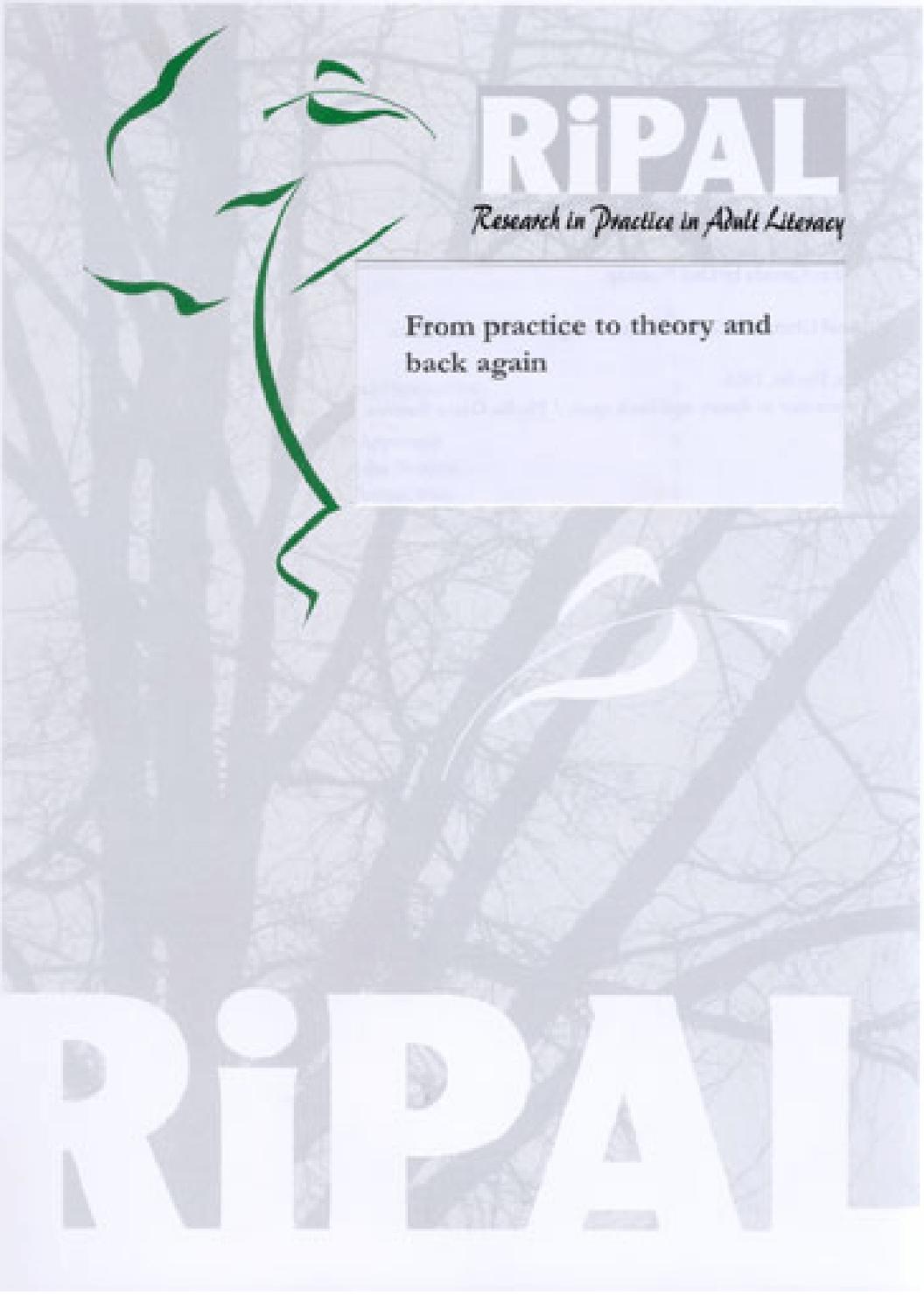


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RiPAL

Research in Practice in Adult Literacy

**From practice to theory and
back again**

RiPAL

**From practice to theory and
back again**

Phyllis Steeves

From practice to theory and back again
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Preface

What do you do when you become aware of a situation in your literacy work that is puzzling or problematic? Perhaps you talk about the situation with a colleague, read a book or article about it, or use a trial and error approach to address the problem. A research in practice project starts with the same sorts of puzzling situations but is an opportunity to investigate a situation in more systematic ways.

Through the Research in Practice in Adult Literacy (RiPAL) Network, eight literacy researchers in practice from across Alberta investigated a range of puzzling questions. During an on-line course in 2000, we clarified our questions and developed research proposals. Then, over several months in 2001, we conducted research, using various methods to gather and analyse information. We started to find some answers but also discovered more questions, which fuelled lively discussion when we met in inquiry groups. Improving our practice was a main reason for us to do research, but we found personal benefits to engaging in research as well.

The research in practice process holds challenges as well as benefits, however. Perceptions of research and who “gets to do it,” confidence and expectations of self, lack of time, and writing up the research are among the challenges we faced and learned from.

As a member of the RiPAL Network, Phyllis Steeves investigated what practitioners can do within a program environment to support change. In this report, Phyllis shares her learnings about her question and about the research process.

Mary Norton, Facilitator
The RiPAL Network

Introduction

A fascinating topic, change. As a literacy practitioner, in my daily work with students, it is a topic I return to again and again. What are catalysts for change? How do ideas and expectations of change affect individuals' desires and abilities to modify their thinking, their behavior, their goals? What supports are needed to encourage the envisioning of new possibilities? Assuming action, what supports are needed to ensure successful transitions? What can practitioners do within a program environment to support the envisioning of new possibilities and to help participants make successful transitions?

With the hope of gaining insights, answers—or more questions—I charted a course of research focusing on the question: *What can practitioners do within a program environment to support change?*

I am fortunate to work in a relatively small non-profit organization whose governing board supports research and, in particular, research in practice. The literacy program, founded in 1981, aims “to engage people in community based learning and literacy development that further enables them to make positive changes for themselves and their communities.”¹ In keeping with this mission, staff, volunteers and participants work together to offer a range of opportunities to support personal and community development. In addition to developing reading, writing and numeracy skills, programs have offered opportunities to extend knowledge of personal fitness and other health related issues, aboriginal² and other cultures, and voluntarism.

Using a case study approach, I embarked on a research journey that wound its way through months of learning. As the method suggests, I did not journey alone but traveled with Barb, a participant in the program where I work. Her desire for change in her own life, a desire both implied and stated, suggested she would be an ideal partner. Further, Barb and I share a good rapport and have known each other and worked together on

The exhaustive Webster's new world dictionary of the American language (Garalnik, 1972) lists twenty numbered definitions of the word change. Within the context of my research, change was defined and redefined; it implied action and named a concept. Chameleon like, it was often defined in the moment.

¹ The mission of the association, developed in 1996.

² Approximately 30% of the students in the program are of Aboriginal heritage.

Choosing to work with a partner that I had an existing relationship with offered advantages and challenges. For instance, the need to establish a working relationship was eliminated but the risk of making assumptions based on our familiarity with each other increased.

various projects over the course of several years. This time together has been fruitful and has helped each of us to develop the level of trust necessary to work with the other. Trust can be built on many things, including culture, and Barb and I have the advantage of a shared cultural heritage—Aboriginal Canadian. Finally, I *like* Barb. Her generosity, compassion and kindness, the way she deepens her tone of voice to indicate she’s in charge, her use of the word “girlfriend”—all of these things and more suggested we could accomplish much as research partners. Her informed decision to work with me on the project was a welcome one. Together, through conversation, journaling, and reflection—learning with and from each other—we began to explore the topic of change.

The data collection aspect of the research spanned several months, and thus many opportunities for Barb and I to work together were presented. Planned and impromptu, in blocks that ranged from minutes to hours, time in each other’s company proved fruitful. This time together also served to reunite our paths, figuratively as well as literally, and helped to ground me to the research. Our conversations and the journaling and reflections that followed opened doors for me that may not have appeared had I journeyed alone or with another partner.

Mindful that each of us embarked on the journey for different reasons, and that Barb’s learning and view of the journey differs from mine, I have chosen to draw her into this account only as necessary and appropriate. With her foreknowledge and permission, aspects of our conversations directly relevant to the research are shared. This is not intended to minimize her role in the research but to honor it; her journey is her own, to be shared in her own words, in her own time, for her own reasons. Like others who travel together, different perspectives, interests and personal needs prompted us to explore separate paths along the way. Following is an account of my research journey from my view as a practitioner.

Checking the Baggage: Passion and Perspective

Early on in the research process I was daunted by the enormity of change as a topic, so much so that I strayed from this topic of longstanding

interest in search of another. I explored other areas that I found fascinating, in particular reflective thinking and Stephen Brookfield's concepts as they relate to personal learning. I narrowed my focus, formulated a new question and asked myself yet again, "Why do I want to know the answer to *this* question?" After peeling back the layers, I was reminded of the idiom "You can take the boy out of the country but you can't take the country out of the boy." The answer to this new question, formulated through exploration of other areas, would lead me back to my original topic by providing insight into catalysts for change.

This process immediately reaffirmed for me two things. First, quite simply, researchers are more apt to go beyond the usual—to take risks and seek creative solutions—if further knowledge and understanding in an area of strong personal interest is among the rewards. The circuitous route that led me back to my original topic bears witness to this. Many factors contribute to successful research: economics, personal and professional supports, adaptability, self-discipline, and sustainability of interest, to name a few. All things being equal, in the end, quality of research may hinge on the level of personal interest—the passion—the researcher has for the topic.

The second thing relates to bias and its impact. My interest in the topic of change and my unconscious inclination to return to it via other routes is telling and demonstrates how bias can direct research. Similarly, bias affects practice, and the success of both can be limited by it; tendencies to view things from hard and fast viewpoints could restrict one's ability to "see outside of the box." Thus, recognition of bias is critical, and how it is addressed and the methods selected will affect outcomes. Possibilities include taking an objective stance, challenging the bias by seeking and being open to other perspectives, acknowledging and working with the bias to further learning in its direction, and further analysis of the bias itself. Analysis will aid in the detection of assumptions related to the bias and help to determine the underlying beliefs and values supporting it.

Personal beliefs as they relate to the value of formal¹ and informal² education stand as examples of the relationships that exist between bias, personal values and beliefs. There is recognition among literacy practitioners that both approaches to education are valuable and

¹ Generally, primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutional learning.

² Life experience/lessons, the "school of hard knocks."

necessary in today's society. Both contribute to a development of skills necessary to enable individuals to fully achieve personal fulfillment through the creation, pursuit and attainment of goals. However, a practitioner's (and by extension a researcher's) bias towards one or the other—as they relate to all spheres of society—may impact on practice (research).

Recognition of the value of informal education as it relates to the more formal methods often used in programs may prompt practitioners to raise the bar according to perceived capacity. An expectation that the learner would apply the skills and confidence used in the accumulation of informal learning would prompt this. An inclination to place more value on formal education may result in lower expectations when working with participants in literacy programs. Practitioners may assume that a lack of successful formal learning in the traditional pattern is indicative of a lower level of capacity, or they may question the applicability and transference of skills used to gain knowledge in this manner. A parallel within the research community would be the valuing of academic research as opposed to that of practitioners'. These are just two examples of the power of bias, values and beliefs as they relate to a single facet of one area of concern for practitioners and researchers. Thus, self-awareness of personal biases as they relate to practice and research aids in developing and maintaining “good practice.”

However, bias and the underlying beliefs and values that support it will not always be wholly recognized or acknowledged. Belief and value systems run deep and may be so ingrained—individually, institutionally, societally—that they are unquestionable, part of the fabric of the everyday. To address bias and determine beliefs and values that affect research, critical thinking, critical reflection¹ and self-examination are useful methodological tools for researchers and practitioners. As tools, they can be used to continually inform the research process by providing a means of revealing and addressing bias.

Of course the concept of “know thyself” is not new to the field of education and students of philosophy will confirm this. Socrates, the

¹ The terms critical thinking and critical reflection as defined in this paper suggest deliberate and substantial use of intellectual or emotional/spiritual reasonings respectively.

Greek philosopher (469-399 BC), believed to be the father of this teaching, is “famous for the Socratic method of teaching a pupil his lesson by actually questioning them” (February 12, 2002). So too should practitioners and researchers question methods, beliefs, values, theories and other foundations of practice and research. This leads me to another aspect of the journey.

Charting the Course: Methods

One of the aims of the research was to use the process itself to provide opportunities for learning and growth, for Barb and for myself.

Although the primary method of gathering data for the research was through conversation¹ and journaling, other activities were introduced to support the process. As a starting point, Barb and I reviewed a theory outlining a change process. Opportunity for the development of creative and practical skills such as beadwork also served several purposes: the more obvious honing of handiwork skills, the honoring of cultural background and the creation of an environment supportive of communication. A focus on “busy work” eliminated pressure to enter into conversation as well as potentially awkward periods of silence. This facilitated genuine dialogue in addition to creating comfortable periods of silence that supported quiet reflection—itsself an important part of the process. As mentioned earlier, gathering of data through conversation was done over a period of several months. During this time I also maintained a journal, making entries following the meetings Barb and I had and periodically at other times. Internal processing of the information gathered was ongoing but never linear, it varied in intensity and focus, moving from emotional and spiritual perspectives (critical reflection) to more intellectual perspectives, particularly during the analysis and writing stages. The accounts that follow draw from the journal I maintained throughout the process and from personal reflections.

Potential for learning at a range of levels existed and opportunities to do so were pursued when appropriate. Further, this aim, coupled with the broad goals for learning, helped to guide the process and prompted me early on to abandon planned activities in response to a perceived need. This response inevitably led to the desired aim of learning and growth, so much so that no agenda became the primary agenda.

² Conversation is used here in the broadest terms. Other forms of communication, such as body language, tone, silence, initiative in setting a meeting, are also implied.

The Guided Tour: A Structured Approach

During the first of our meetings, Barb and I worked through the change process identified by James Prochaska, Carlo DiClemente, and John Norcross (1994). They name pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance and relapse as being the six stages encountered when individuals undergo change. Using this process as a guide, we spent an afternoon working through the stages as they might apply to each of us personally.

Barb did not appear to engage with the theory emotionally or intellectually, despite the use of a concrete example¹ to illustrate the process and put the theory into context. It seemed that I was the “teacher,” she the student there to listen to abstract theories relating to what other people did, not learning about a process which she might use, or had used, in her own change processes. I sensed in her an emotional response reminiscent of the childhood educational experiences of many adults in literacy programs—bewilderment and a doubting of personal abilities.

This level of detachment and the self-doubt it appeared to create in her was unexpected and unsettling. It prompted me to think about my introduction to the theory² and to explore my expectations related to its use. Reflection raised a number of questions: On what level did I engage with the theory when I first learned of it? Did I apply the process to personal experience or imagined experiences of participants? Did I accept it as a tool that I could use in my own change processes or to aid participants in identifying and developing theirs? Was I expecting an intellectual recognition/rejection of the validity of the theory? Had I hoped for an emotional embracing of the theory and perhaps recognition of its potential for application in her life?

¹ To explain the theory I used a process of change we had both experienced; both of us are former smokers. Together we identified steps to quitting that fit comfortably within the six stages.

² I was introduced to the theory through a course titled *Guiding and counselling the adult learner*.

Self-Guided Pilgrimage: Trusting the Process

Barb's bewilderment was justified. The guided tour approach—working within the framework provided by Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross (1994)—while undoubtedly valuable in other contexts and for other purposes, was not the route for us. The changes I most seek and desire to support—in this instance as well as in my day to day work—are those which contribute to various aspects of growth on a personal level. In particular are those aspects that support emotional growth which in turn aid and support intellectual growth. In this instance the approach (my attempt to initiate exploration of the topic by introducing what proved to be an essentially abstract concept in this context) was not the one best suited to achieve this. While the smoking context provided a form of personal connection, there was no emotional connection to further bridge the gap, to “bring it home.” What was missing was a link between the process and the emotions. During a much later conversation, Barb summed up her response to this approach; she covered her heart with both hands and stated, “I felt empty in here.”

Recognizing the need for a stronger personal connection, I moved from a detached and theoretical approach to a more personal and practical approach—from studying change in its entirety to the exploration of options that would help Barb deal with pressing “in the moment” dilemmas in her life. These dilemmas varied in intensity, and during the span of the research we explored a number of personal and confidential issues that relate to her life *as it is* and *as it was*—with the hope of seeing *how it might be*.

Thus we turned away from the tour guide approach towards a self-guided pilgrimage. The emptiness Barb described in relation to the first approach seemed to be restricted to its use; as we moved away from it, she responded “from the heart.” As need prompted, she would set the agenda with her opening comments. On many occasions she came with a topic for conversation—a specific issue that was weighing heavily on her—and I would pick up the thread and work with her to explore it by introducing a tool for critical reflection.

Tools used included a mind mapping activity, creating a pro and con list to provide focus and visual impact, and an activity using postcards to

visually and orally illustrate a current situation. Aware of Barb's limitations when working with text and mindful of the desire to capitalize on the process itself for a range of learning opportunities, as possible I integrated the teaching of reading, writing and numeracy into the explorations. On other occasions, when there was no immediate need to address, no specific topic to guide the conversation, we would take another route, often turning to an activity more dependent on the intellect such as using a dictionary. Again, recognizing the value of a personal connection, I would encourage Barb to suggest words that she would like to learn more about. This approach would sometimes lead us back to a more emotional level; words selected for exploration sometimes caused an issue to surface.

Forsaking the planned route—the guided tour approach—and trusting the process made it possible to provide the emotional connection that was lacking in the first method. I moved into making room for and supporting these links easily. Thus my belief in the value of reflection and self-examination as vehicles for personal growth played a strong role in the research process. With these biases acknowledged and accepted, I fell easily and naturally into introducing activities that would support reflection and self-examination, and ultimately, change.

Highlights of the Journey: New Perspectives

Rationalizing the route

My intention in introducing the tools was to help Barb with her decision making processes—to encourage her to imagine new possibilities and offer her ways to explore possible outcomes by applying concrete methods of analysis to the difficult circumstances she found herself in. In this context, I did not use the tools to establish goals for “school” learning nor as a means of connecting reading, writing, and numeracy to other goals. The intended use was to equip Barb with tools that she could use again and again to move towards and obtain her objectives. They provided a means of weighing pros and cons, of examining repercussions of various actions, of exploring new possibilities in a non-threatening manner, of coping with the difficult realities in her life. The tools were

introduced in response to personal needs that had elicited emotional responses, not as intellectual exercises aimed at creating connections between reading, writing, numeracy and the achievement of personal or imposed goals.

Of course the use of such tools within community-based adult literacy programs is not new. Indeed, it is likely that Barb had been introduced to one or more of these techniques in an emotionally detached context. What did strike me though was the value of the approach. In the context of the “self-guided pilgrimage” there was no specific time or date set aside for the use of these tools. Drawing on experience, they were used in the moment in direct response to a stated personal need, giving their use (the process) greater meaning for Barb. When used in this context, a sense of detachment is eliminated and the likelihood that Barb—and by extension other participants—will use the methods again to address other concerns is increased. The skills and insights gained by the participants as a result of more meaningful application may then be used to more effectively define learning goals in the usual program sense. The use of the tools in two realms—the emotional and intellectual—also aid in creating awareness of how each aspect contributes to the attainment of individual goals. This is also important in and of itself.¹

This differs in application from the usual pre-planned activity intended to encourage thinking related to learning undertaken within the program environment. When used in this context the tools may be used with a sense of detachment by participants, a detachment similar to the one Barb experienced during our “guided tour approach.” Within the literacy program context, the use of text itself as the primary method of relaying information may also contribute to a sense of detachment. This further decreases and may eliminate totally the likelihood of application in other, or similar, contexts. Thus the tools useful for daily living remain in the program environment for use as directed or are forgotten altogether; when Barb and I spoke of the various tools in a later conversation she could not recall having used them prior to the pilgrimage context described above.

The intellectual and emotional realms are but two aspects of self that contribute to personal fulfillment and balance; the spiritual and physical realms are equally important.

¹ It is important to note that the intellectual and emotional realms are but two aspects of self that contribute to personal fulfillment and balance; the spiritual and physical realms are equally important but are not within the scope of this paper.

The use of written language—text—as the primary tool used to aid in the identification of participants’ goals implies that it is that learning (reading, writing and numeracy) that is the foundation of all things that will bring personal growth, self-awareness and fulfillment. Practitioners need to find other ways to define and frame the things that bring personal fulfillment. Having identified the elements, practitioners could then ask what role reading, writing and numeracy might play in achieving the personal fulfillment defined.

Alternate directions

The use of written language—text—as the primary (and often only) tool used to aid in the identification of participants’ goals implies that it is that learning (reading, writing and numeracy—skills usually associated with the intellect and educational credentials) that is the foundation of all things that will bring personal growth, self-awareness and fulfillment. The value placed on the competent use of text and the culture associated with its competency by society overall is immense. That a culture related to “book learning” exists and is elevated by western society is undeniable, and lack of it often translates into a sense of inadequacy not necessarily limited to participants in literacy programs.¹ Practitioners need to guard against elevating these ideals to levels that will cause a devaluing of other elements that contribute to personal fulfillment.

Overemphasis on text and its role in society can also lead to the creation of high expectations as they relate to a participant’s view of what good reading and writing skills will provide for them. Barb alluded to such an expectation during one of our conversations with this statement: “If I could learn to write more and read more I would find out how grown up I am.”

Thus there is a need to move beyond the promotion of competence with written language and its associated cultural ideals towards an active acknowledgement of the range of elements that bring personal growth and fulfillment. This will encourage participants to acknowledge their successes as well as more freely identify areas of growth they may wish to pursue or develop. These successes or desires are often recognized and spoken of in other settings but are not always accepted as being valuable within the program environment (“school”)—by participants themselves as well as practitioners. Indeed, participants may come to literacy programs with a level of success and valuable experience well beyond that imagined by practitioners. Acknowledgement of the value of their experience within the program environment is critical.

Chandra Mohanty (1997) refers to the power of such acknowledgement: “The authorization of experience is thus a crucial form of empowerment

¹ Elevation of “book learning” exists at different levels and in different contexts. Of particular relevance to this paper are the levels established in literacy programs by staff, volunteers and participants themselves.

for students—a way for them to enter the classroom as speaking subjects” (p. 562). She speaks of the need for teachers and students to “develop a critical analysis of how experience itself is named, constructed, and legitimated in the academy. Without this analysis of culture and of experience in the classroom, there is no way to develop and nurture oppositional practices” (p. 564).

An analysis of the culture and experience of participants will aid in the identification of elements that do or would contribute to their satisfaction with self and life. Elements will vary according to cultural background and individual preferences, and as Mohanty suggests care must be taken to legitimize experience in the program setting. Elements that might be named are many and could include: personal relationships with others, adherence to tradition and culture, respecting and living in harmony with nature, pursuit of spiritual growth, and a lifestyle that promotes good health.

To further reduce dependence on written language and legitimize experience, literacy practitioners need to become familiar with and use other methods to help participants define and frame the things that bring personal fulfillment. The modification of existing methods offers one possibility. Creative expression through art using a range of mediums offers another. Finally, acknowledgement of oral language as having value in and of itself—as being much more than a precursor to written language and used as such—offers a third. Related to this is a valuing of silence itself.

Having identified the elements that have/would bring personal fulfillment, practitioners could then ask what role reading, writing and numeracy might play in achieving the personal fulfillment defined. The value would be placed on the elements themselves, drawn from the participant’s experience and culture rather than on the newly acquired/desired/promoted written language skills.

Staying the course

A shift towards the valuing of culture and experience that is not based on a competence with written language and the cultural ideals associated with

it is much easier said than done, particularly within educational systems. My own experience, directly related to this research, stands as an example. Earlier I spoke of the relationships that exist between values, beliefs and bias, so I feel it is necessary to share relevant snapshots of my own background as a means of acknowledging potential bias.

Two areas come to mind. The first I have already acknowledged—my inclination to make connections via an emotional perspective. Second, and less relevant, is my personal history as it relates to formal education. Like many other Metis I did not follow the path taken by most Canadian youth. I left school soon after entering high school and was a mature adult when I returned to formal education and embarked on the first of my continuing experiences with post-secondary institutions.

Despite recognition of the value of and preference for connecting emotionally—with personal experience as a starting point—I embarked on this research journey using an approach that created a sense of detachment from self. Only later did I realize that in choosing the approach I was yielding to the cultural ideals associated with written language in educational institutions. Two of the concepts of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu speak directly to this phenomenon. In an analysis of the work of Bourdieu, David Swartz (1997) speaks of both and sums up the first concept:

habitus... refers to a set of relatively permanent and largely unconscious ideas about one's chances of success and how society works that are common to members of a social class or status group. These ideas or, more precisely, dispositions lead individuals to act in such a way as to reproduce the prevailing structure of life chances and status distinctions (p. 197).

Lesley Bellamy (1994), further analyzes Bourdieu's concept:

Self-elimination is the work of habitus. It occurs when individuals adjust their aspirations to their perceived chance of success. Individuals also exclude themselves from specific social situations in which they feel uncomfortable because they lack familiarity with specific cultural norms (p. 130).

My choice of method when I embarked on the research—the use of an approach drawing mainly on the intellect and accepted as valid in academic circles—was a response to my “perceived chance of success” (p. 130). This related directly to my perception of “how society works” (Swartz, p. 197) and what I believed would be expected and accepted—the prioritizing of intellectual processes and a recognized and previously accepted foundation on which to build empirical knowledge.

The second concept of Bourdieu’s, also referred to by Swartz, speaks to this valuing of the intellect. The concept relates to a specific capital and its components identified by Bourdieu: “cultural capital (knowledge, culture, and educational credentials)” (p. 192). Further, Bourdieu found that French schools “emphasize the forms of knowledge and cultural ideals and styles dominant social groups in particular cherish” (p. 199). He identifies the disposition of this group as favoring “‘educationally profitable linguistic capital’ of ‘bourgeois language’: its tendency to abstraction, formalism, intellectualism and euphemistic moderation” (p. 199). Given the foundations of Canada’s educational system, this concept extends easily to include Canada’s education system.

The valuing—consciously or unconsciously—of this form of cultural capital over others leads us back to bias and the concept of transference. Rothstein (1996), when speaking of students, suggests “They often transfer emotions and insights from the past to their teachers who, in turn, are unaware of the counter-transferences that dominate their behaviour” (p. 149). However, transference of emotions and insights is not limited to students; practitioners also are susceptible to making such transfers. Thus, participants may sense and react to the level of appreciation an educator has for experiences unlike their own or that do not fall within those valued by the dominant group.

Yet another concept can also be applied to the phenomenon. Clifton and Roberts (1993), when speaking of classroom order, bring a view from another perspective: one of powerlessness as opposed to power:

Alienation refers to the condition of individuals feeling separated or dissociated from the organizations in which their conduct occurs (Seeman, 1975). A principal dimension of alienation is the experience of powerlessness, where

people feel unable to adequately participate in the decisions that affect their lives. When teachers impose requirements, they place students in precisely this impotent situation (p. 50).

Therefore, in a literacy classroom context, the likelihood of a participant experiencing powerlessness when faced with the imposed use of text and few or no alternatives related to their successes is high. They are made aware of a devaluation of their personal and cultural experience *and* reminded that they lack a “correct” form of capital.

Bringing the Journey Home: Applications for Practitioners

So what does all of this have to do with supporting change in a program environment? A variety of responses are possible and will vary from person to person and with each practitioner’s capacity and desire to support change that may, or does, challenge and call into question personal beliefs and their foundations. As practitioners, we need to ask ourselves: Are we able and willing to support change that challenges and may violate personal beliefs? Do we support only those changes that allow us the safety of our own reality? Is our support for change restricted to minor modifications that will continue to sustain the status quo, changes that will continue to “reproduce the prevailing structure of life changes and status distinctions?” (Swartz. p. 197). Answers to these and other questions may provide insights and lead to new perspectives related to the question *What can I, as a practitioner, do within a program environment to support change?*

There is a need to examine the values that support methodology and inform daily practice. Practitioners need to be mindful of the pervasive power of written language, the culture associated with it, and the resulting implications in their daily work with students and when planning programs. Practitioners also need to be mindful of and question beliefs as they relate to practice, to *know themselves*. To fully support change for participants, a willingness to prioritize methods and contexts—cultural and otherwise—that hold meaning for *them* is necessary. After all, the intention is not to devalue participants but to provide them with the tools they need to speak loudly for themselves and pursue the desires of their hearts.

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