



Like Spinning a Coin?

**Student Perceptions of the Relevance of
Formal Transnational Study to Their
Workplace and Career Aspirations**

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Why Investigate?

- Phase 2 of a longitudinal study of the online masters programs. Instrumental. Decision-makers are clients. Evaluation model is based upon Stufflebeam's CIPP (Context, Input, Process and Product).
- Evaluation Team – roles & tensions
 - Program Coordinator: annual report to demonstrate viable & sustainable; aligns with/contribution to ... FoEd strategic plan
 - Progression, and retention versus student perspective



Areas of Interest from the 2004 Study

- Students as active lifelong learners
 - determinants of careers and life
- Students in a community of learners and community of practitioners (in their program)
- Students in workplace settings

Data Collection for Phase 2

- Background context: online survey [LLL]. All 'active' 2006 students in online programs, graduates and those cancelling in 2005 and 2006.
- Communities: online focus groups purposeful selection from volunteers. [personal agency; transnational professionals, transnational learners; workplace 'affordances']..
- Individuals in contexts: online interviews. Purposeful selection from volunteers.

Models & Frameworks: Students as active lifelong learners

- LLL is a contested terrain – *"multiple meanings, purposes and desired outcomes in relation to learning for life and work"* (Grace 2004, p.386).
- Lifelong and lifewide learning – the learning landscape of formal, non-formal and informal opportunities throughout a lifetime (Knapper & Cropley 2000)
 - *"Learning transfer is an extraordinarily narrow and barren account of how knowledgeable persons make their way among multiple interrelated settings"* (Lave 1996, p.151)
 - An individual's motivation for and attitude towards learning rises as key issues with the embrace of lifewide learning (Scolverket, 2000)

Progression – taking a break

- *'I have only just returned from England where I took time off to attend my sister's wedding. I take deadlines very seriously and am currently struggling with several work-related deadlines that I could not have anticipated when I embarked on this course many months ago. Additionally, my wife is in her final trimester and is finding it increasingly difficult to look after our toddler without my support '*
- *Hello Kaye - yes this is Jud Holdzer - still plodding through my Masters (sick last year) I will organize my enrolment for Sem.II over the weekend... I still have three subjects to go.*
- *The reasons for the interrupted study were personal and had to do with the breakdown of my marriage and the subsequent upheaval to my family and life. i am now settled into a new home, job and pattern of life and feel strongly about completing this course. however due to family committments (i have a 13 year old son) and work commitments i am only able to commit to one subject a semester.*



Models & Frameworks: Community of Learners and Practitioners

- Wenger's communities of practice (Wenger, 2000). Novice to expert and life trajectories (Wenger, 2005) and
- Bourdieu's concept of habitus

Meshing Worlds - Bourdieu's concept of habitus

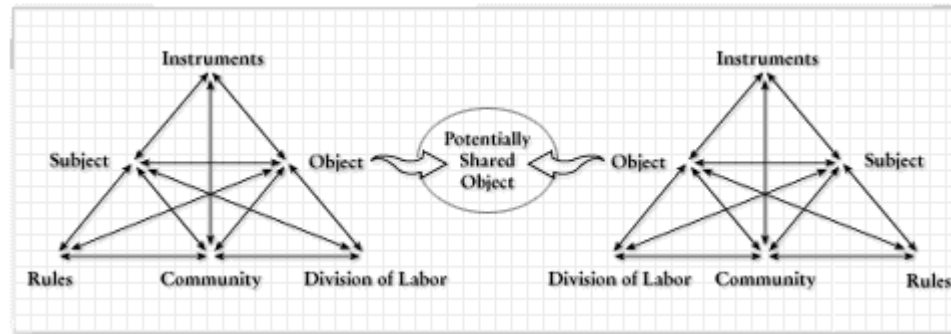
- ... *Professional competence is enhanced by the study, I have more **confidence** in myself to put my opinions out into my work environment and can back it up with research. The collection of papers that I undertook during my study have had a cumulative [sic] effect in the development of this practice competence and my own confidence in self. And it continues post qualification. I can now enter into discourse with other professionals as an equal and what a surprise as someone who has more knowledge at times. The discourse has only just begun really outside of the learning environment and long may it continue.*

Student Comment re Value of their Program in the Workplace

- *I'm delighted to say that my previous employer who had pushed me to study an MBA now is happy to ask me to work as an educational consultant - and is proud to refer to my 'almost complete' Master of Online Education degree as a consultancy skill. The company now recognises that postgraduates with a focus on online learning have special skills and knowledge that are valuable selling points in a rapidly changing world!*

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Models & Frameworks: Students in Workplace Contexts & Formal Learning



- Bourdieu's 'habitus'. "[W]ays of operating, inclinations, values and rationales acquired by individuals from various 'formative contexts'... also inculcated through experience within the field" with "a tension between possibility and constraint" and "... a structure that provides the possibility for agency within a limited arena of choice"... (Taylor 2005, p.175, 176)
- Billett's 'affordances' workplace learning (Billett 2002)
- CHAT – activity theory to examine 'fit', 'dischord', 'harmony' through interlaced activity systems.

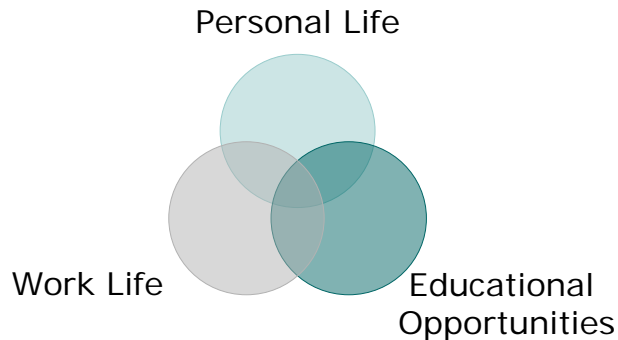
Student Comment re the Value of the Learning Community to Workplace

Teaching Online *was a transformative experience for me, as was Education and Globalization and the International Development Option (2 semester research project). Why? Because the students lived, ate, and breathed the courses - sharing ideas and learning so much from each other - bringing in so much research in such a short time. I remember everything I learned in those courses...including the readings which I absorbed because I argued them through with my fellow students, **used them to support real life research** etc. Interestingly, I cannot recall a single reading or quotation from a couple of other courses that I will not name. The student interactive courses were not easy courses. In fact they were the hardest of all.*

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Intersecting Worlds of Students

- Are located & operating in concurrent worlds
- As members of multiple communities
- Where learning is intentional & legitimated through practice
- Transnational enriches learning



... education is a resource, rarely holding a privileged 'fixed position'. 'Best matches' influence up-take and continuity. Education can develop different relationships dependent upon design.

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Queries and conclusions?

- Like Spinning a Coin?
- Models or theoretical/conceptual frameworks useful for our consideration?