008) propose a 'bottoms up' approach to issues of operationalization and measurability of social capital. In a similar vein, Van Deth (2008) maintains that it is possible to view the major measures of social capital in a classification scheme. He reports that there are several broad categorizations across three dimensions. The first dimension focuses on what is meant by the characteristic. The second is the level of analysis. Here the author proposes that social capital can be conceived either as an aspect of relationships among individuals or as a collective good. The third dimension is related to data collection methods. This approach which was also used in the Australian framework and indicators for measuring social capital (2004) report informed the early conceptualization and tool development of the Social Capital Inventory employed in this pilot investigation which is described in the next sections.

Methodology

Site and participants

The site for this pilot study was an Eastern Ontario Adult High School which delivers credit and non-credit educational and training programs for adults who are returning to school and the workforce. Programs are designed to allow students to move from basic literacy instruction to grade 12 certification, and apprenticeship training or direct entry into the labour market. There were over 1000 adult students attending this high school, enrolled in courses that are offered with regular classroom instruction, individual tutoring with training plans, e-learning and courses with a work placement supervisor.

The custodial workplace education program was a six week course designed for adult learners seeking employment as a custodian in the local hospital and school board environments. Participants were recruited from advertisements on the local transit system, radio and television and through social agency counsellors. Learners were both male and female ranging in ages from late teens to mid-fifties. Some of the trainees were Canadian citizens whose first language was English while others were newly arrived Asian immigrants who had just completed second language training within the school board system. Many of the participants were on some type of social assistance such as Ontario Works to Employment Insurance or had secured some form of part-time work.

The program funded by a provincial ministry incorporated both a classroom based curriculum and a work placement component. The essential skills profile for the National Occupational Classification of Cleaners was used as the foundation for the class room instruction. Both communications and mathematics subjects integrated actual documents that were used in the custodial work sites at the hospital and school boards. Standard First Aid and

CPR certification were also offered along with computer based training in the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System. Résumé writing and mock interviews were also part of the curriculum. An actual custodian from the high school who had won an outstanding employee award was designated as the trainer for the workplace component. Placements were for two weeks and supervised by the school board custodian staff. The course was offered three times over 8 months to small groups of trainees without a grade 12 equivalency .The total sample for this pilot study was N=37.

Development of the Social Capital Inventory

The conceptual development of the tool itself was drawn from the ABS framework and indicators for measuring social capital report (2004) and included four subscales. A seminar of professors and graduate students from an Educational Research Unit of the Faculty of Education participated in the first conceptualization dialogue which resulted in four subscales. The first subscale was called Network Qualities (NQ) and included sub-concepts of trust levels, efficacy, diversity and inclusiveness. The second sub-scale referred to as Network Structure (NS) measured sub-concepts of network size, communication mode and power relationships while the third subscale was called Network Transactions (NT) and focused on sub-concepts of sharing support and sharing knowledge. The final sub-scale integrated sub-concepts of bonding, bridging and linking and was referred to as Network Types (NT).

A panel of experts comprising of adult instructors, counsellors and researchers examined the various bank of items in the drafting of the tool against the ABS framework to determine the alignment of the items with the measurement of the sub-scales. A number of adult learners from the high school were also interviewed to assist in the wording of the items. Following several iterations, detailed feedback was provided on the content of the items, format of the measure

and the self-scoring profile of the Social Capital Inventory.

The draft tool was then administered to a small group of adult learners in a non-credit program at the adult high school to seek feedback on readability and comprehension of the individual inventory items. An important criticism of the measure was raised by this focus group of adult learners who felt that ideas behind the questionnaire and social capital were difficult to understand and confusing to someone who had never heard of the concept beforehand. As a result, a workshop on social capital and this new questionnaire were developed specifically for an adult literacy program within the adult high school and integrated into the training curriculum. The workshop included easy to follow ideas about social capital, the administration of the tool and interpretation of the self scoring profile. This workshop was given to 37 adults from small classes who were enrolled in the six week custodial training program. Seven semi-structured interviews with trainees and three instructor interviews were conducted following the workshop to explore the usefulness of social capital as pedagogy and to gather any further insights as to how the workshop could be integrated into the training curriculum.

Results

The total scale was comprised of 24 items, whereas the four subscales were comprised of 6 items each. Subscale scores were determined by summing the Likert-type responses (1=*Strongly disagree*, 5=*Strongly agree*) for each item of the subscale for a potential range of 6-30. Frequency distributions of individual learner's subscale and total scale scores were then calculated. Overall, subscale scores were roughly normally distributed with very few individuals scoring below 18 on any of the subscales, indicating moderate to strong agreement with most items on the scales. In fact, none of the 24 individual items had a mean of less than 3.60 on the 5-point Likert-type scale. The interquartile ranges (the values between which 50%

of all respondents scored), means, and standard deviations of the Network Qualities, Network Structures, Network Transactions, and Network Types subscales were 22-26 (M=23.74, SD=2.86), 20-26 (M=23.22, SD=3.35), 21-27 (M=23.35, SD=3.76), and 21-26 (M=23.22, SD=3.18), respectively. The interquartile range of the total scale was 88-101 with a mean of 93.52 (SD=11.33).

Cronbach alphas were computed to assess the internal consistency of the items for the total scale and for each subscale. The total scale showed good reliability with alpha = .88; the reliability of the Network Qualities, Network Structures, Network Transactions, and Network Types subscales varied with alphas of .55, .56, .78, and .64, respectively. Inspection of individual item correlations with the subscale scores revealed that subscale alphas would not be significantly improved by deletion of any items. These initial results allow for the possibility that the tool may be measuring a unidimensional social capital construct rather than four sub-constructs. Consistent with this possibility, the subscales correlated with a range from $r = .468$ to $r = .763$.

INSERT FIGURES 1-5 ABOUT HERE

Using a constant comparative technique on the narratives produced from the transcripts of the interviews, the findings seem to indicate that a new awareness was created among the trainees about the importance of social capital in understanding their existing networks or absence of networks. This finding was noted for both Canadian born trainees as well as the immigrant learners. Trainees who had just completed their second language training prior to the custodial training expressed a need to better understand some of the cultural differences that exist in job seeking and how to form Canadian networks outside of the classroom. Another theme area from the trainee interview data pointed to the desire to maintain contact with both the instructor and other trainees in the group beyond completion of the program. Instructors also

supported this idea of blending the social capital topic into the curriculum and a follow-up session with each group of trainees after graduation so as to renew networking resources already established.

Discussion and Implications

With the pilot study now completed, data collection using the tool and other instrumentation continues over the next several months across three provinces in Canada. Although the ratio of participants to items was too small to apply factor analysis to the pilot study data, for this next phase of analysis factor analyses will be conducted to determine if the proposed subscale structure is valid, or if the tool is better conceived as measuring a unidimensional social capital construct as mentioned above. As well, frequency distributions of scores on the subscales and/or total scale will be used to determine cut values for classifying individuals into low, medium, and high-level groupings. Then, profiles created to describe each of the groupings will be assessed to determine if they accurately represent individuals classified into each level.

Results of the pilot study which also included the workshop as a teaching strategy seem to suggest that how we measure social capital may be intrinsic to the adult learning process as trainees begin to realize the social outcomes of a literacy program. These preliminary findings hint that the role of social capital might be seen as a means to counterbalance the hegemony of the human capital approach to education and training (Fine & Green, 2000). In this sense, it emphasizes the non-economic objectives of learning and the social norms that may motivate individual participation in education and training. Trainees with a stronger stock in social capital may be better able to navigate the uncertainties related to their employment search both while attending the program and following completion. Furthermore, a classroom process that

considers social capital awareness may encourage the socioeconomic benefits of learning brought to light through identity formation/reformation and skill attainment (Balatti & Falk, 2002).

From a training design perspective, questions arise as to what forms of pedagogy and andragogy are best suited to illuminate the individual learner asset of social capital and how to best strengthen the membership networks that have already developed through the training group process. The findings seem to indicate that the intervention workshop followed by the administration of the inventory, afforded trainees with new insights into their social capital assets. This may further propel the development of deeper and wider networks due to the increased awareness of the value of these newly founded resources. It may well be that the nebulous notion of informal learning within and beyond the training program is somehow connected to the development of social capital for adults with low literacy. Further research in this area is required.

Another pedagogy issue that was raised in the study was the need for better cross-cultural understanding among the learners in terms of job seeking behaviours and resource networking. A further line of inquiry may be to use the model by Hofstede (2005) which has some broad overlays with the dimensions of the SCI. Using data from 116,000 employees from the International Business Machine (IBM) organization and 70 national subsidiaries, Hofstede (1986) developed a cultural difference model with five dimensions: power distance; individualism vs. collectivism; masculinity vs. femininity; uncertainty avoidance and; long term vs. short term orientation (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). This model provides valuable insights into teaching and learning as all social interactions are culturally mediated (Signiorini, et al., 2009).

Hofstede's model has been used in the field of international human resources management in the preparation of employees seeking or going to work in another country.

However, these cultural difference dimensions may have some explanatory power in educational environments, as programs such as custodial training becomes more heterogeneous. For example, learners from countries characterized as having a large level of power distance, such as China, feel most comfortable in a hierarchical structure where clear levels of authority are assigned. From a teaching perspective, this includes the teacher as an authority figure. There is a clear division between the teacher and the student. The teacher relays the information to the student, it is not reciprocal - the student is the receptor. As Signiorini et al. (2009, p. 254) explain “The teachers, not the students, initiate and drive class communication” This may be contrary to student-centered teaching where trainees learn from each other as exhibited in small power distance countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and the United States.

Another example, is the dimension of individualism vs. collectivism. It describes the power levels in the group over the individual (Hofstede, 1986). In highly collectivistic nations, the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual. According to Hofstede, this affects the perceived purpose of education in terms of group dynamics and student participation. In highly collectivistic countries, learners would only speak when spoken to and the teacher would deal with the group as opposed to the specific individual. In individualist societies, students are encouraged to show their individuality and express themselves accordingly (Signiorini et al., 2009).

It may be helpful to use the cultural difference model and the SCI with immigrant trainees to better understand how to design training programs for learners who hold norms, values and beliefs from their former countries. This may shed some light on how to influence the level of participation, interaction, and comfort of newly arrived immigrants in developing their networking resources and building their social capital.

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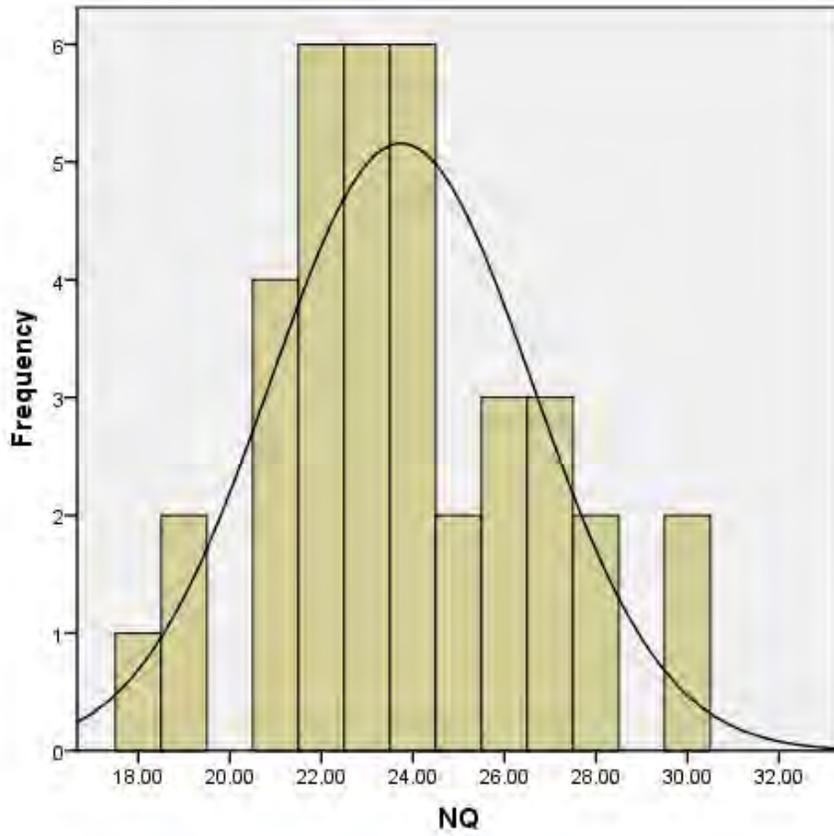


Figure 1. Frequencies of scores on the Network Qualities (NQ) subscale.

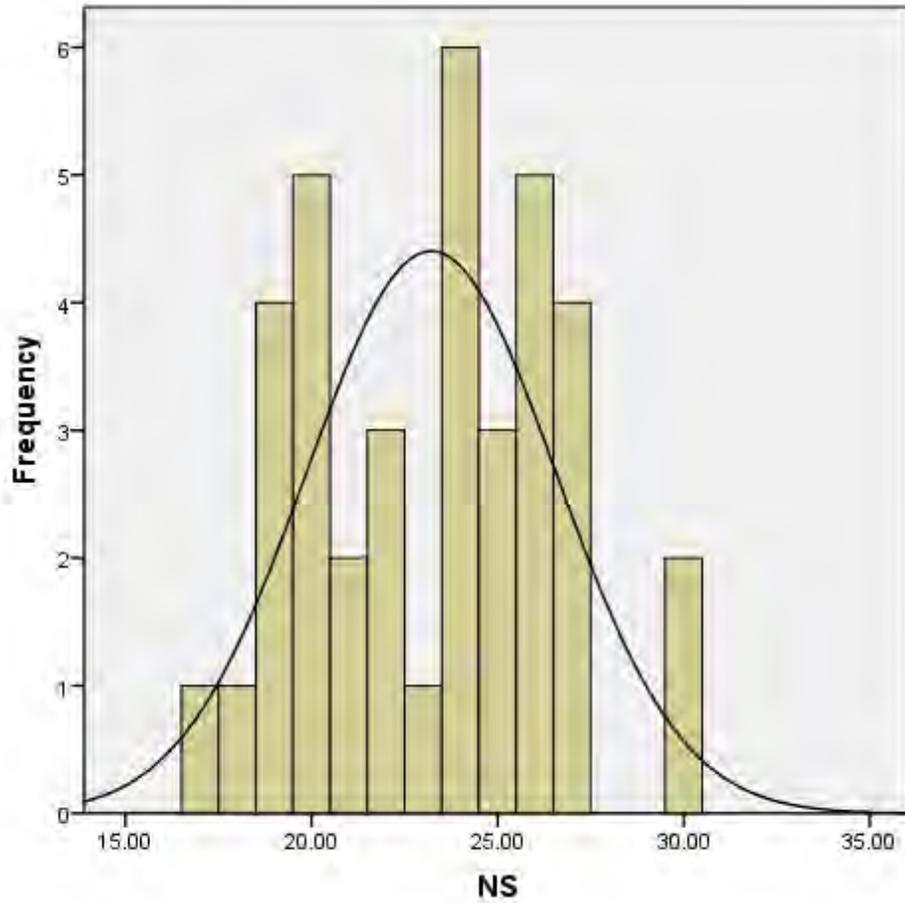


Figure 2. Frequencies of scores on the Network Structure (NS) subscale.

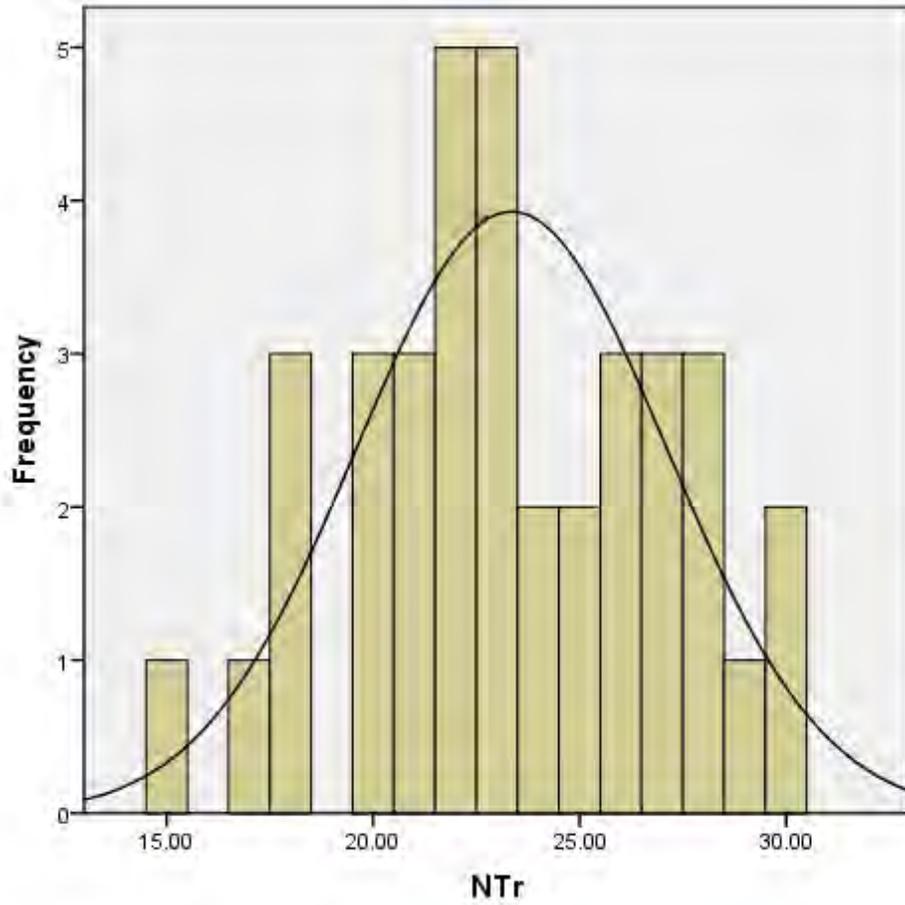


Figure 3. Frequencies of scores on the Network Transactions (NTr) subscale.

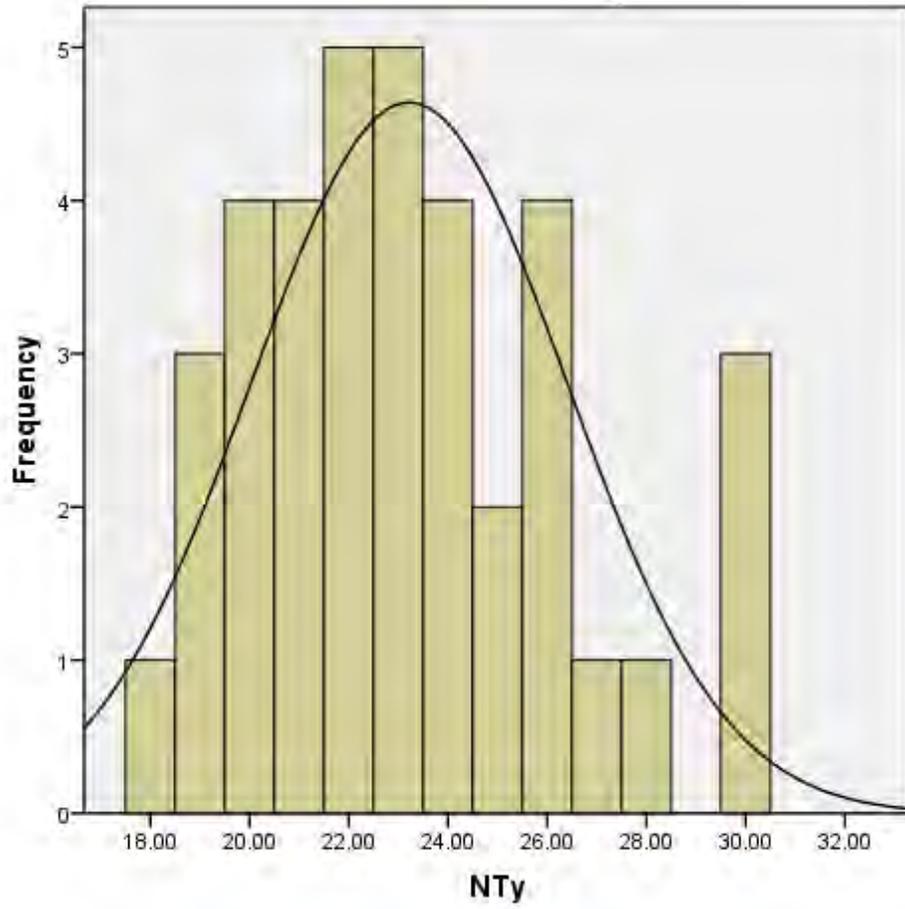


Figure 4. Frequencies of scores on the Network Types (NT) subscale.

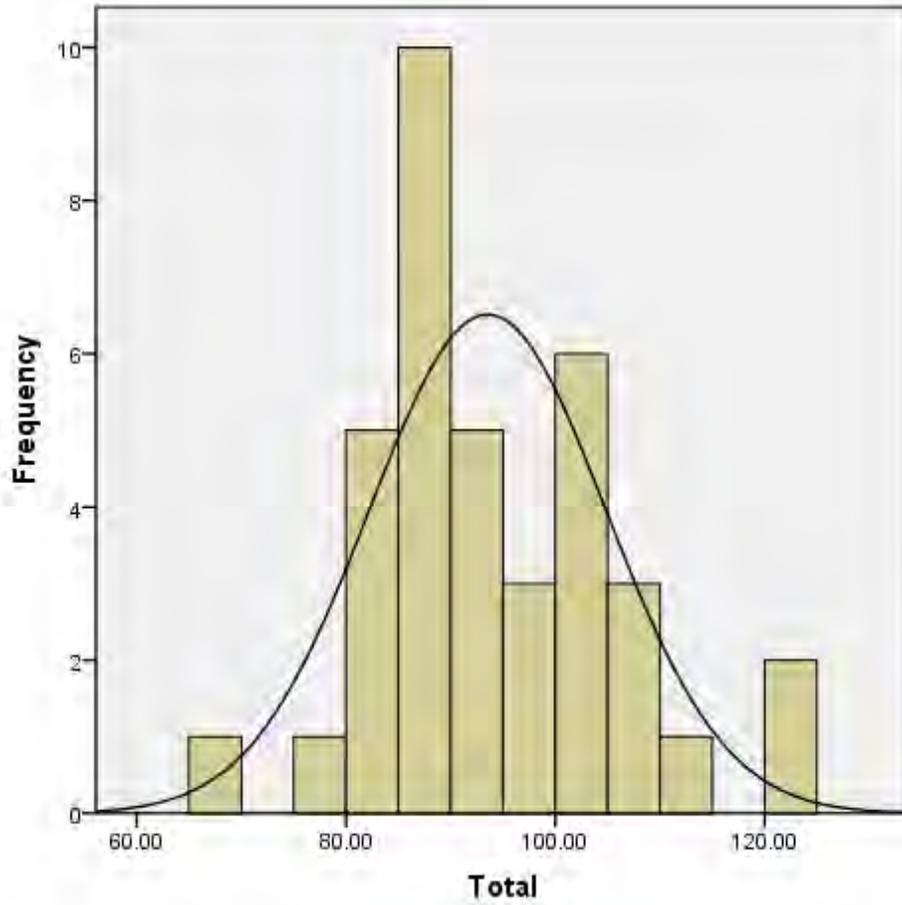


Figure 5. Frequencies of scores on the total Social Capital Inventory scale.