Engaging Students in Life-Changing Learning

Royal Roads University's Learning and Teaching Model in Practice - Revised Edition

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Introduction

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Engaging Students in Life-Changing Learning: Royal Roads University's Learning and Teaching Model in Practice presents examples illustrating how an institutional education model at Royal Roads University (RRU) is applied in practice. While numerous institutions across the globe are currently developing institutional models to improve student outcomes, experiences, and success, scholars have long lamented mismatches between theory and practice. In this book, we provide opportunities for faculty members and staff to describe their experiences with the Royal Roads University framework—the RRU Learning and Teaching Model–and illustrate how they use this model in their learning design and teaching. By engaging in this process, we hoped to learn from one another and become better practitioners, but also to enable peers at other institutions to explore how RRU practises education.

In this introduction, we provide a short background to RRU, a brief overview of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model, and an introduction to the chapters included in the book.

Royal Roads University: Our Unique Educational Mandate

When Royal Roads was created in 1995 as a public university, the government of British Columbia was responding to a need to serve those whose access to advanced education was limited within more traditional universities both in terms of labour market need and mode of education structure and delivery. The university was given a mandate from the government of British Columbia to respond to the emerging needs of a changing world and workforce. The enabling provincial legislation was very clear:

> "The purposes of the university are
>
> (a) to offer certificate, diploma and degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels in solely the applied and professional fields,
>
> (b) to provide continuing education in response to the needs of the local community, and
>
> (c) to maintain teaching excellence and research activities that support the university's programs in response to the labour market needs of British Columbia. (Royal Roads University Act, 1996)".

To achieve this mandate, programs were created which are interdisciplinary to maximize the learning experience for those students who seek to change and transform. The university now offers 50 interdisciplinary programs to over 5,000 students. Interdisciplinary research plays a significant role in most programs.

In order for students to stay in their home organizations and communities, and equally important, for those students to integrate their real world organizational and community experience into their academic programs of study, RRU developed a blended learning model. This model allows for short intensive residencies on campus combined with distance internet based courses. Although most other universities now offer alternative modes of delivery for some of their programing, when RRU was created, this was not the case. The blended model remains our primary mode of delivery across all of our schools. Digital delivery and technology enhanced learning are fundamental to our teaching.

The typical RRU student is 40 years old and is well established in his or her career. Through their learning and applied research from an interdisciplinary perspective, students enhance their leadership capacity, ability for complex problem solving and systemic thinking for the betterment of their communities and organizations.

The expertise of industry, the public sector, and institutional partners are incorporated into program development and instructional delivery to ensure the highest possible level of program relevance and quality. As such, RRU has developed its unique niche in providing applied and professional learning programs adapted to a changing workplace.

Complementary to its teaching programs, RRU has developed a research program that is almost exclusively applied, responding to the economic, social, and environmental concerns of British Columbians and beyond.

Over the last 20 years, we have developed a national and international reputation for delivering high quality programs. National and international studies have confirmed this reputation. For instance, Royal Roads University has consistently ranked very high on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for active and collaborative learning and academic challenge (NSSE, 2012; Macleans, 2012).

Overview of the Learning and Teaching Model at Royal Roads University

At its most fundamental level, an institutional framework for learning and teaching describes the current, robust, and agreed-upon educational characteristics that help define the unique identity of the university or college, especially pertaining to its core educative mission. It provides a means of connecting the university's mission and values to the learning and teaching practices that support them. The introductory chapter will describe in more detail the rationale for developing institutional frameworks using RRU as a case study. The RRU Learning and Teaching Model was intended to describe the distinctive characteristics of the current university-wide approach to learning and teaching (Royal Roads University, 2013). It included an inductively generated description of the educational principles, characteristics, or elements that guide learning and teaching combined with a summary of the relevant and current research literature on learning, teaching, and andragogical innovation.

The description of the model begins with the university's mission to immerse students in a learning context that facilitates personal and professional transformation and allows them to succeed in a global workplace. As illustrated in Figure 1, a set of values emerged from this context that guided the development of our learning and teaching framework.

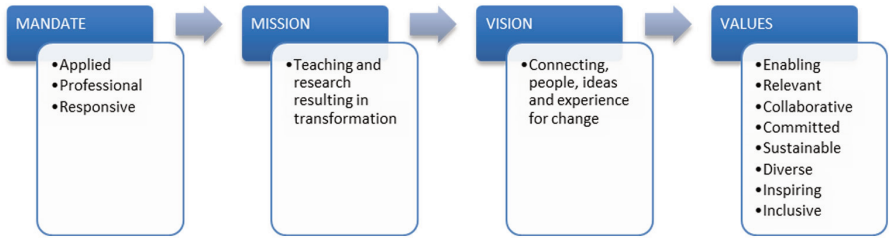

Figure 1. A Strategic Focus on Learning and Teaching

Foundational Frameworks

At the heart of the student experience is a focus on meaningful, relevant, and lifelong learning that permeates all educational offerings at RRU, including degree, non-degree, and continuing education programs. UNESCO's Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (Delors, 1996) and subsequent work by UNESCO'S Education for Sustainable Development Initiative (2012) presented a conceptual framework for ongoing, lifelong learning that applies very well to the RRU context[1]. This model organizes learning into the following five pillars:

1. **Learning to Know** – the development of skills and knowledge needed to function in this world e.g. formal acquisition of literacy, numeracy, critical thinking and general knowledge (the mastery of learning tools).

2. **Learning to Do** – the acquisition of applied skills linked to professional success.

3. **Learning to Live Together** – the development of social skills and values, such as respect and concern for others, of social and inter-personal skills, and the appreciation of cultural diversity. These are fundamental building blocks for social cohesion, as they foster mutual trust and support and strengthen our communities and society as a whole.

4. **Learning to Be** – the learning that contributes to a person's mind, body, and spirit. Skills include creativity and personal discovery, acquired through reading, the Internet, and activities such as sports and arts.

5. **Learning to Transform Oneself and Society** – when individuals and groups gain knowledge, develop skills, and acquire new values as a result of learning, they are equipped with tools and mindsets for creating lasting change in organizations, communities, and societies.

These five pillars are linked together by a social constructivist approach to individual learning and a social constructionist approach to the development of learning communities that significantly influences how students learn and how faculty and staff support their learning at RRU. There is general agreement that a social constructivist orientation includes the following key elements (Mayes & de Freitas, 2004; Beetham & Sharpe, 2007):

- self-responsibility for learning that enables students to actively construct their own understanding of concepts;
- complex problems to support a discovery-oriented approach to learning;
- open-ended activities and challenges to encourage experimentation and risk-taking;

1. This conceptual framework also serves as the basis for the development of the Canadian Council on Learning's Composite Learning Index (CLI).

- collaborative inquiry with peers and faculty members to help learn faster or deeper than when solely engaged in individual activities;
- shared ownership of the learning process to facilitate a common understanding and shared meaning of the tasks and experiences involved in learning;
- discussion and reflection that draws on existing concepts, contexts, and skills; and
- timely and effective feedback to guide correction and improvement in concept and skill attainment.

The social constructivist/constructionist orientation is a foundation for both a set of principles that guide the learning and teaching process, i.e. the RRU Teaching Philosophy, and a constellation of practices, i.e. Core Elements of our Learning and Teaching Model.

Taken together in a summary fashion, Table 1 illustrates that at RRU, we understand learning as a socially constructed activity and we conceptualize lifelong learning as a process of social and personal discovery beyond the acquisition of knowledge.

Social Constructivist Framework	**UNESCO Framework**
Self Responsibility	Learning to Know
Complex Problems	Learning to Do
Collaborative Inquiry	Learning to Live Together
Open Ended Learning Activities	Learning to Be
Discussion and Reflection	Learning to Transform Oneself and Society
People Learn in a Diversity of Ways	Learning to Know

Table 1. Foundational Frameworks for Learning and Teaching at Royal Roads University

RRU Teaching Philosophy

The implementation of curriculum development and teaching strategies that reinforce the social constructivist view of learning at RRU is supported by a robust teaching philosophy collaboratively developed by faculty and staff. This philosophy indicates that, at Royal Roads University, faculty members and academic staff:

- share a passion for learning and teaching;
- value students as individuals who bring expertise and life experience to their education, and support them as they construct knowledge in a personally relevant way and enhance their lifelong learning skills;
- focus on applied and professional learning and integrate research into the curriculum;
- are experts in many substantive areas of knowledge and take steps to share

this knowledge in ways that do not interfere with the adult student responsibility to learn and reflect for themselves;

- are knowledgeable in their areas of expertise and in current adult learning theory;
- know how to use appropriate learning technologies for the desired learning objectives;
- believe that teaching is a critically reflective practice;
- foster learning environments that are respectful, welcoming, and inclusive;
- facilitate learning experiences that are authentic, challenging, collaborative, and engaging;
- model and encourage academic integrity;
- aspire, as lifelong learners, to create experiences where new learning changes all members of the learning community and where students contribute meaningfully to the learning of others; and
- actively participate in the University's global learning community.

This teaching philosophy is complemented by the ways in which our programs are designed, our courses are developed and taught, and our students are supported.

Core Elements of our Learning and Teaching Model

Despite the different contexts and mandates, most programs at RRU share a number of fundamental curriculum design elements, learning processes, and support services that work together to support authentic, relevant, and meaningful student learning. These curriculum design elements and learning processes, summarized in Figure 2 and Table 2, are described in more detail below.

Figure 2. Core Components of the RRU Learning Model

Component or Strategy	Advantages
1. **Outcomes-Based** – all curriculum is developed and delivered using program-wide learning outcomes that are created in consultation with expert advisory councils.	• Clarifies program focus • Helps students connect program to workplace • Provides a focus for assessment/evaluation • Helps employers understand program benefits
2. **Enhancing Learning through Technology** – most programs, and sometimes even individual courses, feature a blend of short-term, on-campus residencies, and online learning courses that are made possible by the use of web technologies.	• Enhances access and relevance—students can continue to work and engage in a reflective cycle involving reading or other learning activities, applying new skills and knowledge in the workplace, and reflecting on what worked, while engaging with others in online dialogue throughout the learning cycle • Provides complementary social learning processes: online engagement enhances deep-level thinking and the exchange of perspectives; understanding how others interpret or experience a phenomenon gives students a broader understanding about possible learning strategies • Residencies help students make personal connections to faculty and other students
3. **Experiential, Authentic Learning Strategies** – problem-based learning, project-based learning, service learning, action learning, action research, etc.	• Provides a more integrative experience • Enhances practical relevance • Deepens learning by focusing on systemic understanding and distinctions between simple, complicated, and complex problems, issues, and challenges • Provides students with a more realistic understanding of their profession
4. **Learning Communities** – groups of 20-50 students work together as a cohort for the duration of the program, frequently forming a lifelong professional community.	• Helps students experience a strong sense of connectedness, collegial support, and shared experiences • Increases access to professional knowledge of colleagues and peers • Exposes students to a diversity of views, experiences, perspectives, and scholarship • Creates a broad base of readily available learning resources
5. **Team-Based Learning** – up to 50% of course assignments may involve group projects or team-based work.	• Enhances skills related to collaboration, team facilitation, project management, conflict management, etc. • Makes large assignments more manageable and realistic • Provides opportunities for more complex learning

Table 2. Advantages of the Core Components of the RRU Learning Model

6. **Supporting Integrative Learning** –programs and courses bring together subject matter from a variety of disciplines and feature teaching strategies that help students make connections across subjects and between thinking and doing, e.g. capstone courses, team-teaching, integrated course delivery, integrative assignments.	• Increases relevance and authenticity to workplace • Provides tools, resources, and approaches suitable to solving complex problems and managing emerging issues • Makes connections across courses • Promotes relevance and meaningfulness • Helps students apply higher-order thinking skills such as analysis and synthesis • Promotes praxis—strengthens links between theory and practice
7. **Faculty with Professional Experience** –faculty collectively possess strong academic credentials and significant experience in the application of the subject matter to professional contexts.	• Enhances relevance for students • Helps faculty members mentor and guide students • Fosters links between academic and professional perspectives • Requires scholar-practitioner faculty members who are able to bridge the worlds of scholarship and applied practice with maturity and the confidence to play a supporting role to student learning
8. **Teaching as an Active Process of Facilitating Learning** – faculty use a variety of strategies to engage students and support/guide the learning process.	• Helps students understand and integrate the ideas of a given course with their personal experiences to create personally relevant and actionable knowledge • Increases students' personal responsibility • Acknowledges student experience and expertise as relevant and critical sources of knowledge for others • Enhances teaching quality and relevance
9. **Action-Oriented Research as a Process of Inquiry**—students develop meaningful research questions and engage in worthwhile investigations to solve real organizational, community-based, or societal problems.	• Links systematic inquiry to workplace issues and problems • Provides a professional context for the integration and application of concepts and skills learned in other components of the program • Create opportunities for positive and meaningful change to occur
10. **A Whole Community of Support** – RRU staff from many different services work together to deliver timely and integrated student support.	• Helps connect many different RRU services to students, e.g. program support, student services, library, instruction design, continuing education, media, information technology, etc. • Provides a seamless suite of services to students

11. **Flexible Access**–a variety of structures have been implemented, e.g. flexible admissions, block transfer agreements, dual degree partnerships, etc. to support a smooth entry of students into RRU programs.	• Recognizes the importance and value of relevant workplace and life experience • Acknowledges the value of both formal and informal learning • Provides multiple pathways of entry into RRU programs

The model was intended to be evolving and generative. The goal in developing the model was not to advocate for one 'best way' to teach, but to integrate common design elements in RRU programs. None of these methods, on their own, are effective in supporting high-quality student learning. We contend that it is how these elements work together in the service of authentic and relevant learning that create engaging and relevant experiences for today's and tomorrow's students at RRU.

Key Themes within the Book

The book spans and crosses disciplines and ways of thinking. Some of the chapters are empirical, some are reflective, but all aim to contribute significant insight into how staff and academics in the institution perceive their teaching and scholarship, and how they come to practice the RRU Learning and Teaching Model. The introductory chapter by Hamilton, Márquez, and Agger-Gupta investigates the emergence of institutional educational frameworks and describes the RRU Learning and Teaching Model. To provide a compass to readers, the rest of the book is divided into four thematic sections.

In the first section, authors are concerned with learner experiences and outcomes:

- Walinga and Harris (chapter 1) examine students' transformative learning experiences and report how learners came to question their assumptions and gain new consciousness in their learning.
- Wilson-Mah and Thomlinson (chapter 2) explore tourism/hospitality students' and internship employers' perceptions of internship programs. They report positive experiences with internship programs, note that such experiences allow learners to apply theory to practice, and present recommendations for improving internship programs.
- Wesolowska and Agger-Gupta (chapter 3) report one student's experience in creating a community engagement process to define sustainable downtown revitalization. This chapter provides an insider look into the authentic and experiential activities that the RRU Learning and Teaching Model aims to engender.

In the second section of the book, authors report investigations of faculty perspectives with one or more aspects of aspect of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model.

- Hamilton and Childs (chapter 4) investigate faculty members' perspectives on how the key pillars of the Learning and Teaching framework were incorporated into the design and delivery of the learning program.
- Students in traditional one-to-one capstone projects may experience social and academic isolation. Rowe, Harris, Graf, and Rogers (chapter 5) report that group supervision for students completing capstone projects may address such problems and investigate faculty members' benefits and challenges in using Moodle for group supervision.

In the third section, authors describe various learning designs and pedagogies enacted and developed under the auspices of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model.

- Wood, Márquez, and Hamilton (chapter 6) present Applied Business Challenges, which are problem-based learning experiences aiming to immerse students in analyzing and resolving business challenges via internal case competitions, international case competitions, and live-case consulting projects.
- Page, Etmanski, and Agger-Gupta (chapter 7) identify and explore the intentional design that serves to build multiple opportunities for learner belonging and longstanding relationships.
- Malisius (chapter 8) argues for providing students with diverse learning opportunities and investigates how video assignments may potentially be used in blended settings.
- Slick (chapter 9) describes how the author used learning theory to design a case study. This article draws widely from the literature as well as from the author's personal experience implementing the case over a five-year period.
- Chao and Pardy (chapter 10) argue for the adoption of an intercultural mindset supported by responsive team composition, intercultural training, teamwork-appropriate assignment design, and multi-dimensional assessment of teamwork.
- Agger-Gupta and Perodeau (chapter 11) present *appreciative inquiry* as an approach that supports the enactment of RRU's Learning and Teaching Model.
- Li and Chao (chapter 12) describe a form of pedagogy they denote as Interactive, Contextual, and Experiential (ICE), and present their experiences implementing this approach.

In the fourth and final section of the book, authors examine macro level topics of interest to the institution.

- Grundy (chapter 13) examines the effect of flexible admission practices on academic performance. Results show that flexible admission students do

equally well to those admitted on the basis of previous academic credentials.

- Belcher (chapter 14) investigates RRU's unique research model and reviews the research completed by RRU graduate students. Through this investigation, he examines how to improve student research and its design, evaluation, and learning.
- Finally, Young, Malisius, and Dueck (chapter 15) explore the role of the Curriculum Committee at RRU—a committee that evaluates and provides feedback on course proposals.

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Setting the Stage

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Living our Learning: Chronicling the Implementation of an Institutional Educational Framework

A university's institutional identity is a way of describing the culture of an organization related to the collective meanings associated with "shared attitudes, values, goals and practices" (MacDonald, 2013, p. 153). As such, articulating an institutional identity can be an important tool for promoting organizational sense-making, encouraging institutional affiliation, supporting change management efforts, and shaping long-term identity and culture (Stensaker, 2015; MacDonald, 2013).

Over the last 30 years, the post-secondary environment has become highly competitive (Bok, 2003). As a result, universities and colleges constantly seek ways to differentiate themselves and help potential students understand their institution's unique strengths and characteristics. Nevertheless, communicating key aspects of an institution's educational identity can serve many more purposes beyond supporting competitive marketing and

recruitment efforts. In addition to framing a message to prospective students, an explicit articulation of the institutional identity connects current students, faculty, and alumni, and is helpful to those responsible for representing the university to funding agencies, accrediting bodies and other governmental agencies, research grantors, and philanthropically-minded individuals and groups. A clear understanding of institutional identity is helpful in making sense of both internal and external organizational dynamics and changes, supporting the development and reinforcement of an organizational image, supporting further organizational innovation and creativity as well as fostering and promoting employee and constituent engagement (Stensaker, 2015).

The articulation of this identity via the development of an "institutional educational framework" can assist faculty, staff, and senior administrators in a university in describing or articulating the characteristics related to learning and teaching that are most relevant to the unique educative mission of their institution. Articulating a common and institution-wide understanding of the unique mix of history, learning approaches, curriculum, teaching strategies, and educational practices that give rise to a particularly institutional identity is a laudable exercise. Many efforts to help define these characteristics happen at the school, program, or faculty level, where prospective students often engage in their own comparative analyses. At the institutional level, however, recruitment and public relations departments are often charged with the responsibility of communicating the institutionally unique characteristics to prospective students, industry representatives, and community partners, which means that an institutional-wide articulation strategy has the potential for increasing the reach of engagement and involvement within the institution.

In the first part of this chapter, we describe the attributes of institutional education frameworks, explore the reasons why such frameworks exist, and articulate the benefits of developing them. Next, we present the Royal Roads University Learning and Teaching Model (2013) as an example of an institutional framework and describe the model's rationale, core characteristics, development process, and some of the key lessons learned in its implementation.

Description and Rationale

"Institutional frameworks" are described as "the systems of formal organizational structures, rules, and informal norms for service provision" (International Ecological Engineering Society, 2016). Wiktionary goes beyond this to include "...regulations, and procedures, and informal conventions, customs, and norms, that shape socioeconomic activity and behaviour" (2016). Institutional frameworks have been identified for a variety of sectors, most notably in government and the environment, since the mid-1980s. Four examples of this development are: Oakerson's *Model for*

the analysis of common property problems (1986), Freestone and Davidson's *The institutional framework of the European Communities* (1988), Ostrom's *Governing the Commons* (1990), and, more recently, Lee's *An institutional framework for the study of transition to adulthood* (2014). These identify institutional perspectives as frameworks, typically in fields of endeavour that transcend jurisdictional boundaries, such as government regulation (whether at the level of the European Community, or municipalities), the environment (at the macro level of the UN's Law of the Sea charter and ongoing dialogues, and local environmental regulation), as well as human development. Institutional frameworks can therefore be descriptive, regulatory, or even aspirational.

Ostrom reviewed how environmental regulations were seen across jurisdictions, and in particular the differences in Common Property Resource Management. She attributes the first look at what she called an institutional framework as dating from a series of papers commissioned for a US National Academy of Sciences conference in 1985, and published in 1986 (Oakerson, 1986). While Ostrom was highly influential in understanding the transdisciplinary nature of institutional frameworks (2007), there is, as yet, no comparable definition applicable to the post-secondary education field. The development of using the language of an institutional framework to describe how Royal Roads University works at its best is part of this 30-year tradition.

In this paper we define an Educational Institutional Framework (IEF) as a description of the current and agreed-upon learning, teaching, and research characteristics that help define the unique identity of a university or college. The IEF articulates the current or intended qualities and contexts of the learning and teaching process in the institution, its intersection with student and faculty research, and how the administrative, resource, and technological infrastructure of the college or university are engaged and support student learning. Thus, IEFs provide a means of connecting the university's mission and values and the learning and teaching practices that support them. "Agreed-upon" implies that the process of developing the framework involves some degree of collective examination of the key learning and teaching characteristics that results in a coherent and common understanding of the unique educational qualities of the institution.

IEFs are still quite rare in colleges or universities, although robust examples exist at: the University of Calgary (2016) in Calgary, Canada; Open University of Catalonia (2015) in Barcelona; Utrecht University (2016) in the Netherlands; University of New South Wales (2014) in Sydney, Australia; Tecnológico de Monterrey (2015) in Mexico; and Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (2011) in Lima, Peru. Nevertheless, based on the number of new educational frameworks that have emerged over the last five years, the development of these frameworks is becoming more prevalent worldwide as universities and colleges strive to define, articulate, and sometimes, to preserve a unique institutional identity within a broader post-secondary landscape. Our review of these frameworks indicates that many of them

combine research from the current literature on learning, teaching, and pedagogical innovation with an inductively-generated description of the educational principles, characteristics, or elements that guide learning and teaching with the specific institution.

Why would university or college officials want to develop an IEF? These frameworks can be developed to help set academic priorities, to describe the current Learning and Teaching Model (LTM), or to provide guidance for the institution's unique qualities and characteristics related to the learning and teaching enterprise. Table 1 provides a summary of many of the key benefits of developing institutional frameworks. According to our review of the frameworks above, most are established with the view that they will be revisited, augmented, enhanced, or revised over time in response to changes in the strategic mandate of the institution, to keep pace with new developments in learning and teaching theory and practice, and/or to respond to shifting policy requirements at the national, provincial, or state level or changes in accreditation requirements. Two examples of current frameworks that clearly display this evolution over time are the frameworks of Chadron State College (2014) and the Open University of Catalonia (2015).

- Serve as descriptive, not prescriptive guides;
- often based on an evolutionary, not revolutionary "stretch goals";
- promote conversations and dialogue about learning, teaching, and program planning;
- guide future infrastructure, resource, and policy decisions related to learning and teaching;
- inform professional development strategies and activities;
- help in course design and program development;
- support faculty recruitment and selection efforts;
- make tacit assumptions about the institutional learning and teaching culture more explicit; and
- promote a strong sense of coherence in learning and teaching approaches across the university.

Table 1. Benefits of Institutional Frameworks (Hamilton, Márquez, & Agger-Gupta, 2013a)

It is important to note that frameworks are not plans but can serve as the basis for a plan. For instance, the IEF from Ohio State University (2014) is described to serve as "a structure to guide change over time, ensuring that the academic missions drives the physical environment, and connecting ideas and information to implementation." In fact, the framework can serve as an anchor point for the development and implementation of successive plans because it helps to flesh out the academic mission of the institution and describe its essential qualities as they pertain to the learning and teaching functions, services, and programs.

IEFs take time and effort to develop and validate within the organization but if carried out with a clear purpose, strong leadership support, and broadly-based consultation they can be highly beneficial in helping to develop and re-affirm a strong and unique sense of institutional academic identity.

The Learning and Teaching Model at Royal Roads University

Royal Roads University (RRU) in Victoria, British Columbia is a Canadian public university that specializes in applied and professional programs that are mainly aimed at learners who are already in the workforce. In 1996, the university was given a mandate from the government of British Columbia to respond to the emerging needs of a changing world and workforce through its own provincial Act (Government of BC, 1996). Over the last 20 years, the university has developed a national and international reputation for delivering programs designed specifically for aspiring and experienced professionals who want to advance in their professional careers. To provide a flexible and accessible learning experience for these professionals, most programs at RRU are delivered through a combination of short-term residencies and longer terms of online study.

The university's mandate to meet the needs of professionals and aspiring professionals necessitated the development and evolution of an approach to designing and delivering undergraduate and graduate degrees as well as professional certificate programs that focus on relevance, application to practice, theory-practice connections, and the responsiveness to changing labour market needs and conditions.

Over the last 16 years, the design of programs has evolved to support and reinforce this approach. The general approach to teaching and the ways in which our university provides support for students have evolved. During this time, it was not uncommon to hear faculty, staff, and administrators make reference to "our learning model". This phrase became embedded in the vernacular of university culture which meant that, in the past, most faculty and staff could articulate a version of the model verbally but there had been very little actual documentation of the specific characteristics of the university-wide approach. In describing this rather tacit model and the lack of an overt articulation of it, the university's Academic VP Dr. Steve Grundy once quipped that "it was our secret sauce with the emphasis on 'secret'". Finally, in 2013, the university's Academic Council recognized the benefits of commissioning a team of administrators and faculty members to engage in the necessary research that would lead to a clear and overt articulation of the model.

The Learning and Teaching Model (2013) development process was designed to respond to the following questions:

- How do we create educational environments that reflect what we know about effective learning?
- How do we shift the focus from teaching to learning to better serve our students now and in the future?
- What if we provided advanced learning opportunities for emerging and

current leaders and other professionals that supported the enhancement of 21st century skills and knowledge?

- What if we were able to provide learning opportunities that were authentic, relevant, and integrative?

These were some of the fundamental questions that the team considered in developing a working paper describing the LTM and the current research about effective learning and teaching that supported it (Hamilton, Màrquez, and Agger-Gupta, 2013b). The two main phases of developing the framework were: (1) Pre-Draft and (2) Post-Draft .

The pre-draft phase was best described as the primary "information-gathering" phase of the development process. The research team began by systematically reviewing all programs at RRU to identify and examine the foundational LTM elements that these programs had in common. The starting point was to take a 'slice in time' approach by beginning with an inductive analysis of every program's structure and curriculum, then examining current practices, systematically reviewing program and course proposals submitted to the university's curriculum committee, holding discussions with colleagues, reviewing a database of comments on their learning experiences provided by graduates, and looking at recent research related to learning and teaching in post-secondary learning environments. The desired outcome of this phase was to produce a working paper that could be broadly circulated in the university community to seek an informed response and guided feedback for incorporation into an eventual formalized version of the model. The resulting paper articulated 11 core components of the LTM, described their benefits, and illustrated how these components work together to provide an authentic, relevant, and integrative learning experience for RRU students. As well, the authors examined the teaching philosophy, key curriculum design elements, and learning processes that are a common foundation for all RRU programs including both credit and non-credit programs.

The post-draft phase was designed to evaluate the reaction within the RRU community to the draft paper and to seek input into the creation of the final version of the framework. A draft of the paper was circulated to faculty members, administrators, and staff across the university. People were invited to respond to a series of questions related to its meaningfulness, applicability, and relevance to the institution. This consultation process involved presentations to formal committees such as the Board of Governors, Academic Council, and Curriculum Committee as well as exploratory dialogue sessions with key committees and offices responsible for operational planning and support such as the Academic Leadership Team, the Centre for Teaching and Educational Technologies, and various school meetings. Furthermore, a series of 'community cafes', modelled after the methodology provided by Brown (2005), were organized where faculty, staff, and students could interactively discuss the model's merits and shortcomings. These

sessions were live-streamed to facilitate participation by members of the university who could not attend one of the face-to-face sessions. Finally, faculty and staff members were invited to submit response briefs about the model. This enabled the consultation process to extend its reach to faculty and students who did not live in the local region. On the basis of the feedback generated through the consultation process, the paper was revised and then launched publicly online and in document form.

Reflections on the Development and Implementation Process

Our experience in developing the LTM has led us to reflect on both its achievements and challenges, as well as the opportunities it has created to profile important aspects of the learning-related culture at RRU.

First, the actual experience of engaging in the development process has enabled us to stand back and consider various approaches to the development of institutional educational frameworks. On this basis, we have developed a conceptual model that describes three main approaches to developing a framework. The first approach, *Describing*, suggests that a framework can be dedicated to documenting and describing the existing realities of learning and teaching at the institution including an analysis of the perceived strengths of the current approaches. This approach is synonymous with a 'slice in time' orientation where the focus is on accurately capturing the current status quo that exists within the institution. Not only does this involve profiling the 'best practice' explanations and actions within the institution, it also involves engaging stakeholders in describing their experiences with the aesthetics of the LTM: what does the LTM *feel* like, for students, faculty, and other stakeholders, when it is working well (Lewis, Passmore, & Cantore, 2008; Maturana & Varela, 1987; Oliver & Brittain, 2001)?

The second approach, *Extending*, suggests that frameworks can also help to identify promising areas of expertise and innovation that are desirable to continue to refine and expand across the institution. This approach focuses not only on identifying core competencies related to learning and teaching but also on how to extend these competencies by identifying and promoting innovative practices in the hopes that they may be more widely adapted.

The third approach, *Envisioning*, focuses on identifying practices that may not have taken solid root in the organization yet but are considered highly desirable to promote, implement, and support within the institution. This third approach is considered more future-oriented and aspirational than the other two, because it embodies the hopes of stakeholders for more effective teaching and learning, resulting in effective, innovative, and engaged student outcomes in their workplaces across Canada in a broad range of sectors of industry, professions, and services in society.

Our review of the existing frameworks described earlier suggests that

educational institutions tended to combine two or three of the approaches in their descriptions of their frameworks. For this initial attempt at articulating a framework at RRU, we were mostly concerned with providing a current description of practices as well as identifying some key areas of extension. For example, team-based learning and authentic learning are approaches to learning that were identified as important in effectively supporting our university's mandate. Experienced professionals need to know how to work effectively in teams and they can benefit greatly from being engaged in learning experiences that enable the direct and timely application of skills and knowledge. Nevertheless, as a collective entity, we still have a lot to learn from our own practices, as well as other institutions' innovations, regarding how best to design, teach, and assess both team-based learning and authentic learning. As a result, our approach provided a combination of *Describing* and *Extending*. For other institutions, the specific combination of approaches will depend on the overall strategic goal for developing the framework as well as the relative maturity of any existing institutional educational frameworks. For instance, an institution might begin its first framework with a description of current practice but develop future frameworks later that are more aspirational.

In its first three years of implementation, the LTM has provided an organizational frame for deepening and sustaining a dialogue about learning and teaching in classrooms, schools, and committee meetings. It has also served as a helpful framework for organizing and presenting faculty development programs and activities, both online and face-to-face.

One of the key benefits of developing the LTM has been the emergence of a common language and, perhaps, a greater common understanding about the key characteristics of RRU's learning and teaching approach across the university. The articulation of the LTM has helped to demystify valuable terms such as learning outcomes, authentic learning, and transdisciplinarity. This common language has been helpful in faculty recruitment efforts because most schools now require prospective applicants to read the LTM prior to interviews and site visits. Serving as a helpful heuristic, the LTM has functioned as a launch pad for perspective sharing and meaningful dialogue regarding learning and teaching at RRU. Some of this dialogue has been oriented towards the future evolution of the model and the next steps in its ongoing developing. This kind of conversation has been insightful because the LTM was never intended to be a static, rigid, and prescriptive entity. As one example, the initial statement of the LTM was silent on faculty and student research and how this contributed to improved teaching and learning outcomes. Through faculty dialogue and input, faculty and student research has now been added to the framework. In a second example, the School of Leadership Studies created a set of four principles in alignment with the LTM elements (Harris and Agger-Gupta, 2014).

The LTM has also helped to provide a sense of coherence to the existing

work by faculty members who have been engaged in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL). The model contributes to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning by serving as an organizer for the various SOTL-related research studies already conducted by RRU faculty that contribute to the knowledge base that is specific to many of the 11 core components identified in the white paper such as promoting student engagement, assessing team-based learning, designing authentic learning experiences, assessing the impact of capstone projects, building student and faculty learning communities online, and facilitating student action research in professional workplaces. The current volume serves as the first means of organizing and sharing this body of work that focuses on case studies of existing practices, institutional change and transformation initiatives, and new innovations in learning, teaching, and faculty and student research. Secondly, in addition to helping to organize existing case studies, the LTM has served as a launch pad for new investigations that have enabled deeper examination of some of the key components. SOTL-related case studies of how the model works (or does not work) in practice have been sought from both faculty and staff. For instance, recently a series of studies have examined both faculty and student perspectives related to the Learning and Teaching Model (Harris & Walinga, 2015; Walinga, & Harris, 2014; and Walinga, Harris, & Slick, 2013).

A recent article by Hamilton (2014) describes the kinds of institutional support structures that are helpful leverage points related to the three categories of leadership, planning and policy, and organizational structure presented in the typology have been key to the LTM implementation process so far. First, leadership for the development and the dissemination process related to the model has been broadly-based and includes the university's Academic Leadership Team (ALT) as well as a number of faculty and staff members who have played key roles in writing the white paper, organizing consultation processes, conducting background research, and supporting the development of the case study process. This collaborative development process would not have been possible without the stewardship of a senior academic leadership group that was open to dialogue and the sharing of divergent perspectives about important learning and teaching issues. Engaging the campus community to help determine what is both unique and essential in the institution's learning and teaching identity was also an important source of information for the framework and a means of instilling its presence in ongoing departmental and committee conversations about academic matters.

Regarding policy and planning, Weimer (2006) suggests that commissioning a faculty-prepared white paper on pedagogical issues identified as important across the institution and then discussing these in forums across the institution can serve as an important starting point for further institution-wide engagement in pedagogical inquiry. For us, it was a key step in developing a tangible conceptual model that could then be critiqued and

revised. Determining the institution-specific intelligence that was already available at the university and that could benefit from wider analysis and dissemination was aided by starting the process with an audit of existing SOTL studies. This step involved doing a meta-analysis of the key themes and conclusions stemming from SOTL-based inquiries as a means of informing the development of an institutional framework and for determining intersection points between the identified themes and an existing institutional framework. The process helped to reveal gaps in institutional knowledge about learning and teaching that could be addressed through future SOTL studies or by commissioning future campus-wide studies.

The Learning and Teaching Model now serves as an important reference for key university-wide academic decisions and has been integrated into the development of the latest institutional academic plan. Furthermore, key steps were taken to ensure that the model was in alignment with the three overarching institutional strategic research themes at the university: (1) learning and innovation; (2) thriving organizations; and (3) sustainable societies and communities. This is consistent with Weimer's (2006) advocacy for creating a positive institutional research agenda that actively inquires into learning and teaching issues that are important across the campus.

Finally, regarding organization structure, the linkages between the model and the promotion of the scholarship of teaching and learning across the university is dependent on two existing structures of support. The first means of support is provided by the services offered by the Office of Research. This office provides small-scale research grants for faculty that they can use for the development of the case studies and related SOTL research as well as for the dissemination of the findings from the case studies. Applicants for small-scale funding through internal research and professional development grants must clearly indicate how their proposals directly relate to at least one of the three strategic research themes mentioned above. In fact, the theme of "Learning and Innovation" sends a clear message across the university that the institution is supportive and actively encouraging research that addresses this topic. Those scholars engaged in SOTL-related work can make strong arguments for why and how their proposed research is related to this theme.

The second means of support is provided by the central institutional body responsible for promoting faculty development and instructional development—the Centre for Teaching and Educational Technologies (CTET). In 2014 and 2015, the centre organized a series of workshops and sharing sessions for faculty and staff around most of the 11 core components of the model. These events and activities have provided important forums for faculty and staff members to discuss perspectives, issues, and innovations related to the learning and teaching model. This kind of discussion serves as a form of "teaching commons" (Huber & Hutchings, 2005) that provides

instrumental work for increasing faculty interest in engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning at RRU.

Central to the development of a viable and sustainable teaching commons is the support for ongoing dialogue about learning and teaching issues and the degree to which this dialogue permeates the operational fabric of the institution. Evidence that this is happening at RRU includes the degree to which the model has become central and strategic in supporting faculty development plans, programming discussions at departmental meetings, orientations for new students, recruitment sessions for prospective students, presentations to visiting delegations, papers at research conferences, monthly research project lunch and learn sessions, regularly-scheduled "teaching talks" coordinated by deans, and the development of international partnerships. In many ways, the efforts put into describing and articulating the LTM have helped to consolidate a rather cohesive RRU-wide learning community.

Despite these benefits, there have also been important challenges to address, resolve, and overcome. Although the LTM has seemingly been met with a highly receptive response with the university community, there is a constant danger of it becoming an overly simplistic heuristic tool that ends up being too prescriptive, formulaic, static, and rigid in its application. What is occasionally lost are the origins of the LTM as a description of what made RRU unique, rather than this being a set of specific actions and orders for teaching success. Not all programs at RRU make use of all 11 of the elements of the LTM—and this diversity is generally acceptable—within the context of the values of the RRU mission. But when used as a prescription, the LTM, in a way similar to how learning outcomes are occasionally used, can begin to limit, instead of facilitate, innovation into teaching, and to indoctrinate, instead of socialize, people into the RRU learning and teaching culture. Herbert Simon (1956), in a playful essay on the uses and limitations of models, reminds us that: "The [models] that actually occur do not have the same content as the phenomena to which they refer. They do not tell the truth or at least they do not tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth (p. 3)." Thus, it is best to be mindful of the LTM's role in serving as a helpful map — but not the territory itself (Korzybski, 1933, p. 58)– and to be constantly vigilant to its overuse and inappropriate application.

Conclusion

The papers that follow in this volume attest to the value of articulating an institutional educational framework and describe how our institutional framework, the RRU Learning and Teaching Model, is enacted in practice. Our description of the development of our institutional framework adds to the SOTL literature by providing one of the few existing chronicles of the development of an institutional educational framework. It is clear from our case description and the other cases in this volume that the LTM needs

to continue to evolve. This is an ongoing process. Engaging the broadly-based learning community, including students, faculty, administrators, and technical support personnel in the development of our institutional framework has continued to remind us of the value of ensuring that an inclusive, dialogic, flexible, engaging, and emergent process needs to be at the core of our efforts to describe, refine, and revisit our educational framework.

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PART I

Learner Experiences and Outcomes

1

From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Student Experiences of the RRU Learning Model

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Abstract

This narrative inquiry examines students' stories of transformative learning. The paper describes the constructivist, social constructionist, and transdisciplinary theoretical roots of Royal Roads University's Learning and Teaching Model. It also reviews the literature on transformative learning, stages of change, change readiness, and transformative change facilitation models. Five hundred and sixty students in the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management (MAELM), Master of Arts in Professional Communication (MAPC), Master of Arts in Intercultural and International Communication (MAIIC), and Master of Arts in Leadership (MAL) programs were invited to participate in an anonymous survey to elicit their perceptions and stories. We received 94 responses, which were analysed for themes and insights into the meaning-making processes. Eight stages of transformative learning were identified: (1) a disorienting dilemma, (2) a threat or challenge which presented an opportunity to reflect, (3) a conscious choice to reflect and problem solve, (4) questioning of assumptions, (5) releasing old ways of knowing, (6) reaching a new level of consciousness or insight, (7) feelings of

satisfaction and freedom and/or sadness, and (8) enduring change. Students experienced disequilibrium as a result of struggling to make meaning of an unfamiliar learning environment that deliberately fosters questioning of assumptions. This struggle triggered deep learning and, ultimately, transformation, as predicted in the literature. For our participants, however, the reward was in the new consciousness. This study both affirms the utility of transformative learning and helps us to better understand the student experience. This increased understanding will allow us to better support students on their learning journey.

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Introduction and Overview

Royal Roads University (RRU)'s Learning and Teaching Model (LTM) describes educational practices and program design features that promote transformational learning. While institutions or programs may support some elements of the Model, the process by which they were identified and drafted into a statement that both espouses and guides the University's teaching and learning approach is, to our knowledge, unique in a higher education setting. A dean and two faculty members set out to capture what made RRU's learning and teaching approach distinctive, and engaged in successive discussions with faculty and staff members to deepen their understanding and ensure they captured learning practices across the University. The resulting document, *Royal Roads University Learning and Teaching Model* (Hamilton, Márquez, & Agger-Gupta, 2013), was vetted by faculty again before it was finalized. The resulting document describes a unique and integrated educational approach as well as associated values. This educational approach often differs from what our students have experienced in a previous education context.

As faculty members, we have observed that new students may experience a learning curve associated with the University's instructional practices and learning environment. While many students told us that they were drawn to the philosophy of the University, they soon realized that their previous educational experiences and the way they learned to learn did not prepare them for the learning and teaching expectations in many of the Royal Roads University programs. For instance, how does one co-create knowledge when he or she has only experienced learning as transmitted from a teacher-expert? How does one learn with student-peers in community when one's previous experience of learning was a process between teacher and student? Or how does one translate the traditional conception of academic rigour into an applied learning and research context? This paper explores RRU students' experiences of learning to learn at RRU. We will identify ways that students reconcile tensions, conflicting beliefs, assumptions, and values in order to more fully and effectively experience and benefit from RRU's transformational learning approach.

We wondered what students' stories of transformative learning could tell us about their transformational process. The research questions that guided us are as follows:

1. How does the RRU Teaching and Learning model influence the learning environment and experience of students?
2. In what ways do students experience and resolve conflicts between standard and transformative learning models?

This paper describes theoretical foundations underlying RRU's Learning and Teaching Model and reviews the literature on transformational learning,

stages of change, change readiness, and transformative change facilitation models. We then present our research methodology and methods, the findings of our study, and our recommendations for practice and further research.

Principles and Practices of RRU's Learning and Teaching Model

Fullan and Scott (2009) call on universities to create practical and engaging educational experiences that prepare students to become leaders capable of working with others to solve the complex and divisive problems that confront the world in the 21st century (p. 42). Royal Roads University explicitly states its role in educating such leaders through "immersing students in a learning context that that facilitates and promotes personal and professional *transformation* and allows them to succeed in a global context" (Hamilton, Márquez & Agger-Gupta, 2013, p. 2, our emphasis). RRU's Learning and Teaching Model describes guiding principles and practices that promote transformational learning and teaching practices. It sets out 11 educational practices that, together, promote the development of the type of leaders the world needs:

1. Students are active and engaged in their learning, and faculty provide them with learning experiences, and facilitate and coach them.
2. Experiential and authentic activities and assessment allow students to reflect on and apply their learning to their own practice and the real world.
3. Outcomes-based assessment guides learning by stating clearly what a student should know, be able to do, or value through an assignment, a course, or a program.
4. Students engage in practical and participative research (often action research) to address real world issues.
5. Integrated curriculum provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge, approaches, and perspectives to solving real world problems.
6. Faculty are scholars and practitioners, bringing their real world experience to their teaching and ensuring that what students learn can be applied in their practice.
7. The best of blended (face-to-face and online) teaching strategies facilitate student participation and accessibility.
8. Students enter and complete their program in the same cohort, developing relationships that support, enrich, and enhance their learning.
9. Students explicitly learn to work effectively in teams through numerous team activities and assignments.
10. Integrated academic and student services support engagement and success.
11. Flexible program designs ensure they are accessible and fit into the lives of working students.

RRU's Learning and Teaching Model explicitly embraces constructivist and social constructionist principles[1]. Constructivism emerged from John Dewey's (1938) theory of experience and education. He saw learning as an individual's active inquiry process in interaction with the world, in contrast to the rote learning approach of "traditional education". Key here is that adult learners are active agents and participants in their learning rather than empty vessels and passive recipients of knowledge from others. Further, an individual's learning does not occur in isolation; rather, it becomes part of an "experiential continuum," (p. 33) meaning that learning is influenced by what is already known and what is known influences subsequent learning. Social constructivism adds that an individual's knowledge construction takes place within a social context, which influences the learning process and "socially agreeable interpretations" (Adams, 2006, p. 246). Shaped by influential theorists like Piaget, Vygotsky, Freire, and Bruner[2], constructivist learning theory asserts that "genuine learning occurs when students are actively engaged in the process of discussing ideas, interpreting meaning, and constructing knowledge" (Gordon, 2009). Thus, while faculty still need content expertise (Gordon, 2009), they must also know how to guide and coach learners and create engaging learning experiences. Their facilitation entails a solid grounding in adult learning principles that promote self-direction and the application of theory to practice.

While social constructivism understands learning as something that occurs as individuals interact with other individuals and the world, social constructionism posits that "we construct multiple and emerging 'realities' and selves with others through our dialogue" (Cunliffe, 2008, p. 135). "[S]ee[ing] ourselves as collaborators, co-constructing our identities and behaviour in a dynamic dance with discourses" (Alford, 2012, p. 299) can lead to greater insight, particularly about learning. The cohort model (#8 of the Learning and Teaching Model) creates a tightly knit learning community, providing an environment which supports learners in co-creation of knowledge and identity through dialogue. These relationships, culture, and common language bind learners to others in their program at RRU (Harris & Agger-Gupta, 2014).

The Learning and Teaching model also aligns with the aims, approaches and values of transdisciplinary teaching, learning, and research. McGregor (2014) defines transdisciplinarity as "iteratively crossing back and forth and among and beyond disciplinary and sectorial boundaries to solve the complex, wicked problems of humanity" (p. 161). It has three broad characteristics. First, it aims to solve complex and multidimensional real world problems that cannot be solved within "the boundaries of a single discipline" (Wickson, Carew, & Russell, 2006, p. 1048). Second, transdisciplinary (as opposed to

1. Our thanks to our colleague Niels Agger-Gupta for enriching this section on constructivism and social constructionism as they apply to the Learning and Teaching Model.
2. We acknowledge differences amongst these theorists and many others. In this article, we focus on the shared characteristics of constructivism.

interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary) research moves beyond disciplinary boundaries, which results in the "construction of unique methodologies tailored to the problem and context" (Wickson et al., 2006, p. 1050). Third, transdisciplinary researchers engage in collaborative knowledge production between researchers and stakeholders (Wickson et al., 2006; Carew & Wickson, 2010). The Learning and Teaching Model elements of action research focus (#4), integrated curriculum (#5), and applied learning (#6) bring transdisciplinary knowledge production approaches to life as a pedagogic strategy. Transdisciplinarity, according to Nicolescu (n.d.) "is a way of self-transformation oriented towards knowledge of the self, the unity of knowledge, and the creation of a new art of living in society" (p. 3). He goes on to observe that "transdisciplinary evolution of education" is required to address the urgent and vexing problems of the world. Likewise, transformative learning is grounded in and dependent upon the capacity to think across disciplines. It is this expansive, inclusive thinking that allows us to tolerate ambiguity, sit with a dilemma, and in turn navigate complex challenges to one's existing paradigm, beliefs, or assumptions through the releasing and embracing of ways of knowing.

This transdisciplinary evolution of education is apparent in UNESCO's (2013) five educational pillars—learning to know, do, live together, be, and transform oneself and society—which provide a foundation for RRU's Learning and Teaching Model and are grounded within the work of Jacques Delors (1996) as well as the discussion of his work by Tawil and colleagues (2012; 2013). Originally conceived as a framework for transformational environmental education, it addresses the whole-person, multi-dimensional, and transdisciplinary learning needed to resolve the urgent, difficult, and complex problems confronting people, communities, societies, and the world. Learning, according to the UNESCO framework, extends beyond knowledge acquisition and skills application to working productively and inclusively with others, nurturing and providing individual growth of the whole person, and working for the common good. The UNESCO model explicitly links transdisciplinarity, personal transformation, and social transformation. And while our students tell us of their personal transformation through testimonials and evaluative comments, many alumni have told us of how that personal transformation, in turn, enabled them to create positive change in the lives of others, whether in their families, workplaces or communities.

Theoretical Framework for Transformational Learning

Definitions of Personal Transformation

Transformation is defined as a metamorphosis, conversion, or complete change in form, shape, or appearance, usually into something with an improved appearance or usefulness (Oxford English Dictionary, 2006). The concept of personal transformation has multi-disciplinary relevance.

Specifically, the topic has been explored in relation to education, behavioural science, health, cognition, and athletics. Throughout the literature, personal transformation is described using several different terms reflecting diverse contexts. Terms for personal transformation include individuation (Jung, 1921), critical transition (Skar, 2004), transformative world view (Scheiren, 2004; Taber, 1983, Smith, 1984; Watson, 1989), transformative logic (Loder 1981), perspective transformation (Carpenter, 1994; Mezirow, 1978, 1991), and transformative learning (Carpenter, 1994; Mezirow, 1995, 1997, 2000). Along with the more formal definition of personal transformation as a "forming over or restructuring," Wade (1998) derives the following definition from her literature review: "a dynamic, uniquely individualized process of expanding consciousness whereby individuals become critically aware of old and new self-views and choose to integrate these views into a new self-definition" (p. 716). Wade explains that while "the thrill and focus of transformation may not be sustained indefinitely, the individual continues to live by what has been seen" (p. 717). Royal Roads University strives to facilitate transformational learning in its students as part of a larger teaching and learning model. By its nature, the approach can inspire tension, dissonance, and resistance. This study aims to understand how students experienced the RRU model and how they approach resulting tensions.

Personal transformation finds its roots in the realms of educational, cognitive, and behavioural psychology, including such theorists as: John Dewey (1859-1952) and his theory of "experiential education," Carl Jung (1875-1961) and his theory of "individuation," Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) and his "field theory" and "dynamic theory of personality," Jean Piaget (1895-1980) and his theory of "accommodative learning," Lev Vgotsky (1896-1934) and his "social development theory," Paulo Freire (1921-1997) and his theory of "liberation through education," Ivan Illich (1926-2002) and his theories of "deschooling" and "raising consciousness," and Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) and his concept of "paradigm shift." While these historical theories derive from diverse disciplinary perspectives, they share several common transformative principles: i) transactional development as the individual interacts with his environment, ii) a disposition for change or critical life transition, iii) a point of "bifurcation" and process of equilibration, and iv) a final reorganization or "transformation" of the individual's world view and consequent behaviour.

Modern theorists and researchers have attempted to capture the transformative process by exploring emergent patterns, categorizing the phases or stages of transformation, and identifying means and conditions for effectively facilitating the transformative process. As well, recent researchers have shown that individuals who experience personal transformation believe they have more freedom, more creativity, and greater capacity for stress tolerance (Gould, 1978; Loder, 1981; Wildermeersch & Leirman, 1988).

Modern theories of personal transformation stem from work in the area

of education, health, theology, and psychology. Examples include: Jack Mezirow's "perspective transformation" or "transformative learning" (1978, 1991, 1995, 1997), Robert Havighurst's theory of "mobilized energy" and change (1972, 1979), Robert Kegan's theory of "constructive development" (1982), James Fowler's "faith development theory" (1981), James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente's "transtheoretical model of change" (1982), Robert Boyd's theory of "discernment" (1989), Kathleen King's "Learning Opportunities Model" (2002), Edward Taylor's exploration of the "neurobiological role in transformative change" (2001), Richard Boyatzis' "intentional change theory" (2002), Roy Baumeister's "crystallization of discontent" (1994), and Jack Bauer's "crystallization of desire" (2005). From each of the theories arises the idea that personal transformation is an internal creative problem-solving process occurring at the level of the unconscious but sparked by an interactive dissonance between environment and individual affective/cognitive processes. In reviewing the literature on personal transformation, the common principles of the transformative process appear to follow a set of stages (Table 1). Critical to the transformative learning process appears the confrontation of a disorienting dilemma or feeling of being "stuck". It is the experience of failing or being stuck no matter which path you choose that prompts a willingness to pause, look elsewhere, and reflect. This theoretical and conceptual model guided our analysis by providing categories by which to code and theme our data.

a) **A disorienting dilemma** or problem (Ferguson, 1980; Skar, 2004; Loder, 1981; Busick, 1989; Mezirow, 1991), causing

b) **a threatening and challenging opportunity** for reflection, problem solving, and expansion of consciousness (Bailey, 1996, Duff 1989, Ferguson 1980, Loder, 1981; Mezirow, 1991; Neuman, 1996; Pierce, 1986; Watson, 1989), at which point the individual must

c) **make a deliberate choice** to confront the conflict or dilemma (Busick, 1989; Newman, 1994; Ferguson, 1980; Smith, 1984; Wildemeersch & Lierman, 1988) by

d) **questioning assumptions** (Hagberg, 2002; Kegan, 2000; Mezirow, 1991; Schein, 1999; Walker, 2000),

e) **releasing old ways of knowing**, becoming receptive to new ways of viewing the self, and reinterpreting experiences in a new context (Loder, 1981; Mezirow, 1991). This results in

f) **a new level of consciousness or insight** which unites the mind and heart to form a new self-definition (Ferguson, 1980; Mezirow, 1991) and express a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and integrated meaning perspective (Dirkx, 2000; Loder, 1981; Busick, 1989; Mezirow, 1991). Transformation is followed by

g) **feelings of excitement, satisfaction, and freedom as well as sadness** associated with loss of the old self (Dirkx, 2000; Ferguson, 1980; Busick, 1989; Duff, 1989; Newman, 1994). Finally, transformation is

h) **enduring change** in attitude and behaviour. Once transformation has occurred, the individual never returns to the old perspective (Ferguson, 1980; Duff, 1989; Mezirow, 1991).

Table 1. Conceptual and Theoretical Model for the Transformational Learning Process

Methods for Studying Personal Transformation

This study explores the interactions between internal and external factors on the student experience of the RRU transformational learning model. In the wide variety of studies performed and theories developed in the area of personal transformation, a consistent complaint among researchers is the

intangible nature of the transformative process. To empirically test theorems related to the concept, several measurement instruments may be needed, placing artificial limits on the data elements. Qualitative research may be most effective at revealing the unfolding of patterns associated with the transformation process. Wade (1998), in her review of studies in personal transformation in the health, behavioural, and educational sciences, found only one empirical study performed in the area of personal transformation (Williams, 1987), and even then, found that the qualitative measures were more reliable and telling than the quantitative instruments involved. Williams explored the relationship between perspective transformation and changes in abusive spousal behaviours following a twelve-week educational program. Five self-report instruments were administered to measure outcomes related to perspective transformation, including: Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, Conflict Tactics Scale, Rotter's Locus of Control Scale, the Index of Role Preferences, and an Index of Spouse Abuse. Intake and exit interviews were also used and rated by a therapist and three researchers using Mezirow's ten phases of perspective transformation. Williams found that the qualitative perspective transformation ratings were of greater value than the measurement tools in analysing the process of personal transformation. This study involves a qualitative content analysis of student reflections and discussions of the RRU learning and teaching model in order to form a clearer picture of the transformational learning experience.

Facilitating Transformational Learning

Many studies explore methods or conditions for facilitating the transformative process. For example, Taylor (1998) identifies 11 dissertations exploring transformative learning alone. There appears to be no "best practice" for fostering personal transformation (Taylor, 1998). Taylor complains of a lack of thorough literature review in the area, criticizing transformative learning theory in particular for "lack of coordinated efforts" to build upon existing studies. He specifically calls for a process to facilitate personal transformation that is not limited by "ideal conditions" but is adaptable to a variety of individual situations (p. 61). In his paper exploring the mechanisms of critical transitions, Kuhn (1972) complains that "it is the requirement that mental operations be applied and consolidated over a period of time in order to be susceptible to restructuring that constitutes the essential limitation in attempts to externally induce this restructuring by means of short-term experimental procedures" (p. 843). The transformative process can be difficult to capture due to its sometimes gradual and indistinctive nature.

Facilitating true transformation as an emergent process seems to precede the process of moving through the stages of change. For instance, the decision to lose weight, if it is to be truly motivating and result in true transformation of the individual, would first emerge from the transformative process. Within the transtheoretical model of change (Prochaska et al., 1986; Prochaska et

al., 2008) the opportunity for the transformative process exists in the stages of contemplation and preparation. As well, Kubler-Ross's model (1969) represents an aspect of the transformative process in that acceptance of a loss (like "releasing old ways of knowing" in our model of transformative learning) enables the individual to see more clearly the path he or she must now take to continue living a full life. Scire (2007) later applied Kubler-Ross' model to organizational change and found that, for some, a change in circumstances does not always have to be negative, but can prove to be a positive opportunity. Accepting a new job may cause individuals to lose their routine, workplace friendships, and confidence in tasks, but with this change may come the opportunity for learning, improved career prospects, salary, and benefits.

Schein (1999) illustrates the power of negative emotions and the importance of addressing them as part of the transformation process:

> Adapting poorly or failing to meet our creative potential often looks more desirable than risking failure and loss of self-esteem in the learning process. Learning anxiety is the fundamental restraining force which can go up in direct proportion to the amount of disconfirmation, leading to the maintenance of the equilibrium by defensive avoidance of the disconfirming information. It is the dealing with learning anxiety, then, that is the key to producing change. (p. *55*)

In dealing with these anxieties, Schein calls for the creation of psychological safety through a supportive environment and reassurances.

Again, proponents of a negative psychology may miss the opportunity that the negative emotions, such as fear, anxiety, worry, and concern, offer the facilitator. At the same time, they miss the opportunity to integrate positive with negative psychology. People protect what they love. Within their fears and anxieties lie their deep (and protected) values. Paradoxically, fears exist because of goals and values. The process of exploring competing commitments, negative emotions, or fears and concerns can do more than simply allow individuals to work through their emotions. In fact, this process may hold the key to transformation. By inquiring into fears, we are able to uncover deep values and goals.

The power of goals and values has been illustrated empirically (Locke & Latham, 1990). As an individual's goals and values emerge, solutions to the "disorienting dilemma" emerge and the path of transformation becomes clear. For instance, Kegan and Lahey (2001) provide an example of a woman whose competing commitments included "wanting a project to succeed" and "not wanting to override her boss's position in the company". If her fear of overriding her boss's position were to be explored, it would be clear that she deeply valued her relationship with her boss. The transformation in both behaviour and outlook would occur when her values become clear; having gained insight into her true values, she can proceed with her project after having a respectful conversation with her boss preparing him for the possible change in their relationship. As Jung reminds us, "in the intensity of the

emotional disturbance itself lies the value, the energy, which (the individual) should have at his disposal in order to remedy the state of reduced adaptation" (Jung, 1957/1969). The solution may lie within the problem.

The key to moving past the crux, and creating true readiness for transformation, may rest with an integration of theories. Paradoxically, the power of positive emotions in driving transformational change may begin with the power of negative emotions and resistance. Resistance to change may hold the "seeds of change" in that within our fears and anxieties reside our true values. While values have been shown to be a powerful motivating force, stress and fear are just as powerful at diverting attention away from values. If our fears represent the values we aim to protect, inquiring into fears would expose the values that can drive change.

For this study, we were interested in exploring the student experience of a transformative learning approach to education—one that challenges the typical educational processes, contexts, and elements. From these insights, we hoped to discover ways to better facilitate the transformative learning process for our learners through our learning and teaching model.

Research Approach and Data Collection Methods

This study is interpretive. The researchers' ontological assumptions are that reality is "socially constructed, complex and ever changing" (Glesne, 2011, p. 8). An interpretive epistemology (Cresswell, 1998) seeks to understand how people experience and make meaning of their experiences within this socially constructed world. This approach enabled the researchers to make sense of the data—that is, how students experience transformational learning at RRU. This study is a narrative inquiry in which we elected students' stories related to their learning experiences at RRU. "The study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative is a "form of discourse in which the events and happenings are configured into a temporal whole" (Kelly & Howie, 2007, p.137), capturing context-rich and situated understanding. The study examines how students make meaning of and integrate the University's learning and teaching principles into their learning experience. It uses narrative inquiry to explore new students' experiences, their challenges, and what supports their learning. We elicited students' stories through a survey with open-ended questions to gain insight into their learning processes, and ultimately, to develop strategies and processes to support students as they "transform" through RRU's pedagogy.

Approximately 560 students in the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management (MAELM), Master of Arts in Professional Communication (MAPC), Master of Arts in Intercultural and International Communication (MAIIC), and Master of Arts in Leadership (MAL) programs received an invitation to participate in an anonymous survey to elicit their perceptions

and stories, which were analysed for themes and insights into their meaning-making processes, and transformational learning experiences. We asked:

1. Can you recall a time during your experience at RRU when you felt that the learning experience/model/approach was different? Tell us about that; what happened? What made it different in your opinion? What stuck out particularly? What discovery did you make about yourself and/or RRU? What prompted this discovery?
2. How did you experience this difference in learning experience/model/approach? Can you recall a time during your experience at RRU when you felt a particular shift in your learning style, assumptions about learning, mental models or even world view? Describe the events surrounding that experience; what happened and what did you notice about yourself? About learning? Can you recall a tension, a conflict, an incongruity OR a release, an alignment, a familiarity with the learning and teaching model at RRU? Describe the experience.

We received a total of 93 responses. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of responses by program.

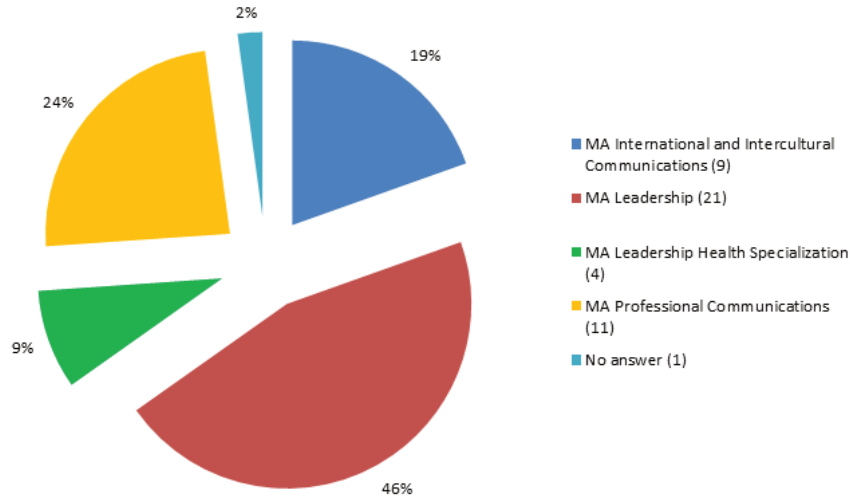

Figure 1. Number and percentage of survey responses by program.

Analysing narrative data is not a process that emerges from "a single heritage, theoretical orientation or standard methodology" (Kelly & Howie, 2007, p.139). Rather, it draws on a variety of qualitative methodologies in order to bring to light the depth of meaning embedded in the narratives and how their interpretations shape future practices. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe narrative analysis as a process of transforming field texts (in

this research captured in interview transcripts) into interim texts (interim analyses), followed by research texts (documents ready for dissemination). We examined the field texts for "the patterns, narrative threads, tensions and themes within an individual's experience and in the social setting" (p. 132).

Results and Discussion

The themes emerging from the data reflected the transformational learning model introduced earlier in the paper. We've used the words of the students themselves (in italics) to illustrate our findings.

a) Disorienting dilemma

Many students remarked on what was different about the RRU model and approach:

The learning experience is constantly/consistently different from my bricks & mortar undergraduate experience, and also other distance graduate experiences that I've had.

I've had experience in distance graduate learning, so I knew what to expect on many levels... but not necessarily what to expect from RRU.

What was different is that my cohort members were so much more a part of my learning.

...the integration of on-campus residency with online learning, which is not incorporated into many other distance learning programs.

When I started the program I found that the information was not merely being dumped on us, it was made available.

For the remainder of residency everything was different. It wasn't all lecture style. We were learning about ourselves. We were not just learning from the teachers, but from our classmates too.

I completed my undergrad through distance education at another university. It was an individualized study and therefore I did not have the experience/benefit of a cohort model.

The RRU experience was a much richer one in that I had far more interactions with faculty than I had previously.

The emphasis on getting to know each other, feeling comfortable, and being able to help each other stuck out in each plenary and seminar session, which in turn translated to a close-knit community outside of the classroom.

Although theory was taught in the classroom, there was an application piece during my residency in China that was unlike any other learning I have done.

Unlike many students, I completed my undergraduate degree mainly through a

distance program. What I found different in this program, which helped with my learning of the content, were the online discussions with my cohort.

While most students spoke of these differences in a positive light, often the difference they sought resulted in a tension they then needed to resolve. Students celebrate differences while at the same time experiencing a "disorientation" and struggling to function within these new and different educational parameters. The result is feeling caught in a "dilemma" of wanting something different from past "bricks and mortar" experiences, yet not having the tools or mindset to respond to this new environment. For instance, students want an approach that allows them to continue working—an approach RRU describes as "meeting the needs of the working professional,"—yet struggle with the resulting lack of time or balance:

There has not been enough break time between courses. It is unreasonable to give people only a week between courses who are working full-time. It accomplishes very little except excessive stress and exhaustion. RRU's learning model, in my opinion, is seriously flawed in this aspect.

I struggled with the work-life-school balance and it had a significant impact on my stress level.

Students also signed up for a more mature, diverse cohort of working professionals, yet then struggled with how this model contradicts a more established profile of a graduate student or master's level program, or even what learning involves—i.e. that learning cannot happen with those who do not have the same "level" of education or experience:

What was different is that my cohort members were so much more a part of my learning.

One of my biggest challenges was with my mental model of what I considered to be a master's caliber student.

My tensions were mostly derived from the others in my cohort—this may relate to RRU's acceptance practices, but there were a number of people who clearly did not add to the experience of others... in fact there were a few who detracted from our learning experiences as a cohort.

The students were seeking autonomy and an adult learning experience at RRU, yet wrestled with the independent self-direction required:

There is far less engagement with the professors during the off-campus terms, which creates a distance between me and my studies.

What prompted this discovery was a baptism by fire so to speak, as we all were intentionally teamed up in diverse groups with all the information collectively to successfully complete the various assignments.

I did not expect to have to reach so far into myself, and to challenge my own way of being as much as I did.

At first it was a bit overwhelming getting to know the technology, etc., but then I got used to it.

Students, though craving an alternative, more democratic learning environment, seemed bound by the constraints and expectations of a traditional hierarchical learning environment. As one student remarked, the cohort as a whole seemed reluctant to embrace the true democracy and openness required within the discussion forums, despite the online nature of the program and its associated adult learning principles:

While the intention is good, I'm personally finding the asynchronous posts are a bit contrived—they tend to be answers to questions on material and not conversations to fully explore and test out ideas and theories. I don't feel they are "safe" enough to openly make errors for learning.

Students seemed locked in a traditional view of university hierarchy, and some were unable to let go of preconceived notions of power and control in an educational setting. Students continued to assume that their instructors were adversaries rather than partners, or that they had no alternative avenues for raising concerns other than the traditional "chair" position:

I also feel that to have the Department Head instruct courses is unacceptable and unworkable because there is a power imbalance and vulnerability should a student feel compelled to challenge that person on marking or other issues that arise.

Though students applied to RRU for its unique model and approach to adult post-secondary learning, flexible admissions, and cohort model, these were the very elements that proved "disorienting," challenged the students, or caused tensions. Many students were unable to reconcile their prior experiences and expectations of higher education with the unique, alternative learning environment and elements offered by RRU. As an institution, it is important to not only confront students with a new model, unique educational principles, and more democratic approaches, thereby "disorienting" them, but also to equip students with the tools to resolve the tension between the RRU model and their previous, traditional experiences and expectations, shift their mental models, and transition them into a new way of operating through reflection and practice. For instance, RRU instructors could facilitate discussions concerning learning and challenge students to consider and articulate the ways we can learn from individuals who derive from all demographics of society. Instructors could be more intentional about helping students recognize their disoriented state, and then provide students with the opportunities and tools to reorient themselves within their new environment.

b) Threatening or challenging opportunity to reflect

Based on the literature concerning transformational learning, a necessary step in the transformative process is the emergence of a threat or challenge. While the students noticed "differences" and found these "disorienting," critical to transformational learning is that these disorienting dilemmas are also threatening or challenging in some way, forcing one to appraise, reflect, and respond. The students articulated many thought-provoking threats and challenges:

The thing I found most frustrating about the RRU experience was the diverse background of my cohort members.

... one person in my advisory group stood out significantly, and quite honestly, made me question whether I wanted to consider my RRU journey because I did not want to feel I had an "under-rated" degree, especially for the cost.

Overall, the setting that we work in has allowed me to come into contact with many interesting people and has often tested my ability to work with people I wouldn't normally choose to work with. This has been a huge part of my learning as a master's student and as an individual in relationship.

Students often commented on the level of their peers' academic or professional achievement or status, referring to their educational and career accomplishments. For some, the diversity of the cohort posed a challenge by "testing their abilities to work with the unfamiliar," and for some it posed a threat to the quality or "reputation" of their degree. The challenge or threat posed by the diverse cohort offered an opportunity for reflection on what makes a colleague or peer, a quality degree, or a productive team-based learning experience.

As well, students found the vulnerability of the online environment a challenge or threat:

I noticed that during the first semester with the online learning discussions I was sensitive to critiques or comments from my peers.

It is a point of potential humiliation if you are on the wrong track. Posting does force you to assemble your thoughts and read others, and allows for distance across time zones.

For students, the challenge emerged when their independent learning began to suffer from a tendency toward and expectation of "dependence" on the instructor:

I think that the vacuum of learning on a laptop alone becomes a point of tension in its ambiguity – students are floating in a sea of content without direction or feedback.

There was no catalyst (i.e. lectures or live discussions) to push us in to engaging with the material, the concepts, the theoretical structures. We miss out on the seminar style discussion that really pushes a graduate group to learn and explore together...

mostly due to the apathy of others, and the daunting nature of logging in to a forum and seeing dozens or hundreds of responses to read and acknowledge.

The traditional learning environment features a reliance on an instructor at all times to initiate and facilitate discussion and learning. The reality of adult learning includes interacting with and learning from one's peers as much as an instructor, initiating discussion independently and creatively, and choosing to follow or contribute to particular threads from myriad discussions. The challenge that this bereft student experienced offered an opportunity to reflect on the true nature of learning and the learning environment. S/he could have abandoned the learning as undemanding due to the lack of instructor "push," as this student realized:

This experience did teach me about what types of learning I want to pursue in the future – that I want to avoid group-based learning, and collaborative assignments; that I want to focus on research that is important to me; that a "traditional" bricks & mortar learning environment is a more comfortable place for me.

Or students could choose to reflect on and question their expectations as a way to consider and imagine alternative ways of knowing and learning. As one participant articulated:

We could either be victims of circumstance, or become self-aware and recognize the systems at work.

Both the institutional communicators and the instructors at RRU could be more intentional about surfacing the challenges and threats that a new learning model and environment pose to students. Embracing and welcoming the critiques and highlighting the differences between the RRU and traditional models would wake students up to their assumptions about learning and begin the transformational process. Instructors could then facilitate a discussion about expectations, gaps, and what is missing from the RRU experience, thereby fostering critical reflection on the traditional models of learning and challenging students to consider that there may be alternatives to "pushing students". Learning can also be a pull, a listening to one's inner drive, and a self-propulsion.

c) Conscious choice to reflect and problem solve

Many students reflected the next phase of transformational learning in their comments regarding the conscious choice to pause, reflect, and problem solve the tensions, incongruities, and discomfort they were experiencing:

During these sessions you gained incredible insight into differing perspectives if you were open to understanding these perspectives.

Several students were acutely aware of the turning point that these uncomfortable experiences offered, and emphasized the need for all students to "trust the process" in order to arrive at true insight and understanding:

I can state that those who did not (trust the process) encountered a difficult path of completing program/course requirements.

Trusting that the School has your best interests in mind is something that a lot of students need to realize. If you're coming into a cohort model thinking that life is all about you, and you alone, you're screwed. It is truly a team effort between yourself, the cohort, the academic team, and the administrative team. However, when it comes to the work and increasing your knowledge base and capacity, the work you put into it reflects what you will receive!

Personal reflection occurred independently, prompted by a dilemma, tension or threat, and often resulted in self-discovery or a new appreciation for possibilities not otherwise imagined:

I think that the setting in which we were exposed to other people in our program and the variety of people and backgrounds in the program allowed me to do a lot of self-work as well as progressional [sic] development.

Within the process, one essential piece included relying on the group you were partnered with to supply information from their learning towards overall group understanding and project completions.

When we did have seminar-style discussions I found some of my cohort were an immense help in allowing me to adjust my frame of reference.

Adult learning principles suggest that students are agents of and engaged in meaning making. For example, this student realized on her own that materials were often recommended and not required, curated, and stored for future reference, rather than deconstructed by the instructor through lecture:

This meant I could return to it instead of trying to memorize and regurgitate, allowing for real understanding and cognitive function.

A common expression at RRU is the "aha moment". Prompted to reflect on what was important to them and to question their prior learning and experiences, the students worked through their concerns independently and thoughtfully arrived at new insights and deeper self-understanding perhaps not possible unless experienced independently:

What discovery did this prompt? That I needed to make this program my own – that it wasn't designed to offer me what a bricks & mortar program provides. In order to get what I wanted from the program I needed to put in extra time for theory and introspection to have the academic understanding of concepts that I felt was warranted in a graduate program.

This is crucial learning for me; I have some background in interactive multimedia training and am learning first-hand the importance of integrating a variety of learning elements. It is easier to tune out when course content is static and self-paced; engagement is lower and learning isn't as embedded.

The most valuable role the RRU instructor can play in facilitating the transformative process is likely in providing students with the opportunity to truly experience the challenge or threat to their value systems and expectations, and then to offer a space or opportunity to reflect upon that experience, make sense of it, and question the underlying values at stake. Instructors could inquire into what is threatened or at stake for the student in an effort to surface the values they seek to protect and sustain. Instructors can challenge students to articulate their underlying values in an effort to raise awareness.

Students can then be challenged to build their values within the new RRU context. For instance, for those students struggling with the independent nature of adult learning at RRU and the lack of push, it may become clear that development and growth are what is most at stake. Asking the learner to consider how they might develop and grow in an environment that does not involve being "pushed" will encourage him or her to imagine the alternative (i.e., self-directed learning, ownership of one's learning, and independent exploration) and let go of his or her default expectations.

d) The questioning of assumptions

Surfacing and questioning assumptions emerged as a natural part of the transformational learning process at RRU:

Well, I have had a shift in a major way. I took a lot of things at face value, I won't say I am cynical now but life experiences and situations trigger a lot of questions for me...

As part of the transformative process, individuals first encounter a disorienting dilemma that awakens them to the difference and creates a cognitive dissonance. They may interpret some elements of this experience as threatening or find the experience challenges their prior learning or ingrained expectations. At this point of cognitive appraisal, individuals may decide to reflect upon the feelings of discomfort or unease and then make a conscious choice to problem solve. It is at this point of choice or dilemma that an instructor can play a critical role. Often, the individual needs to recognize that a threat is not necessarily a signal to fight or flight but can also be an opportunity for self-awareness, development, and growth:

Recently I had another shift in my assumptions about the world, about others. In order to change the experience I was having with my sponsor I chose to look at the situation from an entirely different angle. To change my mind about him and it.

When an individual recognizes the threat as an opportunity and enters into an exploratory problem-solving process, underlying assumptions become more visible (Kegan, 2000). For instance, initially a student may struggle with the cooperative, collaborative approach to learning, and rail against the risky and somewhat self-effacing nature of such an approach:

One of my greatest learnings has been about sharing. In the corporate world you are

careful about what you share because it is through your creativity and uniqueness that you get ahead. Some value is placed on leadership but mostly it is about being better than the next person.

The shift in thinking from confronting a "threat against which to defend" toward "an opportunity" to reconsider old ways of knowing and reimagine new ways of doing is coupled quite naturally with a surfacing of assumptions about what was "right" or "necessary", a demonstration of true critical thinking:

I have learned to feel really comfortable being a leader and helping the other person any way I can. I recently shared my entire proposal to a group struggling, never once feeling that I was 'losing' but rather that I was gaining because I had helped them.

I feel safe and at home with this community and that has allowed me to take risks and be vulnerable in my learning to a degree that I did not expect would have been possible.

Along with the awareness of assumptions and the realization of one's faulty or narrow thinking comes a greater awareness of alternative possibilities:

…that introverts are able to be tremendous leaders!

…that I was getting smarter, this is done by realizing how little I know, day after day.

…that I don't know as much as I thought or think I know but am always seeking to know. I love it.

…that I'm not as independent a learner as I thought I was.

Some students came to realize that the source of their greatest initial disappointment and frustration—the "quality or level" of their peers—became one of the greatest sources of learning and inspiration:

I came to the conclusion that we are on our own journey. I had much to learn as did this person, and therefore RRU may be the right institution. I was on my journey, she was on hers.

One of the biggest changes in my thinking that I noticed was being able to look at an issue from different perspectives and being open to a change in my thought from that assessment.

At this stage in the transformative process, RRU instructors could play a role in helping the students to acknowledge and articulate more specifically the assumptions guiding their prior learning. Raising awareness about assumptions in general is a powerful educational tool and a necessary step in developing a student's capacity for critical thought. Once assumptions are made visible, it is possible to recognize and surface assumptions in other contexts. However, instructors must also understand that assumptions can

only be made visible once the student has moved several steps along the path of transformation. Students must be ready to see assumptions first and this takes an appreciation for the process, and timely facilitation along the way.

e) Releasing old ways of knowing

Releasing old ways of knowing is the point of actual transformation that was set up in the categories a-d. It involved the learners' realization that their existing perceptions about learning would no longer serve them. To learn in the RRU Learning and Teaching Model environment, learners needed to actively engage with what they were learning, to make meaning of it, and apply it in their workplace. The following learner's reflection states succinctly the before and after states of knowing that the "release" brings about:

I have shifted my mental model about learning. I am not exactly sure at what point along the way it happened. I came in with the view that the instructor would relay information and knowledge and that I would take it in and would then have learned what I was supposed to. This is not at all what happened. I was guided to resources, but then asked to offer my own thoughts on what it meant and to connect it to how I perceived it to be relevant to my work.

Another learner described his sense of "release" when he realized the limitations of his old way of learning and his need to "escape" from a limiting approach to a new "culture" that would serve him:

A release of sorts is accurate in describing a point in time during the learning where I realized how I had been living, thinking, acting, and feeling had been impacting or controlling my path to date. Escape from the present culture I had been a part of was the immediate course of action, followed by realization that escape could not be permanent. The path forward needed to embrace intentional integration of what had been learned to form part of creating a new culture which I would be glad to be part of.

When learners described the "release," they often contrasted the "before" with an "after" state describing their own agency in learning. For example, a learner stated:

I needed to make this program my own – that it wasn't designed to offer me what a bricks and mortar program provides. In order to get what I wanted from the program I needed to put in extra time for theory and introspection to have the academic understanding of concepts.

In each case, the release came when students let go of their past learned behaviours, perceptions, or expectations related to how one learns. Their "letting go" led directly to taking on an active role of meaning making and integrating what they were learning with prior knowledge and practice.

f) New level of consciousness or insight

Participants described new levels of insight in two major categories: insights about themselves and their learning; and insights into the value of connectedness and peer support inherent in the learning community.

Insights into self

Participants described insights into their own abilities that were tested in the learning environment. For example, one learner stated:

I learned about my own tenacity, discipline, team-work capabilities, strengths, and intellectual endurance.

In contrast, others pointed out the link between the personal and the professional. A participant described the learning process as one of maturing:

The learning model made me grow up and become more engaged in my personal and professional life.

Another participant also describes this link between personal and professional insights but notes that this type of learning may not be suitable for all:

The learning was holistic and led to a deepening of personal and professional discoveries for me as a student. This type of learning may not be suitable for everyone, however, I found it to be very effective and had a significant impact (positively) on my overall experience at RRU.

This learner notes that while the learning process had positive outcomes for him, it may not for all learners. This statement supports the idea that learners need to make a conscious choice to reflect and problem solve, and to question their assumptions (as shown in sections c and d).

For some participants, the insights were described in terms of responsibility for learning and control, as demonstrated in the following quotations:

The distance learning element forces you to take matters into your own hands. You get in what you put in, and you learn to take full responsibility for your experience and your outcomes.

The recognition that I had control (when sometimes it felt like I didn't) and the only one who would ultimately make or break my success was myself.

In contrast, another participant realized that accepting and working through uncertainty was far more important to learning and dealing with changes in the workplace:

What I learned about myself is that I need to trust my instincts more and not panic when things do not go as planned. Sometimes, it is perfectly acceptable to just stand in uncertainty. Learning that has served me well through many organizational changes at work.

Participants' experience of the type of learning engendered by RRU's Learning and Teaching model was deeply personal, even revelatory. As the participants' comments demonstrate, the RRU Learning and Teaching Model approach led to professional as well as personal learning. And, once learners obtained new levels of insight or consciousness, that approach to learning continued. One participant stated it succinctly:

I know that my world view will never be the same as a result of being in this program... I have learned more about myself than ever before and paradigm after paradigm keeps shifting, most unconsciously, which speaks to the many positive aspects of this program and RRU.

Insights into the benefits of the learning community

The Learning and Teaching Model acknowledges that learning is social and thus, supports the development of a supportive learning community among students. It therefore came as no surprise that participants' insights were about the benefits of "sharing," "mutual support," and "networking."

One participant described how she bonded with her cohort:

Perhaps it was the subject matter (Leadership) that made the course so personal, but I was amazed at the strong bonds I was able to form with the cohort prior to meeting them in person.

Others noted how learning in "community" enriched their learning:

Just as I was learning from others, I recognized that they were learning from me. How empowering! This "community of practice" (my label for this) generated synergy, and the level of outcomes far exceed what I could have achieved on my own. Profound!

I feel safe and at home with this community and that has allowed me to take risks and be vulnerable in my learning to a degree that I did not expect would have been possible.

Similarly, a participant noted that she was learning a new way of learning:

The class [members] sit in a circle and share information with each other and the class in ways that were strikingly different than the typical classroom setup. The result was learning new ways to consume and share information and ideas. Really powerful!

In addition to changing the way of sharing information through the group, this approach led to the development of a network that would last beyond the program:

This model has shown us that no one is going through this experience alone. We now not only have a great support system in each other, but also have built an incredible network that will last years.

Mutual support and learning in community, two elements of RRU's Learning and Teaching Model, created powerful learning environments.

g) Feeling of excitement or satisfaction and freedom as well as sadness

Some participants described a shift in their emotions as they confronted and made meaning of a different learning model that changed their role as a learner. For example, one participant stated:

The energy shifted to support my own personal journey from one of frustration, anger, disappointment, and wanting to slip into revenge to one that was peaceful, joyful, reflective and curious.

This extreme change of feelings shows how emotionally difficult, but ultimately rewarding, the learning journey can be. Participants used "love" to describe a shift in their way of learning, along with a lasting change. For example, a participant noted:

I have loved this experience. I have shifted my mental model about learning. I am not exactly sure at what point along the way it happened. I came in with the view that the instructor would relay information and knowledge and that I would take it in and would then have learned what I was supposed to. This is not at all what happened.

h) Enduring change

What is apparent in the participants' comments so far is that the changes they experienced went well beyond the classroom to influence both their personal and professional lives. The transformational learning model describes here not only the aspects of participants' lives that were altered, but also that the transformation led to enduring change; we found evidence of this in the participants' story. For example, a participant stated that:

The residency will always stand out in my memory of life-altering events.

Another described how her self-examination led to transformation:

I think the best way to develop is through transformational learning, and having different ways to self-reflect is a key to examining mindset and then having the opportunity to shift. This is where long lasting significant change happens in my experience. There was time for that to occur. This was an alignment of the work I have experienced previously, supporting a process where the student continues to self-examine and then choose new action steps based on that learning combined with a supportive environment guided by people who also had undergone a process of self-transformation.

Finally, a participant described both how the transformation is exciting and has changed her life path:

I cannot begin to express how enrolling in this program has positively and powerfully

impacted my life on all levels. It is the best thing I have ever done and I am so grateful for the experience. I am definitely changed and I am in alignment with my life's path more than I have ever been. It's very exciting!

Conclusion

We asked how the Learning and Teaching Model influences the learning environment and experience of students. The students' stories strongly support the existence of a transformational learning process that changed how they learned and had lasting application to both their professional and personal lives. The data supported the existence of all the eight elements of the transformative learning process from the initial disorienting dilemma to the transformation to a new and enduring state of insight or consciousness.

We also asked how students experience and resolve conflicts between standard and transformative learning models. As we have observed in our own teaching, the disequilibrium brought about as students struggle to make meaning of a learning environment that is meant to create a questioning of assumptions and ultimate transformation triggers deep learning, as predicted in the literature. For our participants, however, the reward was in the new consciousness. This study both affirms the approach and helps us to understand in more detail the student experience.

This increased understanding of the student experience will allow us to better support students on their learning journey. It became clear through the research that RRU could better articulate, leverage, and facilitate its learning and teaching model. Instructors and administrative leaders could become more educated in the principles of transformational learning, which would enable them to be more explicit in the rational for the RRU transformational model. Recruitment, marketing, admissions, and web materials could all reflect more explicitly the purpose and principles guiding the RRU model to ensure students are aware of what they are choosing to pursue.

During the learning process, instructors could be more intentional and better equipped to facilitate the transformational learning process including surfacing tensions and dilemmas, guiding students to articulate their cognitive dissonance, drawing out their appraisals of challenging situations, surfacing assumptions, and challenging students to resolve tensions, generate creative solutions, and imagine alternatives through guided questioning and through techniques such as Open Space, Integrated Focus, or Appreciative Inquiry. We also recommend faculty and staff attend development sessions in theory and facilitation techniques for the transformative learning process. We urge university leadership teams to make a concerted effort to structure the theory, language, principles, and models of transformational learning into program and course materials in order to spark discussion and reflection both prior to and during the students' learning process. With more explicit articulation and embeddedness of the transformative learning models and principles, instructors are encouraged and equipped to more explicitly and

intentionally discuss and foster transformative learning experiences in their classrooms and courses.

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2

Improving Work Integrated Learning through Implementing Internship Performance Indicators

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Abstract

In applied programs, there is a growing expectation for students to be work-ready at the end of their undergraduate and graduate studies. Work integrated learning is a strategy that enmeshes applied and practical experience with academic courses to offer integrated learning and a connection between post-secondary education and the workplace. Students in tourism and hospitality programs across British Columbia were surveyed along with their internship employers to better understand their perceptions of internship programs across the province. With 46 of 93 students and 14 of 55 employers responding, the research discovered that participants are generally satisfied, with the internship programs rated at 85% above average or excellent. The ability to use skills and knowledge from the classroom in the work environment is a particularly strong aspect of internship, bridging theory, applied learning, and practice. Some areas for improvement, though, include better communication between employers, students, and

supervisors, as well as broader internship opportunities. The findings also supported previous research regarding the potential disconnects between student expectations of internships and student internship performance evaluations completed by employers. The research demonstrated that internship programs continue to be an important aspect of the undergraduate and graduate learning experience and should be supported.

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Introduction

Work Integrated Learning (WIL), also referred to broadly as active learning or experiential learning, is a widely used term, where students spend time in a workplace setting that is integrated into the curriculum of a course or program. This provides a bridge between theoretical learning in the classroom and applied learning in the workplace. Examples of WIL include apprenticeships, field placements, practicums, co-ops, internships, applied research projects, and service learning (Sattler and Peters, 2012).

There is a growing expectation for students to be work-ready at the end of their undergraduate and graduate programs (Business Council of BC, 2010). In a knowledge-based global economy, post-secondary education must respond to changes in the labour market and a common concern shared by employers is that graduates are not prepared for the rigours of the work place (Business Council of BC, 2010). Employers consistently advocate for programs that equip students with skills, knowledge and attributes that enable them to successfully and consistently perform in the workplace and continue to develop through further applied learning (OCED, 2012, p.12).

As educators respond to labour market needs, including the expectations of employers, student needs and expectations must also be considered. For students with a student loan, the average debt incurred in British Columbia for a four-year degree is $27,600 (The Research Universities Council of BC, 2014). With or without a student loan, students are seeking programs that will help them transition successfully and seamlessly from school into careers, mitigating the concern of unemployment, underemployment, and further debt.

BC's hospitality programs are applied, and this focus has nurtured a tradition of WIL in all the hospitality diploma and degree programs offered in the province through apprenticeships, practicums, co-op work terms, and internships (Province of British Columbia, 2007). As WIL garners attention and further investment in BC's colleges and universities, there is an opportunity to broaden our understanding of WIL by investigating student and employer expectations and perceptions of WIL. Specifically, the researchers wanted to identify if there were performance indicators (skills, knowledge, attributes) that could be attributed to positive outcomes for students and also positive outcomes for employers. There is also an interest in identifying any differences in perception between employers and students on the performance indicators, and if gaps were present, to understand why. It is anticipated that this data will enable WIL faculty and staff to improve student outcomes and employer satisfaction by providing targeted adjustments to curriculum, teaching, on-site support, and communication with host employers and students.

Background to the Research

In 2014, RRU had seven graduate programs and five undergraduate programs with a WIL component, where students spent 3-5 months in a workplace setting as part of their program in either a practicum or an internship. One such program, and the focus of this research, is the BA in International Hotel Management (BAIHM) in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management (STHM), which has included WIL and an internship component in the degree since its inception in 2006.

The BAIHM is an applied degree that prepares students for a career in the international hospitality sector and includes a twelve-week, six-credit internship course at the end of the program. Internships in the BAIHM program facilitate the application of learning and are an opportunity to integrate and practice the knowledge and skills developed during the program, encouraging reflective practice and facilitating the transition from university to professional career.

The following learning outcomes are identified for the Internship placement and course.

An internship is considered successful when it (Royal Roads University, 2014):

- enables you to practice new skills and apply new knowledge within a professional employment setting,
- prepares you for employment,
- increases your employability following graduation with your present internship host or in another organization,
- widens your range of industry contacts and professional networks;
- generally broadens your global understanding and the opportunities available to you in your area of interest within the hospitality sector,
- provides applied experiences that can be reflected upon critically to advance your professional attitude and competence, and
- provides value to the internship host.

While Royal Roads University has a mandate to deliver applied, real world programs that respond to the needs of the evolving work place, broad performance indicators were not established to explore and analyse the effectiveness of WIL in the BAIHM. A mid-internship student and employer evaluation were in place; however, the surveys were brief and were designed to ensure the student was on-track and that any concerns from the student and the employer could be uncovered early and addressed as necessary. Similarly, a final internship student and employer evaluation ensured that the student received a final evaluation from their employer, and was also an opportunity to self-rate their performance relative to the learning outcomes for the internship course. This process was effective as a mechanism to

support communication between the student, the employer, and the faculty advisor for the course. It encouraged student reflection and addressed the specific learning outcomes established for the course. However, these evaluations had a specific purpose: they were not designed to provide a data set that could be used for broader planning or analysis.

Internship outcomes established for the internship course have not been formally assessed against performance indicators to ensure that learning outcomes for the course are achieved. This was a significant opportunity to further the understanding of how students perform in the work place and how they integrate their learning during the BAIHM program into an applied setting.

It was anticipated that performance indicators would offer insights and guidance to:

- identify what employers expect from students on internships,
- identify what students expect and value from their host employers,
- promote the benefits of hiring an intern as a host employer,
- promote the benefits of internships to prospective students,
- guide student career preparation and program curriculum through appropriate support services and teaching content, and
- provide a benchmark for additional research and monitoring of the effectiveness of internships.

This research was also timely for British Columbia's tourism learning system, a consortium of BC tourism and hospitality educators with a mandate to build a professional tourism and hospitality workforce in BC (LinkBC, 2013). In May 2013, at an annual BC Hospitality Management Articulation Committee Meeting, the members discussed experiential education in BC's hospitality education programs. There are seven hospitality management programs offered in post-secondary colleges and universities in British Columbia that incorporate WIL. One component of WIL—the internship—is also provided under the following names: co-operative education, work-placement, work experience, and practicum. Additionally, the courses vary in curriculum design, duration, learning objectives, and remuneration for the student. At this meeting, members identified that hospitality educators were not evaluating WIL effectively and it was agreed that there was a shared interest to work within the hospitality education community to establish performance indicators for WIL in hospitality programs (Diploma and Degree) in BC. While the term "internship" is used in this paper, participating WIL programs in this research include practicums, co-ops, and internships.

At the time, the authors agreed to take the lead to develop and implement performance indicators for hospitality internships with participating higher-education institutions across British Columbia. LinkBC, a provincial

coordinating agency for the tourism and hospitality sector in BC, would provide coordination support for the project. By extending the project province-wide, the reliability and validity of this data would be enhanced. Additionally, aggregation of the data would allow for macro level analyses of BC's hospitality education internships for the benefit of the students, schools, and hospitality industry.

Literature Review

Many authors have discussed the variety of skills and experiences that post-secondary education programs should be providing. Dressler, Cedercreutz and Pacheco (2011) noted four categories of essential outcomes for education programs: integrative learning; knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world; intellectual and practical skills; and personal and social responsibility. They suggest that these elements should provide the foundation for programs in addition to teaching the specific disciplines. Also more focused on the softer skills, Roberts (1998) stressed the importance of understanding cultural norms, with particular focus on nonverbal communication, time orientation, interpersonal space, gender roles, and physical appearance. Dopson and Tas (2004) suggested that education should teach how to integrate knowledge, skills and values into the workplace. Many of these critical competencies and the integration of academic skills and knowledge can be accomplished through WIL.

Education institutions are increasingly recognizing the value of internships for their students and their programs. Internships can be an important step for those entering the workforce from a post-secondary institution, helping students to transition from the academic to professional world by putting theory into practice (Collin & Tynjala, 2003; NACE, 2014; Tse, 2010; Young & Baker, 2004). As Chi and Gursoy (2009) highlighted, more competition and complexity in tourism and hospitality is raising the bar on requirements for entry and growth in the industry. Students are now expected to add value from the day they start work and they cannot necessarily rely on the industry to assist them to enter the workplace and make a start with their career. Internships are one method of assisting students to get opportunities that they may not access without career development support and internship placement coaching available through their school programs.

Further complicating the students' move into a professional career, the constantly changing needs of tourism and hospitality make it difficult for educational programs to provide for and adapt to all of the industry requirements (Dopson & Tas, 2004). However, with properly designed internships, students are able to apply information gained from school to real-life situations and are better able to understand and learn from their future workplace (Young & Baker, 2004; Knouse & Fontenot, 2008). Students also gain confidence, leadership skills, and maturity while developing their networks and future connections through these opportunities (Knouse &

Fontenot, 2008; NACE, 2014). To provide additional assistance to their professions, Chi and Gursoy (2009) commented that hospitality programs are starting to develop more of their own placement services and courses to assist students during and after their coursework. Programs are assisting in developing job search abilities, networking skills, and providing internship experiences to aid the future success of students.

Internship programs are not only important for the success of students, but they can also be critical to the success of hospitality programs. Research conducted by Chi and Gursoy (2009) with industry recruiters revealed the top five factors when they are considering students from different hospitality programs: 1) how prepared students were for the real world, 2) how much industry experience faculty had, 3) how prepared students were for interviews, 4) the reputation of the program, and 5) the quality of the curriculum. Internships were deemed to be very important by industry for several reasons, such as giving students an opportunity to practice classroom material, providing students with more understanding of the industry and their needs, showing students a variety of career options, and supplying valuable hands-on experience. These findings were supported by work from Knouse and Fontenot (2008), also noting the value of providing realistic expectations in the students. These internship programs provide benefits to the industry as well by giving them access to new employees, screening these new employees without committing to them, assisting in the education of future staff, and strengthening ties with hospitality and tourism programs (Chi & Gursoy 2009).

According to Dressler, Cedercreutz, and Pacheco (2011), ensuring the relevancy and success of these higher education programs has been a concern for at least the last three decades. Institutions are being tasked more and more to ensure that students can thrive in their future careers; focus is shifting from assessing teaching to assessing learning. Experiential learning advocates have responded to this growing desire to evaluate outcomes by developing more tools and applying more focus on student learning. This concern to measure and improve outcomes extends to internships where, as Tse (2010) noted, much research has highlighted the disconnect between the expectations and evaluations of internships by students.

However, the desire to evaluate internships is not a new phenomenon, as evidenced by work from researchers such as Downey and DeVeau (1988) and Walo (2001). Downey and DeVeau (1988) looked at internships from the point of view of potential employers and discovered: that more hours in the field were desired, internship programs need to be properly coordinated and supervised, more documentation is necessary to monitor internships and provide feedback, realistic expectations need to be set, and hands-on field experience is critical for future success. From the perspective of many of these recruiters, the internship programs were not providing all of the skills and experiences that they sought, such as realistic expectations and sufficient

hands-on experience. In 2006, Knouse and Fonenot found somewhat similar results, emphasizing such things as the need for more employer participation, clearer expectations, and mentoring built into the internships. They concluded however, that internships were a beneficial activity overall since students and the industry gained through the experiences.

Tse (2010) approached the issue of evaluating internships from the student perspective in order to discover some key themes of importance for the interns. Using content analysis of reports from students, nine key areas of focus were revealed, which he suggested should be used for examining internships. These include: relationships with colleagues, personal growth, acquisition of skills, learning opportunities from colleagues, contributions by the student, relevance of the internship, supervision, problem solving, and difficulties encountered. Tse noted that the most important element for interns seemed to be the working relationship with colleagues as a measure of satisfaction and success. A somewhat similar study by Rothman (2010) analysed open-ended feedback from interns regarding their internships. Rothman noted that the key aspects of a successful internship include: proper supervision, adequate feedback, challenging assignments with clear expectations, exposure to the entire organization, and explicit goals for the internship.

The need to constantly monitor and adapt programs has led some tourism and hospitality programs to implement monitoring systems for their internships, such as those noted below. Young and Baker (2013) discussed the academic rigor required to demonstrate and justify the attention and resources directed towards internships, noting the need for evaluation from students and supervisors or employers. The Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida is one particular program that continuously gauges the effectiveness of their internships by surveying both employers and students (Dressler, Cedercreutz and Pacheco 2011). Their assessments focus on the areas of basic communication, problem solving, learning, personal characteristics, working with others, leadership, technology use, work culture, managerial skills, and professionalism. By gathering data from these two sources, the college is better able to understand the experiential learning aspects of their programs. Chi and Gursoy (2009) also note the value of gathering feedback from students and employers as their perspectives and expectations may be very different. The contrasting results from Tse (2010) and Downey and DeVeau (1988) further supported the potential differences in views regarding internships between interns and their employers, and the need to gather evaluations from both sources.

This literature highlights the importance of including the views of interns and their employers in any assessment of internship programs. Additionally, a number of key areas for examination are provided by the various studies. The working relationships with co-workers seems to be a critical area to

include as well as the supervision provided to the intern. Basic skills and knowledge are also important themes to research since the students will need to demonstrate competency in their chosen discipline. Finally, occasions to contribute to the workplace seem to be important for interns, based upon previous research. Assessing the effectiveness of internships in providing all of these experiences and opportunities will allow for a better understanding of internships and the role they play in a student's total education program.

Research Method

Colleges and universities across British Columbia with hospitality programs agreed to participate in this research. Their assistance was considered important to provide a greater breadth of information and increase the pool of participants in the research. Survey instruments were developed specifically for students and their employers to gain both perspectives of the various internship programs across the province. While each of these surveys was targeted at the different groups, questions were designed to allow for comparing and contrasting views of the programs. These surveys were pre-tested in the fall of 2014 and, after some modifications, invitations to participate were sent out electronically to 93 students and 55 employers across four programs from four postsecondary institutions. Responses were collected and cleaned, leaving 46 student and 14 employer surveys, resulting in response rates of 49% and 25% respectively. Due to the number of responses, the analyses concentrated on the two complete datasets without any additional crosstabs or separation into smaller group

Both surveys were composed of six main sections. Section One helped to identify the type of position or role that the student played at the organization as well as the type of organization. This information is important to investigate differences in expectations or results across different positions and businesses. Section Two examined the working relationships that the student had with other co-workers, recognizing the importance these relationships can make for successful internships and future careers. Section Three examined the skills and knowledge that the student has developed and demonstrated, with a focus on softer skills such as communication, time management, and responsibility. Section Four asks about contributions to the organization by the student. Section Five looks at the amount of supervision that the student received during the internship—considered important for the development of the student. Finally, Section Six provided an opportunity to rate the entire internship experience. The survey also allowed for additional comments at the end, so that the employer and student could advance any information not already covered.

The electronic surveys eased the collection and consolidation of the data from the various sources around the province of British Columbia. Data was imported into Excel for cleaning and analysis. Any open-ended comments

were coded and grouped into categories based upon the various sections of the survey and then an "Other" category.

Research Results

To keep things organized, the results are presented in the order that they were asked in the surveys, as outlined above.

Section One – Internship Position

Students reported that they were interning in a range of hospitality positions, but mainly related to Front Office (37%), Food and Beverage (26%), and Housekeeping (15%), for a total of 78%. These are typical positions that students from a bachelor in hospitality management program would expect, so this was an expected result for this section of the survey. The response rates of 49% and 25% were considered sufficient, but 46 student responses and 14 employer responses did not allow for finer analyses.

Section Two – Working Relationships with Co-Workers

In Section Two, students responded that they were generally pleased with their work environment and co-workers. Working relationships with co-workers, cooperativeness with co-workers, and ability to positively affect the work environment for others were rated at above average or excellent by 87%, 85%, and 87% respectively. Employers generally agreed with those assessments, providing ratings of 86% for all three of these factors. The main difference between the student and employer feedback was in the strength of the positive ratings, as employers tended towards above average while students were more likely to consider working relationships with co-workers to be excellent.

Section Three – Skills and Knowledge

While student and employer assessments of the internships were somewhat similar for the work environment and relationships, they had different perceptions of the skills and knowledge of the students—the focus of Section Three. Student ratings of their skills and knowledge being above average or excellent ranged from 74% for problem-solving skills to 96% for demonstrating a strong work ethic. In contrast, employer ratings of skills and knowledge spanned from 64% with responsibility and communication skills to 86% with problem solving skills. It is interesting to note that problem-solving skills was the only factor in which the employers rated the students higher than the students rated themselves. Differentials between the ratings ranged from 27% for responsibility to only 6% for time management skills. The Table 1 displays the ratings from students and employers, and their differences.

Factor	Student	Employer	Difference
Responsibility (e.g. ownership of tasks)	91%	64%	27%
Communication skills	85%	64%	21%
Application of knowledge and skills	91%	71%	20%
Guest service skills	87%	71%	16%
Problem-solving skills	74%	86%	12%
Ability to work with other cultures	87%	79%	8%
Time management skills	85%	79%	6%

Table 1. Ratings of Skills and Knowledge

Section Four – Opportunity to Contribute

The responses provided for each of the four questions in this section were also rated higher by students than by employers (Table 2). When combining the ratings for excellent and above average, the differentials between student ratings and employer ratings were even greater than in the previous section, ranging between 47% and 14% for each of the four questions. The rating differential was wider for "asks questions and shares suggestions and ideas" (47% higher student rating) and "strong work ethic" (25% higher student rating). "Asks questions and shares suggestions" received a rating of 36% by employers at excellent or above average, compared to a student rating of 83%. Employers and students had stronger agreement for "positive influence on colleagues and team members" (16% higher student rating) and "takes initiative" (14% higher student rating). In Section Four we can conclude that there is a wider gap between how employers and students evaluate asking questions and sharing suggestions and ideas in the workplace, and work ethic and productivity, than the other opportunities to contribute that were assessed.

Factor	Student	Employer	Difference
Asks questions and shares suggestions and ideas	83%	36%	47%
Demonstrates a strong work ethic; consistently productive	96%	71%	25%
Positively influence colleagues and team members	87%	71%	16%
Demonstrates initiative	85%	71%	14%

Table 2. Ratings of Opportunity to Contribute

Section Five – Supervision

Students were very positive regarding on-site supervision, with most rating it as above average (33%) or excellent (41%). The employers were more critical about their supervision, with 38% rating it above average and only 14% as excellent. This may indicate that students and employers have different perceptions regarding the need for supervision or of who is responsible for supervision. Students may receive and accept supervision from their

senior peers and be amenable to receiving direction and guidance from other employees, while employers may perceive supervision to only be provided by a supervisor.

Section Six – Overall Performance and Value

The employers rated the overall performance of students as excellent (14%), above average (36%) and average (50%). Similar to other assessments, students self-rated much higher than employers for overall performance. Students believed that they were either excellent (30%), above average (61%) or average (9%). This tendency may relate to the students' fewer years of experience (54% had less than three years experience) and their level of self-awareness. The employer survey included one additional question to further evaluate the capability of the students—to the question "Would I recommend this student to another employer?" 12 employers (86%) responded "yes" and 2 employers (14%) responded "no."

The student survey included five questions in this section that were not on the employer survey. The first question asked the students to rate the overall value of the work experience placement. One student rated the placement as poor (2%), six rated it as average (13%), thirteen rated the placement as above average (28%) and twenty-six (57%) rated the placement as excellent.

The qualitative data in the survey broadens our understanding of the different ways a work placement can provide value to students. Students were asked to provide further comment and reflection on the overall value of their work placement; 20 students responded (43%). The responses were assigned a positive, negative or neutral rating (18 positive, 1 negative and 1 neutral). The majority of the comments referred to the knowledge and skills the student had applied and developed while on the work placement (40%).

> *My work experience was great and rich. Doing that job gave me the opportunity to use the knowledge I acquired in class last year, get and improve some useful skills, learn things we don't learn in class that has to do with running a restaurant.*

Some responses related to learning about working relationships (20%), e.g., *"Being able to work collaboratively with others whose cultures are very different from mine."* Four students made reference to aspiring to more developmental opportunities that were not offered or arranged, e.g., *"This was a great company for students on internship… I wish they could provide more cross-training opportunities so I could learn more knowledge from different departments."*

The second question asked students if they would recommend their work placement to others; 38 (83%) responded "yes" and 8 (17%) responded "no." These scores are similar to the employer ratings for the students (86% and 14% respectively). The third question asked students if they were going back to school; 26 (57%) responded "yes" and 20 (44%) responded "no."

The fourth question asked students to identify anything that the student's

supervisor or school advisor could have done to improve the work placement experience. There were 35 (76%) responses, 19 (54%) of which indicated "no or nothing or satisfaction," 8 (23%) of which related to suggestions for the students' work placement supervisor, and 8 (23%) of which related to suggestions for the students' school supervisor. The responses were wide-ranging and included gaining insight into workplace politics, on-site housing, more projects, difficulty completing a final paper while working, lack of opportunity to apply skills and knowledge, check in with a Skype call, dissatisfaction with front-line job, provide pros and cons of the job in advance, and visa-related issues.

The fifth question asked students to comment on how their work placement has influenced their career goals; 39 responses were assigned a positive, negative, or neutral rating (32 positive and 7 neutral).

Question six asked students to comment on their most significant learning from the work experience (Table 3). The researchers assigned the comments to the criteria established for Section 2-5 of the student survey and the responses related most to Section Three and the development of skills and knowledge.

Section 2 (working relationships with co-workers)	**5**
Section 3 (skills and knowledge)	22
Section 4 (opportunity to contribute)	7
Section 5 (overall value to you)	5

Table 3. Most Significant Learning.

Discussion

Tse (2010) looked at the importance of evaluating internships from the student frame of reference, and the research suggests interns are generally satisfied with the current internship program, with 85% rating the experience as above average or excellent. Qualitative comments supported this assessment, noting that it was a "good working experience" and a "valuable experience for the future career". Students did comment, however, that there were some areas for improvement in their internship programs. Better communications during the internships between the school advisor and/or supervisor as well as better opportunities being offered were two areas mentioned. This last point was also highlighted with respect to potential areas of disconnect between expectations and reality, discussed below.

Chi and Gursoy (2009) and Knouse and Fontenot (2008) discussed the value of internships in providing students with realistic expectations and better preparing students for the realities of the industry. Students in the study seemed to agree, when asked about the influence of the internship on their future careers. Of the 39 responses, 32 spoke positively about the impact while the remaining 7 were neutral. Comments included "offered me great

training and insight about the industry and what I want to do" and "my internship opened my eyes into the hotel world" (see an interview with Kaitlin Duplak).

The research also corroborated Tse's (2010) finding that potential disconnects can occur between expectations and evaluations of internships. The research showed that most of the students had reasonable expectations, but that some work could be done with helping students make the most of their internships. One student commented that the internship was nothing different than a regular position. Another student however, asked the employer for additional opportunities and tasks, and was able to use the internship to learn many of the positions at the organization. This type of initiative should be communicated to students prior to their internship.

Another potential area for separation between interns and their employers is with self-assessments or ratings. Most of the interns rated their abilities higher than those from the employer. While this may be a common occurrence with evaluations, it could lead to dissatisfaction with potential employers if students do not perceive any key weaknesses or areas for improvement. Chi and Gursoy (2009) indicate the importance of maintaining industry support for the internships and programs in general. This emphasizes the need to continue to monitor the effectiveness of the internships and watch for any areas needing development from the industry perspective.

It is worth noting that problem solving skills was the only factor where the employers rated the students higher than the students rated themselves. This may indicate that hospitality educators' emphasis on real world problem solving in applied courses, case-based teaching, and curricula with an emphasis on operations management may be supporting WIL students to distinguish themselves for problem solving in the workplace relative to their peers.

Some of the widest differentials in ratings between employers and students were in relation to "asks questions and shares suggestions and ideas" (47% higher student rating), responsibility (27% difference) and strong work ethic (24% difference). In the hospitality industry, employees work different shifts with different people on a regular basis. The 24/7 operational environment often does not enable managers to have regular or consistent time with their direct reports. Furthermore, new employees are often assigned the less favourable shifts, and these shifts typically have fewer managers and supervisors (night shifts, early morning shifts). One possible explanation for the difference in ratings is that students do share their ideas and ask questions, and demonstrate their responsibility and work ethic; however, they do so with a supervisor or the most senior employees on their shift and not in the presence of their assigned supervisor for the internship course. Alternatively, there may indeed be a difference in perception between employers and students regarding these two criteria; this difference could

be attributed to well-documented generational differences or to a lack of experience and maturity in the workplace that some employers observe in the behaviour of students during internships.

The ability to utilize skills and knowledge from the class in a work environment was a particularly strong aspect of the internship. While student ratings were notably higher than their employers for skills and knowledge, evaluations at above average and excellent were all at 64% or higher, with many in the high eighties or nineties. Many of the students also commented that their most significant learning from the experience was in the area of skills and knowledge. They noted opportunities to practice skills with people management, team building, and communication, amongst others. This strongly supports the research from Young and Baker (2004) and Knouse and Fontenot (2008) regarding the benefit of applying classroom information in real situations (see the value of practical solutions).

An important final indicator of the value of the internships for the future of the students comes through in the employer evaluations of the students. With over 85% of the employers willing to recommend the students to other employers, these students have been provided a positive step forward towards their professional lives in hospitality. Several researchers (Colin and Tynjala 2003, NACE 2014, Tse 2010, Young and Baker 2004) highlight this value, noting how internships help students to transition into their future careers. Clearly, the internships are an important element of the education program.

Conclusion

The BAIHM program at Royal Roads University aims to provide students with global awareness, hospitality skills and knowledge, the ability to critically think and problem solve, an understanding of how to work with others, and effective communication competence. One of the key elements in their education is an internship, which strives to offer students with the opportunity to practice these outcomes in a practical setting while helping them advance their futures. This research looked at the effectiveness of the internship program from the perspectives of employers and students from various colleges and universities in British Columbia.

The research initially set out to offer insights and guidance for the internship program in several areas, including identifying expectations, promoting the benefits, guiding preparation, and providing a benchmark for future research. All of these goals were achieved. Results from students and employers show that both groups benefit from the internships, with students getting that foothold into their future careers and employers receiving a skilled and knowledgeable employee. For the future, it will be important to continue monitoring the internship programs, minimizing the potential disconnect between the students and employers, and maximizing the benefits and opportunities for the students. As this research demonstrates,

students are being well served by the current internship program and it is essential for their future, and the future of the BAIHM program, that this continues.

Research Limitations

Unfortunately, the research was not able to gather sufficient quantities of responses for each of the types of positions to allow for further segmenting of the analyses. The researchers were initially interested in comparing perceptions for different groups (e.g. Front Office, Food & Beverage, and Housekeeping). It is possible that perceptions about the internships vary depending upon the role played within the industry. Future research would hope to expand the number of employers and students who participate in the research to allow for greater refinement of our understanding of WIL.

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3

Living Our Leadership Learning in Swift Current, Saskatchewan

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Abstract

This case study of a MA-Leadership capstone project demonstrates three elements of Royal Roads University's Learning and Teaching Model: 1) Experiential, authentic learning strategies; 2) Supporting integrative learning—how all elements came together; and 3) Action-oriented research as an inquiry process. RRU MA-Leadership student, Lidia Wesolowska, supported by her academic supervisor, Dr. Niels Agger-Gupta, created a community engagement process to define sustainable downtown revitalization sponsored by the City of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, a community of about 16,000 people. This challenging process involved creating an authentic dialogue complicated by community politics and high visibility. The focus of the inquiry shifted, both during the project design and through its implementation. This study demonstrates how applying the critical learning elements of LTM, combined with an intentional, multi-faceted approach and a transparent leadership style, effectively engaged the community.

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Introduction

The three components of the Royal Roads University (RRU) Learning and Teaching Model (LTM) applicable to this case are as follows: 1) Experiential, authentic learning strategies; 2) Supporting integrative learning-how all elements came together; and 3) Action-oriented research as a process of inquiry.

What does experiential authentic learning look like in the context of an action research Masters capstone? In this article a student in the MA-Leadership program took the RRU Learning and Teaching Model for a test run in the real world through her thesis research. This action research inquiry in Swift Current, Saskatchewan was an example of community engagement and authentic learning on multiple sides. The learning model in the School of Leadership Studies (SoLS), with its cohorts of mid-career adult students, supports an approach to learning and change that applies the scholarship of leadership to complex real world settings, an example of the LTM.

This case-study is the story of an enactment of "living our learning" (the RRU motto) in the application of the RRU LTM principles in the Leadership capstone, involving each student to engage in an action research project that leads to a process of change within a real organization. This requires each MA-Leadership student to develop a seven to nine-month project. The project builds on a relationship the student develops with a senior organizational leader as a project sponsor, who helps them shape the project to meet the organizational needs by engaging organizational stakeholders in dialogue through a variety of inquiry methods. Students also work with an academic supervisor from RRU, who supports the student's action research strategies and inquiry methods. The student, with the sponsor and supervisor's help, creates a collaborative inquiry that engages key stakeholders to develop agreements on innovative change, new knowledge for the organization, and sometimes even for the field.

The sponsoring organization in this capstone was the City of Swift Current, a small city in southern Saskatchewan's wheat belt, 245 kilometres west of the capital, Regina. Swift Current (the city) was celebrating its centennial in 2014 and was eager to engage its community in a revitalization of the downtown core. This capstone project by MA-Leadership student Lidia Wesolowska brought together a broad cross-section of people from a diverse set of stakeholder constituencies in the city to develop a community engagement process that would allow the city to conduct its downtown revitalization in a way that would result in welcome and sustainable change for its citizens.

Lidia worked closely with her academic supervisor, Niels Agger-Gupta, to design all aspects of the study. Niels guided Lidia through many challenging times as the direction of the study shifted based on emerging information

pertaining the scope of the study and specific, critical aspects within the community. Lidia's sponsor, a senior city director, fulfilled a primary role of providing information regarding the selection of key stakeholder groups, as well as critical and on-going input regarding political implications of the inquiry process. Otherwise, the sponsor maintained a more "hands-off" posture throughout the process, keeping an open mind, and was ultimately receptive to the re-direction of the study as it evolved.

The inquiry engaged relevant and interested key stakeholders and became an opportunity for Lidia to review the applicable scholarship pertaining to the inquiry. A sampling of the scholarly topics touched on for this community engagement process included organization systems and change (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010; Meadows, 2008; Senge, 2006), creating readiness for change (Armenakis et al., 2007; Rowe et al., 2013; Walinga, 2008), learning organizations (Scharmer, 2009; Senge, 2006; Senge et al., 2005), collaboration and teamwork (Getha-Taylor, 2008; Lencioni, 2005; Madsen, 2009; Raelin & Raelin, 2006; Trist, 1977), democratic engagement for change (Taris et al., 2008), and approaches to adult learning (Brookfield, 1991; Horton & Freire, 1990; Knowles et al., 2005; Raelin & Raelin, 2006; Scharmer, 2009).

Creating the Project

Exploring her options, Lidia knew she wanted to conduct her thesis inquiry outside of her field (cross-disability consulting and employment counselling in BC): she craved an Action Research process that would both challenge her and have significant, long-lasting impact. In March 2013, Lidia's sister, a resident of Swift Current, presented her city as a potentially exciting consideration for a leadership capstone, and arranged an email introduction to the city's chief administrative officer (CAO). During a telephone discussion with the CAO, Lidia saw possibilities: the city had a progressive vision, it would soon be celebrating its centennial, and the CAO was forward-thinking and wanted to create positive change. Lidia subsequently flew to Swift Current in April 2013 to confirm her decision and to lay the groundwork for her project. During the week-long visit, she met with a number of influential stakeholders in the community, including city staff and a few key influencers in the community. Buoyed by her prospects for an exciting project, Lidia moved to Swift Current, a community new to her, at the start of July 2013.

Shifting Focus

Initially, both the sponsor and Lidia wanted the capstone to generate concrete ideas for downtown revitalization, and thought the entire revitalization engagement process might be the capstone project. Subsequent conversations between the two authors of this article, Lidia and Niels, gave Lidia pause for reflection and reconsideration. While she and her Sponsor were invested in the original concept, Lidia came to realize and accept, through numerous conversations with Niels, that attempting a full

community revitalization initiative would not be possible within the six-month capstone; it was outside the scope of the inquiry.

The focus shifted; it *was* possible to engage a representative sampling of the key stakeholders (many of whom might well be involved in the future revitalization efforts) to create the plan for a successful community engagement process to define, and subsequently support, the actual revitalization. Though initially disappointed, the sponsor readily came to see how the shift in research question made sense and would engender a more effective outcome. Even this reduced scope for the inquiry had numerous challenges.

Initial Challenges and Opportunities: Setting the Stage

Being an outsider provided a major opportunity: Lidia had no history in the city, so it was much easier to engage in this inquiry as a neutral party than had she been a native of Swift Current. Yet the reality of Lidia's outsider role carried the risk that the community would see her as someone who "did not belong," or was pushing "big city" views on their small community. Since establishing credibility and building trust was critical to the success of her research, Lidia proceeded to mindfully develop relationships with key individuals within the community as well as the greater community itself.

Lidia kept her approach intentional and multi-faceted. She knew that she had to demonstrate an open leadership style that would engage and not alienate people. Though she wanted to jump right into her research project, she remembered that quiet leadership "is not about drinking champagne in Business Class...it is about rolling up your sleeves and finding out what is going on" (Mintzberg, 1999, p.30). She knew she had to be seen as a member of the community, however much of a newcomer she was. The opportunity presented itself when she spent each Saturday in the summer at Market Square—a hub of activity—where she assisted with running the community event on behalf of the city. Lidia developed relationships with Market Square vendors, event sponsors, and patrons alike. She discussed her upcoming research with anyone who seemed even moderately interested in downtown revitalization. She presented her project to various business groups (e.g. the Downtown Business Association—DBA), informing stakeholders of her upcoming research, the philosophy under which it would be conducted, and the scope of the undertaking. She attended as many community and business function as possible and generally became a networking presence in town.

Between the months of July and September, Lidia focused on demonstrating democratic engagement and using an appreciative stance (Bushnell, Bergthold, & Agger-Gupta, 2002) in all interactions. She found herself engaging in a balancing act, maintaining a neutral stance with all stakeholder groups (Stringer, 2007, p.49) in an attempt to generate interest in participating in the upcoming inquiry, while not making any promises for any particular outcomes of the revitalization effort. Lidia found maintaining

a neutral stance a challenge as it became evident the city had a history with many citizens that was not always positive, and she was now representing the city. Some interactions were challenging as not everyone she encountered responded positively.

By October, just three months after she had arrived and started meeting people, the stage was set: there was ample evidence of interest in the topic of downtown revitalization among potential participants.

Build it Right; They Will Come

Through continuing discussion and exploration with Niels, Lidia designed an inquiry to facilitate up to five focus groups, three to five individual interviews, up to three expert interviews (to support her research), and a World Café, bringing previous participants together after she had done the first rounds of data gathering. The World Café was planned but was held as provisional, as time permitted. Though the scope of the inquiry was now more manageable, there was still a broad section of key stakeholder groups that needed to be involved in order to pave the way for success.

Lidia completed her proposal and prepared a request for ethical review by the RRU Research Ethics Board. The inquiry needed to adhere to the RRU Research Ethics Guidelines (2011) for minimal risk research and to the Tri-Council Guidelines for Ethical Research (2010). After a thorough review, her ethics review was quickly approved and Lidia was cleared to proceed with her inquiry.

Stakeholder selection was initially identified through discussions with the Sponsor and other key people in City Hall. To ensure inclusion as well as to demonstrate the democratic engagement concept, the original set of stakeholders were confirmed and additional potential participants identified through conversations with potential stakeholders themselves. During those discussions, Lidia asked many questions about the community, something that both engaged people and allowed her to mine a vast amount of community knowledge, which in turn helped her to understand how to construct and facilitate her groups.

Expanding on her nascent community understanding connections, early in October—once the research was designed—Lidia personally contacted key representatives from each key representative group to engage them in an overview of the nature of her project, stressing its appreciative stance and ethical standards, and asked if they or someone else from their organization would be interested in participating. She also continued to probe stakeholders to identify other influential individuals that should be included on the invitation lists.

Though most people were receptive to her calls and upcoming research, a few skeptics told her, “These things never work. No one will come to your

groups." Later, in the focus groups, several participants said it had been Lidia's personal approach that had engaged them in the process and made them want to participate. They felt their opinions mattered to Lidia and would be valued, regardless of their point of view.

Early on in the process, Lidia learned that there were different points of view and indeed, there had recently been a discordant exchange of ideas between those who want downtown revitalized (City Hall and the DBA) and other stakeholders (including some Chamber of Commerce members and business owners located outside of the downtown core) who thought that revitalizing downtown would not serve their interests. Lidia took pains to stress to everyone with whom she spoke, from all sides of this community divide, that their input was critical in planning a process for downtown. She kept asking questions that allowed people to see that revitalization and any changes in the downtown could affect everyone in some positive way, and that their involvement and input were essential.

While the process of asking questions proved a powerful tool, Lidia also understood that the location in which she held focus groups would send a strong message to the community. Rather than holding them in council chambers at City Hall or a large downtown venue, she opted for a smaller facility in the casino located on the city's periphery. According to the CEO of the Chamber, several people stated that they were pleased the location was not downtown; this simple choice clearly signified to them that the inquiry was truly inclusive, valuing the opinions of all stakeholders.

By the middle of October, with a secured venue, her phone calls completed, and a substantial list of invitees, Lidia sent out focus group invitations to five stakeholder groups and arranged two individual interviews with individuals who could not attend one of the group sessions. To maintain neutrality, while at the same time clearly identifying who the emails originated from, Lidia set up an e-mail account specifically for the inquiry. Of the thirty (30) people who accepted a focus group invitation, only two (2) were unable to attend (.06%).

Making it Safe: Encouraging Openness

When discussing the combination of invitees for each focus group, Lidia and Niels initially agreed that keeping major stakeholder groups separate was wise; it would provide a safe environment in which open dialogue and candour would be most likely to occur. During her dialogue with stakeholders, Lidia learned there had been a recent shift in the "distance" between the DBA and the Chamber of Commerce. She explored the concept of combining members of these two groups in a single focus group. There was no compelling ethical or philosophical reason to keep them apart. The response was quite positive: many agreed it was an opportunity to coax the two sides even closer, suggesting they had common interests and re-enforcing the theory that any changes in the downtown would affect and

benefit all business in the city. All other groups—City Hall management, protective services, and health, community, and education services—were not separated.

Promoting a safe and productive environment in the groups was critical, as among them were representatives from each major group in Swift Current. Another critical factor was sowing the seeds to spread the culture, or rules, of engagement. To that end, Lidia consistently stressed both the "appreciative" stance of her research—explaining what it meant—and the respectful, democratic aspect of the process. She talked about new ways of learning and addressing issues. By the time the focus groups started, the tone had been set: participants knew what to expect and negativity was negligent. What little there existed was usually promptly dealt with by other members of the group.

The Dialogues

The goal of the research was to answer the following question: "How can the city administration engage the community of Swift Current, Saskatchewan to plan a revitalized downtown that will appeal to and benefit the community?" Facilitating dialogue with a cross-section of community stakeholders, Lidia engaged participants in articulating the elements needed for successful community change to occur, the kind of change that would be supported, embraced, and perhaps more importantly, result in change that the community would "own" (Armenakis et al., 2007; Rowe et al., 2013).

Participants reflected on elements that were relevant to a community change process, specifically as it pertains to revitalizing the downtown. They were asked to share their thoughts regarding:

1. What is currently working well in drawing people to downtown?
2. How will a revitalized downtown benefit our community?
3. What does community engagement look like?
4. Who needs to be involved in the process and to what degree?
5. What strategies are required to engage the community to co-create a revitalized downtown?

The dialogues across all focus groups were positive and spirited. Major themes that emerged indicated the community was receptive to revitalization with certain provisos and that engaging the community in supporting such change would require major collaboration and input from all stakeholders along with shared responsibility for designing and driving the process.

Learning in Action: Surprises along the Way

There were a few key conversation elements that surprised Lidia, challenged her perceptions, or refocused the direction of the conversation. For example,

she was surprised by the strong sentiment that downtown, having already experienced some revitalization, was already somewhat vital! This observation was pivotal in sharpening Lidia's sensitivities and altered how she perceived the downtown as well as how she discussed further revitalization with future groups.

Furthermore, participants were not unanimous in the belief that downtown was a revitalization priority for Swift Current and felt that in a [small] city of this size, "you have to develop the whole community" (Focus Group 4). This observation and subsequent spirited discussion was a game changer: it refocused the conversation, expanding the scope from planning for downtown revitalization to addressing the revitalization needs of the entire city. Through this one discussion, Lidia was able to experience how the process of change was an emergent one: getting support for change could actually redefine the nature of the change itself, sometimes profoundly so.

On a smaller but perhaps equally valuable scale, Lidia's perceptions about what positive change for this community would look like were challenged almost from the start of the dialogues. Being from a large city herself, she anticipated wholesale excitement among participants regarding the prospect of bringing a big city atmosphere to Swift Current. Though participants truly embraced and highly valued recent changes (and concomitant benefits) that gave Swift Current a more cosmopolitan feel, Lidia was touched by the extensive and strong degree of pride and protectiveness expressed for the city's small town aspects: safety, friendliness, openness, and connectivity. This experience made Lidia all the more aware of her own biases and she formed a sensitivity to engaging participants from a neutral, appreciative position and without saying something that might inadvertently alienate her participants.

Another surprise was not that people wanted to have a say in what happened in their communities, but the *degree* of passion participants felt towards total involvement in any community change process. They didn't just want to be involved—they wanted to both define *and* drive the change! As one participant stressed, "It is [not] the City's job to…tell us where we are going…it is very important that it is a collaborative process and that we all have a say…in terms of developing the vision, direction and strategies" (Focus Group 2). Indeed, many felt strongly that in order for the process to be effective, the city should only be one of many stakeholders in planning change for the town and stressed that "it is not us and them, it is just us" (Focus Group 2). Some participants wanted to see an actual change in the relationship between the city and the community that would result in a more inclusive decision-making model. This aspect of the conversations demonstrated, in a real life situation, the importance of getting the "whole system in the room" (Weisbord, 2012, p. 269).

An even greater surprise came when some participants pointed out that in addition to increasing involvement in planning for change, there was

an opportunity for the city to share the responsibility with the entire community itself and, to some degree, even the actual costs related to redevelopment. This was a strong example of unexpected ideas that emerge from learning together and was the instigator of further research, along with the introduction of the concept of co-governance in the study.

Lidia's biggest surprise, and perhaps greatest learning, was that at the heart of the downtown revitalization process was the mechanism for true civic engagement: truly engaging the community in defining and implementing meaningful change is not just an effective way to generate sustainable physical revitalization, but it becomes the very tool that revitalizes the community itself, both in terms of how it defines itself and how it functions.

After the Dialogues: It's a Wrap – For Now

The dialogues had refocused the main research question, expanding it from looking at downtown to addressing the revitalization needs of the entire city. Of equal significance, people wanted to be involved in the process to a much higher degree than expected. This interest suggested a literature review into new governance models based on co-leadership, a new concept, not only for Swift Current, but for communities everywhere. In discussions and exploration with Niels, these two areas crystallized for Lidia the realization that promoting democratic civic engagement was itself an opportunity for the city to support a process that could change how the community relates to itself and the greater world: community revitalization from the inside out. In discussing the findings and conclusions of the study with the sponsor, it was these two areas that proved to be the most interesting.

Initially the sponsor was surprised by the shift in focus of the inquiry, a shift that encompassed identifying the revitalization needs of the entire city, not just downtown. Though a focus on downtown in many respects would more quickly and readily demonstrate visible change, a discussion about the benefits of taking a longer term view, and how including the entire city would engender greater support from all residents, opened the doors to considering new approaches that the city might take.

The shift in inquiry focus was perhaps eclipsed by the degree of involvement that participants stated they wanted in terms of defining and implementing change in the city. This was seen as incongruent with the current perceived apathy; existing channels for community involvement to influence change were not being utilized. This response from the sponsor led to a discussion that explored the differences between attending DBA meetings to effect change regarding how downtown merchants conduct business versus involvement with sharing decision-making for the entire community—decisions that would impact all citizens for many years to come.

The recommendations to the sponsor for a pilot for potential broader change

were drawn from a global perspective and an exploration of what could be. These recommendations included requesting the city to:

1. Collaboratively host a series of community conversations or dialogues—the civic engagement process for the revitalization of Swift Current.
2. Prepare to play a leadership role in facilitating and supporting a collaborative community change process.
3. Host a World Café or similar large group learning space to formally launch the vitalization of Swift Current.
4. Enact and support a collaborative steering committee to drive the planning and subsequent engagement process.

Lidia presented the above process as an opportunity for the city to engage the community to learn new ways of working together, consider possibilities for the future, and learn how this experience might impact relationships both within the city and between the city and the community. She positioned the process as one that could ultimately provide the city and its residents with the opportunity to learn whether a more collaborative model might be beneficial for implementation in certain aspects of civic governance. Though generally favourable, the reaction to the study and its recommendations ultimately lacked a sense of immediacy.

Subsequent to her presentations to the sponsor, Lidia realized that there would be some challenges in implementing the recommendations from the study. Basically, three key factors had eclipsed the inquiry and its outcomes:

1. Though she had learned much about the community in her early days in Swift Current, as a recent arrival Lidia did not have the insider knowledge of everything that the city was dealing with.
2. There were many things that required immediate attention and eclipsed the study: planning and organizing a series of major 100 Year Anniversary celebrations to be held through 2014; the introduction of a radical new budget with a significant increase in civic taxes; a new strategic plan; an extensive economic revitalization study; and the implementation of a new garbage collection system, to name a few.
3. Lidia would not be staying in Swift Current to keep the recommendations alive.

Nine months after the completion of her thesis, and five months after graduating with her MA-Leadership, Lidia was still exploring creative ways to make the inquiry come alive in the minds of the city leaders. In the MA-Leadership program, it is sometimes difficult for the sponsor to implement the changes that such an engagement process suggests, but in this case, it was also clear that the city would create more of a community-supported revitalization initiative if they were to implement the recommendations of the study.

Conclusion

Truly, this hands-on action research project in the community afforded Lidia an opportunity to experience first-hand much of what she learned in her RRU Leadership training. The RRU LTM elements of Experiential, authentic learning strategies, Supporting integrative learning, and Action-oriented research as a process of inquiry formed a substantial component in helping Lidia consolidate her new leadership skills as an organizational consultant. Its very nature dictated that in order to be successful, this study had to be grounded in experiential, integrative learning throughout its entire evolution. Conducting research in a community that she had not previously known meant that Lidia's inquiry design, indeed her entire research process and her understanding of the project, had to be constantly refined according to daily observations and experiences. Much of the success of the study can be attributed to its democratic nature which allowed participants to feel safe, valued, and consequently engaged—salient elements of the action research process that in this study were critical aspects of establishing credibility and building trust. Consequently, these very components also helped the City of Swift Current, Saskatchewan to develop an inclusive approach for implementing their revitalization engagement process. In large part because of her work on this project, Lidia received the Founder's Award at the RRU Convocation for her cohort.

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PART II

Faculty Perspectives

4

Learning to Learn and Teach Together: Faculty Members' Perspectives on the Applications of the Five-Pillar Model within an Internationalized Context

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Abstract

This research examines the fit between an institutional learning and teaching framework and the design and delivery of an internationalized graduate-level educational leadership program from the perspective of faculty members. The goal of this research study is to gather faculty perspectives on how the five key pillars of an institutional learning and teaching model were incorporated into the design and delivery of the educational leadership program to Chinese school administrators. This study employs photo-narrative methodology to assist faculty members in expressing their beliefs, opinions, and experiences about designing and teaching in the international program. Other complementary data-gathering methods, including focus groups, graphic recording, and free-writing sessions, are used. Themes are explored that help link the five-pillar model to faculty members' teaching

practices and to their reflections on the benefits of applying the learning and teaching model to an internationalized program context. Recommendations related to faculty development are highlighted.

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Introduction

The Learning and Teaching Model (LTM) developed at Royal Roads University (RRU) was intended to be applicable to a wide diversity of program models and delivery strategies. Our primary interest in conducting the current research study was to determine how the LTM model "fit" specifically within an international context by exploring the perspective of faculty members responsible for designing and teaching within an internationalized version of a graduate program at RRU—the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management (MAELM) program. In this research, we were interested in what could be learned from faculty members' perspectives that would be helpful in: (1) understanding the model's application in an international context and (2) undertaking any modifications to the program for future delivery. This case study has been situated in a larger longitudinal study involving faculty members' and learners' perspectives on the program.

We begin this paper by sharing important background information related to the program itself. We also explore the literature on the internationalization of programs that is helpful to our current study.

Program Description and Context

The MAELM program is a 33-credit master's program designed to help aspiring and existing administrators develop a critically reflective understanding of school improvement concepts and research, and to apply practical tools and strategies to address issues, challenges, and opportunities related to supporting student achievement and growth. The program is based on an outcomes-oriented, cohort-based, and collaborative learning approach that focuses on providing authentic learning experiences that bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The particular version of the international program studied in this research is offered in a one-year timeframe; the first six months consist of RRU faculty teaching in a series of full-time residencies in Beijing, China, while the following six months involve having the Chinese school administrators study at RRU in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

The program is delivered in partnership with the Beijing Municipal Education Commission, the Beijing Institute for Education, and Royalbridge Consulting. Over a four-year period, three successive program intakes resulted in 73 Chinese school administrators graduating from the MAELM program. District representation also increased substantially over the three years with two school districts being represented in the first year, five districts in the next year, and thirteen in the third year. It is also noteworthy that this program won a national "Panorama Award" in 2013, sponsored by the

Canadian Bureau of International Education for Leadership and Capacity Building in an international program.

Many of the activities, readings, and assignments within this internationalized version of the MAELM program were customized to respond to the specific needs of the Chinese government to equip school administrators with the knowledge and skill sets to effectively implement the latest wave of national educational reform. *The Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)* is a national policy blueprint that calls for comprehensive educational reforms aimed at building the foundation for a modern learning society throughout China over the next 10 years. The reform strategies, developed in consultation with key stakeholders over a two-year period, involve all levels of education, from pre-school to post-secondary, and recommend significant changes to the ways in which education is delivered, administered, and monitored in China.

Cheng (2005) and Cheng & Tam (2007) have characterized the policy directions in China over the last 30 years in terms of "three waves." Moving from the "effective schools movement" to "quality school movements," the system has shifted its focus from improvement on internal processes (i.e. school leadership, professional development for teachers, curriculum development) to external standards and measures of public accountability and quality assurance. Chen and Tam (2007) suggest that the current third wave, "world-class school movements," focuses on the broader needs of society and that the goals, design, and management of education now must support a 21st century paradigm of learning which emphasizes globalized relationships and world-class standards. When looking to support and prepare educators for this shift in paradigms, the Chinese Ministry of Education supported principals from thirteen municipal areas in metropolitan Beijing to participate in the MAELM international program offered by Royal Roads University.

Research Goals

Childress (2009) notes that with the increasing prevalence of internationalization efforts by universities and colleges, it is important to understand ways to better engage faculty and to determine the strategies and resources that will best support them. As well, Knight (2004) argues that to really understand the process of internalization, it needs to be understood at an individual faculty member or student level. Nevertheless, despite the increased attention paid to internationalization in higher education, little research has actually studied faculty members' experiences or perceptions in carrying out their roles and responsibilities in an internationalized context (Friesen, 2013; Dewey and Duff, 2009).

The goal of the current research was to address this gap in current knowledge by understanding faculty perspectives on how the five pillars of learning were

incorporated into the design and delivery of the Chinese MAELM program. The 'five pillars of learning' model was first championed by UNESCO 20 years ago and became a foundational construct in the articulation of the LTM at RRU. Many of the faculty members involved in this program were teaching an internationalized version of a graduate educational leadership program for the first time. We were interested in learning how the five-pillar model aligned with faculty members' experience in customizing and teaching this internationalized version. Delors (1996, p14) explains:

> The commission did its best to project it thinking on to a future dominated by globalization, to choose that questions that everyone is asking and to lay down some guidelines that can be applied both within national contexts and on a worldwide scale.

In a speech at the International Congress on Lifelong Learning, Delors (2013) explained that the pillar model also rejected the compartmentalization of learning into traditional spheres such as school, home, private, and public in the hopes of promoting a more coherent and dynamic model of learning where there is a greater sense of shared responsibility for the fullness of learning that is represented by the model. As a result, we were interested in studying the perspectives of faculty members to learn if their experience in customizing a program for another cultural context reflected some aspects of the transcendence noted above.

Specifically, this research project examined the following questions:

- How do the key elements of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model align with the design/delivery of an international program in educational leadership from the viewpoint of faculty members engaged within it?
- Within the framework of the LTM model, what are the main benefits for faculty members in being involved in the internationalization of this program?
- What were some of the key challenges for faculty? How were these addressed? What issues are still outstanding?

Methodology

The study used an appreciative approach adapted from the Discovery Phase of the Appreciate Inquiry (AI) methodology (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003; Reed, 2007). Consistent with an AI approach, the qualitative research methodology focused on the collection of faculty-generated stories which reflect "what worked in practice" and which were analysed to determine the keys to the success achieved. This methodology is being used in an ongoing study of graduates' perspectives on the value of their educational experiences in the MAELM program and is described in more detail in Hamilton (2014a).

The study employed a photo narrative methodology to assist participants

in expressing their beliefs and opinions about their experiences teaching in the MAELM international program and the alignment of their practice against the institutional learning and teaching model. The approach used a modified version of the visual storytelling method, "Photo-voice" (Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchison, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004; Wang & Burris, 1997). In this particular project, participants shared narratives with the researcher and other participants with the assistance of photographs that they selected from a large photo-bank of images. The goal of using this approach was to enhance participants' reflective self-expression and engagement in the research process (Warren, 2005).

Figure 1. Overview of the Photo-Narrative Research Approach.

As outlined in Figure 1, the study involved five primary data collection methods:

1. Photographs selected by each participant from a large photo-bank (over 300 images) in response to the following question: "Think of your experience teaching in the MAELM China program. Select an image that best describes your teaching experience and how it relates to the five pillars of the RRU learning and teaching model."
2. Posters, created by the participants, that expanded on the symbols or imagery within the selected photo and which helped to explain why the particular photo was chosen.

3. Video recordings of participant narratives elicited through the use of a think-aloud protocol (TAP) inviting participants to explain why they chose specific photos and what these photos meant to them.
4. A written record that described the generation of collective themes. Participants scanned a "gallery wall" comprised of the posters and then each person was asked to describe a key theme that they believed connected the different posters.
5. A focus group discussion and graphic recording of the focus group serving as a wrap-up exploration of participants' perceptions of common themes explored in the photo-narratives and think-aloud sessions.

Faculty who taught one or more MAELM courses participated in the research study conducted February-March 2014. Of the six faculty that participated in the research study, five had taught at least once in the Beijing residency, three had taught at least once in the in-Canada residency component, with two involved in fully face-to-face delivery and one in a blended delivery course during the in-Canada period.

This paper reports on the thematic data analysis using a formal coding structure derived from the 'five pillars of learning' model previously discussed. This was done using an inductive analytical approach and constant comparative method described by Boeije (2002), Huberman & Miles (1994), and Mason (1996).

Findings

Data analysis appears to provide evidence for the following areas of connection to the Royal Roads Learning and Teaching framework (see Table 1). These linkages are discussed below and supporting evidence is shared.

Themes	The Pillars
Learning is Reciprocal & Community-Based	Learning to Live Together Learning to Know
Learning as Change or Transformation	Learning to Do Learning to Live Together Learning to Transform Oneself and Society
Improving Practice & Changing Perspectives	Learning to Be Learning to Do Learning to Transform Oneself and Society

Table 1. Case Study Findings: Alignment with LTM

Theme 1: Learning is Reciprocal and Community-Based

Data in this theme addressed the participants' recognition that engaging with course content was only one aspect of a much larger effort to create a meaningful and substantive learning experience for students. For instance, faculty spoke of the shared decision making within the courses and across the program. The co-constructed learning approach, for many learners, was

a new "literacy" that required an understanding of its philosophy, orientation, and process. The role of faculty is discussed as becoming cognitive apprentices by modeling reflection, questioning strategies, and through critical thinking (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989). Within this theme, faculty acknowledged that the content was just the beginning of the learning experience and that there was a need to encourage space for thinking or "think time". Faculty spoke of themselves as curators, co-facilitators, and guides in the learning process as well as their efforts to encourage students to consider new ways of thinking about key issues relevant to the course focus. Helping to facilitate the early development of an emerging learning community specific to each cohort was an important step in creating a safe venue for learners to share, question, and discuss ideas.

Supporting an evolving community dynamic enabled faculty to learn from the cohort of students and provide support for the development of the learning community over the course of the program. All faculty participants commented on the delicate balance they attempted to achieve between encouraging the on-going development of community and respecting the inherent culturally-specific approaches and norms around the concept of community, both in the face-to-face and online environments. Faculty members spoke of the shift in their understanding of what counts as a learning experience in what they created for learners and what they experienced themselves. One participant noted:

> I was uncertain many of the times whether knowledge was flowing from East to West or West to East. I was uncertain many of the times what was happening there and I was being changed on a constant basis not just when I was face-to-face but when I was online with them and reflecting in private in a way that they were as well.

The *Learning to Live Together* pillar refers to the development of social and interpersonal skills and values such as respect, empathy, and concern for others. These are defined as "fundamental building blocks for social cohesion, resolving conflicts, respecting diversity, as they foster mutual trust and support and strengthen our communities and society as a whole" (Royal Roads University, 2013, p. 9). Based on this definition, and through the presentation and free-write data, it would appear that this pillar is evident in the work faculty did to create and foster a supportive face-to-face and online learning community in the MAELM program. These qualities and others such as introspection, intuitive awareness, and a collaborative team ethic have also been identified as requirements of facilitators when developing a strong online problem-based learning environment that places learners and faculty as co-contributors to the learning community (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, & Chinn, 2007; Savin-Baden, 2007).

Many faculty members commented on how they worked to find ways to help students have a voice in the learning process and in doing so, had to spend time developing the required supporting skills with learners such as

learning how to value and raise their voice and how to undertake critical reflection on, in, and about practice. The concept of the "reluctant silence" (Wang, 2014) was commented on by all faculty as they spoke of the ways in which they were made aware of the need to thoughtfully consider their pacing, placement, and selection of resources, and to make time for learners to become familiar with how to develop their critical thinking skills. The development of the skills and knowledge required to be successful is consistent with the *Learning to Know* pillar, defined as "the development of skills and knowledge needed to function in this world (e.g., formal acquisition of literacy, numeracy, critical thinking and general knowledge (the mastery of learning tools)" (Royal Roads University, 2013, p. 9).

Theme 2: Learning as Change or Transformation

Data coded in this theme focused on the role of faculty in supporting learner reflection and fostering collegial dialogue in the constantly evolving learning community that was being co-created. Faculty spoke of seeing the program as a learning laboratory where they could try out diverse learning strategies so that the students could experience them and then be able to make decisions about whether they would want to adapt similar practices in their school and if so, how to foster them with their teachers. This appears to be consistent with the *Learning to Do* pillar which is defined as "the acquisition of applied skills linked to professional success" (Royal Roads University, 2013, p. 9). A participant reflected on this process:

> …we worked together to explore what we are learning about learning, I watched the students work so hard to see the similarities and differences between our educational systems, theories, and practices and to identify "the core" – what is most important to keep doing, to stop doing, and to do differently in order to improve student outcomes.

The *Learning to Live Together* pillar speaks to the development of social and interpersonal skills and values such as respect, empathy and concern for others. These are defined as "fundamental building blocks for social cohesion, resolving conflicts, respecting diversity, as they foster mutual trust and support and strengthen our communities and society as a whole" (Royal Roads University, 2013, p. 9). Faculty also spoke of creating conditions within their courses that permitted the learners to value their own thoughts and ideas. Using the emerging and evolving learning community to create a safe venue for them to share, question, and discuss ideas was identified as critical to developing new ways of thinking about issues and content.

The pillar *Learning to Transform Oneself and Society* is defined as when "individuals and groups gain knowledge, develop skills, and acquire new values as a result of learning…[resulting in them being] equipped with tools and mindsets for creating lasting change in organizations, communities and societies" (Royal Roads University, 2013, p. 9). Several faculty spoke of the modelling role that they adopted when working with MAELM cohorts

because the learning and teaching approach was a catalyst for change across several dimensions of the learners' experience.

Theme 3: Improving Practice & Changing Perspectives

The focus of the data coded in this theme was on the practice of facilitation as being one of constant reflection as well as the inter-relatedness of the LTM pillars. Within this theme, faculty spoke of being learners themselves and provided examples of the change they underwent as they became more experienced working with the learners and more familiar with the context and challenges the learners faced. These types of comments appear to be consistent with the *Learning to Transform Oneself and Society* pillar as well as the *Learning to Be* pillar which is defined as "the learning that contributes to a person's mind, body and spirit. Skills include creativity, personal discovery, acquired through self-reflection and self-awareness including reading, the internet…" (Royal Roads University, 2013, p. 9). As a participant observed:

> teaching in the MAELM Program has reaffirmed my belief that teaching and learning are all about relationships. I have long held this opinion, but it has been made abundantly more clear in this circumstance, where such extreme differences exist between us culturally and experientially, yet there is a common quest to understand each other, from which we all benefit.

For example, many faculty spoke of the time they created, or aspired to create, in their courses for students to actively reflect on the course topics and their applications. Making space and time for learners and faculty to reflect on practice and to think about what and how new learnings might integrate into practice were provided as examples. Several faculty members commented on the act of facilitation in the MAELM program as fostering constant reflection on practice.

Within the faculty teams themselves, many commented that as they worked together to revise, adapt, and refine their practice within and across faculty teams, they too benefited from having a shared sense of community to share, question, and discuss emerging issues. In some cases, this collaborative work led to the transformation of key instructional approaches as noted by the following participant:

> I believe the opportunity to work closely with a teaching partner was a real strength of the course delivery in China; team teaching, integrating content from three different courses, combining project-based learning assignments, and collaborative marking.

This is again consistent with the pillar *Learning to Transform Oneself and Society*, mentioned previously.

Discussion, Next Steps, and Implications

This research study provided opportunities for faculty: (1) to reflect on their

own teaching practice based on their recent teaching experiences in the MAELM International program; (2) to reflect on the learning that has come out of this experience; and (3) to enhance their own professional expertise via the sharing of helpful strategies and experiences with other faculty members.

A key finding that emerged is that the five-pillar model appears to apply equally well to faculty members' sense of themselves as educators and learning facilitators as it does to the design of structures that support the students' learning experience. We were pleasantly surprised at how well the five-pillar model was aligned with the experiences of faculty members teaching in a cross-cultural internationalized program.

Furthermore, it appears from the faculty perspectives shared within this study that the five-pillar model is robust enough to apply to different cultural contexts. A key to its successful adaptation, however, is for program designers to provide enough latitude in the course design and delivery structure to enable, and even encourage, instructors to play, experiment, and adjust various aspects of the model to fit the specific exigencies of the cultural milieu. Thus, this research highlights the need for professional development opportunities for faculty members that directly support their efforts to develop both innovative and culturally-responsive ways to ensure the model works in practice.

Consequently, this research will continue to inform the support and professional development provided to faculty involved in the MA in Educational Leadership and Management program and has implications for faculty teaching in other international programs at Royal Roads University. In addition, it will help to inform the integration of the RRU LTM into internal processes for program and course design.

Beyond the specific program, this research will assist other program developers at the university in identifying helpful and effective design and delivery practices related to the application of the five pillars of the institutional LTM for other international programs. On a broader scale, this research may be able to provide insight into the role of institutional frameworks of learning and teaching in international program design and delivery, the successes and challenges of their application to the international context, and the level and type of faculty support and professional development required.

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5

Enhancing Student Learning Experience through Group Supervision Using a Digital Learning Platform

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Abstract

This article describes the use of a digital learning platform to facilitate group supervision of students completing their capstone projects for a Masters in Leadership program. To address the problem of social and academic isolation experienced by students in traditional one-on-one supervision, the authors sought ways to use the digital learning platform Moodle to provide a supportive and collaborative learning environment, similar to what students experienced earlier in the program. Following a pilot demonstration period of two years, 35 students and 5 supervisors were surveyed and engaged in focus group discussion to obtain their assessment and feedback on the

benefits and challenges apparent in the use of the digital learning platform to provide group supervision to these students. Students noted many positive benefits in support of a collaborative learning environment using the digital platform, while some supervisors were more mixed in their assessment of this supervision approach. Some faculty were adamant that the group supervision digital platform saved them time and helped them be more consistent and focused with students. Other faculty were concerned about the difficulties inherent in using the technology effectively. Results are discussed in light of relevant literature[1].

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Introduction

In this chapter, we describe the use of a digital learning platform to facilitate group supervision of students completing their graduate capstone project. The capstone project is an 8-month long major organizational change project that students do at the end of their 2-year academic program. We report on data gathered from students and supervisors who used this digital learning platform and from supervisors who did not. This study is relevant to any academic program in which distance learning students are engaged in an individualized and long-term project.

Students in the MA Leadership program at Royal Roads University, in Victoria, Canada, are required to complete a leadership change project within a sponsoring organization for the purpose of integrating leadership theory into practice and providing "real time" benefit to the organization. Using an action research methodology, students are required to engage key stakeholders in the organization in dialogue and to explore an issue as well as possible solutions (Rowe, Graf, Piggot-Irvine, Agger-Gupta, & Harris, 2013). Students work in a mutually supportive cohort-based learning community throughout the entire first year of their graduate program. Yet, during the capstone project (beginning in month 14 of the program), students transition from this enriched learning environment to working one-on-one with an academic supervisor to complete an individual service project over nine months in a sponsoring organization. Academic supervisors provide 30-50 hours of individualized support to students in all phases of the project from planning and proposal writing, gaining ethics approval, conducting the research, developing recommendations, and writing up the project.

Although there are standardized requirements and quality guidelines, templates, and suggestions for the supervisory relationship, most students and supervisors work in a dyadic relationship. During the capstone project, there is no formal contact or collaboration between and among students, nor between the supervisors themselves—in sharp contrast to the learning environment that nurtured the students in the first year of their graduate studies. Most capstone supervisors communicate with their students via e-mail, telephone, Skype© and, occasionally, face-to-face meetings, where possible.

Student and alumni surveys, supervisor evaluations, and casual conversations with students have revealed a consistent theme: students feel isolated during the traditional one-on-one supervision process. Students spoke of feeling "adrift" and "unsupported". Many pointed out the sharp contrast between the supportive, social learning environment in the program *before* the start of their capstone and their isolated journey *during* the capstone. Moreover, we have observed that the one-on-one supervision process often results in wide variation in how students are supervised, in terms of guidance, resources, progress achieved, and quality of the submitted project reports.

To address these challenges and to enhance students' learning experiences during the capstone project, the authors sought ways to use the digital learning platform Moodle to provide a supportive and collaborative learning environment similar to the one students experienced earlier in the program. As this platform was used to deliver online courses in the first year of their program, the students were already familiar with it. The learning platform provides mechanisms for group discussion forums, as well as a structure for presenting learning resources and organizing student submissions, which we felt could be harnessed for our purposes. We turned to the literature to better understand how a digital learning platform could be used to bring students together in a group process that would support work on individualized projects. We reviewed literature across five domains: (a) the pedagogical value of distance education, (b) the relative efficacy of different learning technologies, (c) group interaction factors, (d) faculty experiences teaching in an online environment, and (e) extant empirical evidence demonstrating positive outcomes for digital learning platform supervision and learning sites.

Literature

The Emergence of the Digital Learning Platform

Distance education has long been an alternative to classroom education. In the early years, distance education consisted of correspondence-type courses that depended on the postal service or e-mail to transmit course information, instructions, and feedback to students in geographically dispersed locations. As distance learning began to establish itself as an alternative to classroom instruction, courses on digital learning platforms became more sophisticated, including mechanisms to enable students to interact with their instructors through synchronous and/or asynchronous discussion. Research on design, technologies, and faculty pedagogy identified factors such as student discussion forums and instructor facilitation that created a successful learning environment (Miller & King, 2002; Rena & Paloff, 2001; Moore & Kearsley, 1996).

Nonetheless, while digital learning platform sites were developing more pedagogical features, there were still issues of low completion/high drop out in distance courses (Palloff & Pratt, 2001; Moore & Kearsly, 1996). Students cited lack of timely feedback, feelings of isolation, and frustrations with the technology as their reasons for dropping out of a course (Hara & Kling, 2000). In an investigation of barriers to successful performance of students in distance based courses, Owen, Hardcastle, and Richardson (2009) noted additional factors such as lack of orientation on how to study in a distance education context, confusion over how to submit assignments, feelings of isolation, lack of one to one contact with staff, and lack of confidence with the technology associated with distance learning. These issues led to further

research on characteristics of students that were predictive of engagement to support further development of instructional techniques to engage students.

Students who stay engaged attribute their persistence to other students in the course, as well as personal support from staff and/or instructors. Miller and King (2003) summarized research on these factors, concluding that social factors, more than technology factors, are the "main determinants of success or failure in a computer-mediated course" (p. 287). Miller and King argue that "technology is the cornerstone of distance education, but successful distance education requires a paradigm shift in the learners, the instructors, the pedagogy, and the organization" (p. 287).

Often administrators adopted online courses with an expectation of achieving cost–efficiencies (Rumble, 2001). Moreover, Rumble (2001) noted that administrators often sought to reduce instructional costs by increasing class size or employing part time, contract, or adjunct faculty (as opposed to tenured faculty) to achieve a lower labour cost in teaching of courses. Rumble (2001) was of the opinion that time to deliver quality teaching in the online environment was greater than for face-to-face teaching, thus putting faculty in the untenable position of teaching more hours for less compensation or modifying their teaching practice to reduce interaction time spent with students. In a review of literature on faculty teaching, Van de Vord and Pogue (2012) observed that while most faculty believe online teaching is more time-consuming, the evidence is mixed as to whether the time investment of faculty is greater in the online environment. Time spent often depended on the type of activity. Certainly these authors noted that the faculty have flexibility and control over how much time they engage with students in the online environment. When faced with fixed compensation levels for an online course, it is possible the online instructor will unconsciously adjust their teaching or facilitation practices so as to reduce time engaging with students in online discussion forums, providing feedback and other supports. This has its consequences; research has demonstrated that student engagement in a course suffers when interaction between instructors and students is minimized and instructor feedback is not timely or specific to the learning needs of the students (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Palloff & Pratt, 2001). The dominant perception is that higher levels of student engagement, which is related to student performance, requires more instructor time in the online environment (Palloff & Pratt, 2001, Rumble, 2001). Our research needed to address these perceptions if faculty were to adopt online group supervision.

Groups and Group Interaction Factors in the Online Environment

To understand the value of the digital learning environment, one needs to examine how students interact as a group, whether on a discussion board or working in small groups as part of a learning assignment. While the conclusion of many researchers is that group work in a face-to-face environment is more successful than online groups, other researchers have found evidence that online group work was equally as successful and in

some cases, could be said to be superior (Koh & Hill, 2008). Johnson et al. (2002) determined that online teams could be successful if they took steps to break the team's work into tasks or steps, spent extra time in the beginning to clarify expectations and develop group protocols, had an instructor who provides leadership, directions, and instructions, and develops timelines that matched the goals of the team work as well as the capability of its members.

Koi and Hill (2009) found that while group work in the online environment could be challenging and take longer because of team development needs, high levels of interaction and a sense of community among group members can lead to successful outcomes and satisfaction. Garrison and Vaughan (2008) referred to sense of community as "social presence," defined as the feeling of communication or connection among groups of learners. They identified three factors as important: open communication, cohesive responses, and affective connections. Researchers investigating social presence or sense of community found it key to collaborative learning (Gunawardena, 1995; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Online learning is just as effective as face-to-face learning if social presence is achieved (see summary in Huevelman-Hutchinson, 2012). Additionally, group work is optimized when steps are taken to assist learners in forming a sense of community through strategies such as frequent interaction in small groups, activities designed for the online context that build increased familiarity, providing learners with techniques and tips on time management, and teaching students about stages and strategies of group formation (Koh & Hill, 2009).

Paloff and Pratt (2005) found that group work in an online learning environment can be transformative since learners in asynchronous discussion forums have more opportunity to read messages, reflect, and write carefully and deeply in response. London and Sessa (2007) describe group learning as occurring when individual group members create, acquire, and share knowledge and information. Group members change as a result of their interactions as a system, moving from individualistic behaviors to synergistic interactions that foster continuous learning (Kasl, Marsick, & Dechant, 1997). London and Sessa further argue that group continuous learning results in:

> deepening and broadening of the group's capabilities…[according to] three interaction patterns of forms of learning: adaptive, generative and transformative. In adaptive learning, the group automatically reacts to changes in the environment so that the group is able to adapt. Generative group learning refers to situations where the group purposefully is proactive and generates and uses new knowledge, skills and behaviors. However the purpose and form of the group remains the same. Transformative group learning refers to the transformation of the group into a new entity. (p. 652)

London and Sessa (2007) emphasize that the group facilitator or leader is key to collaborative group learning through channeling of the learning stimuli, improving group and individual readiness to learn, and mobilizing the support resources (e.g., information, technologies, time lines, standards, etc.)

for group learning. This may be done in the form of forceful pressures, demands, and challenges as well as opportunities which disturb the status quo and stimulate learning. However, groups must be ready to learn before members will accept disturbing events (Hackman & Wageman, 2005). For Palloff and Pratt (2005), successful group work and the creation of a collaborative and transformative learning environment begins with the instructor. The instructor should act as motivator and "facilitator or guide, allowing students to create their own learning process as they move through the phases of collaborative activities" (p. 19). Palloff and Pratt (1999) speak to the importance of social interaction through dialogue, regular presence on the learning site, and group activities that require cooperation, negotiation, and team collaboration.

In a collaborative learning environment, both instructors and students need to be socially present. In addition, the instructor must give up some control, and the student must take on more responsibility in interaction with other students so as to "establish and nurture a collaborative community of learners" (Miller & King, 2003, p. 291). The type of dialogue is also important; it is not just a matter of being socially engaged online. The dialogue needs to be channeled or facilitated to expose student learning strengths and their gaps, thus creating the potential to go deeper in critical thinking and analysis of the issues at hand (Weigel, 2002). We aimed to leverage a collaborative learning environment to better support students completing their capstone projects.

Digital Learning Platform Supports in the MOST Project

In the MOST project (Laffey et al., 1998), students were required to work as a team over several months to a year, using a variety of computer mediated technology tools to solve real problems in the field of computational science. Instructors provided help as coaches and as facilitators. Coaching within the MOST project learning environment involved modeling, giving feedback, challenging the student, providing suggestions, samples, and hints, and diagnosing problems—both *a priori* or after performance—either immediately or delayed (Laffey et al., 1998). In this digital learning platform environment, students could post their ideas electronically and get immediate comments from the instructor on the electronic document, thus facilitating immediate learning and adjustments. Other supports in this environment included tools that helped the student to specify goals and objectives or to establish activities and tasks within specific time lines.

Students engaged in threaded, asynchronous discussion forums that enabled discourse and information sharing. This resource, in combination with e-mail and real time chat rooms, created opportunities for students to support each other's learning, get help when needed, provide social support and in general create a "community of learning" among the student group. Reflection was also part of the digital learning platform learning environment — in the context of feedback and critiques from both the

instructors and peers. Students could compare their work to others as well as to standards and internal cognitive representations—a process that generated new learning and insight.

Finally, students in the MOST project were supported in the creation of a document (knowledge) representation of their work. This involved writing a journal article with sections for an abstract, the goals and objectives, resources utilized, the application, conclusions, and recommendations. Revisions were tracked and became additional sources of learning; different formats for representing the document were also possible in the digital learning environment.

The context of learning required by students in the MOST project is similar to the experience of students working on the MA Leadership capstone projects. The students are engaged in an inquiry project to address a need or problem identified by a sponsoring organization. They are required to undertake research, facilitate processes of engagement with stakeholders, implement data collection, and carry out technical tasks of data analysis and interpretation. Like the MOST project students, the MA Leadership students are in geographically separated locations. Computer-mediated technologies for the MOST students, in a group context, provided opportunity for the students to engage in deeper levels of analysis, problem solving, and learning.

The Leadership Program Digital Learning Platform Supervision Site

Based on the literature as well as our experiences as instructors in the digital learning environment, we identified trust, collaboration, support, privacy, and confidentiality as guiding principles for the design of a digital capstone supervision site for the MA Leadership students. These guiding principles informed the design and development of each segment (e.g., bulletins, forums, site settings) of the Moodle Learning Management System. Teams were set up in the Moodle supervision site to model the distance environment that students had become accustomed to during the first year of the program. Establishing supervision teams (for each supervisor and the students) was intended to model an environment that would promote collaboration, coaching, reflection, and learning.

When students approached a faculty member to explore potential supervision, the faculty member explained his or her supervision approach and methods. At this time, the faculty member would explain that he or she was assembling a group of students to work together using the online supervision site. Equipped with this information, students made the choice of working with the supervisor in a team environment or of selecting a different supervisor for traditional one-on-one supervision. Sometimes students suggested others to join the group; other times, the supervisor would put together a group of students that had approached him or her. Typically, the supervisor's goal was to establish a supervision team with two

or more students from the same cohort and use the supervision site to instruct and coach students throughout the project.

Once formed, the site administrator would set up the supervision team in the online supervision site. Only those within the team had access to their supervision team site. The site was designed to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the interactions (e.g., discussions, shared documents) were protected, resulting in a natural platform for students and their supervisor to create and nurture trust and support. One supervisor observed that students quickly began interacting with each other in the 'team discussion forum' (bulletin board) and turned immediately to the task at hand (personal communication, 2013).

Forums corresponding to the phases of the project implementation were displayed in a consecutive (logical) manner in the site and provided students a view of each stage of the capstone project (Figure 1). The online site also contained a 'latest news' bulletin that supervisors used to post updates about the capstone project (e.g., revisions to the Capstone Project Handbook), and offer guidance and instructions for completing the OLP.

Figure 1. Moodle Supervision Site Layout.

Supervisors requested that students update their capstone project schedule and post this schedule in the OLP Schedule Forum (Figure 2) at the beginning of each month. This monthly activity positioned students to assess the planned schedule against their progress and, if required, adjust timelines. The visual representation of their progress provided opportunities for students to engage in dialogue about their progress, celebrate achievements, and discuss potential challenges. Students shared strategies to support their progress through the various project stages within the required timeframes.

The activity also provided a venue for the supervisor to coach and provide feedback to students on their progress and upcoming deadlines.

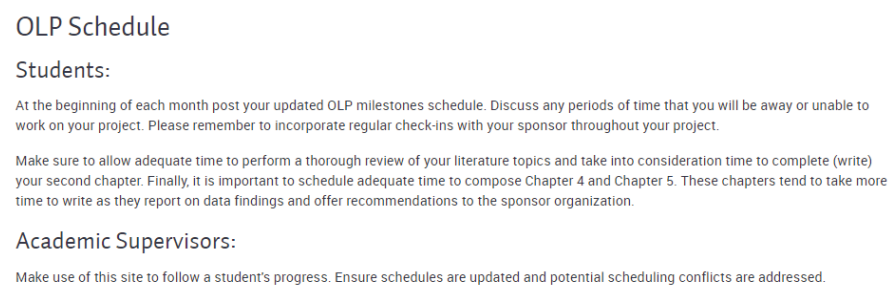
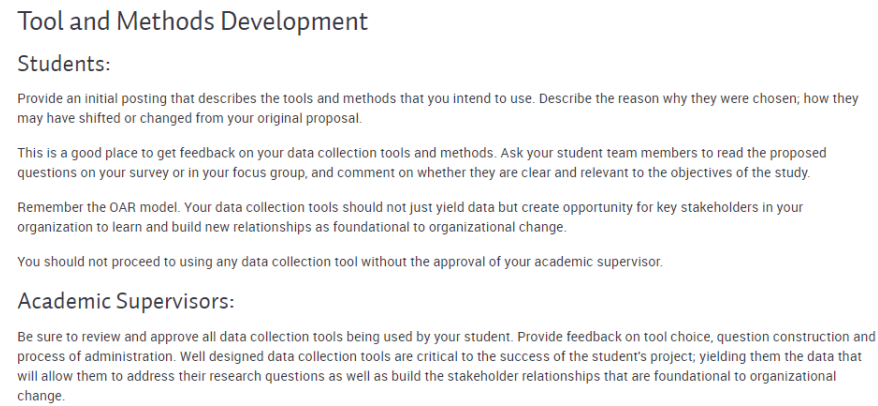


Figure 2. OLP Schedule Forum.

Students progressed through their capstone project, making use of the discussion forum relevant to the particular stage in which they were engaged. Descriptors in each forum offered students an understanding of the components of the particular stage of the capstone project (see Figure 3). Each forum provided a space for students to engage in a threaded discussion with peers and their supervisor. The site design enabled the supervisor to focus their instruction on each stage of the capstone project, breaking down each stage and building a bridge to the next stage. Students submitted various pieces of their project (e.g., tools and method development) and received feedback from peers and their supervisor. This student interaction promoted an environment for reflection and learning.



Discussion	Started by	Group	Replies	Unread	Last post
Sherri's Focus Group Draft Questions			1	0	Wed, 3 Dec 2014, 4:42 PM
Post your methods and begin your conduct of the inquiry			0	0	Thu, 27 Nov 2014, 8:36 AM
gab's interviews draft transcrip			0	0	Mon, 15 Sep 2014, 1:04 PM
Literature review ?			1	0	Tue, 26 Aug 2014, 9:44 PM

Figure 3. Tools and Method Development Forum.

Table 1 provides an example of a discussion between a supervisor and a group of students in the digital platform Moodle supervision site. In this posting, one student presented an issue. A peer responded and asked some additional questions. The supervisor responded to the initial issue and the additional questions.

Initial post from student: I am having challenges with crafting my questions for the World Café. I am struggling, as I would like participants to look at their own fears and beliefs while using an appreciative stance. Any suggestions?
Peer response: I've looked over your Chapter One again and wonder if you could use the subquestions. Your subquestions essentially ask what the positives are for the organization is and how collaboration can appropriately be achieved.
Supervisor response: I am going to chime in and agree with [peer's] suggestion. The subquestions are tight, hold an appreciative stance lens, and have the potential to elicit great discussion and insight. Please make sure you pilot test your questions … always a valuable exercise as you strive to compose the perfect question. Looking forward to seeing the next/final version of your questions. I hope you find my comments helpful.
Student reply: Thank you! Asking the subquestions is a terrific idea. I have a pilot test planned for next week with two of my inquiry team members. Once we have completed the pilot, I will post my final draft questions here for everyone to view and offer comment. I can just imagine the discussions these questions will generate at the tables! Thanks again.

Table 1. Example Discussion Posting Between Students and Supervisor.

In addition, students posted drafts of their proposal, ethics review, and chapters of their final report for feedback from peers before submitting them to the supervisor. This collaboration became a key component to accelerate learning across the group. When a student posted a question, peers were able to share their knowledge and the supervisor could address the issue (typically a common one) to all, instead of separately via emails to individual supervisees. At the completion of their capstone project, students posted their draft OLP Final Report (see Figure 4) for review and feedback from their peers.

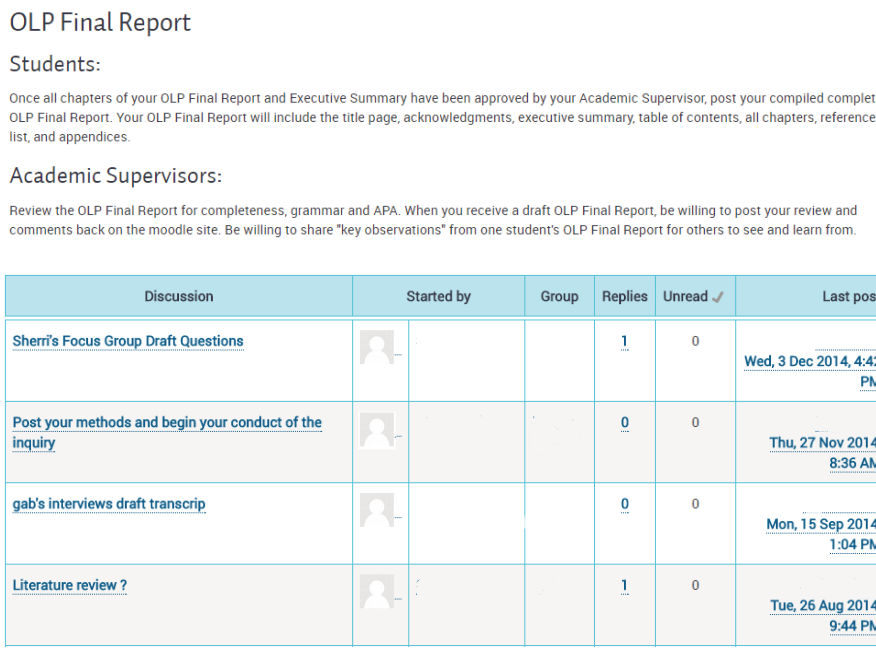


Figure 4. OLP Final Report Forum.

Within the Moodle supervision site, a 'shadow' role was designed to train and familiarize supervisors who were new to capstone project supervision or just new to the Moodle team supervision approach. This role allowed an academic supervisor to follow a supervision team to learn how to facilitate a capstone project using the digital learning platform Moodle supervision site. The supervisor leading the supervision team would first obtain consent from the students to allow the shadow to join the team, explicitly describing the purpose of the shadow role. A shadow could view the supervision team site (e.g., view bulletins, forum discussions) with no ability to engage in forum discussions.

The Research Approach and Methods

Following a trial period of two years, in which 35 students and 5 supervisors used the Moodle supervision site, we implemented an evaluation of process and outcomes.[2] Data was gathered from student participants as well as supervisors.

The evaluation questions were as follows:

- How effective is group supervision using an online technology site

2. The opportunity to use the online capstone supervision site was voluntary for both students and faculty; consequently, only small numbers joined from each of the four cohorts in any year. After two years, we deemed there was a sufficient level of participation that research and evaluation was possible

(Moodle) compared to traditional one-on-one supervision in terms of student's experience, their learning, and project outcomes?

- What is the experience of faculty supervisors engaged in this process?
- What design features would improve the site from both a student and supervisor perspective?
- What best practices have we learned for managing group supervision using an online technology site (Moodle)?

Using a post-case summative design, the study involved collection of qualitative and quantitative data addressing: (a) quality of relationship between supervisor and student, (b) project adherence to requirements, (c) completion of the project on time, (d) quality of the project report and reflective paper, (e) workload impact for supervisor and student, and (f) extent to which a sense of community and engagement were enhanced.

Student Survey

Students were invited to provide survey feedback on their experiences with the Moodle supervision site following the conclusion of their capstone project and completion of their graduate program. Ethics approval was obtained from all participants. Table 2 provides a list of the topics explored in the survey.

Background Data:

- Demographics, Personality Factors, and Expectations
- Past experience and comfort using technology

Assessment of Experience Using the Site:

- Frequency of site visits
- How useful they found the site (resources, support)
- Comfort with site
- Challenges with site
- Degree of engagement with supervisor/students on the site
- Satisfaction with process of OLP
- Comments and what was liked/shared with others

Outcomes Related to Using the Site:

- Quality of relationships
- Quality of support at each phase of the supervision
- Students' areas of learning
- Completion of OLP project

Table 2. Student Survey Topics.

All students who had used the digital learning platform Moodle site from July 2010 to July 2012 were contacted by a neutral third party research assistant. In this way the perceived risk of speaking honestly about their experiences was reduced. Students were asked about how they had used the site and

their experience with each other and their supervisors. Twenty-one students responded to the survey and 81% were female. These students were from seven cohorts (with an average size of three students per group). Forty-five percent of respondents were in the 51-60 age group, 40% in the 41-50 age group, 10% in the 31-40 age group, and 5% in the 61-and-over age group.

Focus Group with Instructors

Faculty who had supervised or considered supervising students through the online site were invited to participate in a focus group to address questions related to their experiences. A research assistant sent out invitations, arranged for informed consent forms to be signed and returned, and made all arrangements for the focus group session. The focus group was facilitated by a neutral third party not involved in any part of the study. A total of four individuals participated in the focus group, two of whom had supervised at least one group on the Moodle site and two others who had gone through training but had not yet supervised students through the site. Questions for the online supervisors focused on their experiences with using the site and the supports they had needed. Questions for supervisors who had not used the online supervision site had to do with their perceptions of group supervision and obstacles to using it (see Table 3).

Instructors Who Did Not Use the Supervisor Site:
1) When you think about using the Moodle site to supervise your students, what comes to mind?
2) How do you perceive it to be different from one-on-one supervision?
3) What do you see as the advantages and benefits of using the site?
4) What do you consider may be obstacles and/or challenges using the site?
5) What supports would you need that would enhance your ability to make use of the site?
6) Is there any other comment you have to offer regarding making use of the Moodle supervision site?
Instructors Using the Supervision Site:
1) When you think about your experience supervising via the Moodle site, what comes to mind?
2) How was this experience different from one-on-one supervision? In what way did it differ in terms of workload? In what way did it differ in terms of how you related to your students?
3) What have you learned as a result of supervising this way?
4) What supports do you think supervisors need to use the site effectively?
5) What is working well? What could be improved?
6) Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Table 3. Focus Group Questions.

Study Findings – The Students

Student Reported OLP Supervision Needs

Students were asked to identify their supervision needs as they had perceived them prior to becoming engaged in the use of the online supervision site.

Table 4 shows that most students wanted help from their supervisor on various aspects of carrying out their projects. Interestingly, 85% identified encouragement and support as a need.

	Greatly Needed	Somewhat Needed	Total # (%) Greatly or Somewhat
Supervisor to be familiar with the content area of my OLP	16	5	21 (100%)
Feedback from the supervisor on each OLP milestones	19	2	21 (100%)
Information on the OLP requirements	14	6	20 (95.2%)
Easy access to forms and supporting documents	17	3	20 (95.2%)
Peer feedback and help	14	6	20 (95.2%)
Help with designing research tools	19	1	20 (95.2%)
APA editing and formatting help	11	9	20 (95.2%)
Regular progress check ins	14	5	19 (90.5%)
Help with analyzing data	4	15	19 (90.5%)
Encouragement and support	5	13	18 (85.7%)
Help with writing the report	4	13	17 (80.9%)
Clear description of the OLP process and milestones	5	6	11 (52.4%)

Table 4. Student Reported Supervision Needs or Desires (21 respondents).

Engagement with the Online Supervision Site

Eighty-five percent of students expressed initial interest in being supervised through the group supervision site (53% were "very interested" and 32% were "somewhat interested"). Table 5 lists the students' reasons for using the online site. The most prominent reasons were accessing information on the capstone project requirements and getting feedback from the supervisor. The peer support potential of the site (i.e., feedback from team members) was identified by less than half (42%). Additionally, only half the students (57%) felt they needed to use the site to keep themselves on track or to stay motivated. Most of the students (67%) were assigned to a student team in which they knew the other team members. Twenty-four percent were assigned to a team where they did not previously know their fellow team members. About half of the students joined their digital learning platform Moodle supervision site when they were working on their capstone project proposal while the other half started later in the process—as they were working on their research ethics application.

	Often Needed	Frequently Needed	Total # (%) Often or Frequently
To access information on the OLP requirements	9	7	16 (76.2%)
To get feedback from my supervisor on my proposal, ethic applications and draft report	6	10	16 (76.2%)
To get instruction from supervisor on design of data collection tools	8	7	15 (71.4%)
To get instructions from supervisor on data analysis	7	8	15 (71.4%)
To see what others were doing	9	5	14 (66.7%)
To post my progress on my OLP project	8	4	12 (57.1%)
To help me stay motivated	5	7	12 (57.1%)
To keep myself on track with making good progress	7	4	11 (52.4%)
To get feedback from my team members on my various documents	7	4	9 (42.8%)

Table 5. Reasons for Engaging the Moodle Site (21 respondents).

Despite varied reasons for using the site, frequency of access was high. Most students (71.4%) said they had engaged with the supervision site every two or three days or at least twice a week. A quarter of them (24%) said they were on the site daily.

Level of comfort with the site was very good (81%). Nobody was uncomfortable with using the site. Ninety percent of the survey respondents said the pace of work on the supervision site was just right. They were able to keep up with their postings.

Activities and Quality of Supervision

When asked what activities occurred while working on their capstone projects on the Moodle supervision sites, over 80% of the survey respondents responded:

- sharing of experiences in implementing the OLP,
- problems or challenges in implementing the OLP,
- new information or resource materials,
- feedback from peers on your work, and
- motivational messages.

Quality of supervision support was rated as very high by nearly all the survey respondents (Table 6), whether for regular motivational support of for support, coaching, and feedback on various aspects of completing the capstone project. This data suggests that it is the supervisor's engagement in the online environment that is critical.

	Rated as Good	Rated as Exceptional	Total # (%) Good or Exceptional
Regular motivational support	8	12	20 (95.2%)
Support/coaching/feedback on my proposal	3	17	20 (95.2%)
Support/coaching/feedback on developing data collection tools and administering them	5	15	20 (95.2%)
Support/coaching/feedback on resolving implementation barriers or challenges	3	17	20 (95.2%)
Support/coaching/feedback on analyzing my data	6	14	20 (95.2%)
Support/coaching/feedback on writing the final report	4	15	19 (90.5%)
Support/coaching/feedback on writing my ethics application	4	14	118 (85.7%)
Support/coaching/feedback on working better with my sponsor	8	8	16 (95.2%)

Table 6. Student Report on Quality of Supervisor Support (21 respondents).

Positive Outcomes Reported by Students Using the Site

Students rated the group supervision site as very valuable (71.4%) or valuable (19%). Only 10% (2 individuals) said the site "added no value" to their work on their capstone. One of these individuals noted they joined the group after it had been formed, and the other individual joined a group from a different cohort. The top three things that students liked about the site were: (1) access to OLP resources (OLP samples and requirements and process documents), (2) access to their supervisor in terms of timely feedback and consistent direction, and (3) the collaborative team environment that facilitated their teamwork, providing ongoing support and motivation. The site also created significant momentum as students saw their peers completing milestones and celebrating their achievements. This notion of the value of a team environment was supported by students reporting a "good" to "strong" sense of community (76.1%) with only 14% (3 individuals) reporting that there was "somewhat" of a sense of community and 9% (2 individuals) a "poor" sense of community. This finding shows that 2 of the 21 students had a poor experience. However, most students (71.4%) said they would definitely recommend an online supervision site to others, 10% said "perhaps," and 19% students said "it depends."

A qualitative analysis of student comments revealed three overarching themes, all of them consistent with the quantitative survey findings. Students saw the community and the relational benefits of the site as facilitating collaboration and a shared experience, enhancing motivation, and providing better access to supervisor support. It also helped them to balance personal and learning needs. The enriched learning environment provided a common context for learning and helped students to establish common expectations. It created a structure, process, and set of milestones. Students also commented on the specific aspects of the digital learning platform that were

advantageous, such as the group discussion forums and the convenient electronic access to key documents in one location.

Respondents expressed a strong appreciation for the ability to continue the style of learning and mutually supportive community they had become accustomed to in the first year of the program. Generally, they believed that the site significantly enhanced their overall experience and ability to complete the capstone. The group-based supervision site provided a place for them to share ideas, celebrate successes, and, most importantly, to support each other.

Additionally, the online supervision site contributed to enhanced learning. Respondents valued the ability to share with their peers and enable each other's learning. Learning together resonated throughout the analysis. Respondents appreciated the opportunity to view each other's work and the comments/support offered by the supervisor. The respondents derived great value interacting with their peers and supervisor to support individual and group learning. This learning environment promoted a constant momentum and focus that resulted in a number of respondents completing their capstone ahead of schedule. One respondent went so far as to state that the digital learning platform Moodle site should become a permanent fixture in the MA Leadership program.

Challenges or Difficulties Experienced by Students

While 57% of the students said they had no challenges or difficulties using the site, 16% said they had technical issues with the Moodle site platform and 16% said they experienced some personal time pressures completing the OLP and supporting others on the site. Two students observed that not all students were at the same stage of progress on their OLP and, thus, were overwhelmed by too much feedback. Suggestions for improving the site were to make the resources easier to find or access, provide a better explanation on the intent or purpose of the site, and to make other group collaboration tools available (e.g., Skype©, Blackboard Collaborate etc.). In addition, respondents stressed that students should be at similar places in their process and working at a similar pace to reduce any learning participation and support imbalances.

Findings – Supervisor Focus Group

Workload

Supervisors who had received training but had not yet used a group supervision site expressed great concern about the additional work they perceived as necessary to learn a new way of supervising. It was their belief that supervising students using the online group supervision site would require learning to manage the technology of the digital learning platform as well as how to supervise effectively in an online environment, which could be quite different to the individualized methods they were currently

using. It would also create a record of their supervisory practices and communications, which could open their supervision to scrutiny of others. However, supervisors who had used the online site indicated that working with students this way either did not increase workload or actually reduced workload. For example, one supervisor stated that "*in terms of workload when you are supervising several students from the same cohort, it reduces your workload significantly.*" It is important to note that when the students are in the same cohort, while each student's progress may vary, they are working toward a common set of deadlines. In contrast, mixing students from different cohorts in one online supervision site does not reduce workload, according to the participants. When students are on the same schedule, another supervisor observed, "*it doesn't take me any more time…because the online group supervision site keeps [supervisees] moving along.*"

The online group supervision site enabled students to read each other's postings and document drafts. Thus, they were able to track and support each other's progress and achievement of milestones. This mutual peer support made it easier for supervisors to support their students. As one supervisor explained:

> *And in fact, the large group that I did just recently, they all finished well ahead of time and I'm sure it was just because they were there to support each other and help each other out so much that it actually made the timelines easier and for me much easier to support my learner in that regard… so not much of a workload difference for myself, I don't think.*

Another supervisor supported this idea, stating that it was easier to support students because "*there was a lot of sharing of information. [The students] really supported each other and I think they motivated each other, kept each other going.*"

It is not just the students providing mutual support and motivating each other to make progress that creates the benefit to group supervision through the online group supervision site; it is also significant that issues and questions come up in the learning interactions that allow for a richer discussion for all. A supervisor observed that:

> *I had two people in the same cohort before and that really helped them move along together. But this helps me see them working together. I can post the same message for both. It's just — it's quite a bit easier, I think.*

While there is a learning curve associated with adopting this approach to supervising, the supervisors agreed that workload was reduced or remained the same and that the site contributed to sustained student progress on their OLPs. As well, helping students to meet milestones and share information were key strengths in supervising groups of students in an online group supervision site.

Enriched learning environment for students

A key instructional approach in the MA Leadership program is building and

maintaining a supportive learning community through peer feedback and support as well as team-based activities and assignments. In the past when students began their culminating capstone project, they would transition from a socially rich learning community environment to a more solitary one-to-one relationship with their supervisor. Generally, they would interact with their supervisor through email and with peers only informally in other forums such as Facebook. As teachers and supervisors, over the years we (the researchers) often heard students remark that they felt isolated and missed the peer support and learning community they'd previously experienced.

A common theme among the participants was the benefit of the sense of community apparent in the groups of students coming together in the online supervision site. One participant described how well the learning community came together:

> *I have to say it was just marvelous. It created a very strong sense of...being in [the on-campus residency] for the team again. The team really worked well together. There was a lot of information sharing. It was very powerful for the students.*

Another participant described the importance of continuing to promote a learning community in the capstone part of the program:

> *I think it helps that transition from [the on-campus residency] out into the wide, wide world of confusion and life with [the capstone project], that you can't always provide that support to the student the way another student can provide it to another student. So I found the students were cheer-leading one another on and sharing resources and asking questions and putting in a request for information.*

Not only did the online group supervision foster a continuity of approach between the programming leading up to the capstone and the capstone experience itself, it provided key support that was often missing in one-on-one supervision.

Supervisors observed that in online group supervision, technology was an enabler to enhance student experience and create a richer learning environment for students. As one participant observed:

> *One [thing I learned] was that technology can work in our favour and that the students are well attuned to going into that kind of environment... they seem to get energy from the ability to be collectively together.*

In addition to gaining energy, students benefitted from peer feedback and gained multiple perspectives. Citing her students, a supervisor stated:

> *A number of [students] commented on how helpful it was to get perspectives from two different people that had two very different styles as well. So they had the added advantage of, I guess for want of a better word, pulling in more information and gathering more data... than they would have gotten had they just worked with one person.*

This quotation demonstrates the best aspect of a learning community; students support the learning of others, rather than pursuing their own

learning though one-on-one supervision. Rather than weakening or interfering with the bond between student and supervisor, the student-supervisor relationship was deepened in an online group supervision setting. For example, a supervisor observed that:

> *I think, if anything, it made the working relationship much closer between the learner and myself in that there just was that real sense of community and a very strong bond and connection created because it seemed so much more like the atmosphere of [the on-campus Residency] that they experience. So it was a very positive aspect.*

Supervisors agreed that creating an online community that included two or more students and a supervisor created a stronger bond than they had experienced when they did one-on-one supervision, which is the norm.

Learning for supervisors

As well as promoting a positive learning environment for students, online group supervision fostered a learning environment for supervisors. For example, one supervisor noted:

> *I think the most powerful learning for me was the reminder of the enormous benefit to community for everyone. It's not just what the actual students are learning and for myself, my learning has been incredible.*

Focus group participants remarked that the online platform had allowed the capstone project coordinator to orient and support them to successfully supervise in that environment, especially in terms of helping them to use the site effectively and to manage their workload. The participants saw this type of support as essential, but they felt they would have benefitted from more supervisor-to-supervisor interaction. For example, a participant lamented that she would have liked to see more participation from supervisors in the private discussion board provided for supervisors:

> *How it could have helped my workload was if there was more activity in the supervisor to supervisor area, where I could have some resources from other supervisors that they were using to support their students that then I could take and make my own or that we could share. So that may have helped the workload there.*

Rather than seeing online peer-to-peer interaction as increasing their workload, they saw it as a vital way of better managing the supervision workload. For example, they might post an issue that was common to most students and address it in a common forum, saving the time of multiple individual e-mails. Also supervisors felt it saved them time not having to respond to individual student's 'help e-mails' (e.g. "where is this document?"), as typically students would post their issue online and get help from their peers.

Online group supervision created a learning environment for supervisors. There was strong agreement that providing this environment to support the ongoing learning of all supervisors, whether they were using online

group supervision or the more usual one-on-one approach, was beneficial. A participant spoke to the efficacy of a broader supervisors' community:

> *I think that in order to really have effective supervisors there needs to be a supportive supervisory community where we can share resources and ideas about what we're doing with our students to make the processes easier for us.*

So, while the discussion forum provided some support for the supervisors who participated in this study, its potential was not fully realized. One individual commented that connecting all supervisors through a supervisor community was essential to creating a sustainable process for orienting new supervisors and providing ongoing peer support:

> *It's so important because then you see that — the whole theme of community is also important to us as supervisors. And through the [online group supervision] site or... however that that orientation takes place, we then can say, oh, here's all the people supervising within this cohort at this time. So supervisors for [a particular] cohort..., here's all the supervisors, here's their contact information. You know, you can ask each other questions so that poor [capstone project coordinator] doesn't get inundated (laughs) with all of our questions. But that... community for supervisors is built as well. And I think that that would really cut down on the workload and also... you would feel more like you're part of the community. And I can relate to what the previous participant was saying about kind of feeling out there and on your own.*

Our supervisors' message was clear. They enjoyed the learning engendered by online group supervision but they craved more peer-to-peer support and the ability to share solutions and resources. In this way, they could build a repertoire of skills and strategies and become better supervisors.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The students in this study gave high ratings to the quality of supervision they received during this trial demonstration of the Moodle site. They accessed the online supervision site regularly and frequently, which indicates high levels of student engagement. They spoke of the community and relational benefits of this type of supervision, which contrasts markedly from the consistent feedback we received over the years that students felt isolated in more traditional one-on-one supervision experiences. The "social factors" that facilitate the success of online courses (Miller & King, 2003) were apparent in the online supervision in this study. Students also experienced an enhanced learning environment.

Social presence, or sense of community, is a critical element for fostering collaborative learning among learners (Gunawardena, 1995; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). In our project, group supervision through the Moodle site fostered a collaborative and supportive learning community consistent with the pedagogical practices in the rest of the program. It fostered knowledge sharing and ongoing dialogue among students, providing for enriched feedback. These findings are consistent with Luppicini's (2007) analysis of

the literature, which noted that while students brainstormed in discussion forums, they were more task oriented and more likely to engage in problem solving and creative idea formation. Moreover, students working together energized each other and kept one another on track. However, a few students found it overwhelming and difficult to keep up when others were at different stages in their OLP process, which had a detrimental effect on community creation. For that reason, care should be taken to assign students to a supervision group who are at or at about the same stage in their OLP process. This will ensure they can engage in mutual exploration and problem solving.

Online supervision requires a different approach than one-on-one supervision does. In addition to providing instructions, feedback, and directions, the supervisor must facilitate group formation and processes such as clarifying expectations and developing group protocols at the outset, breaking down tasks and developing timelines that help the team and team members to progress together (Johnson et al., 2002). These elements of online team instruction were also apparent in the online supervision environment. While there was an initial learning curve involved in group supervision that made some supervisors hesitate to adopt it in their practice, those who had supervised using the digital learning platform Moodle site observed that faculty workload was reduced or stayed about the same when students were from the same cohort.

Group supervision demonstrated significant benefits for supervisors as well as students. As part of a robust learning community, supervisors' bonds with their students were deepened. In addition, as our supervisor participants pointed out, the group supervision site allowed the OLP coordinator to mentor new supervisors and those new to group supervision. In this way, it fostered improved professional practice of supervisors, increasing their confidence and supporting their learning. Moreover, it created a learning community for supervisors to provide peer support and share resources. However, as the supervisors suggested, this potential of group mentoring needs to be more fully supported to reach its full potential.

The following recommendations are supported by the findings and conclusions. First, all new supervisors should be required to join an online group supervision site with an experienced mentor supervisor to orient them to supervision. This would require that we develop mentoring guidelines as well as identifying mentor supervisors. Second, because of the overwhelming benefits of group mentoring, it should become the normal practice rather than the exception. To do this successfully will require changing the traditional culture of faculty engaging in one-on-one supervision in isolation. While the MA Leadership has successfully changed the individualistic culture of teaching to a more collaborative teaching approach elsewhere in the program, we will need to support our supervisors to change the way they supervise students working on their capstone projects. This will certainly require sharing these findings with them, and providing training and support.

It may also require a reorganization of how supervision is done. Third, we need to more actively support and encourage a supervisors' peer support group to share solutions and resources, and to maximize the benefits of a learning community of supervisors to enhance their skills and strategies and support them to become better supervisors.

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PART III

Pedagogies & Learning Designs

6

Problem Based and Collaborative Learning in Action: The Applied Business Challenges in the Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurial Management Program

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Abstract

Using real-life situations as the stimulus for learning, Problem Based Learning (PBL) has become more prevalent in management education. After a redesign, the Royal Roads Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurial Management (BCom) program has introduced three one-week, one-credit PBL experiences with a common theme of case analysis, called Applied Business Challenges. Each Applied Business Challenge (ABC) is designed so that the students immerse themselves in analyzing and resolving business challenges via an internal case competition, an international case competition, and a live-case consulting project. These ABCs illustrate a

concrete application of Royal Roads University's learning and teaching philosophy and practice, specifically with respect to experiential and authentic learning, an integrative curriculum, and the development of a strong learning community.

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Introduction

Royal Roads University's Learning and Teaching Model (LTM) has evolved since the formal opening of this special purpose university in 1995. Launched in September 1996 as one of the first programs at the recently created Royal Roads University, the Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurial Management (BCom) program was the first on-campus program offered using an innovative design and teaching teaching approach that capitalized on its attempt to be as relevant to the marketplace as possible. With on-campus and blended modes of delivery, the program was conceived to respond to the demands of the labour market by meeting the needs of early-career professionals interested in completing a flexible undergraduate management degree with emphasis on entrepreneurial skill development. The program was innovative because it was one of the first of its kind designed for mature and motivated students, allowing them to join the labour market after only 12 months of study (on-campus) or be able to work and study at the same time over a two-year period (blended).

The program adopted a constructivist approach and combined a set of andragogic features to serve its purpose. Like other programs at RRU, it adopted a problem-based/community learning approach, employing the Case Method and Collaborative (team-based) Learning as its main instructional techniques aimed at helping students obtain a concrete set of learning outcomes. Instead of leading to strong functional expertise as most other programs did, the program focused on developing well-rounded "managerial thinking" through the use of a Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach.

Over the last twenty-five years, considerable attention has been given to the use of learning-centric approaches to teaching such as inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, case-based learning, action learning, and problem-based learning (Major and Palmer, 2001). Despite their methodological differences, all these approaches emphasize the importance of active and collaborative engagement in defining, understanding, and posing solutions to real world issues. As well, these approaches respect individual differences in learning styles and build on previously acquired experience. They seem well-suited to applications in professional education programs where learners often have substantive experience in the profession and are seeking ways to apply new skills and knowledge directly to enhance workplace performance. The PBL approach, in particular, has made significant inroads into medical, education, and business schools as educators seek ways to make their curricula more integrative, problem-focused, and constructivist in orientation (Major and Palmer, 2001).

PBL uses complex and authentic tasks or real-life situations as the context and stimulus for the learning process. These "problems" tend to be ill-structured and open-ended, requiring learners to use an inquiry-based

approach to identify existing information that is pertinent, developing questions to acquire new insights, and gathering further information to assist in the analysis of the problem (Donnelly and Fitzmorris, 2005). Learners acquire and apply critical thinking, self-directed, and team-based learning strategies to wrestle with the real-life implications and meaning of these problems in order to analyse, understand, and eventually propose solutions or other strategies to manage or address the problem. The process attempts to reflect the kinds of authentic problem-solving processes encountered in professional applications or other real-life situations.

This chapter describes the particular use of PBL as a business education approach, supported by the Case Method and Collaborative Learning, adapted to the specific nature of RRU's BCom program. Introduced five years ago were three purposefully designed one-credit courses at the beginning, mid-point, and end of the program referred to as Applied Business Challenges (ABCs), all with a common theme of "case analysis." The ABCs support the accomplishment of the program's learning outcomes through an "in-house" experiential learning process. Participating in a mini-case competition, ABC I introduces the students to, and expands their comfort with, the Case Method as used across the program. ABC II builds on students' understanding of what a case competition is and provides a space for the students to practice their management skills by organizing an International Case Analysis Competition on campus. Finally, as a one-week long problem-based learning activity, ABC III challenges the students to integrate and apply their learning into a live-case scenario with real clients dealing with current business challenges. This chapter briefly describes the BCom program's design and purpose, highlights its most important learning and teaching features, and elaborates on the design and implementation of these three Applied Business Challenges. The most meaningful experiences are highlighted and an overall assessment of the effectiveness of this approach is incorporated.

The Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurial Management

Although the BCom program has changed through the years, particularly as a consequence of an in-depth program review and redesign in 2010-11, the program is fundamentally a completion-degree program, comprising years three and four (60 credits), and delivered in two unique delivery formats: (1) a 12-month compressed on-campus program, and (2) a 24-month blended program. These variants were launched with great success, recruiting two different student profiles to each program modality. The program is innovative and is a flexible alternative to those interested in advancing their credentials while limited by the professional or personal demands of early and mid-career professionals. The admission criteria includes a minimum of three years of work experience, high motivation and drive to learn, and a desire to participate in a dynamic learning community. The program is particularly attractive to those applicants who find it difficult to adjust to the

traditional admission requirements and/or time restrictions of the programs offered by institutions in their local regions.

At inception, the program offered an innovative constructivist model that employed four unique features not frequently found in the traditional management undergraduate programs of the time. First, the program was designed around five concrete learning outcomes: effective communication, critical thinking, problem solving, working with others, and global thinking. Secondly, unlike most other similar programs offered in Canada, this program placed a greater emphasis on developing a well-rounded entrepreneurial mindset[1] instead of advanced specializations (i.e., marketing, finance, accounting, operations management, or human resources). This was accomplished throughout the program in different ways. The two most important were the students' completion of a major final knowledge-integrating project, and, after 2003, the option of participating as competitors or volunteers of the Royal Roads University International Undergraduate Case Competition (RRUIUCC). Third, the program was offered in two innovative delivery structures: on-campus and blended. Each of these structures served the needs of two different markets producing unique learning experiences for either the compressed (on-campus) or the blended learning communities. Finally, in order to recruit students capable of succeeding through what was seen as a personally and intellectually challenging constructivist program, a different admissions philosophy was developed. Instead of admission being granted on the basis of completion of sufficient 100/200 level courses and a high grade point average, admission to the BCom program required the completion of a diploma, regardless of field of study, a strong learning motivation, a willingness to join a team-based learning environment, and at least three years of work experience. For those applicants that lacked post-secondary education, an opportunity for individualised flexible admission or prior-learning assessment was established, fundamentally recognising the professional competencies acquired through on-the-job experience.

The Applied Business Challenges

In accordance with RRU's Quality Assurance Policy, a program review in 2010 provided a major assessment of the BCom's market relevance and pedagogical effectiveness. Some of the feedback from alumni gathered through this review process concerned the optimum use of the Case Method, and the RRUIUCC competition and mechanisms to bring the case competition training and experience into the BCom program by design. Such requirements triggered a major program redesign in 2011. One key challenge identified was related to the structure of the program and the need for extensive student involvement in the planning and execution of the

1. "Entrepreneurial mindset" is defined as the capacity to conceive, plan, and execute new initiatives within established organizations, or the pursuit of new ventures.

RRUIUCC. The BCom redesign was an opportunity not only to introduce case analysis training, but also to re-structure the courses and terms with the goal of expanding the competition in both pedagogical impact and relevance. The Applied Business Challenges (ABC) resulted from the program redesign team's efforts to improve the program's capacity to meet its learning outcomes and respond to the feedback and challenges expressed by students and alumni.

Under an overarching theme of case analysis, the ABCs were designed as three complementary one-week, one-credit courses situated between terms in which the students immerse themselves in the process of resolving business challenges via an internal case competition, an international case competition, and a live-case consulting project.

1. ABC I – The Mini Case Competition

ABC I consists of a mini case competition delivered to each cohort of students over the course of one week (plus one more week for the final deliverable) and worth one credit.

According to Gamble and Jelley (2014), case competitions "provide business students with opportunities beyond the classroom setting to learn, network, and engage with complex problems". Students work in teams to propose alternative solutions to a pre-selected written case after three hours of thoughtful analysis and discussion. The students are expected to be intelligent and strategic about their choices because their recommended solutions are shared through a formal 20-minute presentation to a panel of judges, followed by a 10-minute question-and-answer session. This internal competition allows the students to increase their analytical, decision making, critical thinking, and teamwork and communication skills through a memorable learning experience. In addition to the intense work put in during the week, the students are also asked to reflect on the week and what they have applied to the analysis from their previous courses, then to submit their individual reflections to the instructional team.

Case analysis training includes: 'how to read a case,' with tips and tricks for maximizing learning; useful analysis tools, including drawing upon what students will have learned from their earlier courses such as Strategy and Financial Accounting; how to work/make decisions as a team; 'in-room dynamics'; as well as presentation skill and tips for working with PowerPoint. During training, students become familiar with the scoring sheet being used, watch a video of a previous case competition team's presentation, and score it themselves as if they were judging it. Finally, teams do small case analyses and presentations to the cohort for the purposes of learning from one another and receive considerable feedback in preparation for the assessed cases on the final day.

Cases used in this competition are typically 15-25 pages in length, with some

financial statements or other exhibits for analysis. Many cases are sourced through Ivey Publishing; however, sometimes RRU School of Business cases are used. More recently, there has been an initiative to coordinate the cases chosen for ABC I with cases that will be used in the students' upcoming courses.

The intention of the competition component is to promote learning through problem solving and collaboration, within the context of the social pressure produced by a carefully structured competition. For example, each day involves a new case requiring analysis, preparation, and presentation. There is no overnight reading or homework, which is a positive variation from usual term coursework. At the end of the competition, the winning team is announced, followed by a celebration of the week's accomplishments. At such point, 30% of the grade has been determined: 10% for contribution/active participation during the week, and 20% based on the case competition final ranking. The final deliverable for ABC I is an individual reflection, worth 70% of the grade and limited to 1500 words. The reflection must reference each of the five learning outcomes for the program. The reflection is evaluated based on the student's ability to communicate clearly, and should be a reflective demonstration of how they have applied their learning to the case analysis.

ABC I has evolved since it was originally conceived in 2011. There have been 13 mini case competitions delivered since January 2012, to both on-campus and blended BCom students. Based on student feedback, changes are introduced after each iteration, including the overall number of cases within one week, the length for case analysis, the number of cases done within one day, the number of judges per panel, the amount of training and the type of activities used in training, and the level of difficulty of the cases.

One important change has been the method of team selection for the on-campus cohort, who had initially been put in their first term teams for the challenge. They now do ABC I in new teams based on the positive feedback from the blended students who have always been put into their new teams for the mini case competition as a way to get them working together face-to-face before heading back online for another year.

The recruitment of judges for the mini case competition was originally focused on the RRU staff and faculty community as a means to engage them with the students; many non-academic staff have minimal face-to-face contact and appreciate the chance to see the students in action and to provide the teams with gentle, constructive feedback. Over time, judge invitations have extended to include members of the external community, such as local Chamber of Commerce representatives and employer contacts through our Student Services' Work Integrated Learning unit.

Feedback on this course has been primarily positive. Blended students appear to find it more rewarding than on-campus students, possibly due to the fact that it is a very interactive activity, and gives blended students

a condensed opportunity to practice their presentation skills. That this happens during their second residency, when they have not seen each other for a year, helps to promote bonding within the cohort. Many on-campus students have reflected positively on the mini case competition, however, overall the feedback has been mixed, which has led to the more frequent adjustments to the on-campus delivery. The switch to putting students in new teams has resulted in a significantly happier group in recent offerings.

2. ABC II – the RRUIUCC

The second Applied Business Challenge is one-week long with an additional week provided to submit the final deliverable. It is worth one credit and builds upon the experience in ABC I with the organization of the RRUIUCC. During the week, the BCom students are either responsible for competing as representatives of RRU or for running the various components of this international competition.

The RRUIUCC is held on campus every spring and is run by a small group of on-campus BCom students under the direction of program faculty and staff. The first competition attracted 14 teams, including one from the United States. Since its inception, the competition has grown considerably in size and reputation; the most recent competition (2016) included 20 teams from universities across Canada, the US, and Europe.

ABC II occurs between the second and third terms, however, a great deal of preparation and role selection happens beforehand. For instance, at the start of term one, students are presented with two specific co-curricular opportunities:

1. **RRU Case Competition team tryouts.** After an overview of the training requirements and competition tryouts, up to five students are selected to be on the competing team; and

2. **Executive Director (ED) interview**. After an overview of the RRUIUCC, students are invited to apply for the ED position. Interviews are conducted, a selection is made for either one leader or two co-leaders. Subsequently, the ED recruits other BCom students to the various key 'executive' roles, such as judges coordinator, live case writer, social events coordinator, and others. These role titles are not prescriptive, rather the recruitment of the individuals and their role definitions are left to the ED as an opportunity to "build their core team" and to acquire valuable learning in the process. RRUIUCC executive teams have been as small as 5 people and as large as 14 (with several co-chairs). Most importantly, the student executives are given the freedom to "make it work."

The RRU competing team and RRUIUCC cxecutive team work diligently for at least four months leading up to the RRUIUCC/ABC II. The remainder of

the students (e.g. 20 in 2016) participate fully in the RRUIUCC according to their assigned role:

- *Ambassadors*: escort and assist one competing team through all four days of the competition, including pre-arrival communication, welcoming students upon arrival, and escorting them through each case analysis and presentation (as well as monitoring them for adherence to the rules).
- *RRUIUCC Judge/Presentation Room Coordinator*s: responsible for keeping one of five presentation rooms on schedule and in accordance with the rules. Each coordinator works directly with one lead judge for the duration of the competition.
- *RRUIUCC – other roles*: includes runners who obtain USBs from teams, make hand-outs, and deliver them to judges, as well as presentation videographers, general photographers, gala slide show creators, emcee/s, scorekeepers, and more.

Depending on the size of the BCom cohort in a given year, the RRUIUCC executive team may play multiple roles during the actual days of the competition. By the end of ABC II, it is true that both the RRU competing team and the RRUIUCC executive team will have put in considerable more effort than those assigned to other roles during the competition; those individuals, however, have considerably more potential skills and lessons learned than the others to apply to their future careers.

Students "learn by doing" in areas such as scheduling, logistics and supplies, volunteer management, communications and marketing, judge recruitment, budgeting, sponsorship, and hospitality. This is the only component in the BCom program that all students work on or experience as a whole because most of their coursework is individual or team-based. Similar to ABC I, students are then asked to reflect on their individual experience during the RRUIUCC and submit a reflective paper. By week's end, 20% of the ABC II grade has been determined. The remaining 80% is based on the student's individual reflections on the connections between their learning experience and its relation to the program learning outcomes.

As well, ABC II has evolved through time. There have been five ABC II courses delivered, starting in 2012, with changes being made each time based on student feedback. For instance, a Case Analysis deliverable was recently implemented to reinforce students' case analysis skills and provide a better link to the running theme of the Applied Business Challenges. Prior to this change, students involved in the RRUIUCC had to complete an operational analysis, based on their role in the RRUIUCC, and identify areas for improvement for the operation of next year's event.

Feedback about this course has been mixed. Many students have commented on the positive element of this being a whole-class activity, as opposed to something done in teams or individually. Many students have also

commented on the learning obtained by observing the real-time behavior of their peers in an organizational setting that connects nicely with prior coursework in leadership. Nevertheless, there are also many comments about a lack of understanding of the benefits of the activity in anticipation of the case competition. As a result, greater effort is required to reframe the course and competition as important sources of learning for their career development. For instance, a future reflection might ask a student to connect an observation (e.g., the team they are hosting) to something they have learned in a prior course (e.g., leadership styles or teamwork).

3. ABC III – the Live Client Case

For the final Applied Business Challenge in the program, students take part in a Problem-Based Learning activity with a live client/case. Unlike ABC I and II that use written cases, the live-case requires a local business organization to share with the students a current and yet unresolved business situation. Unlike traditional cases, live cases lack teaching notes, pre-identified alternatives, or conceptual models to be used. Mirroring professional business consulting, live cases are conceived to be the ultimate test for students' abilities to face the complexities of the business world. As a result, when students work in teams to address real-life, community-centric business challenges, they are exposed to open-ended, complex, and loosely-structured problems that promote critical and creative thinking (Kennedy, Lawton and Walker, 2001).

ABC III is a one-week long activity, worth one credit. Student teams are introduced to a client company and hear about their challenges/issues directly from its CEO/founder. Student teams then ask questions, conduct research, and receive guidance from the instructor as needed. At the end of the week, students prepare a recommended course of action for the client via both a presentation and written report. Because this course is located three-quarters through the program, the expectation is that students will already possess a strong set of business tools and acumen, research experience, and communication skills.

At week's end, 65% of the ABC III grade has been determined, for contribution (15%, individual), the final case presentation (25%, team based), and the final case report (25%, team based). The case presentation, lasting a maximum of 10 minutes, is expected to contain a situation description, problem identification, issues analysis including additional research and resources beyond the case, statement of criteria employed for decision making, alternative solutions, and final recommendation(s). The remaining 35% for the individual reflection is due one week later, and like the individual reflection in ABC I and ABC II, the students are asked to reflect on their learning in relation to the program learning outcomes and how they have applied the learning from all courses taken to that point in the program.

ABC III has evolved through time. Since 2012, there have been 11 ABC III

courses delivered, including four on-campus and seven blended. Adjustments are made each time and have resulted in the following improvements:

- the introduction of the reflection to align with ABC I and ABC II,
- augmented training in problem-based learning (PBL) prior to client introduction,
- the need for the students to come up with a problem statement early in the week to ensure that they are researching what the client is actually interested in,
- clearer articulation of the presentation format, and
- increased clarity in the briefing process with the client and/or a different type of client.

Overall, students find the ABC III to be a positive learning exercise. Negative feedback has been less about the process and overall learning; rather, it has focused more on the actual quality or behavior of the client involved. For example, one on-campus client involved a service ("green" pet cremation) that several students found emotionally difficult to research. Another cohort's client was not as available for consultation as they should have been. Practical feedback about timing and deliverables has been acted upon and changed with each offering.

ABCs and the Program Modalities

Because the two program modalities offer a different course sequence, the ABCs had to be adjusted to fit each specific course delivery structure. For the on-campus delivery, ABC I was situated between the first and second terms and was viewed as not only the best placement for the case analysis training/content and competition, but also as a good way to get the students back into the swing of coursework after the winter holiday break. It also ensured that the students had the experience of a case analysis competition themselves, in advance of the RRUIUCC. ABC II was situated between the second and third terms, just after a 2-week break, in alignment with the general dates of the RRUIUCC. This has to take into account the timing of breaks and finals of other universities and other case competitions. ABC III was situated between the third and fourth terms—again, just after a 2-week break before students' final courses and capstone projects. For the blended delivery, participation in the RRUIUCC is logistically impossible; therefore, the blended cohort combined ABC I and ABC II into a longer, seven-day, two-credit mini case competition, occurring when the students are on campus for their second residency. The one-credit ABC III is offered entirely online to the blended students.

The Applied Business Challenges and the Learning and Teaching Model

The Applied Business Challenges emphasize the importance of three particular components of the Learning and Teaching Model: (1) Experiential and Authentic Learning, (2) Integrative Learning, and (3) the Learning Community.

Experiential and Authentic Learning

All three ABCs are designed to promote "learning by doing." From each of the three challenges, the students should take practical skills into their current and future careers. ABC I compels students to work as a team within a short time frame, to read a case, to do an analysis of it using the skills and tools learned in prior coursework, and to present their team's "solution and recommendation" to a panel of live judges. Judges often ask the students tough questions, based upon their own experiences in business. Highly transferable skills from this experience include the ability to: (a) read a written case in a short amount of time and distill, synthesize, and apply what is most important; (b) apply the appropriate tools to a situation; (c) work through the analysis and presentation preparation with three to five other people within a short period of time; (d) gain helpful practice in the art of presenting; and (e) think on one's feet during a Q&A period, and defend one's decisions/recommendation.

ABC II allows the students to experience the highs and lows of planning and executing a real, live business case competition, replete with the fun and excitement of a social event for 200+ people, as well as the sometimes tense situations brought on by the unique personalities of an individual judge, coach, competitor, or fellow student. The practical relevance of this experience will differ for each student. The RRUIUCC Executive Director, for instance, will have learned lessons about managing a team of peers, while a presentation room coordinator will have acquired valuable skills in time management.

Through consulting on a "solution" for a live client, students hone in ABC III the skills from ABC I. This is an authentic experience given the added element/realism of dealing with a real business owner's accessibility (or lack thereof), personality, and ability to accept the students' final recommendations (and possible criticism). As well, it provides the opportunity for students to learn the skills of communicating effectively and, sometimes, persuasively with clients and customers. This experience should be highly applicable in the students' future careers.

Integrative Learning

By design, the ABCs require students to synthesize what they have learned from each previous course, as well as their own work/volunteer experiences

prior to coming to RRU. Each case analysis in ABC I allows the student teams to draw upon the skills taught and tools recommended. For instance, if the company in a case is wondering whether to expand their operation internationally, the RRU BCom blended students will have knowledge from their *Doing Business in a Global Economy* course to inform their recommendation to the judge panel. In addition, ABC III draws upon students' honed research skills nearing the end of the program. While less explicit in its intention to incorporate prior course subject matter, ABC II is more observational and behaviorally-oriented. Learning by managing a large project—with volunteers and many moving parts—can be incorporated into students' future team interactions and work environments. Furthermore, observing one's own and others' behaviors within the greater whole of the competition can have an impact going into future courses in the BCom program as well as future workplaces.

Integrative by design, the individual reflection deliverable is intentionally due more than one week past the end of each challenge so that students have the time to contemplate how all prior coursework has contributed to their performance through the lenses of the program learning outcomes.

Learning Community

The BCom program cohorts are built with the specific intent of creating a strong learning community. At the start of each cohort/intake, the program office delivers a day-long "learning community day" intended to form important bonds between individuals coming together for a common goal. The ABC mini case competition provides another opportunity for each cohort to come together for a fun, yet challenging, goal: competition between teams. This is especially valuable to the blended students returning for their second residency. And as described, the RRUIUCC/ABC II is viewed by many as a rare opportunity for the entire cohort to work on one goal together—the execution of a world-class event—further solidifying the learning community.

Conclusion

This chapter has described how the 2011 redesign of the Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurial Management program allowed the adoption of a set of unique androgogical methods and learning activities, aligned with the university's Learning and Teaching Model. Specifically, three core components of the LTM exemplified by the Applied Business Challenges are: Experiential and Authentic, Integrative, and the focus on development of the Learning Community. Through their active participation in a case competition, executing an international competition as a cohort, and working with a live client, students draw upon and integrate their prior knowledge and deliver on student learning through the lens of the program learning outcomes. Based on considerable feedback, students have become

more aware of how their skills and abilities have been transformed by their involvement with the ABCs.

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7

Cultivating Belonging: Living Leadership in Communities of Learning

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Abstract

Learning Communities are an important element of the Royal Roads University (RRU) Learning and Teaching Model. Cohort members in Royal Roads University's Master's of Arts in Leadership (MAL) program remain connected and continue to support one another's career development years after they have graduated. In this chapter, we explore the intentional design in MAL that serves to build multiple opportunities for belonging, giving rise to these long-standing relationships. After a brief review of the adult learning literature and the concept of Learning Communities, we present several examples of students accomplishing their learning needs through their cohort. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of these activities for the student, the cohort, and for faculty and staff members.

We identify activities that support the cohort as a learning community and offer examples of learner-focused approaches.

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Introduction

The idea of a Learning Community is a key element of the Royal Roads University Learning and Teaching Model (RRU LTM). As a Learning Community, individuals learn and "work together as a cohort for the duration of the program" (Royal Roads University, 2003, pp. 15-16). Specifically, according to the RRU LTM, a Learning Community:

- allows students to experience a strong sense of connectedness, collegial support, and shared experiences;
- increases access to the professional knowledge of colleagues and peers;
- exposes students to a diversity of views, experiences, perspectives, and scholarship; and
- creates a broad base of readily available learning resources. (Royal Roads University, 2003, p. 16).

We frequently find that cohort members remain connected for years after they have graduated, which means that these relationships extend well beyond the duration of the program. Often, students continue to support one another as they develop in their professional careers.

In the MA-Leadership (MAL) program in the School of Leadership Studies (SoLS), these Learning Communities do not happen by accident. Rather, they are the result of intentional processes and structures that we explore below. These processes and structures serve as the foundation for the cohort model and support the belief that learning happens in relationship (Short, 1998).

Written by a First Residency Team Lead (Beth) as well as two former Program Heads for MAL (Catherine and Niels), the purpose of this chapter is to identify and explore the multiple Learning Communities that support the cohort model. The case we are exploring here, specifically the MAL program in SoLS, is significant in that it explores the sense of belonging that results from the intentional cultivation of these Learning Communities throughout the duration of the program. The chapter opens with a review of literature related to learning and the concept of Learning Communities, then shifts into a review of several examples of how students work with their cohort to accomplish their learning needs. It closes with a discussion of the implications of these activities for the individual and the collective cohort of students, staff, and faculty members.

Learning and Belonging in Community

Students coming to the MAL program typically say they are interested in learning and by the time they graduate, often report they have gone through a transformative learning process in the program. Stevens-Long, Schapiro, and McClintock (2012) described "*transformation* as an outcome [that] refers

to a deep and lasting change, equivalent to what some people term a *developmental shift or a change in worldview*" (p. 184). The MAL program has been carefully designed to support transformations in perspective, or worldview, including the development of critical awareness of one's earlier assumptions as constraints on perceiving and understanding the world, as described by Mezirow's (1991) concept of transformative learning. As Mezirow remarked, the development of critical awareness of one's assumptions has the result of "changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings" (1991, p. 167). As such, the MAL program builds on a new experience of learning for many of our adult learners entering the program.

Students frequently come into the program with expectations of the classroom environment based on a more traditional, top-down, teacher-centred model of education (i.e., Freire's infamous banking model, 2000/2005). However, they quickly find that our program involving adult learning principles and facilitated, experiential group processes creates deep bonds among student colleagues in a cohort. As their confidence increases with their increased understanding of the MAL learning model, students begin to experience an occasionally emotional transformation of their earlier perspectives. Two elements quickly become apparent: firstly, they see how learning "in this way might not simply be an anecdotal experience in one class, but also a useful life skill" (Etmanski & Barss, 2011, p. 24); secondly, students realize they are sharing significant learning experiences with a group of other mid-career adults similarly interested in learning, who each have considerable experience in the very topic they are interested in learning more about—namely, leadership.

From its inception, contributors to the development of the MAL program have understood that people learn better when they feel that they belong. As Block (2008) suggested, community cannot exist without people experiencing a sense of belonging; therefore, a Learning Community includes learning in the context of belonging. For this reason, in addition to the holistic integration of adult learning principles and practices, we have historically placed, and continue to place, a strong emphasis on building community among our students from the start of their program. Recognizing that people respond differently to different scenarios and have different learning preferences (Kolb, 1984), the MAL program offers a diverse range of options for experiencing community, with the intention of offering the possibility of belonging for everyone.

In addition, Stallard and Pankau (2008) identified that "people have six psychological needs that they expect will be met in the workplace: respect, recognition, belonging, autonomy, personal growth, and meaning" (p. 20). While we aim to meet all of these psychological needs, the focus on

belonging to community allows students to (a) understand "that one's own stories are partial, local, limited, or bounded," and (b) "[realize] the value of remaining in the tension between standing one's own ground and being profoundly open to the other" (Pearce & Pearce, 2003).

As a result, the act of belonging is co-created through sharing stories and understanding oneself more deeply. It is through this understanding of self in relationship to others that we can teach effective and holistic leadership.

Communities of Learning and Communities of Practice

In the existing literature, the concepts of Communities of Learning (CoL) and Communities of Practice (CoP) are frequently conflated. Although CoLs are at times narrowly defined in the educational literature "as a formal cross-disciplinary approach, involving the restructuring of the curriculum to enhance active, collaborative learning," (Wastawy, Uth, & Stewart, 2004, p. 333) they are typically associated more generally with the sharing and co-creation of knowledge. Likewise, the concept of a CoP is typically associated with Wenger's (1998) work (see also, Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Described as "groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise," (Wenger & Snyder, 2000, p. 139) CoPs have become part of organizational and educational discourse for the past two decades.

The concept of CoPs has become more nuanced over the years as new technologies have emerged and the body of related literature has expanded. However, in his original association of *community* with the idea of *practice*, Wenger (1998) claimed that the association of these two words "yields a more tractable characterization of the concept of practice—in particular, by distinguishing it from less tractable terms like culture, activity, or structure [and]…defines a special type of community—a community of practice" (p. 72). Wenger went on to assert that the three characteristics of CoPs were mutual engagement (i.e., people doing things together in the midst of complexity and diversity), a joint enterprise (i.e., in the context of heterogeneity, mutual responsibility, and diverse interpretations), and a shared repertoire (i.e., of stories, artifacts, historical events, concepts, and discourses) (pp. 73-85). Moreover, Hydle, Kvalshaugen, and Breunig (2014) have added to Wenger's original conception to assert that "a view of CoP that extends beyond the local understanding to consider relational ties in terms of spatial and relational proximity is needed" (p. 610). In other words, the more traditional understanding of community as only comprising a place-based group of people has evolved and communities are now understood to exist in virtual settings as well. As such, the Learning Communities (both CoL and CoP) we discuss in this chapter extend beyond place-based communities of more typical, localized classrooms and into the online setting.

In their research into different types of CoPs, Hydle et al. (2014) further differentiated between CoLs and Communities of Task (CoT). The latter was

focused on distributing work tasks across a community while the former was focused on people sharing and creating "knowledge across geographic locations and time" (Hydle et al., 2014, p. 610). Although this research was focused on business contexts rather than educational settings, Hydle and colleagues' findings are useful to this paper through their suggestion that in CoLs, individuals knew one another well and used multiple forms of communication (phone and e-mail, among others). In addition, "management stressed that both formal and informal organizations were necessary" to operate successfully (Hydle et al., 2014, p. 620). These findings support the value of a blended (both online and face-to-face) learning model that emphasizes the building of strong relationships prior to engaging in either task-oriented or learning-oriented processes at a distance in a virtual setting.

Fleck (2012) discussed Learning Communities in the context of a blended learning environment at the UK's Open University. He argued that face-to-face learning periods, akin to the two week residencies we offer in MAL, are foundational to the creation of Learning Communities, and "can be designed to maximise interactions between student peers with relevant experience to share, and to facilitate the development of real world business relationships that can offer considerable value beyond the merely didactic benefits of transmission teaching" (p. 403). Although Learning Communities exist in online settings, in the following section we focus on the mix of activities, both online and face-to-face, that offer MAL students the opportunity to build relationships.

Intentional Processes and Structures in the MA Leadership Design

The intentional processes and structures we introduce in this section serve as the foundation for the cohort model. At the time of writing, the MAL program was offered three times per year during the winter, spring, and summer, with a MAL-Health specialization also offered in the fall. In recent years, each offering has been attracting a cohort of approximately 40 to 50 students, with a handful of Interdisciplinary students joining the cohort for the first residency term as well as some who take it as an elective. Despite these large cohort sizes, we offer individualized and small group attention through advisory groups of 10-13 people assigned to one instructor. These advisory groups form the basis of our team teaching model—described in more depth in the paragraphs below—along with other learning activities that help to build strong relationships and a sense of belonging among the students.

Successful educators, like the successful managers described by Wenger and Snyder (2000), know how to "bring the right people together, provide an infrastructure in which communities can thrive, and measure the communities' value in non-traditional ways" (p. 140). Additionally, Cochrane et al. (2013) have discussed the merits of using mobile social media to create

an alternative online open and connected (OOC) framework. Similarly, as part of the culture of each particular cohort, students organically develop communication strategies and ways of working through mobile and social media, in addition to the class-based online platforms. Therefore, in the sections below, it is important to understand that there exists a balance between the intentional design created by the instructors and program administrative staff and the emergent properties of the group. In other words, the instructors and staff create the container (or infrastructure, to echo the quote above), but the people (the students together with the instructors and staff) fill this container with life and learning. The unique culture of each cohort is socially constructed (see for example, Gergen, 2009) through the dialogue and the stories that emerge from this weaving together and sharing of life experiences. As one of the participants in Storch's (2015) process identified, "It's the feeling that we are together in doing this, we share it. It only works because everybody plays along" (p. 212). This corresponds to Lewin's (1951) social psychology research that demonstrated people are more inclined to make a change in behaviour when they are committed and loyal to a group that can hold them accountable for carrying out new actions. The result of this mix of formal and informal opportunities to connect and transform reveals similarities and unique attributes between the different cohorts, year after year.

Finally, it is also important to understand that there is a widely held belief amongst faculty members—a belief grounded in adult education principles—that the learning communities we co-create in the cohort also allow faculty to demonstrate that we are learning with and from one other, the students, and the administrative staff. Clapp (2010) referred to these multiple forms of learning as omni-directional mentorship. The following sections provide insight into the multiple opportunities for omni-directional mentorship students experience in the MAL program.

Competencies to Support Teamwork

As suggested by Cochrane et al. (2013): "One of the key graduate attributes that lecturers aspire to develop in their students is the ability to work collaboratively in teams to design creative solutions to real world problems" (p. 1). As a special purpose university designed for working professionals, RRU places strong emphasis on collaborative and creative problem-solving in service of real world problems. RRU's competency-based learning and assessment model (see Dunning, 2014; Popova and Clougherty, 2014) in general, and the SoLS competency framework in particular, supports the development of effective teamwork skills amongst MAL students. The competency areas we focus on in MA-Leadership include:

- enhancing one's personal mastery and self-leadership,
- managing one's own learning and change processes,
- enabling others' learning,

- communicating effectively in diverse settings,
- developing team leadership and group facilitation skills,
- thinking and acting from a systems perspective,
- enhancing one's capacity for organizational leadership, and
- cultivating aptitude in organizational inquiry and research.

With all courses designed to address some or all of the above competencies, students have many opportunities to enhance their competencies during team-based learning activities, both during face-to-face residencies and online.

In this program, we offer seminars, workshops, readings, individual and team coaching, and other resources that support strong team development and teamwork skills. Moreover, the learning environment itself creates multiple opportunities for students to not only enable the learning of others, but to further develop their own personal mastery through a focus on the competency of *personal leadership*. Senge (2006) described personal mastery as "the discipline of personal growth and learning" (p. 131). The multiple learning communities we will describe below also allow students with specific gifts such as coaching, facilitation or systems thinking to express their leadership.

Although team dynamics are not always enjoyable or productive, and some teams are certainly more high performing than others, through building the competencies necessary for effective teamwork, we hope to inspire students with the idea that "you can't get extraordinary things done by yourself" (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 242). The intentional focus on these competency areas means that not only do we acknowledge that working in teams can often generate conflict, be more challenging at times, and occasionally be more time-consuming, but we also provide the tools and resources to work toward resolving these challenges. Indeed, as instructors, we would not be able to facilitate the learning of mid-career professionals on our own, which means that we endeavour to model effective teamwork ourselves.

Faculty and Staff Teams

During the residency period in particular, the faculty and staff demonstrate the value of engaging in our own Learning Community through a collective commitment to building a strong team and engaging in lifelong learning. As a community of learning and practice ourselves, we model the way (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) for the MAL students and demonstrate what is possible through working in collaboration. As we have described elsewhere (Etmanski, Fulton, Nasmyth, & Page, 2014), we have learned that explicitly naming our shared values is essential to the success of these residency delivery teams. This practice is affirmed by leadership scholars and practitioners such as Barrett

(2010), Copeland (2010), Hall (2001), Kouzes and Posner (2012), and Senge (2006). For most teams,

> The process of planning for a residency begins with an in-depth conversation about the values we individually bring to the work, the values we share, the ways in which we wish to work together, and the ways in which we want to stretch and grow. It is in these early dialogues that our deep relational connections are established. (Etmanski, Fulton, Nasmyth, & Page, 2014, pp. 101-102).

These relationships then serve as a foundation for our work and allow us to create a welcoming, brave, reflective, and compassionately critical learning space for the incoming cohort. From this foundation, we divide the cohort into team and small group configurations.

Beginning the Journey Online: Advisory Groups

To give students the opportunity to connect with a smaller group and work more personally with their faculty advisor, our cohorts are divided into advisory groups. Advisory groups spend the first four weeks of the program working together online. During this period of time, they are introducing themselves to one another, completing required readings, completing self-assessment activities, posting responses to activities, and participating in online dialogues with the other members of their advisee group. Each faculty advisor participates in online forums, modelling possibilities for interaction and supporting the advisory group as they begin their online journey. During the second week of the online pre-residency session, faculty advisors host a Collaborate™, Skype™, or teleconference call with their respective advisory groups. The purpose of this call is generally to connect as a group, identify team values and ways of working together, provide an overview of the first assignment, and clarify any questions the students may have to date. Thus, the seeds of community are planted during this initial online session, in preparation for their work together in residency.

Opening and Stewarding Community: The Role of Dreamkeepers

During the opening reception for the residency, second year students serve as hosts by warmly welcoming first year students arriving on campus and by serving as their mentors in a buddy system. This evening event also serves to introduce the first year students to stewards of community called *Dreamkeepers*—or keepers of the dream—a longstanding tradition in the MAL program. Within 12 hours of this event, the first year students have grasped the idea that the Dreamkeepers are responsible for taking the pulse of the cohort and identifying activities that will help to foster greater cohesion and community. In other words, through their relationships with other members of the cohort, Dreamkeepers gain a general sense of how people are feeling (curious, excited, tired, anxious, overwhelmed, etc.) and design activities intended to support their colleagues and generate deeper relationships between all members of the cohort.

On their first day of residency, the first year students select their initial team of Dreamkeepers. Essentially, two or three individuals from each of the advisory groups self-select to play the role of Dreamkeeper for different parts of the program. This group of individuals support creating the sense of belonging that is so crucial to community (Block, 2008). Individuals are also responsible for facilitating the exercises that will help the cohort determine its vision and values, and for bringing the cohort community to a close on the final day of the residency experience. These individuals steward the community throughout the residency experience and for the remainder of the two year program. They also offer an early opportunity for individuals to step into their leadership in the context of this cohort-based Learning Community, if they wish. The individuals who hold the role of Dreamkeeper switch regularly, and there is always a team of people who are taking the pulse of community and offering activities and experiences to further develop and enhance the cohort. Although the Dreamkeeper activities sometimes wane during the year of online learning following the first year residency, they are always rekindled as the second year students prepare to welcome the incoming first year cohort.

Supporting Each Other Throughout the First Term: Learning Partnerships[1]

As described by Agger-Gupta and Etmanski (2014), one of the basic learning structures in the First Residency Term is a learning partnership, typically a triad or dyad. During the first few days of the first-year residency, students self-select into learning partnerships. We encourage students to be intentional about their choices, taking into consideration, for example, opportunities for personal growth based on an immediate response to specific individuals, as well as opportunity to maximize diversity factors including, among others, work sector, geographic home, age, culture, (dis)ability, and gender. This diversity of experience, culture, and thought is highly valued in learning partnerships as it ensures that students are exposed to ways of thinking, being, and knowing that are different—or perhaps surprisingly similar—to their own. Our experience has been that these learning partnerships can also help to develop cross-cultural communication skills and empathy, especially because they take place in the context of a supportive CoL environment with multiple opportunities for belonging. In the second-year residency, the program staff and faculty assign learning partnerships based on our growing understanding of the students' personalities, knowledge of their previous opportunities to work with specific classmates and instructors, and their Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)^{TM} profiles. If a second-year learning partnership is clearly not working, we accommodate this reality; however, for the most part we ask

1. This section on learning partnerships, as well as the next one on Leadership Challenge teams, draws extensively from our previous writing on the topic of Transformative Learning in the MAL program (Agger-Gupta & Etmanski, 2014, pp. 43–44). Please see the original publication for more information.

students to respect the choices we have made in assigning these learning partnerships. This allows them to practice their growing leadership competencies with any given member of the cohort and, on occasion, this allows them to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings.

The main purpose of the learning partnership is to create a safe environment for experimentation with different leadership strategies and behaviours, and to provide reciprocal, learning-oriented peer feedback. Learning partners become familiar in detail with one another's learning goals and provide mutual aid in developing learning plans, reflecting on readings and class material, sharing their leadership experiences, and addressing personal and professional challenges from a learning perspective. The dyad or triad learning partnership meets outside of class time, supports one another in learning, reviews assignments prior to submission to the faculty advisor, meets as a learning partnership with the faculty advisor each week during residency, and provides feedforward (Goldsmith, 2002)—that is, future focused, improvement oriented, or affirming suggestions about how to succeed in future iterations of self-identified learning goals.

Students conduct learning experiments in their triads on a range of interpersonal skills such as: creating a respectful environment, optimizing others' learning, sharing stories of their experiences and cultural orientations to the world, and practicing a variety of communication skills, including asking helpful reflective questions. The partnership gives students experience in rehearsing leadership behaviours, in observing, and in providing learning-oriented feedback to others in a small group. Partners also observe one another in larger learning venues and provide learning-oriented feedback on their observations. The learning partners have a rich opportunity to enable one another's learning, challenge behavioural or thinking patterns that might be inhibiting learning and leadership, and offer a supportive ear (McKay, Davis, & Fanning, 1995; Short, 1998).

Learning About Team and Group Process: Leadership Challenge Teams

The primary structure providing an experience base for learning during the first year residency is the Leadership Challenge (LC). Prior to the residency, faculty engage a local non-profit or sector-relevant sponsor with an organizational challenge or opportunity that would benefit from inquiry by teams of graduate students. The organizational sponsor works with faculty to develop a LC document outlining the organization's mission, goals, structure, and critical details of the immediate leadership issue that they are seeking to address.

Students then self-select (or sometimes are organized) into LC teams and each LC team constitutes approximately half of their advisory group (described above). These teams work together to explore the issue and prepare a response and set of recommendations to the sponsoring

organization on the leadership challenge they have brought forward. The students have approximately ten days from when they meet the client to deliver their recommendations to the client panel. During this ten-day period, they: identify their team agreements, values, and vision; determine the core client issue that they are going to focus on; determine their roles, responsibilities and tasks; and complete the above within the prescribed timeline. This assignment is completed in residency and is designed to provide an opportunity to immediately apply their leadership learning to a real life situation and to navigate the delivery of the final product within the context of learning more about group process and working within a team. As Kouzes and Posner (2012) emphasized, effective "leaders foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships" (p. 21). While time is set aside daily for this work, leadership challenge teams discover that evening and weekend work is also required in order to complete the project.

Engagement as a part of a team working on a practical challenge faced by a real organization creates a common experience in which students can apply the theory they have been reading and dialoguing about in combination with their own professional experience. The LC activity therefore provides rich opportunities for students to develop their strengths on all of the competencies of the first blended learning term. Instructors frequently remind the LC teams of the two goals of this experience: include the end product presentation to the sponsor *and* the process they use to get there. Delivery of one at the expense of the other is a lost opportunity for deep and rich learning.

Learning From Across the Cohort: Seminar Learning Groups

A final learning community configuration in the first residency term is the seminar learning group. To facilitate and support the work of the LC teams in completing their assignment, each of the faculty advisors teaches a seminar in an area of expertise and passion. These seminars also align with the program competencies and support success in the Leadership Challenge. The seminar learning groups include an intentional mix of students from across all leadership challenge teams. This mixture translates into each of these LC groups having lessons from each seminar when they convene in their leadership challenge team meetings following each day of learning. This additional Learning Community also presents another opportunity to build connections across the cohort and diminishes the possibility of advisory groups becoming insular.

After the First Residency: Online, Second Residency, and Capstone Communities

As previously mentioned, Fleck's (2012) work supports our current design of including a two-week residency near the beginning of this blended learning program. Once the students have formed strong relationships, they are better

able to attend to the team-based assignments required as part of their online learning. The online courses offer a variety of learning activities, most of which include drawing links between the students' professional and personal experiences. Although some activities require more individual reflection or straightforward discussion, online courses also include opportunities for team writing and presentations. Just as in residency, online courses are often divided into sections, smaller groups, and even learning partnerships. As described above, students may also continue organizing informal Dreamkeeper activities, such as initiating Collaborate™ or Skype™ calls, or simply sharing video clips via e-mail to support ongoing connections.

Similar to the first residency period, the second year residency includes advisory groups, learning partnerships, and seminar groups. Although there is no Leadership Challenge assignment, students are required to complete an Inquiry and Leadership Lab. For this assignment, team members (who often include learning partners) work together to prepare a short presentation with supporting resources to teach the whole cohort. The purpose of this presentation is for students to teach their colleagues about a selected research method. Again, this assignment asks students to balance the process with the outcomes, while offering an opportunity to develop their skills of learning in community.

As a final Learning Community option, some faculty members have begun supervising their capstone project or thesis advisees in groups of two or more. As is common with graduate level research, many students report feelings of isolation and disconnection in the final stretch of the program. Since most students have not conducted research in affiliation with a university, this can be a period of great uncertainty with a steep learning curve, not to mention the most intense writing experience most students have ever experienced. When supervisors offer to operate in small groups, this provides an option for students to check in with one another on a regular basis, share learning and resources, and realize that they are not alone in their struggles to complete a Master's degree.

Discussion and Challenges

Each of the smaller group configurations outlined above is highly interconnected and interdependent. In the first residency alone, opportunities exist for optional participation across the cohort (seminar learning groups and Dreamkeepers) and within advisory groups (advisory group, learning partnerships, and leadership challenge teams). Each of the small group configurations offers opportunities for students to uncover more about themselves as they operate in a range of different relationships (Short, 1998), challenges they face in their personal leadership and development of personal mastery, and overall leadership practices and approach (Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Senge, 2006). In particular, they offer opportunities to better understand their presence in teams and groups (Kaner, Lind, Toldi, Fisk, &

Berger, 2014; Lencioni, 2005) and how to see themselves as part of a human system (Etmanski, Fulton, Nasmyth, & Page, 2014; Senge, 2006).

Peter Senge has offered that "it takes courage to hold visions that are not in the social mainstream. But it is exactly that courage to take a stand for one's vision that distinguishes people with high levels of personal mastery" (Senge, 2006, p.139). Our hope is that we successfully graduate leaders who have the courage of their convictions, and the tools and skills to achieve their visions. Although the journey to personal mastery is never ending, we have seen that the multiple intentional processes and structures we offer throughout this program support students' ongoing leadership development. What is more, as relationships deepen, our hope is that each student experiences at least one community where they feel they truly belong.

The benefit of these multiple Learning Communities notwithstanding, it is important to recognize that a strong focus on teamwork is more of an extroverted preference. As Cain (2012) has offered, more introverted preferences can also generate deep learning, creativity, and innovation. Based on observations of some students feeling overwhelmed by the intensive residency experience, some teams of instructors have chosen to integrate dedicated reflective periods, or intentionally silent periods, into the residency schedule. For one faculty team in particular (of which Beth and Catherine were part),

> Creating a silent period in the [middle of a] busy agenda demonstrated to the learners that we valued reflection enough to move other content out of the way. … As instructors, we observed that committing to this short daily practice had a tremendous impact. It served as a calming mechanism in the midst of the busy pace of residency and offered opportunities for learners to share their own personal leadership practices with one other. (Etmanski, Fulton, Nasmyth, & Page, p. 103)

Although some individuals can spend all day in conversation, in developing community, it is important to remember to provide spaces where individuals who require more personal time for reflection can take care of their needs. In addition, the intensity of this teamwork also has implications for faculty. Due to the necessity to be fully present for a two week period, often including weekends, the team teaching model attracts only the most dedicated of instructors. As such, we faculty strive to balance our own needs with those of the individual students, the larger cohort, and the institution.

In addition to the idea that an over-emphasis on teamwork can create challenges for students, there is also a question around the possibility for exclusion. As mentioned earlier, occasionally students from outside the cohort will join for a class or two. Although the outside knowledge and experiences they bring can enhance the learning community, there is occasionally a concern about how these students will integrate into the cohort. As a point of reference, Hydle et al. (2014) found that when employees had not met their colleagues face-to-face, "there was less sharing of

knowledge, experiences, solutions, and systems information" (p. 620)—an experience we sometimes see reflected when interdisciplinary or continuing studies students join our online courses. Nevertheless, as is consistent with Hydle et al., we often see particular students from the cohort take the initiative to reach out and build relationships with these new students, thus serving a connector (Gladwell, 2000) or "boundary spanning" function (Cross & Parker, 2004; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Since exclusionary practices are at times unconscious, instructors must be alert to this possibility and support these students—as well as any other students from the cohort who may not be working well with others—in their integration into the course. This requires skillful facilitation and, admittedly, is not always possible. Nevertheless, if belonging is a key element of the cohort-based learning experience, it behooves both instructors and students alike to be wary of exclusionary practices as part of their ongoing leadership development.

Other programs at RRU might also encourage, if not replicate, some of the successful experiences SoLS has had in developing and sustaining CoLs. Although many programs at RRU support CoLs, the Leadership School is the only one that structures its residency teams based on the model of Advisee Groups and team teaching and assessment. The increased costs over a more traditional faculty/student structure may be what stand out on a superficial glance. However, the transformational changes the MAL program generates through its focus on leadership as engagement, its integration of scholarship with practice, of knowledge with personal experience, and its evidence-informed decision-making process result in devoted students and strong word of mouth advertising for the program, resulting in a waiting list for each cohort offering. Moving to this model of learning and teaching requires a willingness to invest in students as adult learners and an orientation to possibility, which is one of the key Leadership School principles (Harris & Agger-Gupta, 2015).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented the SoLS approach to enacting the Learning Community element of Royal Roads University's Learning and Teaching model. Specifically, we have investigated the diversity of intentional learning processes and structures that offer the possibility of belonging and provide the foundation for a strong and vibrant cohort. Even though these activities sometimes take additional time and dedication from faculty, program staff, and students alike, they nevertheless engage the heads, hearts, hands, and spirits of each one of us and offer opportunities to develop our leadership competencies through trusting relationships. Our own experience of teaching in this way, coupled with affirmative comments from our students, provide evidence that learning in community contributes to a greater sense of well-being that continues to attract new students and faculty, year after year.

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8

Creativity Takes Courage: Integrating Video Assignments into Academic Courses and Blended Programs

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Abstract

While the integration of technology has become more commonplace in academic classrooms, many instructors hesitate to integrate video assignments into courses. This chapter addresses how to frame video assignments and manage expectations of both students and instructors, discusses how to integrate and benefit from video assignments in individual courses and across programs, and concludes with a step-by-step guide to embracing creativity and courage in order to engage with a different format for assignments. Drawing on a wide range of interdisciplinary research and resources related to creating engaging assignments and pedagogy, to fostering soft skills at the workplace, this chapter is focused on best practices and safeguarding academic rigor while providing students with different types of learning opportunities. Examples of video assignments are provided, as well as guidance for instructors and students on how to maximize and master the learning experience that comes with video assignments. The chapter argues that video assignments have a wide potential for application in courses and across programs, and that they support cohort and community building. Thereby, video assignments are a great addition to blended and online courses.

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1. Introduction and Context

The use of videos, animated clips, and presentations in the academic classroom has become increasingly commonplace and reflects the everyday use of interactive technology and reliance on multi-media sources translated into the educational context. Instructors use technology in their classrooms (both online and face-to-face) to bring in guest speakers, enhance lectures with TEDtalks or documentaries, and conduct technology-assisted simulations. They use PowerPoint, Prezi, or similar technology to present their materials and teach students content related to their class and program.

However, there is often strong hesitation related to the use of video submissions for academic assignments. Students and instructors commonly raise the following concerns: video assignments are time-consuming for all parties involved, they are of less academic value and relevance to programs of study (outside the context of film, professional communication, or marketing degrees, for example), and they require high levels of technological knowledge. This paper will explore the potential and benefits of video assignments as far more extensive. It offers solutions for addressing concerns and challenges and provides recommendations for how to integrate video assignments into academic courses.

2. Framing Video Assignments and Addressing Expectations

To a large extent, the framing of a video assignment does not differ from other, more traditional assignments; it falls into the category of creating engaging assignments (Fiorentino, 2004; Nisly, Cecire, Friesen, & Sensenig, 2015; Swinth & Vinton, 1994). For any assignment, instructors have a particular (learning) purpose around which they provide students with a specific question or challenge. Assignments follow learning objectives and include assessment criteria or an assessment rubric (Greenberg, 2015). Whether they are working in the context of teamwork or individual assignments, students are required to demonstrate academic knowledge and abilities, and to connect course materials, readings, and independent research to address a concrete problem by critically engaging, reflecting, evaluating, and presenting their own analysis and view on the subject matter (Lim, Pellett, & Pellett, 2009; Schultz & Quinn, 2014). Beyond standard academic requirements including referencing, instructors will specify the parameter of assignments such as length and scope, format and materials to be used, as well as anticipated output. Assignments generally include an outline of scope, purpose, and relevance of the assignment to the course/program learning.

This section will cover aspects specific to framing video assignments and address concerns and expectations as they relate to both students and

instructors. Some examples of different video assignments can be found in the appendices.

2.1 Setting Expectations and Outcomes

For many students—not only adult learners and returning students—the learning curve of academic writing and critical thinking is high. Producing academic materials differs from the report writing, compilation of materials, and documentation common to the average workplace. Most university programs offer academic writing and critical thinking courses. Additionally, they integrate research methods, methodology courses, or other components into their offerings to support students in their transition into academic writing.

When framing a video assignment for an academic context, this becomes particularly relevant as the presentation format is different, yet the content is not. Video assignments are not a simple recording of opinion statements or compilation of existing materials. Rather, they are a demonstration of the ability to critically engage with existing materials, concepts, and ideas, to present reflections, and to expand one's learning inside and outside of the academic classroom. Video assignments, like academic writing, are to follow conventions, such as APA referencing, respecting copyright, not plagiarizing, and generally attributing thoughts and materials to their source of origin (Greenberg, 2015; Sword, 2012). The key difference is that video assignments allow a visual dimension of presenting ideas, concepts, and connecting thoughts and materials in different ways; allow students to extend their comfort zone and thereby learn more effectively.

As producing a video clip is likely unfamiliar to most students, it is important to manage expectations for the anticipated outcome. This includes a focus on academic content over stylistic presentation; students are not expected to produce a feature motion picture outcome, but rather, to present a cohesive narrative in a visual format (Bakker et al., 2011; Willis, 2009). While a simple slideshow will be insufficient to meet academic standards, connecting images, existing clips, new materials, and a narrator voice/text are likely to yield positive results and higher grades for a video assignment.

Similar to supporting students in acquiring academic writing skills, guidance in the production of a successful video assignment is helpful (RRU Library, 2015). Storyboarding is likely the simplest and most important support structure for video assignments (Kay, 2014; Lim et al., 2009; Marks & Thomas, 2014; Thorn, 2011). Whether a video assignment is set to address a particular question (similar to an essay question) or a series of questions (similar to an exam), a video assignment can replace either an in-classroom presentation or a written submission. Ultimately, a video assignment provides engaging and diverse opportunities for student assessment of learning, including breaking up the common cycle of reading and writing alone by adding further dimension.

2.2 Open Ended Questions and Space for Creativity

Open-ended questions often leave space for the most creativity and diverse analysis of the problem or challenge presented to students; there is no difference between regular written and video assignments (Caniëls & Rietzschel, 2015; Nisly et al., 2015). Open-ended questions in the context of video assignments can range from self-introduction and defining concepts to presenting cases and skills (see examples in appendix). Video assignments enable students to compile their own materials, to mix and match written and audio-visual materials, integrating animation, pictures, art, music, different speakers, and of course their own voice into their response to the open question (CTET, 2015). The less restrictions imposed through format and technology use, the more diverse and creative (Schultz & Quinn, 2014; Truong-White & McLean, 2015) will be the responses. This includes leaving space for different levels of ability for dealing with technology and compiling audio-visual materials.

Setting expectations that place an emphasis on content, critical thinking, and analysis over motion-picture quality will enable students to engage with different styles for presenting and learning information (Bakker et al., 2011; Lim et al., 2009). The goal is to allow students to stretch their comfort zone while engaging with the course materials (Borbye, 2010; Harrison, Starks, & Denhardt, 2011; Nehyba, 2011). Through the open framing of delivery, we have observed students do the following: use existing written, visual, and audio materials; integrate their own songs and music to represent conflict; use props such as Barbie dolls or Lego to present conflict interaction or tsunami aftermath as disasters; present newscast type interviews with themselves to answer the questions provided; and connect their professional work as an air traffic controller to demonstrate conflict and competing interests (CTET, 2015). The limits of what can (and will) be done are set by the students in response to open questions. The framing of the video assignment by the instructor will guide them in the context parameters and empower their creativity.

2.3 Establishing Learning Objectives and Academic Rigor

Not every assignment in every course may be a good fit for a video assignment—the video format must be relevant to the purpose of the assignment (Bakker et al., 2011; Nisly et al., 2015). In other words, framing a video assignment must include how the format is relevant for the task and for achieving the learning objectives (Viñes, López, Manrique, & Alonso, 2008). Learning outcomes may be established at a program and/or course level, with each assignment in a course indicating how it will be assessed in regards to these objectives and outcomes (Bahous & Nabhani, 2011; Hill, 2012; Siefert, 2011). Sometimes the wording of learning outcomes provide challenges (or limitations) in regards to the use of video assignments; common wording used in learning outcomes includes language such as “compiles and presents written materials in a coherent fashion.” Accommodating other submission

formats needs to be taken into consideration when generating learning outcomes.

In many ways, most assignments can be easily adjusted to allow video submission for the simple reason that learning objectives and academic requirements are the same, irrespective of the submission format, as outlined above. The learning objectives and outcomes assist students and instructors to distinguish a "nice video" from an "excellent video assignment," again similar from a passing to an outstanding paper (Greenberg, 2015; Kay, 2014). For example, a video assignment that records a student outlining her or his arguments in relation to the question assigned might receive as high (or higher) a grade than a video that integrates music and images from a range of different sources but lacks academic content. The relevance of the materials used in combination to the ideas presented highlight the essence and academic expectation of a video assignment.

2.4 Assessing Video Assignments, Grading and Feedback

From an instructor perspective, the grading of a video assignment is not necessarily different nor more time-consuming or cumbersome than grading a written assignment. This may be surprising to many instructors, and at the same time it can address some resistance related to workload issues, specifically when it comes to the time consuming task of grading written assignments. If students submit 3-5 minute clips, watching the submission is time-bound and the review, feedback, and comments take similar or less time compared to written submissions. A grading rubric can further assist in providing feedback and facilitate a speedy assessment (Greenberg, 2015), which may be of particular interest when teaching larger classes.

Most video assignments can be based on more traditional assignment formats, i.e. framing similar tasks for students to demonstrate their knowledge and learning related to a particular course, program, and topic. Some examples for video assignments can be found in the appendices.

The assessment and related feedback for video assignments should highlight an adequate presentation of ideas, concepts, and analysis; in other words, focus on academic content. Presentation and style may be considered relevant, though generally of less important (academic) value in this context. Feedback for students that focuses on the relevance of their content can also include how their delivery method matches their intention and supports their narrative (CTET, 2015). Some examples:

- Is background music necessary and complementary to the presentation of content, e.g. instrumental music instead of spoken voice or a self-written song capturing personal history conveyed in the clip?
- Are the pictures or images connected to the critical analysis and content, e.g. using images of the World Trade Center memorial waterfalls for an

assignment regarding resource conflicts or demonstrating the impact of a tsunami wave using Lego figures in a bathtub?

- Has existing material been enhanced (mashed) by adding one's own interpretation and understanding of theoretical concepts, e.g. using an existing clip from a Sesame Street skit, used by one student as is and shown by another student to highlight escalation and de-escalation of conflict by adding captions into the existing material?

Instructors may consider how they communicate their feedback, offering for instance a written narrative or a recording of their own.

2.5 Recording Devices, Technical Guidance for Hosting and Submitting

The framing of a video assignment should provide guidance regarding the use of technology – and where to find support for use of video technology (RRU Library, 2015). While it is important to encourage students to stretch their comfort zones and familiar formats, the time required to work with technology should not overshadow a focus on content. It might be safe to assume that students have at least one device at their disposal that enables them to record for the purposes of a video assignment. Most mobile phones include a camera that can create video material, built-in cameras on laptops or computer screens are common, and even digital cameras can be used to record clips. When students are asked to record their own material, privacy and ethical issues must be taken into consideration (Talab & Butler, 2007). It might therefore be important to discourage students from recording others and rather work with materials available or animation (e.g. Powtoon). Generally, technology available for producing video material is less of an obstacle than it might appear.

Having created video material, most students will need to edit their content. This can be achieved in various ways, including the software often provided with digital recording devices, available on computers, or the uploading functions of video hosting platforms such as YouTube. Students will often struggle with editing their materials and keeping their submission within a given time limit. If an assignment requires more than simply recording themselves, different editing tools might be required and can generate challenges of a different kind for students. Facing technology challenges, most students will quickly engage in a dialogue with each other to tackle the hurdles and making the assignment work. Most video editing programs, such as the YouTube video manager, come accompanied by many help and instructional videos that can be easily found online. Thereby, easily available resources providing technical guidance mitigate the impact of the technology on students and instructors (RRU Library, 2015).

Hosting video assignments comes with a range of concerns and benefits, ranging from technical to more personal/privacy related issues. Learning Management Systems (LMS) often have a size limit for file uploads. For

example, the standard setting on the Moodle LMS platform is a 20MB maximum file limit for student submissions. Depending on the recording, video submission can be larger files, which may require relying on hosting services such as YouTube or MediaCore (RRU, 2015). Some video hosting and sharing services may require the consideration of privacy issues, including storage on US-based servers or the requirement to create an account and determine the availability of a clip (e.g. 'unlisted,' 'private,' or 'public'). While simply uploading a video file might appear an easy way around the hosting issues, this can create other challenges such as the inability to watch certain files on different operating software (e.g. Mac/iOS versus Windows) or browser functionality. Generally, when considering hosting options it is essential to provide guidance and keep it simple in order to avoid technology challenges overshadowing the learning experience.

3. Integrating and Benefitting From Video Assignments in Programs and Courses

Some aspects of the benefits of video assignments depend on and relate to specific programs of study or even particular courses. Overall, video assignments benefit from being integrated into programs and courses rather than being isolated events. Enabling students to improve their skills to portray their message and analysis in video assignments will be most beneficial when assignments are not simply replaced with video options but rather used at several intervals and where the video fits best in their overall program flow.

Generally speaking, using an introductory video assignment at the beginning of a program of study, for example in a foundations course, is likely to set a solid basis for continuing integration of technology, and includes other benefits, as the following will discuss. After the first video assignment, and as appropriate thereafter, 'review and reflect' sessions can debrief the students' experience and set the learning into the particular context. Over the course of the debrief, students themselves will overcome frustration with technology and highlight their benefits from the learning experience, which can range from overcoming fear of the unknown to community building, addressing different learning styles, and enhanced peer learning. The following sections highlight some key learning benefits from video assignments.

3.1 Improving Skills Over Time: Regular Sequence Rather Than One-Off

Similar to how students improve their academic writing over the course of their program by increasingly going from writing shorter, simpler documents to longer, more complex pieces, the expectations related to video assignments should increase over time. This relates to expectations of depth and complexity of the materials and ideas presented, the level of analysis and critical thinking, and clarity of thoughts and line of argument. Allowing students to learn and improve their academic writing is one aspect of

completing university studies, which is complemented by learning and improving academic presentation skills (Nisly et al., 2015; Price, Strodtman, Brough, Lonn, & Luo, 2015; Sword, 2012). Video assignments, integrated throughout a program of study, further complement this aspect of learning. It can be achieved by continuously requiring video assignments throughout a program, for example in more than one or two courses. This practice improves the ability to present information in certain formats, written and audio-visual alike.

In addition to including video assignments and improving skills in video formats, instructors can encourage video posts in the learning management system to complement, enhance, or even replace written posts. Similar to practicing critical thinking in written posts, students can practice video skills through their posts. As a result, any course becomes overall more engaging and interactive rather than being one-dimensional based on written words alone.

3.2 Beyond the Classroom: Individual Skills and Marketability

The ability to present information and convey knowledge in a range of formats is a beneficial skill in many professions, which students will take from their video assignments in class to their respective workplace (Kyllonen, 2013; McCarthy & Hatcher, 2002). This includes being better able to communicate with multi-media production specialists by having a more than basic understanding of how to present key information in various visual formats. Furthermore, the ability to analyse and critique visual materials provides students with another marketable skill for their individual toolbox and professional development.

The confidence to appear in and present a self-edited video further contributes to the confidence of students to present and defend their own ideas in videoconferences, presentations, or talks in the classroom and in their professional lives. While students would normally acquire this kind of skill in classroom presentations (McCarthy & Hatcher, 2002), this is more difficult to replicate in blended or online course formats. There are fewer opportunities for presentations and classroom discussions as face-to-face time is more limited. It is easier to mull over and carefully compose posts in writing, drafting, and editing in the comfort of your own home. Perceived provocations or misunderstandings resulting from posts can be excused or explained away by the delivery format, e.g., being written in haste or language/cultural differences. A video submission (or post) adds another dimension where it is possible to set a tone and context, to show one's face and non-verbal communication for further context. Depending on how it is framed, a video assignment results in a product closer to a classroom presentation or plenary discussion. The diversity of how video assignments are framed over the course of a program of study can further enhance individual skills building and marketability.

3.3 Generating Learning Communities: Learning From and With Peers

Building a strong sense of community or cohort is more challenging to achieve in blended programs, where students rarely meet face-to-face and are also scattered across the country, and even the globe (Luppicini, 2007; Tu, 2004). Facing a challenging task together, such as a video assignment, early on in the program can help facilitate community building. Students bond over the experience and interaction; sharing the technical problems and solving them together, they see each other and share in a manner similar to how they would in a face-to-face classroom—or in the hallways (Brown, Rich, & Holtham, 2014). When students meet in person, they already have a more personal frame of reference by having met their peers not only online, but through video as well. This makes the group move forward more quickly, including creating social events and arranging transportation to campus together rather than each on their own. Overall this supports strengthening the safe learning space that the classroom is to provide, based on trust, respect, and mutual engagement. In many ways this represents the cohort model at its best (Malisius, 2013; RRU, 2013; Seed, 2008).

Beyond the community building aspect, video assignments enable students to learn from each other alongside learning with each other (Lillejord, Riese, & Samara, 2012). Being exposed to topics and materials outside the formal readings and resources for a course supports students in a holistic learning approach. For example, in a conflict analysis and management program, a student working in the health industry might be exposed to an ethno-political conflict based on a video assignment from a peer. While the learning might be more indirect, such exposure empowers each individual student to see beyond their own areas of interest and expertise while transferring the knowledge they acquire from their program of study more widely.

3.4 Benefitting From Diversity: Maximizing Teaching and Learning Styles

Exposing the students to a wider range of materials and modes of presentation benefits the instructor as much as the students. As students share their submissions, the instructor becomes a guide to the learning process rather than being the sole, isolated subject matter expert. Furthermore, the connection to the individual student becomes stronger as it is easier to get to know students in the distance-learning environment if there is a face to the name and posts/written words. This includes making sure all voices in the classroom are heard, even those who might be less inclined to speak up.

Furthermore, through video assignments, it becomes easier to accommodate different learning styles (Hatami, 2013; Rolfe & Cheek, 2012; Yassin & Almasri, 2015), including but not limited to more visual and creative learners. The engagement with both visual and written materials and engagement addresses learning and teaching in a more holistic fashion across all learning styles (Kolb, 1984). In many ways, video assignments are a logical extension

of the approach to integrate are more diverse and multi-media materials into learning and teaching and acknowledging different learning styles.

4. Conclusion

Integrating video assignments into academic courses is easier than it might appear. Building on the general advice provided throughout the paper, the following section summarizes lessons learned on how to integrate video assignments to the benefit of students and instructors, following the motto of "creativity takes courage,"—a quote commonly attributed to artist Henri Matisse.

4.1 Vagueness Helps Creativity

While all assignments require clear instructions and expectations, a little vagueness helps foster creativity. In other words, do not be too prescriptive regarding format and content when you set up a video assignment. Students will be more focused on fitting your parameters and expectations than really engaging with the challenge and the materials and presenting their own take on the subject matter. The video format enables students to express themselves in a freer, less commonly used format and thereby has the potential to set them free to explore how and what they want to present. The more restrictions you impose by very detailed instructions and criteria, the less you will see creativity. Have the courage to allow for a little bit of vagueness to make space for creativity.

Of course this element of vagueness does not preclude from setting expectations, a grading rubric, and good instructions on how to work with technology to support the students in their efforts. Be clear on the formal parameters, but vague on the specifics. Encourage students to gain practice and confidence from perseverance and to benefit from overcoming vagueness and unusual challenges. After all, overcoming challenges is a lot of what academic studies are all about—encourage students to embrace challenges and vagueness with confidence and creativity.

4.2 Creativity Helps Out of the Comfort Zone

Faced with a video assignment, most students are likely to feel rather uncomfortable and on unfamiliar grounds. Providing space for creativity and making the assignment their own enables students to move outside their comfort zone. They can then look at the challenge rather than the expectations, find ways to make themselves shine, showcase what they can and want to do, and how they want to present themselves.

Most students notice very quickly what they can and cannot do given the limitations of a video assignment, the time available to them to make it work, as well as their access to resources and materials to complete the task at hand. They will become creative, looking around to identify existing video

materials, creating their own, putting together text, music, photographs, and images—along with academic materials and readings. As they explore the boundaries of their own abilities and creativity to overcome, students think outside the box—and outside their comfort zone—to take on a video assignment, putting ideas, words, and thoughts into moving pictures.

4.3 Out of Comfort Zone Helps Community

Anyone who is pushed or pulled out of their comfort zone usually seeks support from his or her community. As students start a program of study, their cohort or learning community is not quite there yet – fellow students are no more than a list of names and maybe profile pictures. Yet, facing a video assignment, students will quickly turn to each other and build trust amongst their peers as they overcome the challenge presented to them.

Faced with the challenge of producing a video assignment, students will ask for help in their surroundings, whether it is a partner, a child, a colleague, or a friend. Community building becomes an integral part of video assignments in a plethora of ways.

Students will find many ways to express their uncertainty and seek help with technology and content. Be patient and supportive—but do not try to fix things too much. The students will figure it out and turn to each other, sparking more creativity along the way. The common experience turns strangers randomly thrown together in a program into respected and trusted peers very quickly. As their community builds along, they may curse their instructor more than once, and at the same time relish in what they have accomplished in the end. As students share and showcase the results of their work in a compact short video format, the confidence they gain as individuals and as a community pays back the effort required.

4.4 Community Helps Learning

As students become engaged with and build their community, they increasingly learn from and with each other. This is common in face-to-face classrooms, where students share expertise and knowledge, explain readings or concepts presented, form study groups, or simply meet up for a coffee. All of these social elements are less common in the online or blended learning environments, simply because the contact is more disconnected and distant. Activities such as the video assignments support breaking down these barriers by strengthening the community and generating a safe space among the cohort. Completing a challenge such as a video assignment lessens the fear to engage with new materials and the unknown; it increases the interest to engage with other as friends rather than strangers, and it helps students to learn more about conflict as well as their selves in conflict (important both inside and outside a program of study focused on conflict analysis and management).

As the video assignment supports the community coming together, the learning increases manifold, both related to the program of study and to life beyond the classroom. The best learning journeys combine solitude and fellowship.

4.5 Learning Becomes Reflective Practice

Learning new concepts, ways of thinking, or ways of looking at the world and understanding what is happening are surely important parts (and motivation) of any program of study. Video assignments help enhance learning by turning it into reflective practice. As students improve their ways to turn information into audio-visual materials highlighting a particular aspect or content, they practice the following through reflection: What do I want to present? How do I want to present it? Who am I and what do I want to (re)present? How am I perceived and how do I present myself? Irrespective of the program of study, with more practice, the students embody reflective practice. Reflective practice in this context represents a systems approach to seeing the impact of the individual on the whole and engaging more holistically. Any interaction becomes active, pro-active, and reactive at the same time, embracing prevention and sustainability of knowledge and skills concurrently. Through reflective practice, students find and sharpen their own voice, making a difference in their own unique way.

In conclusion, there are many benefits from video assignments for learning inside and outside the classroom, for the individual student and cohort, the learning community and instructor, and lifelong learning. In many ways video assignments capture the essence of the Learning and Teaching Model and the present-day classroom, where technology is a tool that enables and enhances learning and teaching in an engaged and interactive manner across all media.

5. Appendices

The following are examples for video assignments from various courses and programs delivered at RRU.

5.1 CAMN 520 – Introduction to Conflict Management Processes (2013, MA/Dip Conflict Analysis and Management)

Course developer and instructor: Dr. Eva Malisius

Assignment 1: Are you ready for conflict analysis and management practice?

To mark the beginning of your learning journey in the CAM program, you will compile a short video clip.

In addition to introducing yourself to your fellow students and instructor, the objective of the clip is to demonstrate your understanding of conflict analysis

and management practice as well as your readiness for engaging in the CAM program.

This assignment will be graded like any other assignment for the course or program, following the grading matrix provided. The 3-5 minute clip should be brief, concise, and analytical, demonstrating your reflection on the program, readings, and core themes outlined below. Please include references to readings/concepts throughout all sections as applicable.

Introduction

- Please include your name and hometown/place of residence
- Personal background
- What is your motivation for enrolling in the CAM program?
- Do you have any previous CAM related knowledge and training?
- What are your expectations for the program?

Definition of conflict

- What is conflict? What does it represent? What can be done about conflict?
- What makes conflict interesting and valuable?
- What makes conflict destructive and detestable?

Conflict example

- What is a typical example for conflict that you encounter in your private or professional life?
- What happens and what it is about? Who is involved? Why is it relevant to you?
- What would you like to (or what are you going to) do about it? What would make a difference in this conflict?

Conclusion and outlook

- Please include your expectations for the residency and this course in particular.

Length: 3 – 5 minute clip.
Graded: worth 20% of course grade.

5.2 GBLD522 – Managing Difficult Relationships Within and Across Community Dynamics (2014, MA Global Leadership)

Course developer and instructor: Dr. Eva Malisius

Assignment 1: Presenting a Community in Conflict

The purpose of this assignment is to enhance your awareness of the dynamics and tensions between and across stakeholders in an existing community. Identify a community that you are familiar with and/or one where you have access to public information about conflicts, tension, and challenges in that community. The choice is yours. You may choose: (a) a community that you have covered or heard about in a different course, (b) a community that you have worked with or would like to work in, or (c) the community you live in. Be mindful not to simply duplicate what has been done already in another course because you do not want to plagiarise yourself or others. If you choose a community that you have worked on previously, you will need to generate a new perspective on that community.

Make sure you are able to take a balanced stance to analyse and present the dynamics of your chosen community without bias or passion for a particular group or cause. Sometimes this can be difficult when you are analysing your own community or one that you have worked with very closely. Confirm the suitability of your choice with your instructor.

The key guiding questions for your assignment are:

- What defines this community?
- Who are the key actors?
- What are the dynamics, key challenges, and conflicts that face the community?

Determine the audience for your assignment. This can be either (a) the community leadership from whom you will require buy-in to implement a change process, (b) a donor/funding organization board that you are pitching a project funding proposal to, or (c) a more general audience that you are alerting to the situation in the community. Indicate your choice of audience at the beginning of the assignment and make sure you cater your assignment to your respective audience.

Describe your community in all its richness, highlighting its assets, analysing its dynamics, and acknowledging its challenges and complexities. Provide a brief background and basic statistical data for your community (geographical location, demographics and some historical facts). Limit this section to what is essential for understanding the wider context. Focus your assignment on the key dynamics of the community: what are key values shared? What are some underlying conflicts and how do they affect the relationships between the community groups? How does the community make decisions? How does the community interact with the national/regional level? How does it interact with other communities? What are the key challenges for community development?

At the end of your assignment, indicate your recommendations for the future

of the community and what could be done to address difficult relationships within and with other communities.

Your assignment may be presented as a written submission or a video.

Written submissions should not exceed 2,000 words (approximately eight double-spaced pages, not including cover page, table of contents or reference list; standard APA formatting and referencing applies). Accepted written formats are: a community profile to be posted on a professional, field-focused blog; a background report for an assessment of fact-finding visit; contributing material for a donor funding application; a public presentation at an academic conference; or a different format agreed upon with your instructor.

Video submissions should be 3-5 minutes. The presentation format is flexible (Prezi, narrated PowerPoint, Slideshare, or video clip). To find out more about putting together an engaging presentation, consult the RRU Library's guide on video or multimedia essays. Accepted visual formats are: a community profile to be posted on a professional, field-focused blog; a profile presentation to be posted on the website of a community, regional association, or international organization contributing visual material for a funding application to a donor; a public presentation at an academic conference; or a different format agreed upon with your instructor.

When choosing the video format for your assignment, make sure you reference materials using APA style and respect copyright. Do not underestimate the time commitment related to choosing the video format especially if this is a new process for you.

This assignment is due at the end of Week 5 and is worth 30% of your final grade.

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9

Disaster Case Study: A Theoretically Informed Learning Activity Design

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Abstract

Royal Roads University (RRU) is one of only two Canadian institutions offering a master's degree in the disaster and emergency management (DEM) field. Given the formative stage of development of this relatively new academic field of study, there is limited scholarship related to teaching and learning in this area. In particular, little consideration has been given to how the disciplinary foundations and nature of professional practice in the DEM field should inform pedagogical practices. This article describes one RRU faculty member's scholarly approach to the design of a multi-day disaster case study, which aimed to support students learning from the research literature, while simultaneously developing competencies needed in professional practice. The design of the disaster case study was based on a deductive approach to the application of principles derived from social constructivist learning theory. While the development of this disaster case study predated the publication of RRU's Learning and Teaching Model (LTM), the scholarly approach to the design of the case study, the theoretical foundation for the design, as well as distinct elements in the case study activity are reflective of the principles and practices espoused in the RRU LTM. The elements reflected in the disaster case study include (a) outcomes-based, (b) experiential and authentic, (c) team-based, (d) integrative, and (e)

engaged learning. In additional to describing how these elements are manifest in a particular learning activity design, this article expands on the theoretical reasoning for inclusion of these elements in learning activities at RRU.

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Over the course of the last three decades, disaster and emergency management (DEM) has emerged as a new field of study. One such initiative is the Master of Arts in Disaster and Emergency Management Program (MADEM) at Royal Roads University (RRU), which was launched in 2007 to meet the educational needs of professionals working in the emergency management field. The relatively recent growth of DEM programs parallels, and is contributing to, the professionalisation of the practice of disaster and emergency management (Britton, 2002; Mileti, 1999; Oyola-Yemaiel & Wilson, 2005a). One of the challenges within DEM professional activity is the lack of practitioner utilisation of the findings from disaster research (Fothergill, 2000; Mileti, 1999; National Research Council, 2006; Phillips, 2006). This deficiency is of concern because the body of knowledge developed through the systematic study of past disaster events, if applied, can reduce future disaster risk, as well as improve practice (National Research Council, 2006). DEM higher education programs are thus seen as an important means of developing students' knowledge about disaster research literature in a way that supports knowledge transfer to professional practice (Lindsay & Britton, 2010; Mileti, 1999; Neal, 2005; Oyola-Yemaiel & Wilson, 2005b; Phillips, 2006).

This article describes one RRU faculty member's scholarly approach to using learning theory to support the design of a problem-based disaster case study that uses the disaster research literature for case and problem presentation as well as a tool for further problem study. The development of the disaster case study reflected a deductive approach to the use of learning theory. With this approach, formal learning theories, which are descriptive in nature, are taken as a starting point, and principles derived from learning theory are applied prescriptively (Elen & Clarebout, 2006). This article provides an overview of the learning theory that informed the design of the disaster case study and explains the approach to application of this theory in the instructional design process. It draws from my archival documentation about the disaster case study design, which dates back to the fall of 2010, as well as reflections on my experience with implementing the design over a five-year period.

While describing a personal account of an instructional design experience, this article also serves to illustrate how different elements of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model (LTM) were realised in one learning activity in the MADEM program. The association between the elements of the LTM and the disaster case study design is retrospective, as the development of the disaster case study predated the publication of the LTM. However, the ability to develop innovative pedagogy was supported by the culture of RRU as a professionally oriented university with a reputation and focus on innovation in teaching. The LTM elements reflected in the disaster case study include (a) outcomes-based, (b) experiential and authentic, (c) team-based, (d) integrative, and (e) engaged learning. Given the use of learning theory to inform the disaster case study design, this article also offers additional perspectives on the theoretical basis for these elements of RRU's LTM.

Theoretical Framework for the Activity Design

The theoretical framework for the instructional design was grounded by my belief that learning and the construction of knowledge are both an individual cognitive and socio-cultural process; these beliefs align with constructivist learning theory (Cobb, 2005; Cole & Engeström, 1993; Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Greeno, 2006; Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006). The development of constructivist learning theory is attributed to the work of Piaget and Vygotsky; while Piaget (1969) studied the individual cognitive dimensions of the learning and knowledge construction process, Vygotsky (1978) explored learning as a socio-cultural process. Activity theory is viewed as an appropriate organising framework for integrating the individual cognitive and social constructivist dimensions of learning (Cobb, 2005).

Activity Theory

Activity theory proposes that knowledge is constructed and learning occurs through activity. The first generation of activity theory is attributed to Vygotsky (1978), who explained that human activity, at its most basic level, is a *subject* (person or group) acting on an *object* (physical or mental) through the use of mediating *tools* (material or psychological), which are culturally derived. He also argued that intra-psychological development is supported by engagement in inter-psychological activity. Vygotsky (1978) further explained that intra-psychological construction of knowledge is supported by guidance from others in a cultural environment. He used the term *zone of proximal development* to reference the difference between individual capabilities and what can be achieved with and through social interaction with an elder or expert.

The second generation of activity theory is attributed to the work of Leont'ev and Engeström, who built on the work of Vygotsky and other Russian scholars, and expanded on the collective nature of activity. Leont'ev (1974) argued that activities are both determined and differentiated by the object of an activity. He elaborated on the relationship between a subject's *needs* and the object, suggesting that needs are the *motives* for activity. Needs have their origins, Leont'ev explained, in prior activity. Leont'ev expanded the unit of analysis of activity to include the *actions* that make up the activity, and the *operations* that enable the action. Within this *hierarchical structure* of activity, Leont'ev suggested that activity, by its nature, is collective, while actions that make up the activity are individual. Further, he explained that while an object motivates activity, the actions that make up and comprise the activity are directed to *goals*. Engeström (1999) added the elements of *outcome*, *community*, *rules*, and *division of labour* to the basic model of activity (subject, object, and tools). Just as tools mediate the relationship between a subject and an object, Engeström (1999) suggested that rules mediate the relationship between a subject and the community, while the division of labour mediates the relationship the community and the object. Further,

while an object directs activity, the object of an activity can be distinguished from its outcome. Engeström's (2015) expansion of the *triangular model* of activity is illustrated in Figure 1 below. Within this model, the signs and tools are both considered to be instruments. Engeström (2001) noted that elements within an activity system are understood to be dynamic and thus subject to change over time.

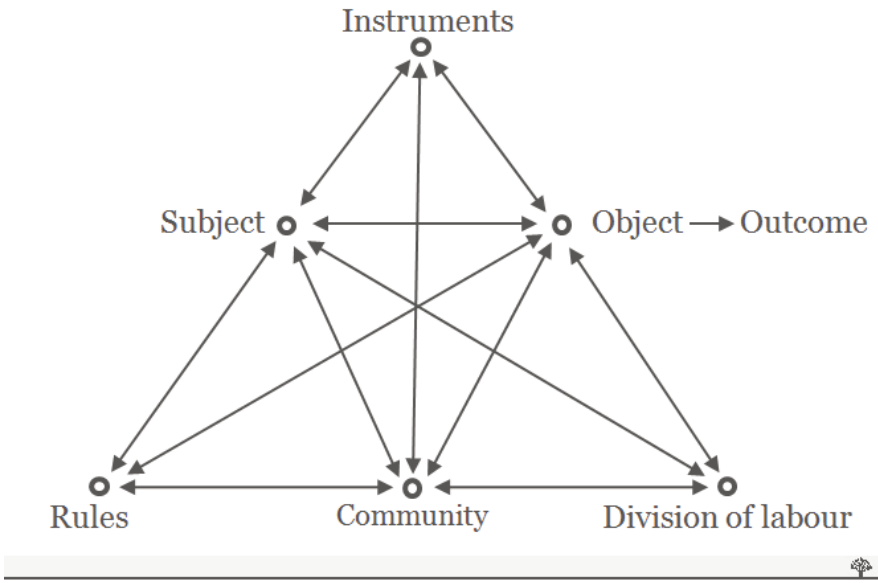

Figure 1. Engeström's expanded triangular model of activity. From *Learning by Expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research* (2nd ed.) (p. 64), by Y. Engeström, 2015, Cambridge: Cambridge Press. Copyright 2015 by Y. Engeström. Reprinted with permission.

Application of Activity Theory to the Design of Instruction

Given that learning theories are descriptive in nature, any approach to the use of these theories for the design of instruction is an interpretive act. Three primary approaches to the prescriptive application of constructivist theories, including activity theory, were noted in the literature: (a) principles for the design of instruction, (b) procedures for the design of instruction, and (c) methods of instruction. Principles-based approaches tend to be related to the use of constructivist theories more generally, while the affordances of the triangular and hierarchical activity theory models have resulted in the development of procedures for applying activity theory to the design of instruction. Additionally, certain methods of instruction have been derived

from constructivist learning theories (e.g., anchored learning, goal-based learning). Further, methods of instruction that have emerged from practice (e.g., case- and problem-based learning) have been retrospectively identified as being congruent with the principles of constructivist learning theories. Principles, procedures, and methods that support the application of constructivist learning theories and activity theory will be briefly described, and their utility in the design of the disaster case study will be discussed.

While acknowledging that there is no one set of constructivist instructional design principles (Tobias & Duffy, 2009), through a review of literature (Driscoll, 2005; Jonassen, 1999; Jonassen & Roher-Murphy, 1999; Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005; Savery & Duffy, 1996), five common principles were identified and were used to support the design of the disaster case study. The first principle was the use of authentic tasks situated in realistic environments. Savory and Duffy (1996) and Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) suggest that authentic tasks often reflect problems encountered in practice, hence problem-based learning methods are recognised as being consistent with constructivist learning environments (CLEs). The second principle was the engagement of learners. An example of engagement includes giving students ownership for problem selection (Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005; Savery & Duffy, 1996). The third principle was the use of alternate perspectives, which can be provided through the use of "related cases," (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999, p. 69) as well as "multiple modes of representation" (Driscoll, 2005, p. 398). The fourth principle, which recognized the function of inter-psychological activity in the learning process, was to engage students in working collaboratively with one another (Driscoll, 2005; Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005), and the fifth principle was to engage students in reflection on "both the content learned and the learning process" (Savery & Duffy, 1996). A principle-based approach was found to be of greater value in the design of the disaster case study than procedural methods.

Jonassen and Rohrer-Murhpy (1999) provided detailed procedural guidance on the use of the triangular and hierarchical models of activity theory as tools for analysing professional activity in context and for using the results of the analysis to design an authentic learning task. A limitation of this approach is that it presumes that the structure of professional activity is transferable between contexts. Further, the procedure is resource intensive and it may not always be possible to conduct analysis of profession activity in situ (e.g., disaster contexts). An alternative procedural approach to the prescriptive use of theory, as suggested by Barab, Evans and Baek (2004), is to use the triangular and hierarchical models of activity as a heuristic framework for conceptualising the characteristics of professional activity. From a practical perspective, this second procedural approach was of greater value in the design of the disaster case study. In addition to principles and procedures for using constructivist theory, problem- and case-based learning methods are viewed as aligning with this theoretical perspective.

Problem- and case-based methods of instruction used in professional fields of study (e.g., law, medicine, business) share a similar history. These methods were developed out of concern that lecture-based instruction did not support subsequent knowledge transfer to professional practice (Garvin, 2003). While case-methods may or may not use a problem-based approach, cases are the foundation of all problem-based methods (Jonassen, 2011). Jonassen (2011) suggests that the function of cases, rather than their form or content, explains differences between problem-based learning methods. The function of a case determines its form and content. The functional use of cases in the fields of medicine, law and business reflects an interpretation of how cases can best support the development of professional competencies within a given field (Garvin, 2003). A more recent contribution to knowledge about learning from cases is case-based reasoning (CBR) theory, which is a cognitive constructivist theory with its origins in the design of intelligent computer applications (Kolodner, 2006). CBR explains how we learn from cases (Kolodner, 2006). The literature on problem- and case-based learning, along with the literature on the principle and procedural approaches to the application of constructivist and activity theories served to inform the design of the disaster case study.

Design of the Disaster Case Study

The disaster case study was designed to replace a multi-day team-based exercise that took place in the third, and final, week of the first residency in MADEM program. The exercise had been designed as an integrative activity to support the application and further development of the knowledge and skills students had gained during their first two weeks in the residency. While the exercise activity had been iteratively revised over time, certain features continued to be problematic and were motives for the redesign of the learning activity. One of the problems was that students had difficulty with the hypothetical nature of the case. Further, because students were at the beginning of their program of study, they had not sufficiently explored the research literature related to the problems within the case, and hence their recommendations about how to address a problem did not take this knowledge base into account. The starting point for the new design was to revisit the learning outcomes, which are the object of a learning activity. From an activity theory perspective, learning outcomes for a particular activity are based on the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) between student starting points and the course learning outcomes.

Learning Outcomes and Student Starting Points

The use of learning outcomes as a starting point for developing an authentic activity is an alternative to analysing professional activity in situ, which was one of the procedural methods for using activity theory to design instruction. Learning outcomes in professionally oriented programs theoretically represent a program's interpretation of the competencies of experts in a

particular field. A characteristic of professional activity is that it integrates different types of competencies, thus the object for an authentic activity would integrate learning outcomes associated with different competency domains. While activities during the first two weeks of the residency courses supported students' development of knowledge, interpersonal, and critical thinking skills, learning outcomes associated with the research domain were not addressed in any depth. Research domain learning outcomes included being able to gather, interpret, and synthesise research findings, and to evaluate research and identify the implications of research for professional practice. Thus, the new integrative activity needed to develop students' knowledge and skills related to the research learning outcomes, as well as to deepen and assess their knowledge and skills related to the first three learning outcomes domains[1]. Student starting points needed to be assessed in relation to the intended learning outcomes.

While students had a shared experience during the first two weeks of the residency, they came to the program with different backgrounds. The MADEM program had evolved over time to include two cohorts per year. One cohort was geared to students with a professional DEM background, with many admitted under RRU's flexible admissions policies. In contrast, the other cohort was geared to those with a relevant undergraduate degree, but who were new to the DEM field[2]. Thus, the disaster case study design also needed to take into account the differences between student starting points in the two cohorts, including differences in educational and professional experience, beliefs about disasters and the practice of disaster and emergency management, and professional aspirations.

Design of Authentic Activity

The use of authentic activity in a learning activity is based on the CLE principle of needing to meaningfully engage students in the type of activity associated with their intended professional practice. The question considered was: What is a realistic professional activity relative to the selected learning outcomes in the MADEM program? An authentic professional activity in the DEM field is for students to (a) analyse needs, issues, or problems within a particular context; (b) determine desired outcomes; and (c) develop strategies to achieve these outcomes, while ensuring that strategies build from knowledge generated through the systematic study of human experiences with hazards. These skills are foundational to professional DEM practice,

1. The outcomes for these three domains were as follows. For the knowledge domain, the intended outcome was for students to be able apply and integrate disaster and emergency management (DEM) theory and concepts in the analysis and study of a historical disaster case. For the critical thinking domain, the outcome was to the development of competencies in critical thinking, specifically (a) problem framing and analysis, (b) outcome development, (c) argument development, and (d) self-regulation. The outcome in the interpersonal skills domain was awareness of individual preferences and styles, and competency in group facilitation.
2. In 2014 a decision was made to do away with streaming of students into separate cohorts based on their professional experience and educational backgrounds and a single cohort model was introduced.

regardless of the context. Authentic activities, however, are not decontextualized; rather, they are situated and hence, authentic learning activities must be situated in real world contexts, which are characteristically complex (Driscoll, 2005; Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005; Savery and Duffy, 1996). The context then becomes a dimension of the problem that students must grapple with, just as context is a variable in professional practice.

Jonassen (1999) suggests that in addition to *problem context*, *problem presentation*, and *problem manipulation space* are two other dimensions of a *problem space* that need to be considered when designing a CLE. From an activity theory perspective, the problem context situates students as subjects in an activity system, in relation to a community as they engage with the object of a learning activity. Design decisions about problem presentation are about the selection and use of tools as mediators of activity. Other tools that need to be considered in the design of CLE include the use of *related cases*, *information resources*, *cognitive tools*, and *conversation and collaboration tools* (Jonassen, 1999). Problem manipulation space design decisions also need to take into account the CLE principle about the role of collaboration in the learning process; within a learning activity system, these are decisions about the division of labour between students and an instructor. Considerations with respect to problem context, problem manipulation space, and conversation and collaboration tools in the design of the disaster case study will each be discussed in turn.

Problem Context

The question guiding selection of context for a new learning activity was: What is a realistic context relative to the authentic activity and intended learning outcomes? The community where the majority of MADEM students live and intend to work is Canada. While practices between jurisdictions and sectors within the Canadian context vary, there is nonetheless a certain degree of cultural homogeneity associated with practice in Canada, in contrast to practice in other country contexts; hence, a problem set within the Canadian context is 'realistic' for most students. While hazards and risks are situated, floods are the most common type of disaster event in Canada, and thus, a type of hazard that many students can expect to encounter at some time in their practice. The hazard and disaster context selected for the case study was the flooding in the Manitoba Red River basin, with a central emphasis on the 1997 Manitoba flood, which has been called the "flood of the century." The selection of this hazard and context was influenced by the availability of information resources, specifically peer-reviewed journal articles about hazards and associated disaster events in Canada, as well as my own experience in working on different flood responses, including the 1997 Manitoba flood.

Problem Presentation Space

Given the emphasis on development of students' competencies with regard

to the use of research literature in the learning outcomes, the research literature was chosen as the vehicle for case and problem presentation. The disaster case study was presented to students as a set of four to five peer-reviewed journal articles related to the 1997 Manitoba flood, as well as other subsequent flood activity in the Manitoba Red River basin. Students were assigned to complete the readings prior to the start of the disaster case study activity and to bring copies of the articles to class. An initial intent was to use "multiple modes of representation" for case and problem presentation, as suggested by Driscoll (2005), and some video and audio clips were used in earlier iterations of the case study. However, over time, the tools for case presentation became limited to the journal articles. One of the constraints in the selection of articles was availability through the RRU library. While most relevant articles were accessible, a few were not, or were not consistently available each year.

While there is limited academic literature about the use of research articles as a tool for case study (e.g., Bordt, 2005; Epstein, 1972, White, 2001), three affordances of this practice were noted to align with the principles of a CLE. First, the use of research literature for problem presentation reinforced the value of research as a way of understanding DEM problems and gave students new insights into problems that could not be learned through practice alone. For example, one article provided students with findings from the systematic study of the gendered impacts of disasters (Enarson & Scanlon, 1999); this is an area that is commonly neglected in professional practice. Second, the use of articles that examine phenomena in more than one context can further aid in highlighting how contextual variables influence problems. For example, one of the assigned articles focused on how the cultural and developmental differences between three Manitoba communities influenced disaster outcomes as well as flood mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery practices (Buckland & Rahman, 1999). And third, the use of multiple articles, as a form of alternative perspectives, helped to portray the complexity and diversity of problems within a specific hazard and disaster context. These affordances were realized in the design of the problem manipulation space.

Problem Manipulation Space

Design decisions for the problem manipulation space related to (a) the functional use of the case within the activity, (b) the structure and sequence of actions and goals that comprised the problem-based activity, and (c) the division of labour within the activity structure. In keeping with the CLE principle of authentic activity, the function of the case in the activity was as a *problem to solve* (Jonassen, 2011). While students would learn a great deal about the case through the activity, knowledge about the particular case was not the object of the activity; rather, the function of the case was as an example of an ill-structured problem associated with professional practice. The case, as problem, became the motive for the activity. The structure and sequence of the case activity was an adaptation of the classic problem-based

learning (PBL) model as used in medical schools (Barrows, 1986, 1996; Savery, 2006). While this PBL approach is normally used to frame the design of a curriculum, it was successfully adapted for use in a single disaster case study activity.

The design of the problem manipulation space included several considerations related to the division of labour. The first decision, in keeping with the CLE principle of learner engagement, was to give students choice about the particular problem associated with the 1997 Manitoba flood that they wanted to study. The boundary of problem possibilities was defined by the research literature selected for case and problem presentation. Accordingly, the problem context needed to be one where there was a sufficient social science literature base related to a Canadian disaster context. The regularity and severity of flooding in the Manitoba Red River basin has generated a reasonable amount of peer-reviewed literature, and hence this was a motive for the selection of the case. The second decision was about the division of labour between individual and collective activity. While CLE principles emphasize that social interaction is an essential part of the design of a learning environment, the principles do not provide guidance on the balance or relationship between individual vs. collective actions within an activity. The theoretical basis for the use of individual vs. collective activity was based on propositions within activity theory. The third division of labour consideration was the role of the instructor. While there are no CLE principles about the role of the instructor, from an activity theory perspective, the role of an instructor is explained in Vygotsky's (1978) discussion of the *zone of proximal development*. Literature on the role of facilitators within PBL learning activities (Savery & Duffy, 1996), which is congruent with these activity theory perspectives, informed decisions about the role of the instructor as a facilitator. During all case study activities, two course faculty members observed two or more teams and provided coaching interventions as needed with regard to development of thinking skills, team process, construct development, and research and argumentation skills. Students' and faculty members' interactions with one another in the case study activity were mediated by conversation and collaboration tools.

Conversation and Collaboration Tools

Through all of the case study activities, students were asked to use the white boards and flip charts as conversation and collaboration tools, and to visually represent their thinking as they worked through the assigned tasks. This required that each team be assigned a large amount of white board space. The value of being able to look at "ideas as things" in the process of socially constructing meaning and knowledge was explained to students at the beginning of the case study (Greeno, 2006; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006). The extensive use of whiteboards offered a classroom-based version of Scardamalia and Bereiter's (2006) online knowledge-building forum where students could build on the ideas of others. An observed affordance of the

use of white boards was students' multi-modal approach to meaning making using text, diagrams, models, and maps. Students' use of whiteboards to make their thinking explicit aided faculty in the coaching process.

The design of the disaster case study was an iterative process of reading, thinking, developing, implementing, and refining the case study design. Further, the experience of implementing the design over a five-year period and conversations with other course faculty and students about their experiences were a means of validating design decisions and identifying deficiencies in the design. Thus, while the initial design of the case study was an individual activity, the realization and advancement of the design was a collective effort. Learning theory continued to inform design modifications. With this background, the activity structure for the disaster case study will now be explained.

Disaster Case Study Activity Structure

While the authentic activity had three core components (analyse the problem, define an outcome, and develop strategies for addressing the problem), design decisions about the problem manipulations space resulted in a five-part activity structure, as follows:

- hazard and disaster context analysis,
- problem analysis,
- problem study,
- outcome development, and
- learning and recommendations.

Each part was comprised of one or more tasks, which were made up of a series of actions directed to specific goals. A handout describing all of tasks was given to students at the beginning of the case study.

Prior to the start of the case activity, students were assigned into teams designed to reflect the diversity of students' professional and educational backgrounds. Time was provided at the start of the activity for students to talk about team process and to discuss how to rotate the facilitation role. In the first two weeks of residency, students had sessions on personal styles and facilitation, and were thus expected to demonstrate awareness and use their knowledge about the interpersonal dimensions of activity as they worked through the case study. Students often defaulted to old practice and needed to be encouraged to apply new knowledge related to interpersonal dynamics and team process.

At the conclusion of each of the five parts of the case activity, students were given a set of reflection questions to individually answer. Responses were then shared with the team. Questions focused on development of meta-cognitive abilities and were also designed to aid the team in identifying and

addressing how team process aided or constrained their learning. Each of the separate parts of the disaster case study will now be described.

Part 1 – Hazard and Disaster Context Analysis

The design for this first part of the activity took into account that expertise is developed through the activity of noticing salient features of a situation or problem, and that expert knowledge about particular types of problems is structured around the concepts and theories associated with a particular discipline (Bransford et al., 2006, p. 25). In keeping with these ideas, the tasks in this first part of the activity were designed to develop students' competencies with (a) *hazard analysis*, which includes identifying the situational attributes of a hazard as manifest in a particular place; and (b) *context analysis*, which included explaining the ways in which social, economic, political, and environmental systems contribute to hazards becoming disasters. These were team activities, and the first deliverable was a statement describing the hazard. An earlier reading in the course had focused on the natural and unnatural complexities of hazards (e.g., human influence on waterways or flood plains), and students were expected to be able to demonstrate their understanding of the complexity of the hazard in their hazard statement. The second deliverable was for teams to select two representative examples of how different systems (e.g., political, economic, social, environmental) each contributed to the hazard becoming a disaster, and to cite two examples of the inter-relationship between two or more of these systems. A half-day was initially allotted for this first part of the activity, however, the students were initially not able to adequately complete their analysis of the hazard and contextual variables in this time period, and eventually, this first part of the case study became a full-day activity.

Part 2 – Problem Analysis

Problems within different fields are noted to differ in terms of structure, context, complexity, dynamicity, and domain specificity (Jonassen, 2011). Disaster and emergency management problems are ill-structured, and temporally, spatially, and cultural-historically situated, and are thus dynamic. Interpretation of problems is personal, builds from an individual's prior experience and knowledge base, and reflects an individual's worldview. Within professional DEM practice, it is important to recognise that there are different interpretations of problems, and often a need to construct a shared understanding of a problem, which may integrate competing perspectives.

The structure for the problem analysis part of the activity included four sub-tasks, which where *problem scoping*, *problem selection*, *problem analysis*, and *identification of assumptions*. The inclusion of a task related to problem scoping builds from the ill-structured nature of DEM problems and the associated need to make sense of the problem space. Based on the recognition that problem interpretation is personal, students were individually tasked with identifying three significant disaster and emergency management problems

as noted in one or more of the assigned research articles, and to make note of each problem on a sticky note and bring these notes to class at the beginning of the second day of the case study. Collectively, students in teams were tasked with exploring the problems that had been individually identified, and with visually demonstrating their collective understanding of the relationship between these problems in a schematic way.

Based on their initial analysis of the problem landscape, teams were tasked with selecting a problem for further study that (a) the team was collectively interested in learning more about and (b) was of significant concern to disaster and emergency managers. After selecting a problem, teams were to create a problem statement that reflected their understanding of the problem at that point in time. While an earlier session in the residency had given students the opportunity to analyse and frame problems from alternative perspectives (i.e., emergency manager versus community member perspective), students in all cohorts continued to have difficulty with framing ill-structured DEM problems. The *Craft of Research* (Booth, Columb, & Williams, 2008) provides a two-part structure for framing practical problems and this model was eventually included as a *cognitive tool* (Jonassen, 2011) to support students with their framing of the problem. The use of the two-part problem structure allowed students to self-assess their problem statement to ensure it included the necessary components.

The third task in Part 2 of the activity supported students' development of knowledge about the particular problem they had selected for study. Students were tasked with identifying specific information in the assigned case study readings that related to the problem and that helped them to make sense of it. Again, some form of visual representation on the white board of the findings from the analysis of the problem was required as a deliverable.

The final task in Part 2 of the activity was for students to state assumptions about the problem that they were making or that were inherent in the article. The inclusion of this specific task proved to be important in students' learning at the conclusion of the case study activity. Before moving onto the next activity in the case study, teams shared their different problem statements, which reinforced the diversity of DEM problems in a given context and situation. A half-day was assigned to the problem analysis activity, however, some teams invariably needed more time. Team dynamics was a factor that influenced the time required to complete the tasks.

Part 3 – Outcome Development

A characteristic of ill-structured problems is that there are many possible solutions, which can result in different outcomes. The inclusion of the step of outcomes as part of an approach to working with problems in the DEM field draws from professional practice, particularly international contexts, where the use of program logic models is common. The use of outcomes statements has emerged from concern over accountability and return on investments

relative to outcomes; while the merits of this practice are debated in the literature, the use of outcomes is now a common practice in certain sectors (e.g., international development, health). The benefits of defining outcomes as part of DEM activity is not explicitly discussed in the DEM literature, however, the consideration of outcomes is fundamental to bringing about paradigm shifts in DEM practice. For example, following a disaster, it is common to hear reference to the goal of 'returning to normal,' with 'normal' being a pre-disaster state. In some circumstances (e.g., death or permanent displacement), a return to normal is not possible. In other circumstances, states of normal may have contributed to a hazard becoming a disaster in the first place. The decision to 'build back better' or 'build back safer' will guide disaster recovery strategies. Accordingly, students' task for this part of the case study activity was to develop an outcome statement that reflected the desired end state they were seeking in relation to the problem they had identified. As with the development of problem statements, models for the structure of outcome statements were provided to support students with this task. The time spent on development of an outcome statement was between two to three hours, as it required discussion and negotiation between team members about possible outcomes.

Part 4 – Problem Study

The goals for this part of the case study were to support students' development about what is already empirically known about problems (e.g., perceptions of risk) and what is known about how to address problems (e.g., efficacy of risk communication practices). This approach to learning about problems and problem resolutions is one that we want students to adopt as part of their professional practice. This dimension of the case study activity was modeled after the classic problem-based learning (PBL) model as used in medical programs (Barrows, 1986, 1996; Savery, 2006). The first tasks in Part 4 were to (a) appraise team members' knowledge and experience relative to the problem selected for study and (b) identify the most salient knowledge gaps and frame questions to guide further study. Questions posed for study could relate to deepening students' understanding of the problem or learning how to address the problem, with the choice of this focus left to the students. Students were then individually tasked with (a) finding three peer-reviewed journal articles or chapters from academic texts that helped them to answer the question posed and (b) preparing three one-page summaries of the findings from the literature that help to answer the question. A full day was allotted for problem study and students were to return to class the next day with their findings from review of the literature. This part of the activity demonstrates the CLE principle about the use of alternative perspectives.

Part 5 – Learning and Recommendations

After completing the individual problem study, students reported back to their team the next morning and were tasked with (a) sharing their individual

knowledge gained with their team and (b) analysing how this new information informs their understanding of the problem and/or strategies to address the proposed outcomes. Based on students' collective new knowledge, they were tasked with revising their problem and outcome statements as well as revising their assumptions.

Two other tasks were designed as part of this final learning activity, however, time constraints often limited their inclusion. One task was a team discussion about how the knowledge gained could be transferred to the contexts where students worked and how knowledge transfer might be constrained by contextual variables. The other task was for teams to identify three new and important questions that emerged for them from the case study, and to represent the relationship between these questions. The purpose of this final task was to reinforce the nature of an inquiry cycle. The tasks in this final part of the activity were all part of a classic medical school PBL design, with the primary difference being that for the disaster management case study, students did not work through the next cycle of inquiry. The case study activity concluded with a final round of reflection questions.

Conclusions

This article has described a scholarly approach to the design of a disaster case study in the MADEM program at RRU. Social-constructivist learning theories, and principles, procedures, and methods associated with these theories were used to inform the design of an authentic problem-based learning activity situated in a realistic professional practice context. The integrative nature of the activity supported students' knowledge and skill development in all four of the program learning outcome domains. In keeping with CLE principles, the design supported the active engagement of students in the learning process by giving them choice over the problem to study. The disaster research literature was used for problem presentation and further problem study. The use of research articles for problem presentation and problem study provided students with multiple evidence-based perspectives about DEM problems as well as approaches to dealing with DEM problems. The lack of practitioner application of the disaster research knowledge base was a motive for the approach to the use of disaster research literature in the case study. The design of the activity considered the relationship between individual and social in the learning process. Collaborative activities were mediated by the extensive use of white boards as conversation and collaboration tools that supported students seeing ideas and things, and building on the ideas of others. The use of reflective activities, with attention to both process and content, supported development of students' metacognitive abilities. The characteristics of the disaster case study design are in keeping with many of the elements of RRU's LTM. The discussion about the design considerations provided additional theoretical perspectives on the reasoning for use of learning outcomes for the design

of an integrative and authentic activity that actively engaged students in learning with and from each other.

Student and instructor involvement with the disaster case study reaffirmed the value of a scholarly and deductive approach to the design of graduate learning activity. Due to MADEM program revisions implemented in the fall of 2014, the 1997 Manitoba Floods disaster case study learning activity is no longer in use in the program. However, the core elements of the design and associated design principles have been incorporated into new courses in the MADEM program.

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10

Your Way or My Way? Integrating Cultural Diversity into Team-based Learning at Royal Roads University

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Abstract

Royal Roads University's classrooms are becoming culturally diverse, giving rise to new challenges and rewards for students learning on teams. Students from different cultures differ in their orientation to communication styles, time, power distance, collectivism and individualism, and task vs. relationship focus. These differences can result in conflict, and can also support success, if facilitated well. In other words, when conflicts arise in teamwork, the emphasis is on creating shared understanding and team norms. Instead of a "your way or my way" mentality for adaptation, RRU faculty and students must jointly invent "our way". The authors further provide suggestions for modifying team-based learning by adopting an intercultural mindset supported by responsive team composition, intercultural training, teamwork-appropriate assignment design, and multi-dimensional assessment of teamwork. Making team learning valuable and meaningful in a culturally diverse but inclusive manner, with inevitable

conflicts, but necessary support and tools for students and faculty to learn and grow, is the very task we need to do to create a productive team-based learning culture.

*

Your Way or My Way?

"I do not like my teammates. I want to change teams."

"I cannot work with my team. They did not hand in their part of the paper on time."

"My team members did not contribute at all. I had to do all the work."

"I contributed but they never took me seriously. They just ignored my points of view."

"I wanted to contribute. But they don't let me. They don't give me any parts to do."

"They speak so fast. I have a hard time participating. Whenever I tried to say something, I was cut off."

"They never show me any respect."

"They speak their own language. I am excluded all the time."

"Only if my teammates would know how to do team work the way I know it".

These comments expressed by students about teamwork are examples of the potential conflict that can hinder learning. It seems that members may have different ways of approaching teamwork, influenced by their educational and cultural backgrounds, and the question of "your way or my way?" underlines such conflict. In this paper, we will explore the relationship between cultural diversity and team-based learning, and make recommendations for course design and learning facilitation.

Team-Based Learning and Culture

Team-based learning (Michaelson, Knight, & Fink, 2004; Michaelson & Sweet, 2011) is one of the pillars in Royal Roads University's (RRU) Learning and Teaching Model (Royal Roads University, 2013). Team-based learning and its pedagogical benefits have evolved with other elements of the Learning and Teaching Model, such as authentic and experiential learning and cohort-based learning, to create a unique teaching and learning culture. We choose the word "culture" intentionally because such an environment comes with a set of rules and expectations, requiring students to commit to team-based learning as an instrument to fulfill the promise for applied learning.

Geertz (1973) defined culture as a system of shared meaning. Gudykunst (2004) extended this definition and stated that "culture is…our implicit theory of [a] 'game being played' (original emphasis)" (p.42). In other words, members of a group that follow a certain set of rules and norms belong to the same culture. How Royal Roads faculty come to understand and facilitate

teamwork, and how students are expected to learn through teamwork and perform accordingly is the "game" of team-based learning culture. The challenge for students and faculty is to understand and work within the many implicit, explicit, and shifting rules of this game. As the examples at the beginning of this paper illustrated, teams run into trouble when these rules are not clear, or are violated. In addition, our growing international student population embodies an expanded range of cultural norms, worldviews, and communication styles related to teamwork, increasing the likelihood of violations of the rules of the game, at least in the eyes of some. Do students, domestic or international, recognize the consequences when rules are broken? Or more fundamentally, do we need to review and change the rules of teamwork to respond to cultural diversity? How do students learn to bridge cultural differences when conducting teamwork? How can faculty facilitate that learning?

To explore these questions, we examine the foundational emphasis on team-based learning at the university through the lenses of intercultural education. We will describe our experiences, share examples, and offer reflection on this issue. Emerging from our work should be a more culturally inclusive way of conducting team work. This enhances RRU's team-based learning as espoused in the Learning and Teaching Model. It also takes us closer to the ideal of educating global citizens—a value advocated by Appiah (2008) as an educational and philosophical response to globalization. In short, global citizens are able to view the world as one, working with differences and striving for common goals (Stearns, 2009). With the cultural diversity on campus, all RRU students are getting firsthand intercultural teamwork experience to become global citizens. Authentic and well facilitated teamwork in this context is much more rewarding for both domestic and international students.

Cultural Dimensions that Affect Teamwork

To examine cultural diversity and to make team-based learning intercultural, we need to first unveil the underlying cultural differences that contribute to the challenges in coming to a shared meaning on a culturally diverse team. There is a large body of literature around intercultural communication and diversity training that investigates cultural differences (e.g. Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Trompennar & Hampden-Turner, 2012). These cultural differences have been discussed in terms of their effects on team process and outcomes in the workplace, and the argument has been made that diversity does not necessarily produce better results; others have argued that once cultural differences are taken into account and utilized as an asset, a culturally diverse team can produce better results (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen, 2010; Staples & Zhao, 2006; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003). Scholars highlighted several diversity variables that impact teams, including direct vs. indirect communication, polychronic vs. monochronic, large vs. small power distance, individualistic vs. collectivist orientation, and task vs. relationship

orientation (Gardenswartz, & Rowe, 2003; Hall, 1977; Hall, 1983; Hoftstede, 2010). In our daily interactions with Royal Roads students learning on teams, we found that an awareness of these five cultural dimensions plays a key role as well because these dimensions are a significant source for friction in teams. With an awareness of these cultural dimensions, students and faculty can better navigate cultural differences on teams.

1. Direct vs. Indirect Communication

Edward Hall (1976) proposed the dimension of high context culture and low context culture. High context cultures value indirect styles of communication. For example, speakers rely less on spoken words to convey meaning and intention because it is assumed the receiver can interpret the message based on their shared knowledge about the situation. On the other hand, low context cultures value direct styles of communication. Speakers use explicit language to express meaning and intention. Misunderstanding can easily occur in teamwork when students with direct styles of communication, while intending to be clear and effective, offend those who are used to indirect styles of communication. Meanwhile, the indirect communicators, who want to be polite and preserve harmony of the group, frustrate the direct communicators. This clash of communication styles can quickly and easily cause friction between team members. For example, when team members are providing feedback to each other, direct communicators may point out the shortcoming of another team member's work in a very explicit manner. If the team member receiving this feedback has an indirect communication style, he/she may view this explicit and direct feedback as rude behavior.

2. Polychronic vs. Monochronic Time Orientation

People from different cultures view and use time differently (Hall, 1983). Polychronic time orientation refers to the cultures where people tend to view time as a fluid concept—they go with the "flow" of time. Time-based schedule is followed loosely, and changes or interruptions are viewed as a normal part of the routine. It is not necessary that a polychronic individual has a preference for multi-tasking, although it may appear so. "When to do what" is based on what is happening in the moment. Monochronic time orientation, on the other hand, refers to the cultures that set their tasks to a clock. Punctuality and single focus in a given timeframe is the norm for monochronic cultures. Exact time allocated for certain tasks is to be followed. For example, in polychronic cultures, it is more acceptable for a meeting to continue until everyone feels the discussion has come to a natural conclusion. Monochronic people will be more inclined to end a meeting "on time" and attend to the next task on the schedule. When it comes to team learning, the difference in time orientation affects team members' perceptions about how a meeting is to be conducted or assignment deadlines (Waller, Conte, Gibson, & Carpenter, 2001). A team member may show up late for a team meeting or

leave earlier for something else, and this behavior may be viewed negatively due to one's time orientation. Team members may agree to a deadline for finishing a task, and such an agreement may be interpreted by polychronic team members as a loose guideline. The difference in the perception of time can in turn affect a team's performance outcomes because the team also has to meet faculty expectations regarding efficient team processes and timely submission of work.

3. Large vs. Small Power Distance

Power distance describes people's perception toward power distribution, hierarchy, and status in a group (Hofstede, 1991). A large power distance indicates that hierarchy is important and that people communicate and behave according to their roles and status. A small power distance flattens hierarchy. Egalitarian principles are highly valued in cultures with small power distances. In a team learning environment, each student will have his/her own interpretation of how to behave according to roles, as well as expectations about how leadership should be exercised (Zhang, & Megley, 2011). Students from a low power distance culture may expect a less "formal" feel to their team interaction. Exchanging jokes and questioning each other are the norm. For students who come from a high power distance culture, these behaviors may create discomfort as they perceive the team members as not taking things seriously. They may also become isolated on peer teams without orientation to the structure and direction provided by formal leadership, such as from faculty or an assigned team leader.

4. Individualistic vs. Collectivistic Orientation

Another well-researched cultural dimension is the distinction between individualism and collectivism. Individualistic cultures value the autonomy and independence of an individual, whereas collectivistic cultures value interdependence and group identity (Hofstede, 1991; Triandis, 1995). When conducting teamwork, members' collectivistic or individualistic orientations can come into play when prioritizing and negotiating roles, responsibilities, and rewards (Wagner III, Humphrey, Meyer, & Hollenbeck, 2012). In an individualistic environment, students from cultures that value a higher degree of interdependence have limited social networks from which to draw support for learning and success. The lack of support can also negatively impact loyalty to team processes and outcomes.

5. Task vs. Relationship Orientation

Cultures also differ in ways of managing relationships. Some cultures place a stronger emphasis on harmonious relationships over task completion. (Adler, 2002. p.64; Gardenswartz and Rowe, 2003). Teamwork is ripe with opportunities for cultural conflict when it comes to competing priorities of relationships and tasks. Team members may limit constructive criticism for fear of damaging team relationships. Task-orientated members may just

want to "get down to business," while the relationship-orientated members want to invest time building trust in the process. Relationship-oriented members may be perceived as delaying the progress of the teamwork by focusing on the social processes.

These cultural dimensions can interfere with the development of deep-level relationships within a team, potentially negating the high quality outcomes of successfully managed diversity. Of course, these cultural dimensions also play out against the backdrop of the cultural preferences of the university and the wider Canadian society. For example, we expect students and faculty to engage in teamwork with more direct communication, including in conflict situations. The faculty encourages students to bring issues to their attention early, and they see early and direct intervention as a better strategy. With regards to individualism vs. collectivism, students are rewarded for self-reliance and initiative. Even though most team members exhibit a desire to work with others, specific constraints apply. For example, teams commonly divide assignments into roughly equal tasks that are then completed independently by individual students. It is expected that this work be completed with limited to no support from other team members or faculty. Students are expected to resolve challenges in completing the task on their own and without prompting by others. These expectations favour the individualists in a group and put collectivists in a disadvantageous position from the start. Also, throughout this process, it is expected that students will adhere to deadlines. Faculty expects the work to be completed on time—failing to do so will result in penalty. The academic culture at Royal Roads reflects wider Canadian social norms; we need to help students and faculty become aware of these norms. By doing so, we open the door for mutual understanding between larger scale cultural characteristics as well as between these cultural characteristics and the culture at Royal Roads.

Becoming Intercultural

Cultural diversity can increase productivity, creativity, and innovation (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Mcleod, Lobel, & Cox, 1996) by bringing more ideas to the discussion and stimulating thinking. Diversity can also increase conflict, posing danger to the efficiency and effectiveness of teams. To achieve the potential benefits of cultural diversity in team-based learning, special attention needs to be paid to integrating intercultural processes into teaching and learning. In other words, putting people with diverse cultural backgrounds on a team is only the first, and an insufficient, step to bridging cultures. Teams are more successful when members have the support and skills to negotiate the dynamics and processes that are affected by cultural differences; support and development of skills require active intervention from faculty and culturally inclusive course design.

Our guiding view is that learning on teams is a complex activity with emergent and unstructured properties that create uncertainty for both

faculty and students. This view is distinct from cause and effect models of teamwork, which can be summarized by this formula:

In much of the literature on teamwork, attributes (i.e., group size, cultural diversity, leadership), processes (i.e., decision making, managing conflict, communicating), and context (i.e., organizational environment, purpose) are seen as inputs that, when properly integrated, result in successful outcomes (Gunter & Stahl, 2010; Salas, Sims, & Burke, 2005). The logic is that teams are successful when attributes and processes are aligned with the context.

Instead, we argue that the relationship between attributes, processes, context, and outcomes is synergistic, connected in complex, non-linear feedback loops. As a consequence, we recommend that faculty consider both sides of the relationship when supporting intercultural teams. So what do faculty need to consider to ensure cultural diversity is an asset and not a liability to team success? There are no prescriptions; instead, students and faculty must work together to construct a rich culture of team-based learning in which everyone is valued. We accomplish this by probing and acting, and based on what our senses tell us and what information emerges, responding appropriately (Kurtz, & Snowden, 2003). In this way, teams and faculty co-create meaning, give shape to their work, and texture to their processes. Each team can develop a unique culture, where differences can be recognized and negotiated, and create opportunities for cohesion and creativity.

From the perspective of complexity, there are any number of methods and tactics for supporting teams. We have chosen to pull on five threads from both sides of the teamwork tapestry: training and support, composition, design, assessment, and technology. Through this loose tapestry, we highlight current and successful practices, and point the way to more culturally sensitive and inclusive team-based learning.

Training and Support

Working with others is a learning outcome in and of itself at Royal Roads. This suggests the need for specific learning about teamwork. Across campus, team training is provided in a variety of forms and formats, from stand-alone workshops for entire cohorts to one-on-one coaching for teams or individuals. At the International Study Centre, team workshops are an integral part of orientation and foundation programs. Cultural sensitivity is a component of this program, highlighting differences in cultural dimensions and providing students with tools to engage in intercultural teamwork. In 2014, the university established the Student Coaching Centre within the suite of services offered by Student Services. As part of its mandate, the Student

Coaching Centre has responsibility for further improving the equity and fairness of access to supports for teams across the campus.

Regardless of the form and format, the growing cultural diversity of the university suggests that cultural diversity training should be strengthened and added to existing and new team training programs. Cultural diversity will continue to increase at Royal Roads due to internationalization. We cannot assume that the presence of multiple cultures will lead to intercultural team skills. Below is a poignant reminder:

> Were it the case that contact alone generated [intercultural] competence, citizens of neighbouring nations would be particularly good at communicating with one another, and native-born members of national groups would be particularly adept at understanding immigrants to their countries. What we see, of course, is usually the opposite (Bennett & Adelphi, 2001, p. 2).

As Bennett and Adelphi highlight, intercultural contact often leads to conflict. In addition to encouraging multicultural contact at Royal Roads, we must also cultivate an intercultural mindset. An intercultural mindset includes the recognition of cultural differences, the maintenance of a positive attitude toward these differences, the ability to identify potential areas of conflict and appropriate compensating strategies, and the acknowledgement that there is much to learn from and through cultural differences (Bennett & Adelphi, 2001). Such openness to differences and a strong desire to learn through the experience has been proven to enhance team performance (Pieterse, Knippenberg, & Dierendonck, 2013; Homan et al., 2014). In addition, there is power in naming; it is important to help students articulate cultural biases and assumptions. In this naming, students may be better able to appreciate the rewards of intercultural teamwork, and also its challenges. Training can deepen cross-cultural understanding and facilitate the development of shared mental models necessary for team success (Staples & Zhao, 2006; Bolman & Deal, 2003).

We suggest that it is not enough to assume that international students simply adapt to the team culture at Royal Roads. The expectation that "they should adapt" simply ignores the many assets our international students bring to our learning community, and diminishes opportunities for our domestic students to hone their intercultural skills. Our learning community's commitment to social constructionism suggests that the culture of all our students, not just the dominant Canadian culture, has a role in determining the specific shape and texture of team culture. This can only happen when we acknowledge the diversity of our classrooms and actively work to surface the rewards and challenges of that diversity.

A paraphrase of Edgar Schein's (1999) Process Consultation Model nicely summarizes our views on training and support (p. 655-656) for intercultural teams:

- only students "own" the problems and successes of teamwork in the classroom;
- students are not experts on what kinds of help to seek—faculty and others at the university can provide helping theory and practice;
- most teams want to learn and improve—they need help in determining what to improve and how to improve;
- most teams will be more successful if they learn to diagnose and manage their own diversity; and
- only students will know what will ultimately work in their team.

Composition

Culturally diverse teams perform better overall but are slower to get started and need more support at the start. When we evaluate diversity based on the cultural dimensions discussed earlier, the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity that should be implemented in a team to achieve desired pedagogical outcomes becomes an important consideration. Course designers and faculty can accommodate cultural diversity in teams by adjusting team composition to reflect the skills and ability of students. The research on composition suggests that culturally homogeneous teams (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen, 2010) are more successful than culturally diverse groups in the early stages of working on teams. Team members with limited team experience will find culturally homogeneous groups easier to navigate. Members of culturally homogeneous groups are more likely to share baseline assumptions about teams and teamwork, which help shape group norms and enable them to function successfully with greater levels of implied knowledge (Staples & Zhao, 2006; Van den Bossche, Gijselaers, Segers, Woltjer, & Kirschner, 2011).

In support of managing composition, we encourage faculty to determine team membership rather than leave it up to students. There is no simple formula for managing team composition; rather, faculty must exercise judgment when establishing teams and help teams monitor their success. At the International Study Centre, newly arrived undergraduate international students, facing initial cultural shock, can find comfort in working within culturally homogeneous groups and support for their mental models; homogeneity can foster team cohesion. When they are put into teams, this support and comfort is taken into account and weighted against the need to learn how to work with culturally different others. With graduate students in international-domestic mixed classes, team composition may be highly heterogeneous from the outset as the mature students can better deal with stress from cultural shock and rely on newly established friendships with cultural strangers. Overall, the emotional, social, and cognitive security of homogeneous teams must be balanced against our pedagogical objective of successfully learning and working on culturally diverse teams (see Figure 1 below).

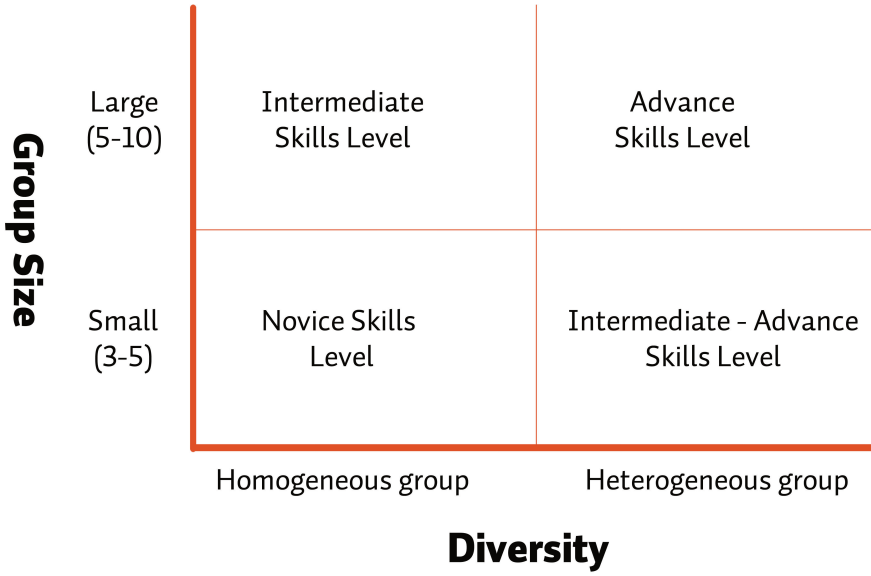
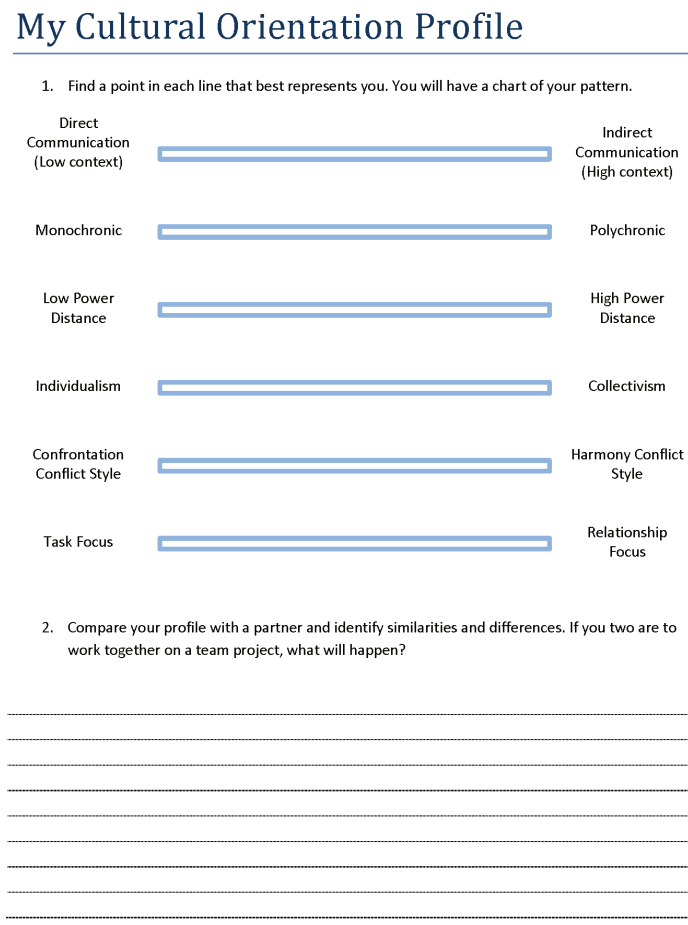


Figure 1: Pedagogical Considerations for Diversity in Team Composition.

In the spirit of viewing teamwork as a complex system, we encourage faculty to consider homogeneity and heterogeneity of team composition as a polarity (Johnson, 1996), rather than a binary either/or choice. The tension between "sameness" and "different" is ongoing over the life of the team. They are interdependent, and only understood in the context of the other. As a result, we prefer teams to explore the opportunities in difference and sameness, thereby better understanding the subtleties, rewards, and challenges of intercultural teamwork. One tool that can raise students' awareness and help them explore the sameness and difference is a Cultural Orientation Profile used in RRU's team training workshop (Figure 2). Students self-identify and discuss the potential impact of cultural orientation on their teamwork. The conversation with team members to compare their cultural orientation profiles helps them to better understand and appreciate each other.


My Cultural Orientation Profile

1. Find a point in each line that best represents you. You will have a chart of your pattern.

Direct Communication (Low context)		Indirect Communication (High context)
Monochronic		Polychronic
Low Power Distance		High Power Distance
Individualism		Collectivism
Confrontation Conflict Style		Harmony Conflict Style
Task Focus		Relationship Focus

2. Compare your profile with a partner and identify similarities and differences. If you two are to work together on a team project, what will happen?

Figure 2: Cultural Orientation Profile.

Design

We can further support the success of intercultural teams by designing meaningful team activities. Often, we take simple tasks, such as writing a short case study, and ask students to sort out the divisions of work necessary for teamwork. Unfortunately, this is like asking three or four people to move a single chair out of the room; it is a task more easily performed by one, maybe two people. The task is made simpler by the division of labour, thus

discouraging cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. To extend the analogy, we need to design large, heavy furniture for teams to move so that real and meaningful teamwork is possible (Schmidt, 2011, pp 7-9). Implicit in this argument is the view that the artifact of teamwork is not exclusively the outcome of team attributes, processes, and context, but also an input; the artifact shapes and patterns the work of teams. Moving a heavy table requires the movers to adopt specific leadership, communication, and coordination strategies to address the interdependencies inherent in the task.

For example, many courses ask teams to write up a case study. This usually takes the form of an essay and/or an audio-visual presentation. Teams often choose to divide the deliverable into equal parts (e.g., "You write the introduction, I'll write the analysis," "I'll do slides six through nine"). Without changing the case, we can encourage alternative divisions of labour. For example, in one BA of Commerce course, team members are asked to adopt different roles in relation to a case by considering the situation through the lens of multiple stakeholders, and to respond to the case through the lens' of these stakeholders. In a BA of Professional Communication course, teams are asked to construct a number of artifacts (i.e., essay, PowerPoint, website, and/or video) around a single assignment. Heavy assignments allow students to specialize within the project, develop discrete skills, and bring unique information and knowledge to the team. As a result, team members are mutually dependent, and therefore responsible for each other. Great team assignments require teamwork; assignments better suited to individual work should be left to individual students.

More generally, we can further encourage meaningful teamwork by asking members to take on distinct roles within the team process and present a portfolio of work. Instead of focusing on the artifact, members can be assigned wider roles common to project and collaboration work such as observer, facilitator, researcher, stakeholder, customer, writer, and/or editor. The resulting portfolio of work allows for a wider range of skills and abilities, accommodates a greater diversity of cultural orientations, and acknowledges the reality of teamwork in organizations. Students in the MA of Leadership are often encouraged to adopt this approach to team assignments, especially in the two on-campus residencies.

The design of teamwork has an impact on the success of student teams. In order to be meaningful, assignments must provide opportunities for learning about teamwork and student success. Assignments should allow for cultural diversity; this suggests that culturally meaningful assignments should encourage teams to use their inherent diversity in the construction of the artifact (Bardram, 1998; Schmidt, 2011). For example, in one Master of Global Management course, a team assignment specifically asks students to explore cultural differences to key issues such as gender, corruption, and power. In this assignment, the cultural diversity of the team is an asset because of the unique knowledge students from different cultures bring to the discussion.

The outcome is that we all become more conscious of our own stereotypical beliefs. A well-designed team assignment "makes simple division of labour difficult, promotes interdependence, broad-based participation, and the use of varied cultural perspectives…" (De Vita, 2005).

Assessment

In addition to designing culturally meaningful team assignments, we should also assess assignments not only on the finished product, but also on the process. If we accept that teamwork is a discrete outcome embedded in every course at Royal Roads, then we should also be assessing that outcome. It is fair to say that across the university, teamwork is assessed, but often only according to one of its measures.

Team success can be understood through the three lenses of performance, satisfaction, and efficiency (Li, Cropanzano, & Badger, 2013). Performance is the standard measure of team success at the university. Performance is the measure of the quality of the team artifact (outcome), usually in the form of an alpha-numeric grade. Satisfaction is the measure of the individual and collective judgment of the team about the process and the outcome. Efficiency is the measure of the relationship between effort, usually understood in terms of time, and the satisfaction and performance of the team. From these provisional definitions, we understand that performance, satisfaction, and efficiency are overlapping measures. Mental models of success vary across cultures and individuals. Few students would dispute an "A," but family and career expectations, experiences at previous educational institutions, cultural measures for achievement, and other factors clearly play a role in a student's understanding of the overall success of their team and its work. Dissatisfaction with teamwork is often framed in terms of equity and fairness, as the samples of dialogue at the beginning of this paper illustrate. When there is a gap between student expectation and team performance, issues of fairness and equity frequently surface. Opening up assessments to satisfaction and efficiency provide greater insights and opportunities for understanding performance, and how to continue improving.

Focusing on team performance provides an incomplete measure of the success of the team and a limited understanding of the complexities of working with others. We need to add to our range of teamwork assessment tools to help students measure, adjust, and develop their teamwork. One proven tool is guided peer assessment. Peer assessment allows members of a team to hold each other accountable, helping to address perceived and real issues of inequity and unfairness. Various methods for peer assessment are used across the campus. Some faculty use peer assessment tools to help students and teams gain insights into their strengths and weaknesses. Mostly, these assessments are used to provide formative feedback to student teams and are not tied to performance measures. In the BCom program, one faculty member is experimenting with formalizing peer assessments and using them

to adjust team grades in an attempt to better reflect the experience of students in their final grades.

Teamwork is a foundational learning method and an outcome; as with other methods and outcomes, it must be tailored and adjusted to the skill and ability of the students, as well as the expectations of the faculty. This suggests a developmental approach to teamwork; start easy and small with lots of support, and build toward harder and larger projects while at the same time slowly removing the safety nets. One important piece to this progression is to provide specific, realistic, and relevant feedback about a team's work, not just the artifact they create.

Faculty must intervene to increase the "collective capacity and performance of a group or team through application of…assisted reflection, analysis and motivation for change" (Clutterbuck, 2014, p. 271). The value of a coaching stance toward student teams is that it promotes shared meaning making and redistributes power between faculty and team members. For example, in a traditional educational role, faculty will recognize and reward team performance. In a coaching role, faculty help students explore influences on team performance by using tactics such as self and peer assessments that can help members understand their impact on team success. In some of the courses in the Year 1 foundation curriculum at the International Study Center, students complete a self-assessment worksheet at the conclusion of their teamwork to answer questions such as "what have I learned about working in teams?" and "how can I improve my team skills next time?" Subsequently, faculty debrief students' responses to these questions and coach them to further develop their capacity to work in intercultural teams.

Technology

Technology can be used to improve communication, to improve the depth of interdependence in intercultural teamwork, and to hold students accountable to others. The immediacy of face-to-face teamwork can be challenging for culturally diverse teams. We have shown previously that individuals from different cultures sometimes miss and misinterpret nonverbal cues, potentially resulting in conflict. These incidents are often exacerbated by linguistic inequality. Asynchronous communication technology such as forums on learning management systems can improve dialogue by slowing down and filtering the flow of information between team members (Carte & Chidambaram, 2004; Palsole & Awalt, 2008; Staples & Zhao, 2006). For example, in one course, on-campus students practice dialogue in both the classroom and online through Moodle forums. The online practice models important components of dialogue such as active listening, taking turns, asking clarifying questions, and building on ideas.

Technology can also be used to coordinate teamwork. Part of the challenge facing teams is coordinating individual activities that collectively result in the artifact of their efforts. Currently, in the Faculty of Management, teams

are asked to complete a Team Assignment Plan Summary, which documents roles, responsibilities, and deadlines. Many students recognize the value of the process and the document in their success. Unfortunately, it is hard to keep these commitments front and centre within the team as it is a MS Word document easily buried by more recent work. Many of the elements of this document reflect a project-based orientation to teamwork. There are several online and open project management software programs that mimic and build on the basic elements of the Team Assessment Plan Summary document, but also provide a single platform for organizing responsibilities, roles, and schedules; most have the added advantage of allowing for multiple and overlapping projects, allowing teams to better visualise the totality of their team enterprise and to more precisely mark time, a key element for understanding team efficiency. Better visualization and coordination of teamwork can help overcome cultural orientations to time, tasks, and responsibilities, and help develop a shared understanding of expectations between team members.

Going Forward – Our Way

The opening scenarios posed the question "Your way or my way?"—highlighting the tension and conflict in intercultural teamwork. We want to provide an outlook for integrating cultural diversity into team-based learning at Royal Roads. Several pedagogical considerations have been proposed and good practices will continue to emerge in the context of the internationalization. It is important to keep in mind that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Effective and innovative pedagogy in this area will rely on faculty's own intercultural awareness, reflection, and application of intercultural competence in designing team assignments and facilitating students' teamwork. Only with the intentional integration of cultural diversity into team-based learning can students practice and develop meaningful intercultural team skills. What we need to avoid is the opening scenarios being the only outcomes of team-based learning in an intercultural context.

The outlook for meaningful intercultural teamwork lies in devising an "our way" of collaboration at Royal Roads. We need to put efforts into guiding student teams to develop shared values and mental models (Meeussen, Schaafsma, & Phalet, 2014) as the foundation for intercultural teamwork. To be successful in this regard, cultural differences need to be recognized; students and faculty alike need to assess their own standing on the cultural dimensions discussed earlier. We also need to be aware of the overall Royal Roads teamwork culture as it manifests in practices such as team coaching, team performance review, and the Team Assignment Plans Summary.

With a better cultural mirror reflecting on our own individual and institutional culture towards team-based learning, we can ensure that using team-based learning principles is about bringing together team members'

different understanding of the world, different ways of solving problems, and different ways of acquiring knowledge. (Gentner & Stevens, 2014, p. 3). Students develop positive attitude towards working with others and attain valuable collaboration skills when intercultural teamwork is designed well with students' intercultural competence at the centre of the learning outcome and assessment (Deardorff, 2006; Montgomery, 2009).

Extending the Geertz and Gudykunst definition of culture, Schein (2010) described culture as a "pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 17). Within the context of Royal Roads' internationalization, the "adaption and integration" is something we need to turn our attention to in order to inter-culturalize our team-based learning within the wider framework of the Learning and Teaching Model. Making team learning valuable and meaningful in a culturally diverse but inclusive manner, with inevitable conflicts but necessary support and tools for students and faculty to learn and grow, is the very task we need to do to create our way.

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Appreciative Inquiry in RRU Mid-Career Student Life

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Abstract

The MA-Leadership (MAL) Program features an adult learning model and highlights three elements of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model (LTM): "facilitate authentic, challenging, collaborative and engaging learning experiences"; "focus on applied research-informed learning"; and "create learning conditions that are respectful, welcoming and inclusive." How these LTM elements have worked for Royal Roads University students in the context of a relatively new approach to organizational change—Appreciative Inquiry—is presented and recommended as an effective approach that strongly supports the LTM.

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Introduction

Since the first cohort of the Master of Arts in Leadership (MAL) program opened at Royal Roads University in 1996, our students, mid-career professionals with a minimum of five years of leadership experience in hand, have been leading a final-year inquiry-based change process in a real world organization as their capstone project. These action research projects have taken place in organizations in every sector, including business, education, government at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels, policing and the military, healthcare, and non-profit social services agencies. The project requires the student to engage a senior organizational leader as a project sponsor, while working with an academic supervisor from RRU. With the Sponsor and Supervisor, the student creates a collaborative action research inquiry topic that helps organizational stakeholders come to some agreements and new directions on an opportunity or innovative change, leading to new knowledge for the organization or the field. Topics have ranged from improving leadership training, redesigning health systems, LEAN implementations, succession planning, employee engagement, municipal re-development, and program planning, to name only a few. The student's task is to meaningfully—and ethically—engage the stakeholders about the leadership issue or opportunity, create opportunities for dialogue, facilitate new and generative collective understandings, and foster generative group decision-making on next steps (Rowe, Piggot-Irvine, Graf, Agger-Gupta, & Harris, 2013).

The MAL Program and Four Principles

The MAL program consists of two years of interdisciplinary study where students focus on relevant, real world opportunities to address leadership issues and challenges through projects grounded in a rigorous theoretical understanding of the nature of organizations, organizational change, and the changing role of leadership in the contemporary contexts of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (or VUCA—see Johansen, 2012). The program is competency-based and focuses on adult learning, individual values and culture, inter-personal and group communication, systems thinking, team facilitation and development, and leading organizational change, and then puts these together through the capstone project with a real world organization. The School of Leadership Studies developed a set of four principles to help frame the school's understanding of leadership, including "leadership as engagement," an "orientation to possibility," "engaged scholarship," and "learning as transformation" (Harris & Agger-Gupta, 2015). An orientation to possibility "helps us to focus on the bigger issues of meaning and hope while being pragmatic about the resources, materials, and processes that will help us and our colleagues move toward a desirable future that has not yet been determined" (p. 6). Leadership as engagement is about fostering the aspirations, skills, and talents of others, and creating

opportunities for organizational stakeholders to take ownership of organizational innovation and collaborative work toward common purposes (p. 2). Engaged scholarship is about creating opportunities for co-creating new knowledge for social benefit by promoting a "synergistic and dialectical relationship among scholars, practitioners and stakeholders" (p. 4). Learning as transformation is about "learning how to learn (second-order learning) and developing [one's own] understandings and values about…relat[ing] to the world (third-order learning)" (p. 7). Fostering transformative learning means going "beyond teaching knowledge and application of skills to creating a learning environment and activities in which students learn to transform themselves and society," along the lines of the UNESCO learning goals (2008, p. 8).

The Insight of Appreciative Inquiry

The framing of "leadership as engagement" is fully in accord with a fundamental leadership question asked in an appreciative process: "What is the behaviour that we want to grow?" and not "What is the behaviour that we want to stop?" (Lewis et al., 2011., p. 24). The critical element in an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process is therefore about exploring possibilities for appreciation and what could be done rather than a deficit-focused repair of something gone wrong. This is not to say that one should not engage in critical path analysis or other inquiries to learn from mistakes—simply, that there are many organizational improvement processes beyond "fixing problems." The key insight of AI is that innovation and creativity come from what Adams (2009) calls a "learner paradigm," a generative and transformative "orientation to possibility" that is about continuous, joyful curiosity and learning from the environment, and then "tracking and fanning" the resulting sparks of innovation into being:

> Tracking is a state of mind where one is constantly looking for what one wants more of. It begins with the assumption that whatever one wants more of already exists, even if in small amounts. Fanning is any action that amplifies, encourages, and helps you to get more of whatever you are looking for (Bushe, 2005, p. 127).

At the opening of RRU in 1996, AI (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Bushe, 2012) was a relatively new concept in the organizational change literature. Yet even in the first cohort of the MAL program (then the MA Leadership and Training program), one student conducted an AI process into improving leadership skills in public health nurses in two BC health authorities as her capstone (Buckingham, 1998). AI is an innovation in organizational inquiry because it links a generative, affirmative organizational inquiry process to an epistemology of social construction (Gergen & Gergen, 2015; Rosenau, 2001; Thatchenkery & Chowdhry, 2007, Yu & Sun, 2012), and dialogic change (Bushe & Marshak, 2014; 2015). AI creates organizational energy and alignment through discovering and appreciating the stories employees and other stakeholders tell about their successes. The telling of these narratives of previous success and inspiration are the evidence, and sparks, of the positive

energy that is the basis for a cohesive change process. The opportunity for this storytelling happens through individual interviews or group approaches to gathering narratives from organizational stakeholders. These stories also reveal the core values that participants believe was a source of the success, as well as the hopes stakeholders have for the organization's future (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987; Bushe, 1999; Bushe, 2012; Barrett and Cooperrider, 2001; Watkins et al., 2001, 2011; Lewis et al., 2011).

Two Challenges for the MAL Capstone

Two issues have challenged the school in sharing our excitement about the work our students are doing in their capstones with AI that really exemplify the RRU Learning and Teaching Model: 1) a question about whether our capstones are acceptable as Action Research (AR) projects, and 2) a question about whether a capstone using the processes of AI is actually an AR project. An explanation of the response to these questions will explain a number of relevant aspects of both AI and AR.

Given the nature of the MAL capstone as an action research process, it has been a challenge to demonstrate that the capstone projects actually are, in fact, action research projects, since structural change outcomes frequently take place after the capstone projects are concluded. Unless one is an autocratic leader, organizational change requires a cycle of action research about aligning to a common organizational change objective, as well as engaging organizational stakeholders on the topic of readiness for change. This additional aspect of the organizational AR process seemed to be a gap in the AR literature that spurred on our description of an "action research engagement" cycle (Rowe et al., 2013). It is also the issue that moves the organizational AR process beyond the personal change described in much of the AR literature and, from the standpoint of the time available for a meaningful master's project, makes this achievable in an academic context.

A second challenge in our program has been to demonstrate that AI, which is more than a single method, actually fits under the mantle of AR, given that AI can appear to have a different epistemology and orientation, and, to some, has been construed as a different methodology. The original writings of AI founder, Cooperrider, and others (see Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Bushe, 2012) accentuated this issue, since they critiqued AR as having abandoned generative, emergent outcomes and theory building usually associated with research and inquiry, in favour of defining AR as problem-solving. Only recently has it become clearer that, yes, AI is a related approach under the broad umbrella of action research (Bradbury, 2015; Cooperrider, 2013). It is in support of this larger perspective that it becomes helpful to describe how the phases of AI relate to the phases in the AR cycle.

AI Phases Linked to the AR Cycle

An Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process typically cycles through four or five phases, described as the 4-D or 5-D model: "Define," "Discover," "Dream," "Design," and "Destiny" (Watkins et al., 2001, 2011; Barrett & Cooperrider, 2001). These AI phases parallel fairly closely the action research cycle of "Plan," "Look," "Think," "Act," and "Reflect" (Stringer, 2007; Coghlan & Brannick, 2010) (see Figure 1).

The "Plan" phase of the AR cycle corresponds closely to the "Define" phase in AI, added to Cooperrider's 4-D model by Watkins et al. (2011), since part of the planning for an AI initiative requires the organizational sponsor to be in agreement with the project as focused on the positive.

The "Discover" phase involves appreciating the narratives told by organizational stakeholders about their most inspirational moments in the organization. These stories describe the "life-giving forces" in an organization's existence. In some versions of AI, there is a search for the "positive core" of the organization or team. These stories, together with the hopes participants express for the future of the organization, are the "data" that move the AI process forward into the "Dream" phase.

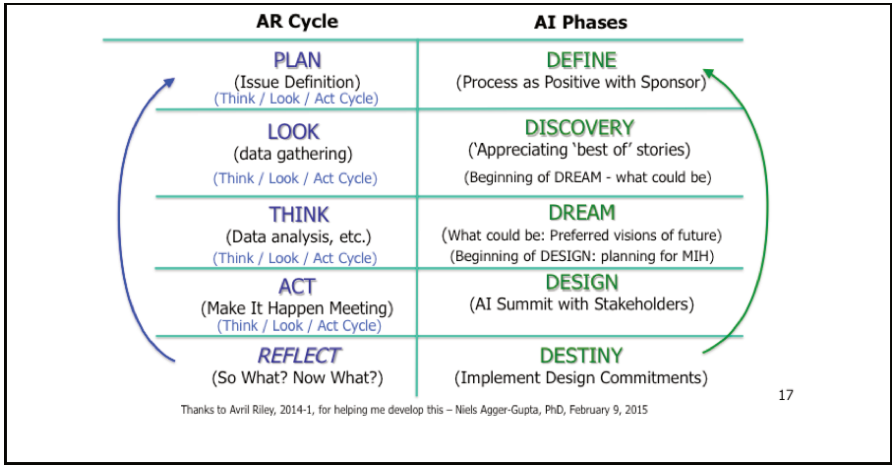

Figure 1. AR Cycle and AI Phases.

The equivalent AR element closest to the AI "Discover" phase is the "Look" phase, typically described as data gathering, or "reconnaissance" in much of the AR literature (as, for example, in Stringer, 2007). Gergen & Gergen (2015) describe this interpretation of the "Look" phase of AR as belonging to an instrumental, diagnostic approach to change. They posit that AR should have a more emergent framing based on inquiry, that harkens more closely to the scholar-practitioner intent of AR founder, Kurt Lewin. They describe the potential for AR to be a dialogic, socially-constructed way of "replacing methodological individualism with a collaborative epistemology, moving

from a vision of research as mapping to one of world making" (p. 401). This conceptual "world making" in AI is the "Dream" phase, involving an iterative, participant-engaged, interactive data analysis, linking the stories, hopes, and values of the organization at its best to the creation of statements of possible futures, also known as "provocative propositions," that are based on the "Discovery" narrative data. In AR, the equivalent is the "Think" stage of data analysis (see for example, Saldana, 2013).

In AR, the analysis of the "Think" stage leads to an "Act" stage, where some change action takes place amongst the organizational stakeholders. Some action researchers (see for example, Stringer, 2007; or, Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) posit "action" in AR as requiring a "thoughtful variation of practice…toward improvement…that is observed" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 12). A social construction perspective of "action" would see dialogue as meaning-making, transformative learning, and the shifting of mental models. This is the critical precursor to any subsequent structural change (Gergen & Gergen, 2015). In the MA-Leadership program, for example, we argue that AR is not only iterative, but holographic, in that embedded within each phase of AR is an iteration of the full AR cycle. Therefore, aligning AR with a social construction perspective means that the MAL capstone involves the engagement of organizational stakeholders in the first or second of multiple loops around the AR cycle. These conversations and dialogue are what we have described as "action research engagement" (Rowe et al., 2013).

The AR "Act" phase therefore can typically also involve a meeting with key organizational stakeholders, including the organizational sponsor, that we in the School have dubbed the "Make-It-Happen" meeting. The findings from earlier stages in the process are presented and the stakeholders swim with their data, come to some collective conclusions and agreements, and plan next-step strategies to move forward. In AI parlance, this would be the "Design" phase with an "AI Summit" of stakeholders coming together to hear about earlier phases and engage in a large group activity to design their next steps. AI Summits (and "Make-It-Happen" meetings) are opportunities to bring "the whole system into the room," a concept that originated with Emery and Trist (Emery & Trist, 1965; Dean, 2001; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider, 2012; Weisbord, 2011). At the summit, the findings and "preferred futures" statements are validated and extended, and next-step strategies are collaboratively developed with the organizational sponsors in the room (Ludema et al., 2003; Watkins et al., 2011). This AI Summit event has also frequently been structured by students as a World Café (Brown & Isaacs, 2005) or other large group activity (Bunker & Alban, 2006) in many capstone projects.

The last phase in the AI process is the implementation of the plans from the Design phase and was called "Destiny" by Cooperrider and Whitney (2005). This equates to a blending of the last part of the "Act" and "Reflect" stages in the AR cycle. This could simply be the real-world roll-out of the

plans and commitments made in the "Design" summit. Most Leadership students are able to at least plan the "Design" phase summit as part of their capstone, but it is the rare project with an AI "stance" that is able to move to the "Destiny" phase. Since our program only has time for the engagement cycle, the conclusion of the student's AR process typically results in a "Reflect" or "Reconstruct and Recontextualize" stage with the Sponsor (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). The key questions for subsequent iterations of the AI phases or the AR cycle are, "what did this action process mean for stakeholders?" and "what should be done next?" The AI (and AR) process then cycle around to the next spiral.

The AI Metaphor

AI challenges the traditional notions of academic study of organizations and organizational issues as problems or deficits. AI reconceptualizes the organization as a learning brain, or a network, instead of as a machine in need of "fixing" (Morgan, 2006). The alternate metaphor Cooperrider describes for AI is that of the organization as a mystery to be understood, rather than as a problem to be solved (Bushe, 2015). In this reconceptualization, successful organizational inquiry leading to generative change came about through discovering the stories of joy and inspiration in the organization, and generated innovation, excellence, and community-building (Cooperrider, 2012; Cooperrider, 2013; Lewis et al., 2001; Watkins et al., 2011). AI creates generative organizational energy and alignment through an appreciation of the organization at its best (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Bushe, 1999; Barrett & Cooperrider, 2001; Watkins et al., 2001, 2011; Lewis et al., 2011; Bushe, 2012).

Despite the epistemological challenge from AI over the last 30 years, "fixing problems" is still the dominant mental model within the business sector, as well as within the world of action research and traditional academia. But this has not generally been our experience with AI at RRU. The stories of just a few of the RRU student AI initiatives illustrate how they have implemented this approach; they demonstrate why AI is an attractive approach for RRU students in their assignments, workplace applications, and projects, and why AI, as per the LTM, "facilitates authentic, challenging, collaborative and engaging learning experiences," while "focusing on applied research-informed learning" and "creating learning conditions that are respectful, welcoming and inclusive."

The RRU Experience with AI Capstones

Between 1998 and 2015, there were 114 accepted RRU master's capstone reports listed in the UMI/ProQuest database that included the phrase "Appreciative Inquiry" in either the title or abstract. Of the 19 capstones with "Appreciative Inquiry" in the title of the study, the MAL program has sponsored 15, while three other RRU programs included one each: MA in

Health Leadership, MA in Environmental Education and Communication, and the MA in Professional Communication (Buckingham, 1998; Johnson, 1999; Hoffman, 2001; Fenwick, 2002; Magee, 2002; Bonney, 2003; Troje, 2003; Camara, 2005; Laing, 2005; Farr, 2006; Maber, 2006; MacDonald, 2006; Klassen, 2009; Lawrie, 2009; Waddell, 2010; Humer, 2012). Since 2010, students engaging in an AI project under the umbrella of the MAL action research methodology have not included this language in the title of their capstone and refer to their process as having an "appreciative stance."

In a comparison of the findings and recommendations across these 19 capstone projects, several strong findings stood out in almost all of these student reports:

- "Appreciative Inquiry helped the organizational participants to build stronger relationships";
- "The AI process was a positive experience for participants and for their organizations";
- "AI generates group energy, and contributes to employee engagement";
- "Organizational leaders, through their organization's AI process, found that their role in their organizations, over the course of the initiative, had changes away from managerial logistics to the task of building a learning organization";
- "Through the AI-focused capstone project, it became clear that AI was more than a competing organization theory—an appreciative, generative lens becomes a way of living for members of the organization—and for the student engaged in this process";
- "The appreciative interview in the Discover phase of AI can have a therapeutic effect on participants"; and
- "Students engaged in an AI process in a health organization found the AI process to be appropriate for Health Care System Research."

In the most frequent four of the 11 kinds of activities in these 19 AI capstone initiatives, students reported conducting appreciative interviews where they collected stakeholder narratives of inspirational organizational events (15 of 19); worked with an advisory team to facilitate a whole organization focus (14 of 19); conducted appreciative focus groups where six to nine participants shared their stories and hopes with one another (10 of 19); conducted a survey of organizational stakeholders (9 of 18); and created an AI Summit or event (10 of 19) for their organizations. These AI Summits were handled in a variety of ways and included participants breaking off in pairs and triads to conduct appreciative "discovery" interviews with one another. Participants were then asked to report back the key elements of what they had heard, which then led to further rounds of interaction in the summit groups. In one case, a student had a group re-envisioning community health care in Kelowna, BC address all four AI phases (Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny) in the

course of an AI Summit taking place over one afternoon and evening (Humer, 2012).

Burnaby Family Institute Example

Katalin Camara, an employee of the Burnaby Family Institute (BFLI), chose her own organization for her final thesis, *Freedom to be Positive: Implementing Appreciative Inquiry at Burnaby Family Institute* (Camara, 2005). In Chapter One, Katalin described the anticipated benefits of the AI process:

> The research provided an excellent opportunity for staff, volunteers, contractors and board members at BFLI to learn about Appreciative Inquiry, and to put it into practice safely, under clear ethical guidelines while the process was facilitated by a professional trained in Appreciative Inquiry. Specifically, BFLI could discover the benefits of inclusiveness, positive focus and collective knowledge- creation. In addition, AI presented BFLI with the opportunity to "shake up" the institutional energy at a time when organizational renewal was warranted in order to deal with the unintended negative consequences of change the organization experienced during past years. A significant possible benefit of this project could be a positive influence on staff morale…. staff morale appeared to increase while staff turnover decreased (Camara, 2005, pp. 2-3).

Camara's qualitative Action Research approach employed the "Discovery" stage of the 4-D Appreciative Inquiry cycle "to understand the 'best of what is and what has been'" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 7). One of the joys of reading this thesis is to "hear" the verbatim voices of the participants in the findings as they gained a growing sense that change was happening while the interviews were taking place. "The Appreciative Inquiry approach changed the language used, the number and the quality of interactions between people and the focus of the conversations" (Camara, 2005, p. 76). This shift in interpersonal relationships is found in both the longer quotations and in the short, direct participant statements about the change they are experiencing in and with one another:

> [She] is completely different than the first time I met her. It blows [me away that] she is saying it and that makes me feel like a mirror it's changing in everybody. So it makes it easier for the group to be able to own the project and be appreciative in any one of these steps.
> (Participant 'B')

As another participant reflected, "I see a shift in you; it's the same shift I feel in me" (Participant 'F'). Another participant summarized, "I understand that someone [who] is really different isn't necessarily better or worse, and I appreciate that difference in a very different way than I did before" (Participant 'C') (Camara, 2005, p. 71).

Camara's participant quotations in her findings and conclusions convey a strong sense that the AI process has had a genuinely transformational impact in the organization. One section of the study conclusions summarizes a variety of changes in behaviours in the

participants that resulted in increased collaboration in the organization and "facilitated the process of releasing leadership skills" (Camara, 2005, p. 78). Indeed, sufficient enthusiasm and support for the Appreciative Inquiry process had built so rapidly that the ED and entire organization agreed to carry on through the other three stages, outside the scope of the project. Camara was able to report on her concluding agency-wide event in her study conclusions:

> During the Dream, Design and Delivery phases, people dreamed about the ideal stage of the organization and developed provocative propositions in three themes that came up from the earlier interviews: trust, respect and communication. Based on the collectively formed images and statements, action items were developed in order to move the organization into the direction of the dreamed situation. During this planning phase, many ideas were considered and some of them were chosen by the teams to carry out. People voluntarily assigned themselves to different roles and responsibilities in the delivery process. Those ideas range from newsletters and posters to different social events and relevant training are all under recent implementation.
>
> Beyond the planned implementation process, the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry has been starting to manifest in many areas of the organizational life. There are ongoing discussions at different levels, within and between different groups of people, about how to embrace Appreciative Inquiry fully. There are regular reflections, within individual and team settings, about experiences in using AI. People aim to discover how to support each other to regularly use appreciative approaches and positive tone of voice and not to fall back to problem-solving methods (Camara, 2005, pp. 83-84).

Additionally, although unreported in the thesis, there were excited phone calls to Katalin internally from the supervisors who were noticing the changes, and emails from Katalin to her RRU academic supervisor about these observed radical shifts in interpersonal relationships, co-operation, energy, and morale. One particular event attests to how remarkable this was for the entire organization. The executive director called Camara's academic supervisor to invite her to a party the organization was holding in Camara's honour, to present her with a trophy as a symbol of the contribution the project was making to the organization—again, before the final chapters of Camara's report were even written.

A recent email from Camara, 10 years after the AI project was completed, described how two of her colleagues took the Justice Institute of BC's *Foundations of Management and Leadership Certificate* program and "for their final project they developed an AI introductory course that will be used for all of their new employees. Exciting, yes?" (Camara, K., personal communication, November 28, 2014).

Providence Farm Example

But AI has not been restricted to just the capstone project. In one case, the AI process for students already began in the first year of the MAL program.

Each MAL cohort experiences a Leadership Challenge™ activity, where an invited organization, typically a regional non-profit, presents a current leadership issue or opportunity to a new cohort, gathered at RRU for their first two-week residency. The response to the challenge is taken up by teams of five to seven students. Over the course of a week, the teams interview the organization's leadership team, investigate their web site, and work out possible approaches for the organization based on the residency leadership literature and the students' own professional leadership experiences. The organization's leadership attends a final presentation made by the student teams and gives each team some feedback and appreciation as to the utility or innovativeness of the suggestions. Typically, this hands-on example of authentic, real world, experiential learning in the first residency is highly memorable for students and sets the context for the rest of the program. It is in the context of one of the Leadership Challenges that the elements for an Appreciative Inquiry were established and the Challenge went considerably beyond the usual boundaries of the classroom.

In spring of 2003, a MAL cohort was introduced to Providence Farm (http://providence.bc.ca/), a therapeutic community operating in rural Duncan, BC. The Leadership Challenge focused on Providence Farm's uncertainty about its future. The organization had been spurred into action to investigate options by an ambitious opportunity presented by the Sisters of St. Ann, who were prepared to donate land if Providence Farm were to build housing. The relationships and insights created from this Leadership Challenge lifted this project into much more than a class activity. The opportunity—and urgency—faced by this non-profit, combined with their strong caring and inclusive values with respect to their clients, created the opportunity for a follow-up Appreciative Inquiry large group event, to help the organization determine its strategic direction and align the stakeholders.

One of us, Ann, working with a learner from the cohort, Lisa Stekelenberg, co-designed and co-facilitated an AI Summit with as much of the Providence Farm community in the room as possible. In this version of the AI Summit, the first two phases of the AI process ("Discovery" and "Dream") were staged in one meeting and the "Design" phase in a second meeting (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin, 2003). The process began with "Discover": stakeholder participants at tables, sharing their stories of moments of pride in belonging to the Farm. Participants found recurring themes of memorable stories and what had contributed to previous success: values, types of actions, and support. After conversations about which values and approaches the organization should carry into the future, participants then moved to the "Dream" phase, creating a powerful new organizational vision that incorporated the ideas that emerged from the earlier stage into a new statement that helped push the organizational boundaries further.

One month later, Lisa and Ann co-facilitated a smaller stakeholder group on a "Design" phase AI Summit. Using the approach of Open Space (Owen,

2008), this large group method created a space where planning groups self-organized around participant-generated topics. These topics received broad support from participants working in table groups. These groups reported on their progress periodically to the whole group in plenary sessions. The planning group conversations uncovered previously unnoticed synergies between individual projects that then further expanded their ambitious ideas.

The results of these two meetings exceeded all expectations; the board, clients, funders, therapists, and staff had become aligned on their organization's revitalized direction. The key stakeholders told Lisa that the new projects the AI process had helped identify were substantial undertakings and significant in the organization's development (Stekelenburg, L., personal communication, 2003).

AI in Other RRU Programs

AI projects at RRU are not limited to the School of Leadership. The Master's of Business Administration Executive Management online optional course, *Building Sustainable Communities*, has students working with Systems Theory, the principles of Community Development, and the theory and practice of Appreciative Inquiry. The same course is offered in the MA-Interdisciplinary Studies program and for students in the Graduate Certificate in Sustainable Community Development. Each student chooses a situation of concern or opportunity, and engages in a current state analysis of their topic. Teams form around a few of these topics and expand the analysis with respect to most appropriate leverage points for change (Meadows, 2008), and then design a plan for an AI initiative involving stakeholders to address the situation. Often the topics arise from actual threats to sustainability in learners' own home communities or are situations of need about which they are passionate.

As instructors at Royal Roads, we are dedicated to the principle that "progress results because of the powerful connect between knowledge and action" (Coghlin & Brannick, 2008). In the 15 capstone projects that specifically identified as engaging an AI process, Camara's included, students have consistently found that the stakeholders in their sponsor organizations were enthusiastic and eager to move forward with the changes they have developed during the capstone process. This was the case for the projects from Lisa Stekelenburg, Katalin Camara, and the other MAL, MBA, MAIS, and SCD students who reported that their sponsor organizations had been influenced by an Appreciative Inquiry process, and that there had been evidence of new ideas and changes in the groups' thinking and communicating in the workplace.

Conclusion

These examples refer to just a few of the ways in which student learning and

inquiry using AI are powerful expressions of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model, and in particular, the elements of "create learning conditions that are respectful, welcoming and inclusive," "facilitates authentic, challenging, collaborative and engaging learning experiences," and "focusing on applied research-informed learning." These examples (often) point to transformational learning, deep reflection, and motivation. A wealth of stories of positive change exist within the other capstone projects, assignments, and learner initiatives based on Appreciative Inquiry. For the authors of this article, the exploration of our shared interest in AI has created a deeper, more nuanced appreciation for the ways in which faculty, students, and all RRU staff engage with one another to promote a positive learning experience and maintain a wonderful orientation to the possibility of innovation that could create systemic positive ripples in our lives and communities.

The opportunity exists for other students, faculty, and staff to try the appreciative approach in their courses and in their organizational lives. Whether there is an opportunity to move forward with a whole AI process, or whether this can only be applied as a guiding metaphor, the opportunity for appreciation for the inspirational and "life-giving" elements of social interaction is a powerful and generative driver of innovation and change, and is a core part of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model.

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12

Interactive, Contextual, and Experiential (ICE) Pedagogy for Intercultural Competence Development

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Abstract

We developed ICE (Interactive, Contextual, and Experiential) pedagogy for RRU MA-IIC program's overseas residency by applying King and Baxter Magolda's developmental framework for intercultural maturity (2005). Specific strategies to implement ICE pedagogy and lessons learned from our past experiences are discussed in this paper. The evolution of the ICE pedagogy exemplified RRU's Learning and Teaching Model in action, particularly the principle of authentic and experiential learning. Royal Roads University (RRU) established the Master of Arts in Intercultural and International Communication (MA-IIC) program in 2005. Since its inception, RRU faculty have implemented a number of innovative pedagogy for best learning outcomes including intercultural competence development for the students. In this paper, we describe the evolution of the ICE pedagogy for the overseas residencies in MA-IIC as an example of RRU's Learning

and Teaching Model in action, particularly the principle of authentic and experiential learning.

MA-IIC Program and Overseas Residency

Like other programs at RRU, the MA-IIC employs an online distance and face-to-face residency blended model. The structure of the two-year 33-credit program starts with a three-week online pre-residency orientation related to the first two courses of the program. The first residency usually takes place in the autumn for two to three weeks, followed by a four-week online post-residency mainly designed for students to continue course discussion and assignment online submission. After that, students participate in four online courses for eight months before they return to a face-to-face residency for the second time. The second residency offers three courses with online pre- and post-residency components starting in September and ending in December. After the second residency, students are engaged in completing their theses and remaining courses online.

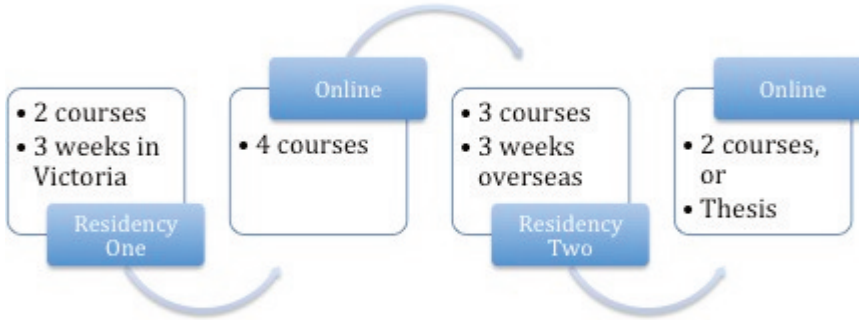

Figure 1. RRU MA-IIC curriculum structure (2008-2015).

During the earlier years (2005-2007) of the program, each of the three-week residencies took place on the campus of RRU in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. However, both faculty and students saw the need to relocate the second residency abroad for two reasons. First, the overseas residency could set up a real intercultural and international learning environment that could benefit the students in the program focusing on their own intercultural competence development. Second, RRU has partners in China, India, and many other countries. Those partners could offer all necessary local supports, from faculty to classrooms, if RRU ran a residency on their campuses.

From 2008 to 2015, we ran the second residency for MA-IIC students in multiple cities in China and India and developed ICE pedagogy by applying the theories to overcome the barriers described below.

Developmental Framework for Intercultural Maturity

Intercultural competence development motivated us to move MA-IIC second residency abroad. We adopted King and Baxter Magolda's developmental framework (2005) for intercultural maturity to set up our goal when designing MA-IIC overseas residency because we believed that all MA-IIC graduate should have achieved "genuine maturity." Such "maturity," as King and Baxter Magolda elaborated, refers to "not just knowing" cultural differences, but also being able "to apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts" (p. 586).

King and Baxter Magolda's framework for intercultural maturity is multidimensional. First, it illustrates how one person could progress from an "initial" level of awareness, sensitivity, and ability to adapt to distinctions across cultures, through an "intermediate" level and towards a "mature" level. In addition, the framework includes the following three dimensions: how people see the world (cognitive), how they see themselves (intrapersonal), and how they relate to others (interpersonal). At the "mature" level, cognitively, a person is able to consciously shift perspectives and use multiple cultural frames. Intrapersonally, one is able to create internal self, challenge one's own views of social identities, and integrate aspects of self into one's identity. Interpersonally, a person is able to engage in diverse interdependent relationships, ground relations in appreciation of differences, understand intersection of social systems and practices, and is willing to work for others' rights.

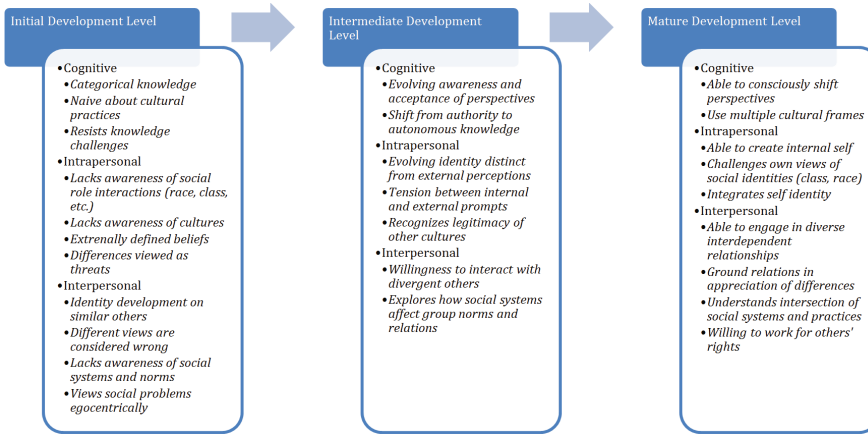

Figure 2. Developmental framework for intercultural maturity (Adapted from King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

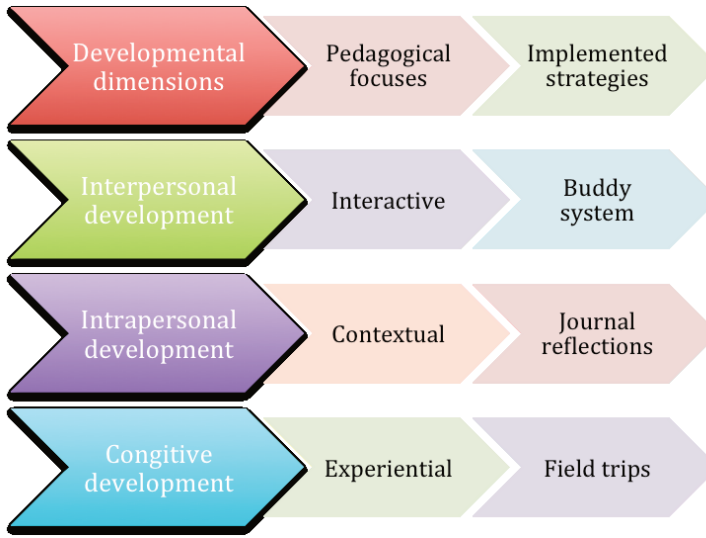

Figure 3. Pedagogical focuses and implemented strategies based on developmental framework for intercultural maturity.

King and Baxter Magolda's model of "intercultural maturity" helped us to choose pedagogical focuses and implement strategies in curriculum design and overseas residency planning. We set up a buddy system for our students to interact with local people for better interpersonal development. We assigned journal reflections for them to understand everything contextually for better intrapersonal development. We planned field trips for our students to expand their spectrum on cultural diversity from immersive experiences. Accordingly, we named our pedagogy ICE by emphasizing "interactive," "contextual," and "experiential" characteristics (see Figure 3).

The ICE Pedagogy

Interactive

Student interaction started before the face-to-face residency with various kinds of activities. Pre-departure preparation was vital to the success of the overseas residency. One of the initiatives in the design of the residency was to pair each of the Canadian students with a graduate student from a host university, two months before the residency. The Canadian students had plenty of questions related to their travel, the city they would stay for three weeks, and the local culture. It was also the first time for the Chinese graduate students to be partnered with students from other countries. They were curious about everything related to a Canadian graduate student's life as well as ways to improve English proficiency. Both sides were highly motivated to exchange emails before they met each other. Interaction across cultures evolved naturally. The buddy relationship, in fact, lasted after the residency.

To improve interaction among the students, an afternoon debriefing after their "field study" was organised. The field study was a major component of the overseas residency. The students were required to get out of the classroom to observe and study what was happening in the "field". For example, they visited a provincial prison, a software industry park, a kindergarten, an elementary school, a high school, and an insurance company. In the second week, the students were sent to different organizations and did their field studies by themselves. Those organizations included a hospital, a hotel, a travel agency, a bank, an IT training institute, an insurance agency, and a university college. After each field study, the students returned to the classroom in the late afternoon and debriefed what they had learned. The faculty-guided debriefing was a way to encourage interactive and collaborative learning. The students' field studies, taking place in an ambiguous and uncertain environment, prompted the students to check with each other and look for help from co-learners. According to Gudykunst (2005), uncertainty is a cognitive phenomenon, while anxiety is an emotional one. Effective intercultural communication and learning must occur between the maximum and minimum thresholds for both uncertainty and anxiety. When above the maximum, we lose our confidence to predict others' behaviour or to communicate with them. Below the minimum, we lose our motivation to interact with others. Therefore, in the overseas residency, the environment must provide sufficient uncertainty and anxiety to our learners and faculty must manage both within the proper threshold to ensure intercultural competence development. For example, the debriefing provided the students with a safe setting to share their frustrations, thoughts, and discoveries. The students were highly motivated and liked the collaborative and interactive learning in the debriefing. There was no intra-cohort segmentation in the overseas residency.

Contextual

Communication scholars believe each interpersonal or inter-organizational interaction takes place in certain contexts and so, understanding of communication has to be context-oriented. Context-based learning was emphasized and facilitated in the overseas residency through different means. One of the methods, specifically designed to assist self-reflection, is the journal entry activity. Related to that, in-class and online discussion also help the students to share their ideas, observations, and learning.

In the overseas residency, the students were asked to submit one journal entry every day during the first two weeks, which totalled 10 journals in 10 business days. Each journal entry was submitted by the student to the instructors at the very beginning of the day in a sealed envelope with the student's name and date on it. The journal was mainly about what the student had seen, thought, and been told on the previous day. The students were asked to record details of the context from which they saw, thought, or were told something. The journals were returned to each student after the

residency. The students were asked to open their own envelopes, and then read and compare their own journals from day one to day ten during the post-residency.

Many students found the journal entry helped them remember what happened in the residency. Furthermore, their own journals sometimes shocked them since the differences between any two days were remarkable. The students reported two significant developments in terms of: (a) their observation skills, and (b) their ways of thinking and reasoning. In other words, they utilized the opportunity of an overseas residency to develop their self-reflection skills and improve their awareness of their own culture. These are clear signs that the students became more sensitive in an intercultural setting (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003, p. 440; Straffon, 2003, p. 499).

Understanding from context as a concept was taught in the students' first year as an essential intercultural competence. It is not an easy idea to grasp until having practiced it in their everyday journal writing and in the post-residency summary of their journal entries. This was where the transformative learning happened. For example, one student had been thinking about "happiness" during the residency. She found that happiness, although it seems to be a universally desired objective of people worldwide, was understood, appreciated, expressed, and perceived differently in various cultures. After learning about the low salary of a Chinese foot massager, she first thought it was an unfair situation for such a skillful worker and that he must be unhappy. The student was asked to further investigate this issue by interviewing the worker and other people. What she learned was not simply that the worker was actually happy, but that her values and thoughts were based on her own culture. Overall, she learned more about herself and her own culture during the residency. That achieved the goal of this overseas residency.

Experiential

In the second year of their graduate studies, the students are expected to be able to apply theories and concepts they learned during their first year into real life. Experiential learning, hence, is an appropriate method to help them reach such a learning objective. According to Kolb, experience is the pivot that turns abstract concepts and theories into reflective observation and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

In particular, the supervised field study was designed to guide the students' experiential learning. Supervision, mainly applied in the debriefing, was an essential piece in the field study. To some extent, the students' learning and intercultural competence development would not take place without supervision. For example, significant changes took place in the second week. The students were assigned to "work" in a local organization for 20 hours. The 28 students were grouped into nine teams. Each team, with four students, was provided the name and address of the organization and the

main contact person's name and telephone number. The assignment for this "field study" was to write a report for Canadians about an intercultural communication aspect of doing business with the Chinese that the team believed to be essential. After a day spent in the Chinese organizations, nearly all the teams thought one day could be enough since there seemed to be nothing valuable for them to learn. Some complained that the host organization did not answer their questions. Some thought the host organization was not friendly. In the afternoon debriefing, the instructors asked if the students remembered key concepts in the field of intercultural studies. The students remembered, and as a consequence, their learning had evolved from "abstract" to "reflective observation" and "active experimentation" through "experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 1). After that moment, students became more active in translating theories and concepts into practice. They were no longer armchair strategists. They had adjusted to the context by observing behaviours of the people in the host organization in order to modify their strategies to approach them, set up relationships with them, and learn from them. These were appropriate acculturation strategies (Berry, 2004, p.64) and the students became able to apply them in their real life learning.

Lessons Learned and Advice Offered

An intercultural environment is a pedagogical choice for educators to maximize opportunities for students to develop intercultural competence. For MA-IIC students with goals such as intercultural maturity, the intercultural environment should not be limited by face-to-face interaction or textbook-based knowledge learning. Since 2009, we have experimented with the overseas residency once a year for each cohort in their second year of study and gradually developed an online-offline blended "intercultural environment." Most of our students appreciated such an intercultural environment and demonstrated significant cognitive and affective development in their own intercultural competence as a result of the overseas residencies. The design and delivery of overseas residency received a federal award from the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) for its innovativeness in 2011. The courses and locations of the overseas residency changed and evolved year by year in order to optimize learning opportunities. Nevertheless, one thing stays the same: the overseas residency is a purposeful intercultural environment designed for the students to achieve intercultural maturity.

Many factors account for the successes of ICE pedagogy during the overseas residency. Faculty and student engagement is obviously one of the most important factors. Support from both RRU and SDNU executives is another key factor. The increasing economic exchange and interdependency between Canada and China motivates the students to take the adventure. The successive Olympic Games hosted in Beijing and Vancouver, in 2008 and

2010 respectively, provided an imperative for the two sides to come together for better learning and understanding.

Organizing such an overseas residency required a considerable investment of human and financial resources. At least two full-time faculty and staff from Royal Roads University as well as six administrative staff and twelve faculty members from SDNU spent more than three months on this project. A web site with constantly updated residency information and answers to frequently asked questions was set up. Over 1,700 emails were exchanged between the program office and students regarding the residency. Also, three delegation visits between the two universities led by the university presidents took place before and during the residency. Lawyers were consulted to generate an agreement between the universities. Cancellation clauses and contingency plans to run the residency in Canada were prepared to avoid any possible interruption due to any possible natural disasters or international conflicts. The students were asked to purchase sufficient international travel and medical insurance as well as emergency contact information.

The success of the overseas residency was not achieved without efforts to overcome challenges that both faculty and students came across during the process. Student feedback and faculty reflection provided several recommendations. First and foremost, pedagogically, opportunities for interactive and collaborative learning should be provided, supported, and encouraged to overcome possible segmentation among the students in the process of developing their intercultural competence in an internalized setting. Internationalizing teaching and learning is about integration, not just the simple accumulation of diversity. The way to utilize the setting of internationalized learning should be carefully designed and guided by experienced faculty (Mullens & Cuper, 2012). A field study without supervision could turn into a study tour in an exotic culture without concrete skill development. In our case, the students were satisfied with their improvement in self-reflective abilities and understanding of their own culture. Intercultural maturity is a deliberate and intentional learning outcome at the centre of this overseas residency.

Experiential learning is one of the best ways for the students to translate and apply theories and concepts they learned from textbooks into real life issues. Real life experiences, when properly guided, are more effective than simulations and case studies in a classroom. Again, the key is to design experiential learning with the pedagogical goal in mind from the start. As mentioned earlier, detailed planning is necessary and one key element of the planning is managing students' expectations prior to the departure. Furthermore, preparing the buddies from the host university is pivotal, as they also have expectations about their role and involvement in the program. All buddies are interested in experiential learning, not only because it does not exist in their curriculum, but also because they find they have learned the same, if not more than, as our students did. They must understand the goal is

for them to share the knowledge about their own community and to explore cultural similarities and differences with the RRU students. It is not surprising to find this experiential learning benefits students from both sides because it is designed and delivered as true interactive intercultural learning.

Intercultural exploration does not stop at the superficial level of observing ethnic and national differences. When concluding each overseas residency, MA-IIC students presented their discoveries of differences and similarities across age, gender, experiences, education, profession, and many other aspects. The average age of our students was 35, while that of the SDNU students was 25. Many of our students have travelled and worked abroad while their buddies hardly had any international experiences. The majority of the RRU students are mid-career professionals, while the SDNU students had not finished their student life nor had much off-campus work experience. Sometimes these differences played a bigger role than ethnic diversity did. By arranging the overseas residency, our students learned first-hand that cultural differences were more profound—which is a mature cognitive development.

Last but not least, many MA-IIC students stay in touch with their buddies, even after many years. This cross-cultural long-distance friendship demonstrates how much Chinese people value long-term relationships (Hofstede, 2001). It is an effect beyond curriculum design, but within the realm of intercultural education. We are glad to see an overseas residency does not stop when it ends. We have the same hope that any intercultural collaboration lasts longer than planned.

Conclusion

Internationalizing higher education is not an issue that educators need to further agree on, but a challenge that both faculty and students still need to work out. The successful design and delivery of the Royal Roads intercultural overseas residency suggest that the ICE pedagogy can offer a model ensuring that students are acquiring the intercultural competence and maturity to become true global leaders.

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PART IV

Institutional Considerations

13

Flexible Admission and Academic Performance

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Abstract

The effect of flexible admission practices on academic performance are examined. A data set consisting of over 8,000 student records of which 27% consisted of non-traditional (flexible) admissions was examined. The results of this analysis showed that there was no significant effect on academic performance by the admission type, indicating that flexible admission students do equally well to those admitted on the basis of previous academic credentials. Further analysis also indicated little effect on academic performance either by gender or age. This study supports the notion of a more flexible approach to university admission, particularly in the applied and professional fields.

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Flexible Admission and Academic Performance

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) refers to the practice of reviewing, evaluating, and acknowledging the skills and understanding that adults have gained through experiential learning (Thomas, 2000). Other terms that are widely used are Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) or Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), which typically refer to the practice of using RPL to grant academic credit through a course challenge or advanced

standing. RPL also includes qualification recognition, which is the practice of using prior learning to recognize equivalency in qualification for the purpose of admission. It is the latter which we refer to as flexible admission i.e., admission granted to an individual who does not meet the standard academic admission requirements for entry but whose experience, after review, is deemed equivalent.

The post-secondary system shows increasing interest in the recognition of prior learning (RPL) (Harris, Wihak, & Van Kleef, 2014), due in part to student demand for recognition of their "out of school" experience, but also in part to the increasing academic recognition that the more mature student is a growing demographic and adds value to the classroom. In Canada, foreign credential recognition and RPL for skilled immigrants is a matter of some government priority as projected skill shortages loom (Guo & Shan, 2013). As RPL expands, there is also an emerging community of scholars studying RPL practice both globally (Wihak, Harris, & Breier, 2011) and in Canada (Conrad, 2008).

There are very few quantitative studies that demonstrate the academic effectiveness, or lack thereof, of flexible admission. A study of flexible admission to vocational teacher education in Sweden concluded that existing practices needed improvement to obtain validity and trust (Stenlund, 2013). Non-traditional students entering a Bachelor's in Nursing program in a UK nursing school were found to perform equally to traditional entry (A levels) students in final degree classification attainment, although attrition was higher in flexible admission students (Brimble, 2013). The health care sector's need for rural registered nurses in Australia prompted the development of alternative entrance requirements and the recognition of clinical experience to nursing programs. The recognition of prior learning did not affect the overall educational outcome (Rapley, Davidson, Nathan, & Dhaliwal, 2008). In contrast, students entering the University of Newcastle, NSW, Australia via flexible admissions were found to perform marginally worse than those meeting the standard academic requirements (Cantwell, Archer, & Bourke, 2001). In the previous study, it was found that older students who entered via flexible admission tended to outperform younger students; this effect was also duplicated by studies at York St John University in the UK, which also found that female students generally outperformed male students (Sheard, 2009).

The long-term experience of applying RPL processes to admission at Royal Roads University therefore lends itself to assessing correlations with admission type, grade point average, and gender. In this chapter, an analysis of these factors is presented.

Since its inception, flexible admission has been a key priority to allow increased accessibility for working professionals and was outlined in the founding education plan (Royal Roads University, 1995, p. 11). The flexible admission policy is designed to recognize evidence of prior learning

accomplishments that will result in a high probability of successful program completion ("Flexible Admission," n.d.) and is a key component of our learning and teaching model. Applicants are required to provide a C.V. and a personal statement, transcripts, two references at a minimum, and may be required to provide additional evidence that outlines prior learning accomplishments. The files are adjudicated by faculty and staff who have been specifically trained in flexible admission.

Anecdotal institutional evidence has suggested that flexible admission candidates do equally well as traditionally admitted students, but there is still a concern in the broader academic community that a more open flexible admission policy might contribute to an overall lowering of academic standards. There appears to be little available qualitative evidence to support this opinion and it may be more symptomatic of a natural resistance to change.

A dataset was exported from the student information system consisting of 11,401 records from students who graduated between 2001 and 2014. A GPA change occurred in 2005 (from a 4.00 scale to a 4.33 scale), and the data was transformed so that all GPA calculations were on a 4.33 scale. Eleven records that had a final GPA showing as zero were eliminated. Finally, data from the MA Leadership and Training program were eliminated from the dataset. This program's competency-based grading system was not compatible with the 4.33 scale and caused significant distortion to the normality of the dataset (the program was replaced in 2005 by the MA Leadership using a more standard grading rubric). All statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS. For the purposes of this paper, the analysis was only carried out on degree programs and not certificates or diploma programs, resulting in 8382 records. The dataset used is summarized in Tables 1-3.

	Gender		
	F	M	Total
Level Bachelor's Degree	1913 (52%)	1735 (48%)	3648
Master's Degree	2750 (58%)	1984 (42%)	4734
	4663 (56%)	3719 (44%)	8382
Total			

Table 1. Gender by Degree Level.

	Admission		
	Standard	Flexible	Total
Level Bachelor's Degree	2860 (78%)	788 (22%)	3648
Master's Degree	3231 (68%)	1503 (32%)	4734
	6091 (73%)	2291 (27%)	8382
Total			

Table 2. Admission Type by Degree Level.

Level	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean
Bachelor's Degree	28.557	3648	7.4201	.1229
Master's Degree	38.730	4733*	8.8642	.1288
Total	34.302	8381	9.6837	.1058

Table 3. Age by Degree Level.

** One student excluded for missing date of birth*

In Canada, women have made up the majority of full-time students in undergraduate programs since the 1990s. In 2008, 62% of all university graduates were women. While lower at the master's level, female enrolment has also been steadily increasing, reaching 54% in 2008 (Turcotte, 2011). The latest enrolment data from Statistics Canada for 2013/14 show female enrolment as 57% at the undergraduate level and 54% at the graduate level. At Royal Roads University, 52% of the undergraduate students and 58% of the master's students from 2001 to 2014 were female.

Table 2 shows that 22% of students at the bachelor's level and 32% of students at the master's level were admitted by flexible admission.

Master's Degree Graduates

The basis of admission by program is shown in Table 4. Programs that are more managerial and leadership-oriented show a marked tendency for more flexible admission, whereas the more specialized or technical programs show a preference for requiring more traditional undergraduate experience.

Program	Standard	Flexible
	%	%
MGM Master's Global Leadership	33%	67%
MA International Hotel Management	33%	67%
MBA Digital Technologies	46%	54%
MA Knowledge Management	50%	50%
MBA Human Resources Management	51%	49%
MBA Executive Management	59%	41%
MA Leadership	59%	41%
MA Interdisciplinary Studies	59%	41%
MBA Project Management	60%	40%
MA Disaster and Emergency Management	65%	35%
MA Learning and Technology	66%	34%
MA Professional Communication	69%	31%
MA Conflict Analysis and Management	81%	19%
MA International and Intercultural Communication	82%	18%
MA Environmental Practice	83%	17%
MA Applied Communications	84%	16%
MA Human Security and Peacebuilding	86%	14%
MA Distributed Learning	86%	14%
MA Environment and Management	88%	12%
MA Educational Leadership and Management	89%	11%
MSc Environment and Management	91%	9%
MSc Environmental Practice	93%	7%
MA Environmental Education and Communication	95%	5%

Table 4. Flexible Admission by Program (Master's degrees).

In order to test whether gender or the basis of admission had any effect on graduating GPA, the means for each set were calculated (Table 5 and Table 6).

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Program GPA	F	2750	3.8176	.24743	.00472
	M	1984	3.8031	.26081	.00586

Table 5. Mean GPA by Gender for Master's Degree Graduates.

	Admission	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Program GPA	Flexible	1503	3.7643	.24791	.00639
	Standard	3231	3.8335	.25266	.00444

Table 6. Mean GPA by Type of Admission for Master's Degree Graduates.

The results of an independent t-test showed that on average, standard admission applicants showed a very slightly higher graduating GPA (t = -8.833, p = .000) of 0.06927. While this is statistically significant, it is a small effect (r = 0.13) and probably not significant in practical terms. The results for GPA effect by gender were not significant ($p \geq 0.05$).

Other studies have shown that older students perform better than younger students (Sheard, 2009) and in our data set, older students are more likely to have used that experience outside of school for flexible admission, potentially distorting the data to show that flexible admission students perform better. In this data set, the correlation between age and graduating GPA is significant (r = 0.031 p = .015) but again the effect is small, resulting in only around 1% of the variation in graduating GPA potentially explainable by age. If anything, this effect would slightly strengthen the performance of traditional admission students vs. flexible admission students.

A study of university grade inflation indicates that average GPAs have climbed by approximately 0.1 per decade (Rojstaczer & Christopher, 2010), but there is significant variation between programs and types of school. It is worth looking at this 13-year dataset from that perspective (Figure 1).

While no formal policies have been introduced to address perceptions of grade inflation during this time, it is clear from Figure 1 that grade deflation has occurred with a GPA reduction of approximately 0.2 in a decade.

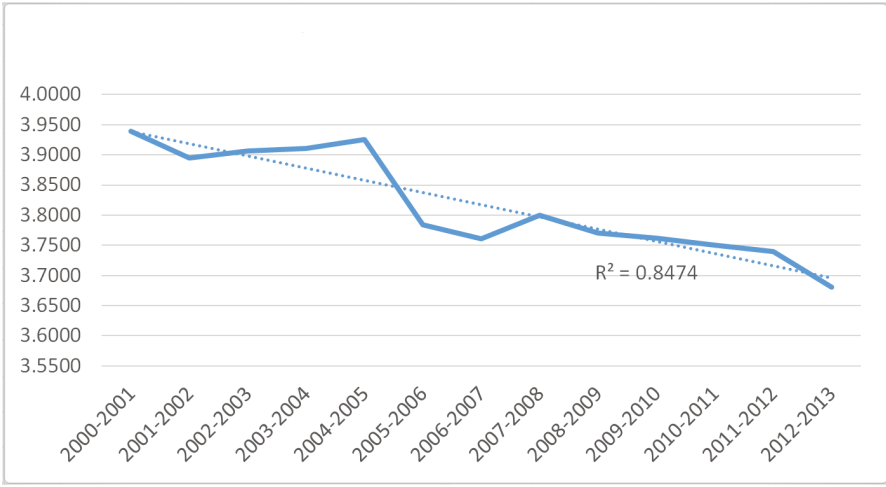

Figure 1. GPA by Academic Year (Master's Programs).

Bachelor's Degree Graduates

As with master's degrees, there is a large variation in the use of flexible assessment by program area (Table 7), but with no obvious reason other than the openness to this form of admission.

Program	Standard	Flexible
	%	%
BA Justice Studies	70%	30%
BCom Entrepreneurial Management	73%	27%
BA Professional Communication	74%	26%
BA Applied Communication	75%	25%
BA International Hotel Management	93%	7%
BSc Environmental Management	97%	3%
BSc Environmental Science	98%	2%
BA Environmental Practice	100%	0%

Table 7. Flexible Admission by Program (Bachelor's Degrees).

The results of the analyses of gender or admission type on graduating GPA were reversed from that of the master's programs. On average, female students outperformed male students by a very small margin (difference in the means = 0.07681, t = 6.213, p = .000). The basis of admission (flexible or standard) had no effect on graduating GPA (p = .900).

The correlation between age and graduating GPA is significant (r = 0.124 p = .000), but again the effect is small, resulting in only around 1.5% of the variation in graduating GPA which is potentially explainable by age. Again,

this effect could slightly strengthen the performance of standard admission students vs. flexible admission students.

Unlike the GPAs of master's graduates, the GPAs of bachelor's graduates have not changed over time (Figure 2). This again is in contrast to overall trends of grade deflation at American 4-year colleges and universities (Rojstaczer & Christopher, 2010).

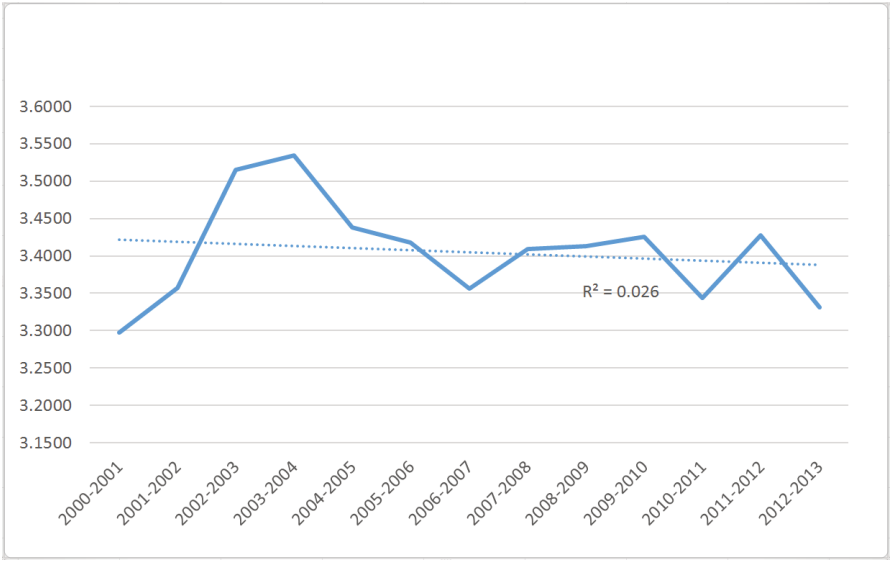

Figure 2. GPA by Academic Year (Bachelor's Programs).

Conclusion

This preliminary analysis of a dataset containing 3648 bachelor's degree graduates and 4734 master's degree students over a 13-year period shows that graduating GPA level appears only minimally correlated to gender or type of admission. The effect sizes suggest that other variables (e.g., pedagogical effectiveness, other learner characteristics, etc.) may be able to better explain GPA variations. This result (a) provides support for continuing to recognize prior learning as the basis for admission for experienced applicants who may lack sufficient educational qualifications, and (b) questions the degree to which undergraduate credentials are a strong predictor of outcomes at the graduate level. Given the growing interest in prior learning assessment and rise of competency-based programs, more research into the outcomes, implications, and results of flexible admission practices is necessary.

Acknowledgements

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14

"Research that Makes a Difference": Conceptualizing and Assessing the Royal Roads University Research Model

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Abstract

New approaches to research engage with and deliberately contribute to transformations in complex social and natural systems. Such research is problem driven, transcends disciplinary boundaries, and it is often grounded in the belief that knowledge needs to be co-produced through collaboration to effectively support decision making and practical action for sustainable development. Royal Roads University is uniquely equipped for this kind of contribution, with low disciplinary boundaries, faculty and students who blend academic and professional experience, and an emphasis on problem-oriented research. This paper examines the research component of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model at the university. It provides an overview of RRU's unique research model and develops and discusses a prototype theory of change. Promising new approaches to evaluate transdisciplinary research (TDR) are discussed, including broader principles and criteria of research quality, and approaches that use theories of change (ToC) to identify key stages and changes in a hypothetical change process and seek evidence to test the ToC empirically. A review of 506 abstracts from completed RRU graduate research projects found that a relatively small proportion (<8%) fully apply key principles and criteria of effective TDR. A full assessment of 48 projects selected for having high potential impact scored well on many criteria, but

with systematic areas needing strengthening to improve effectiveness. It is intended that this paper will help build a conceptual and theoretical basis for improved research design, monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

*

Introduction

Contemporary social and environmental problems are complex and profoundly challenging. They transcend the traditional disciplinary boundaries that underpin the structure and functioning of many research enterprises (Carew & Wickson, 2010). Increasing calls for knowledge aimed at solving consequential problems, an urgent need for research that considers complex contexts, including interactions between natural and social systems, and increasingly engaged populaces that demand more consultative and participatory approaches have changed the research landscape (Wickson et al., 2006). Gibbons et al. (1994) influentially identified the need for new approaches in their path-breaking book, *The new production of knowledge*. Numerous authors have proposed "transdisciplinary research" to deal with problems that transcend disciplinary boundaries, are intertwined with sociopolitical context, and engage stakeholders to generate socially relevant and acceptable outcomes (Carew & Wickson, 2010). A new discipline of sustainability science has emerged, with problem-driven approaches that seek to create and apply knowledge in support of decision making for sustainable development, grounded in the belief that such knowledge needs to be co-produced through close collaboration between scholars and practitioners (Holling, 1993; Gunderson & Holling, 2002; Clark & Dickson, 2003; Berkes, 2009).

Royal Roads University (RRU) is uniquely equipped to undertake research of this kind and indeed to take a leadership position. The university has a mission to do teaching and research that contributes to transformation in its students and in the world. The RRU research model aims to be solution-oriented and real-world focused. The research component in the strategy emphasizes "action oriented research as a process of inquiry—students develop meaningful research questions and engage in worthwhile investigations to solve real organizational, community-based, or societal problems" (RRU, 2013, p. 17). This approach complements and is supported by an interdisciplinary curriculum and organization. Guided by the university's strategic research themes[1]—innovative learning, thriving organizations, and sustainable societies and communities—RRU research aims to produce relevant knowledge that responds to global, national, community-, and organization-based issues and problems. Unlike traditional universities, RRU is fundamentally interdisciplinary by design. There are just two interdisciplinary faculties (Faculty of Social and Applied Sciences and Faculty of Management) organized into Schools. The faculty, including a large group of associate faculty, bring a rich and deep combination of academic and practical experience and interests. Faculty responsibilities for research and scholarship are broadly defined and faculty performance is evaluated based on a range of criteria that include traditional peer reviewed

1. http://research.royalroads.ca/strategic-research-themes

publications, but also: applied research, community and public contributions, contributions to academic quality, and activities that enhance the transfer and translation of new knowledge into practice, foster knowledge exchange between academic and professional worlds, or encourage integrated research/change processes. The majority of Royal Roads graduate students are employed professionals who also bring a tremendous breadth of experience. They choose to study at RRU to cultivate their skills and knowledge for practical application. As a result, they develop high levels of professional and personal competence and influence that allow them to contribute effectively to change in their organizations or communities.

The combination of low disciplinary boundaries, strong blended academic and professional experience, interests and linkages among both faculty and students, and a deliberate and explicit focus on solution-oriented research should situate RRU well to address contemporary, real-world problems. This claim needs to be tested. As a learning organization, we are interested to know whether and how the research model contributes to change, and to find ways to improve it. We also want to be able to respond to the demands of funders, and society more generally, to demonstrate the value of research in terms of results. Research is notoriously difficult to evaluate because the path from intervention to impact is long and indirect, and all the more so in complex inter- and transdisciplinary approaches (Belcher et al., 2016). An important step to facilitate research evaluation is to clarify the conceptual foundations of the research process and to make it transparent and explicit.

The purpose of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework for evaluating the RRU research environment and research model. It begins with an overview of the RRU research community: the students, faculty, and staff who conduct research at RRU and the organizational and academic context for that research. It reviews the types of research activities done at RRU, and the main areas of thematic focus. It then discusses the range and orientation of research processes followed at RRU, with a strong emphasis on knowledge creation and knowledge co-creation with stakeholders, and on change facilitation. The discussion is organized around a theory of change (ToC) for the overall research and learning process, with attention to the leverage points for change. As a first step towards an empirical evaluation of the RRU research model, we report on the results of a review of RRU graduate student theses. The analysis highlights strengths, but also scope, for improving graduate research design and implementation. The paper concludes with a summary of key lessons and suggestions for next steps.

The RRU Research Community

Student Research

A large proportion of RRU research is done by students as an integral part of their academic programs. Research is highly interdisciplinary[2] and often transdisciplinary[3], involving stakeholders in the research design and

implementation. Students gain knowledge, practical skills, and experience through applied research, action learning projects, case studies, and other research activities. Student research is intended to respond to global, national, community, and organizational problems. This focus on application and real-world problems is an intentional part of the design of the research courses and related activities for all programs at RRU. Projects range from major papers with a value of 6 credits (e.g., MA in Tourism Management), theses worth 12 credits (e.g., Master's in Environment Management, MA in Conflict Analysis and Management) to the Doctor of Social Science dissertation (36 credits). A list of RRU academic programs with research components is provided in Appendix 1.

Faculty Research

"Research and scholarship" is one of three main areas of responsibility for RRU faculty (along with "teaching" and "service to the university and to the academic mission"). Research and scholarship is broadly defined as the creation, discovery, integration, synthesis, interpretation, dissemination, and/or application of knowledge related to one's academic discipline or profession (RRU Faculty Agreement, 2012). This research includes externally-funded projects, supported by Canadian tri-council agencies[4], private foundations, private companies, international development agencies, and other research, development, and environmental organizations[5], as well as projects funded internally through RRU Internal Research Grants and Professional Development funds. Other projects are done as contract research, hired by private corporations or public agencies.

There is one research centre at RRU, the Centre for Health Leadership and Research (CHLR), which examines current and emerging challenges related to leadership in the health care system, and three Canada Research Chairs: the Tier 1 CRC in "Sustainability Research Effectiveness" and Tier 2 CRCs in "Innovative Learning and Public Ethnography," and "Innovative Learning and Technology." Each chair has its own research program, involving students, research assistants, post-doctoral researchers, and numerous collaborators.

RRU research falls broadly into three strategic research themes. These themes were developed through a consultative process to span individual programs, schools, and faculties. "Sustainable Communities, Livelihoods and the Environment" focuses on resilience, diversity, development, vitality, and

2. Interdisciplinary research (IDR) combines methodologies and epistemologies from more than one discipline in a single research activity.
3. Transdisciplinary research (TDR) crosses both disciplinary and institutional boundaries to incorporate stakeholders and/or other non-professional researchers in the research process.
4. The Tri-Council agencies are: The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).
5. E.g., the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank.

the ability to innovate and adapt. "Innovative Learning" focuses on learning that creates opportunities to generate knowledge and to empower; the theme considers learning at the level of society and organizations, as well as the scholarship of teaching and learning. "Thriving Organizations" explores human and operational dimensions, and seeks to foster individual and organizational capabilities in organizations, systems, and sectors.

A schematic overview of the RRU Research Environment is shown as Figure 1.

A Conceptual Framework for Research that Makes a Difference

Faculty and Associate Faculty research supports their work as teachers, keeping abreast of and contributing to theoretical, methodological, and practical issues in their fields of interest. Students' research projects link systematic inquiry to practical issues and problems, and provide professional context for integrating and applying concepts and skills learned in their programs. The Master's of Tourism Management (MTM) program puts it nicely, stating that the research components of the academic program help students not only to be critical consumers of research-based knowledge, but also to be capable producers of research-based knowledge (RRU MTM, 2014).

Beyond this important role supporting the RRU educational mission, there is also an explicit intention that RRU research should generate new knowledge and help use that knowledge to solve problems, develop new opportunities, support innovation, and enable change; in other words, to have impact (RRU Office of Research). But how can we know if we are being successful?

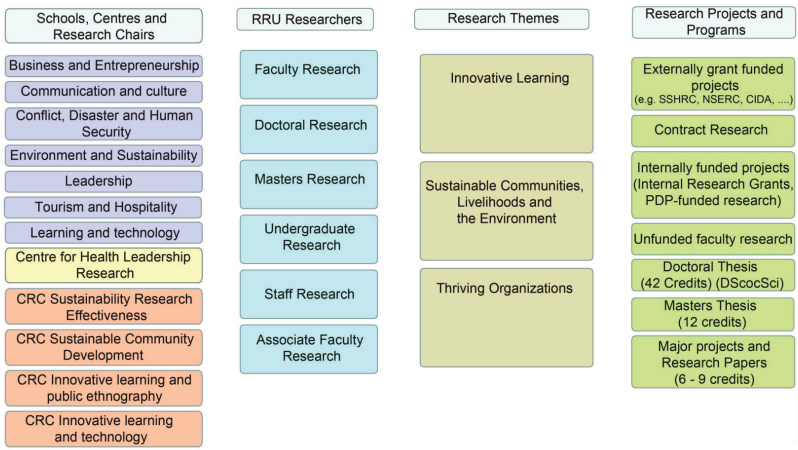

Figure 1. The RRU Research Environment.

In any endeavour, it is necessary to assess progress and to know whether

a project is on track to achieving its goals. This facilitates adaptive management, to adjust and improve efforts during a project, and informs better design in subsequent projects. Of all publicly-funded activities, research may be the most difficult to effectively monitor and evaluate because the path from research to impact is long and indirect, especially in complex systems.

Action research, applied research, and inter- and transdisciplinary research approaches of the kind employed in many RRU projects apply a wide range of tools and engage with many actors: researchers from other disciplines, practitioners, policy-makers, civil society actors, and stakeholders. They seek to contribute to change in multiple ways:

Knowledge Contributions

- Identify & draw attention to important issues or problems,
- document a case or set of cases,
- develop conceptual framework for understanding a problem,
- improve theory and methodology,
- provide theoretical and/or empirical analysis of the problem & possible solutions,
- challenge conventional wisdom & myths, and
- provide evidence-based recommendations for improved policy & practice.

Capacity and Process Contributions

- Provide fora and/or facilitate negotiated solutions,
- increase ability of groups to undertake cooperative inquiry into issues of mutual concern,
- build social and scientific capacity to deal with the issue and related issues, and
- influence research agendas through priority setting, methods development, data collection, and publication.

Conventional and widely used measures of "scientific impact" count scientific outputs: journal articles and other publications and citations (e.g., H index, i10 index)[6]. Notwithstanding some strong criticisms of these kinds of measures (Scott, 2007), they are useful indicators of scholarly influence. However, they are clearly insufficient and inappropriate measures of research

6. As for journal impact factors, numerous scientists and scientific organizations have signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (http://am.ascb.org/dora/) which "rejects journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist's contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions."

effectiveness where research aims to contribute to social learning and change. Such measures only provide an indication of one kind of communication—communication among scientists. They do not measure the usefulness or the effectiveness of the ideas or the recommendations produced by the research, cannot assess the influence of those ideas outside of academia, and usually come too late in the research cycle to allow researchers to adapt their approach to be more effective. For transdisciplinary and applied research, the primary intended audience likely is not a scientific one. The users of such research do not typically publish their experience in the peer-reviewed press, so research of this kind may not be highly cited, even if it is high quality and effective research. Citation records are, in short, an inadequate measure of impact, and evaluations based on publication records offer little formative (learning) value.

New and different ways are needed to monitor and evaluate research, especially transdisciplinary research, to demonstrate value but more importantly, to inform ongoing evolution and improvement of the research process. There is growing interest in "theory of change" approaches (Coryn, Noakes, Westine, & Schroter, 2010; Vogel, 2012). A theory of change is an explicit depiction of the relationships between an intervention (e.g., a research project) and intended results (i.e., outcomes and impacts). Such models have been applied in one form or another in international development and increasingly in the evaluation community generally (Conlin & Stirrat, 2008; White, 2009; Coryn et al., 2011). Theory of Change is also being tested in international research organizations (Belcher et al., 2012; Mayne & Stern, 2013). In the most basic form, a ToC models the stages from project (or program) inputs through outputs, outcomes, and impact. More sophisticated and realistic models include causal mechanisms and assumptions, short- and longer-term outcomes and feedback loops, and reflect changes at different stages in the process as individuals, organizations, systems, and communities engage with and respond to the intervention.

A note on definitions is necessary here, as many evaluation terms are used differently by different authors. Some widely used definitions of outcome and impact (e.g., OECD-DAC 2010)[7] are based on proximity to the intervention or the time elapsed between intervention and result, leading to ambiguity and confusion. For this discussion we use the following definitions:

Output: The products, goods and services of research and the research process, including knowledge and discourse packaged as publications, presentations, dialogs and discussions, strategies and plans, popular media, and artistic representations.

Outcome: A change in knowledge, attitudes, and skills manifest as a change

7. OECD-DAC (2010) defines outcome as "The likely or achieved intended short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs," and impact as "Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended."

in behaviour, resulting in whole or in part from the research and related activities.

Impact: A change in state or a change in flow resulting in whole or in part from a chain of events to which research has contributed, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. These effects can be economic, socio-cultural, institutional, environmental, technological, or of other types.

In a simple example, transdisciplinary research on a watershed management issue might produce an improved model of water flow, document and analyze stakeholder perceptions, values, and aspirations, and create a discussion forum to share information and ideas and promote collective action among stakeholders. These are all outputs. Some outputs may be packaged as research papers, policy briefs, or items in popular media. These are research products. The research process, including but not limited to the dissemination and sharing of research outputs, may influence various stakeholders by changing their knowledge, attitudes, or skills such that they are able and motivated to do something differently. For example, an industrial water user might decide to invest in improved treatment of effluents, or a hydro-electric utility might modify the timing of reservoir drawdowns to accommodate seasonal wildlife habitat requirements. Less directly, advocates armed with new science-based information might lobby legislators for policy change. These are outcomes. If organization or government policy is changed as a result, that is also an outcome. If the resulting actions lead to improved condition (state) of the watershed, or improved water availability (flow) to downstream users, that is an impact. This use of the term "impact" is fundamentally different than the common use in the term "research impact," which refers to reading and citing of research outputs by other researchers, measured in terms of citation counts, as discussed above.

Using these concepts, RRU's ToC for research can be modelled several ways. Figure 2 shows an overall ToC for the RRU research portfolio at the scale of the organization. It shows the classic research project cycle in which: 1) a socially relevant problem or issue is identified and defined; 2) a research problem, research question(s), and methods are defined; 3) data are collected and analyzed, and results are communicated, often within a reflexive process and with ongoing or periodic adaptive management; 4) the research process and research outputs contribute to changes in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of partners, clients, stakeholders, and society more broadly; 5) those actors respond, and longer term organizational development, policy reform, technology development, partnerships, and other system transformations are realized; and 6) changes result in terms of improved community capacity and vitality, improved natural resource or environmental condition, increased economic status, and improved livelihoods. Figure 2 shows these as a series of headings, with examples in the columns of the kinds of actions that are required at each stage. The long bar underlying the main process

steps indicates ongoing interactions. Throughout the process, there is a need for ethical and quality management, supported by the RRU ethical review process and guidelines, academic supervision, thesis committees, steering committees, peer review, and stakeholder engagement. Although the diagram is shown as a simple schematic that progresses from left to right, in practice there may be numerous feedback loops, with ongoing adaptive management of project design and implementation. There is also ongoing interaction with teaching and learning. This model illustrates how RRU research collectively creates and co-creates knowledge, and contributes to change.

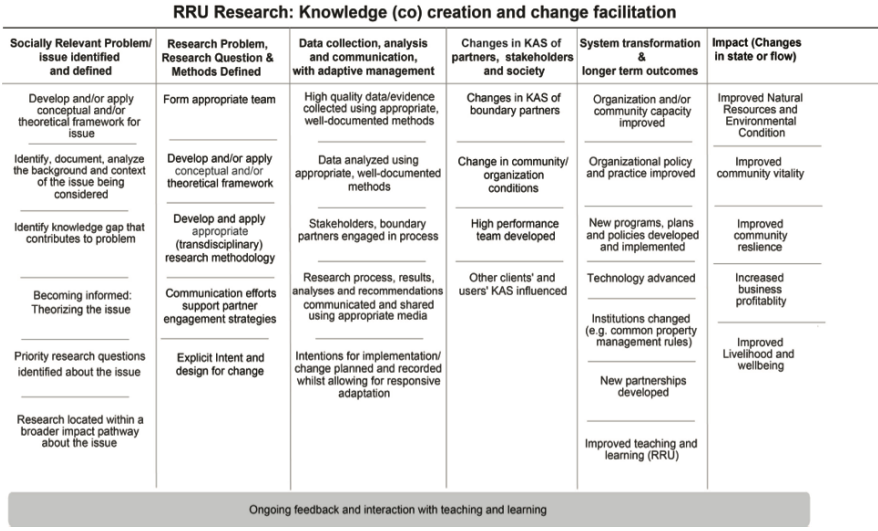

Figure 2. RRU Research Generic Theory of Change.

Figure 3 shows the elements of the research process from an individual researcher or team perspective. The upper pathway (rectangular cells) shows the main elements following a conventional scientific approach, where the research problem is defined in relation to current theoretical and empirical understanding derived from the scientific literature, scientific consultation, and peer review. For students, there are also direct links to course work and academic input from supervisors, committees, and sponsors. There may also be strong links with stakeholders, represented by the lower pathway (oval cells). This can be done at different stages and with different degrees of engagement. Research problem identification and design need to take into account social, economic, and environment context and conditions to make the research socially relevant. This may be achieved through reference to secondary sources, but contemporary theory on research-to-action emphasizes the importance of engaging stakeholders directly in participatory problem definition and research design (Cash et al., 2002; Belcher et al., 2016). In this way, problems are defined, research is conducted,

knowledge is generated collaboratively, and uptake is direct—in striking contrast to the classical supply-driven research model.

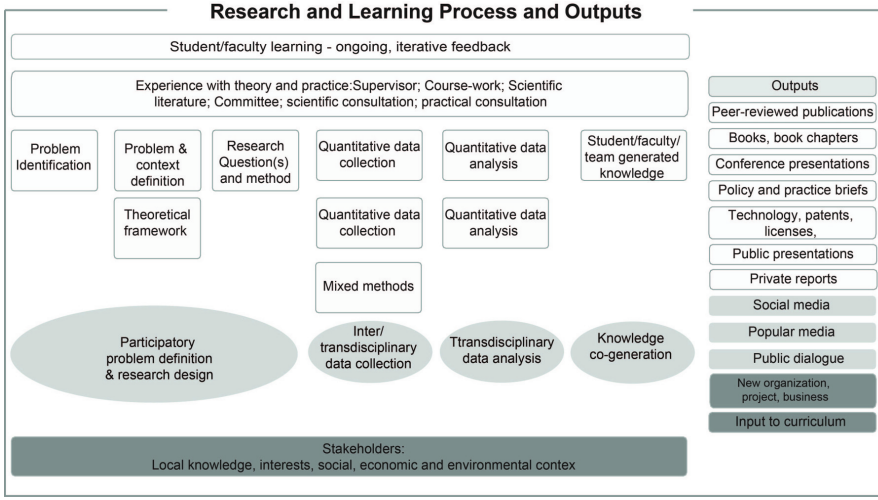

Figure 3. RRU Research and Learning Process.

Note that Figure 3 models the process from the perspective of the research team and it only covers the first three stages shown in Figure 2. Research and related processes are expected to contribute to changes in knowledge, attitudes and skills of partners, stakeholders, and society through communication and sharing of research outputs, and (importantly) through one or more of knowledge, capacity, and process contributions discussed above. In some cases, under the right conditions, system transformation and longer-term outcomes, and social, economic, and environmental impacts may result, but this is by no means guaranteed.

Assessing Transdisciplinary and Applied Research

In evaluating research effectiveness, we need to account for outputs, which is relatively easy. Typical research outputs include journal articles, academic presentations, academic and popular books and book chapters, policy briefs and practice briefs, as well as a range of practical products and processes appropriate to the particular purpose. RRU research produces many privately commissioned studies, with final reports presented in writing and/or in private presentations to client organizations as the main outputs. Researchers can share research-based information by participating in and otherwise contributing to public dialogue, op-eds, interviews and articles in popular media, and through participation and dissemination in social media and other on-line fora. As the variety and reach of popular and social media

have expanded in recent years, so too have mechanisms for measuring reach (Piwowar, 2013).

We also need to consider outcomes (at different stages if possible), a substantially more difficult undertaking. Outcomes are often incremental, dispersed and difficult to attribute as there are likely many factors influencing them. Research and other activities done as part of or linked to the research process contribute to change through a range of knowledge, capacity, and process contributions. Mostly it is about stimulating, facilitating, informing, and advising social processes of dialogue, advocacy, and decision making. As Roll-Hansen (2009, p. 3) put it: "Applied science can roughly be understood as the area of intersection between science and politics. It depends highly on advanced scientific knowledge and methods but is dedicated to the solution of practical economic, social and political problems rather than the further development of such knowledge and methods." RRU research contributes by identifying important social, environmental, economic, or other issues/problems, and in doing so, raises the profile of those issues. The discussion can be facilitated by research that clarifies definitional and conceptual issues, by challenging conventional wisdom or looking at problems in a new way. Science can provide information, but in a political context, not all information is given the same weight or respect. Information needs to be perceived as salient, credible, and legitimate simultaneously for multiple audiences (Cash et al., 2002). This can be aided by involving key stakeholders in research activities. If stakeholders contribute to defining the problem and shaping the research direction, if they are involved in the collection and analysis of data, or even if they are kept informed and aware of the process, they are more inclined to appreciate the results and the recommendations. More profoundly, if stakeholders are involved in the process as participants, the knowledge created is their own knowledge.

Well-designed participatory research on contested issues can also facilitate dialogue and understanding. It can help parties on different sides of an issue to understand and appreciate others' positions and concerns. It can provide a forum, along with improved information, for negotiations and compromise. Being engaged in the research process, or even just informed by it, can also empower stakeholders to negotiate for their interests more effectively.

Measuring these kinds of outcomes is difficult, and it cannot be done at a global level, as can citation counts. Each case is unique and needs to be assessed in context. There are multiple actors and multiple factors affecting any issue or decision—a research project can contribute in many ways, as discussed above, but there will be many other factors influencing outcomes and it can be difficult (or impossible) to disentangle them. Attribution of a change to a particular activity, such as a research project, is practically difficult. It may also be undesirable in an ethical or political sense. Researchers want to contribute and support change, but cannot and should

not take full credit for change that involves many actors and complex social processes.

Impacts often occur over much longer time frames and in the context of multiple other factors in complex systems, and so may be difficult to attribute to the research. By articulating and clarifying the theoretical linkage(s), we can both test the theory and assess whether it is being realized.

Belcher et al. (2016) reviewed the literature on principles and criteria of "transdisciplinary research quality" and identified four main theoretical principles: 1) Relevance (scientific and social), 2) Credibility (mainly scientific, but including consideration of how disciplinary approaches are combined and of reflexivity), 3) Legitimacy (mainly a social/political concept, achieved through transparency and engagement), and 4) Effectiveness (in terms of potential and/or actual outcomes). The first three principles and their associated criteria can be used to evaluate research design *ex ante* or implementation *ex post*. Having a deliberate intent to contribute to change, an explicit ToC, engagement with the problem context ,and involvement of stakeholders throughout the research process all figure prominently in the theory.

Methodology for assessing research outcomes (effectiveness) is advancing quickly (Earl, Carden, & Smutylo, 2001; ODI, 2004, 2012; Davies & Dart, 2005; White & Phillips, 2012; Mayne et al., 2013). Modeling the ToC of a research project or program serves as a starting point to identify key actors and expected outcomes. The basic approach, following Mayne (2012), is to model the ToC for a research project and test whether: 1) the expected results occurred, 2) the supporting factors (assumptions in the theory of change) have occurred and provide a reasonable explanation for the results, 3) any other identified supporting factors have been included in the causal logic (thereby potentially revising the theory of change), and 4) plausible rival explanations have been accounted for. The CRC in Sustainability Research Effectiveness program at RRU is applying, testing, and developing this approach in a series of international research case studies. Forthcoming publications present lessons learned in theory-based evaluations of the national and international policy influence of research on forests and climate change (Belcher, Young, & Suryadarma, forthcoming) and of research projects on peatland carbon storage and furniture value chains in Indonesia (Belcher, Suryadarma, & Halimunjaya, forthcoming).

RRU Graduate Student Theses Review

As a first step to assess the RRU research model in practice, we conducted a review of RRU graduate student research projects (henceforth referred to collectively as "theses") to answer the research question: Does RRU graduate research reflect the espoused RRU model of applied, solution-oriented and real-world focused research?

The objectives were to: apply, test and refine TDR Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) developed by Belcher et al. (2016); select and assess theses with implicit & explicit ToCs; characterize impact pathways of RRU graduate research; and recommend support for more effective graduate research.

The study was done in three steps. First, abstracts of all 492 thesis and major projects for the period 2010 to July 2015 that were available on the RRU thesis database[8] were reviewed independently by two reviewers to select theses with abstracts that have a theory of change (ToC). In other words, we sought project documents with abstracts that indicate what the research aims to contribute, who will use it, and how the researcher/project aimed to facilitate application and/or utilization of the research. The rationale for this selection process was that theses demonstrating a clear intervention logic would be most likely to realize and to document outcomes. Abstracts that captured all three elements of a TOC were categorized as "explicit," and those that identified two elements were categorized as "implicit." Others were classified as having no ToC. This classification yielded 34 theses having either explicit (4) or implicit (30) ToCs, which then proceeded to full thesis review.

Anticipating that the selection process based on abstract review would not capture all highly effective projects, we also solicited recommendations from faculty who, through their roles as teachers and supervisors, are well placed to be aware of projects that had good actual or potential outcomes or impact. We approached all RRU core faculty through notices in the RRU newsletter ("CrossRoads"), direct e-mail, and telephone requests. We received recommendations from 5 faculty which yielded an additional 16 project reports for review. Two of these were not reviewed because informed consent was not obtained. The final set of recommendations included 10 theses, 1 major research project, and 3 Organizational Leadership Projects (OLPs). OLPs were not part of the original abstract review because they are not publicly available on the RRU library database. The 14 recommendations went through the same abstract review and classification process, but all 14 were included in the subsequent full thesis review (i.e., not only those classified as having explicit or implicit ToCs).

Each of the 48 selected dissertations, theses, major projects, and OLPs was then reviewed independently by two reviewers to: 1) classify the ToC as explicit, implicit, or none; and 2) apply the TDR QAF to assess the research in terms of its relevance, credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness.

The TDR QAF criteria, definitions, rubric statements, and the scoring protocol are provided in Belcher et al. (2016). The QAF is designed to assess research according to its purpose. The objectives, goals, and context of each research project are used to calibrate the scoring. Scoring is based on the examination of evidence within the thesis document, from a high of 2 if

8. The database does not include MBA "Organizational Management Projects" or Leadership "Organizational Learning Projects).

a project fully satisfies a criterion to 0 where there is no evidence that the criterion was effectively addressed.

In the context of the RRU research model, we expected to find a substantial proportion of theses that have a deliberate intention to make a contribution to change (as opposed to pure knowledge creation), so the relatively small number classified as having a ToC based on the abstract review (less than 10%) was surprising. However, the selection process based on abstract review may have missed reports that had more fully-fledged ToCs in the main document. This is supported by the fact that the faculty recommendations and full document reviews yielded more "explicit" ToCs than the abstract review alone. Moreover, it has not been common practice to present theories of change in research documentation; it is quite likely that some researchers had plans that were not well described in the research reports.

The application of the QAF to the selected set of theses identified a range of strengths and weaknesses in RRU graduate student research. The reviewed theses generally scored well on most criteria under the principles of "relevance" and "legitimacy." Specifically, a majority of reports excelled in defining socio-ecological contexts (79.2%), developing socially relevant research questions (79.2%), and appropriately implementing research design (83.3%). Researchers had high engagement with the problem context (77.1%). In other words, researchers were able to clearly and sufficiently define their problem context in a way that demonstrates practical application of the research project, and took into account key factors, needs, and complexities for research design through document review and/or personal communication with key stakeholders. This resulted in project implementation that was appropriate to the context. It reflects the strong engagement many student researchers have with the research issues and the contexts of their research projects. They have personal and professional experience with the problems they are seeking to address and they often have direct links with key actors. Overall, the research reports were able to clearly articulate the importance, significance, and usefulness of the research design (relevance), and fairly and ethically represent stakeholders (legitimacy).

Lower scores on some criteria under the principle of credibility suggest scope for improvement. Notably, there was a tendency for low scores on the criteria of "transferability and generalizability of research findings," "clear research problem definition," and "objectives stated and met." While researchers were able to provide an appropriate breadth and depth of literature and theory from across disciplines in developing their research design, they often failed to discuss how their results are transferable to other contexts by supporting or contradicting the theory that informed the research process. Many projects may be too context specific for direct application of lessons learned in other situations. However, more focused attention to relating individual case studies theoretically to the literature would help to more effectively

apply scholarly knowledge to case studies and to link those studies back as learning cases to the scholarly literature.

A more complete presentation of this research is available in Belcher & Soni (2016). It recommends that students should be encouraged to develop explicit theories of change, identifying key audiences and boundary partners, and anticipating change processes. Supporting students at the beginning of their research process to map a theory of change and identify links between research goals (purposes and questions), actions (methods and analysis, collaboration), and outcomes can improve focus and raise the standards for research. Engagement and communication should be supported wherever possible in the research process, when supporting knowledge translation of the research outcomes; simply providing recommendations is insufficient to catalyze change. We also suggest providing more support for improved reporting to better capture research processes and outcomes, including the use of structured abstracts and executive summaries.

This review mainly addresses the potential of RRU student research to contribute to outcomes based on theoretical best practice. As discussed above, there is also a need for empirical assessments of actual outcomes and impacts from RRU research. It would be valuable to include questions about students' perspectives on research in the various student surveys conducted by RRU (e.g., new student survey, existing student survey, alumni survey). The alumni survey in particular could usefully ask about research purpose, contributions, and outcomes achieved. It would also be valuable to conduct outcome evaluations on a selection of RRU student research projects to assess whether and how the research and associated activities have contributed to change.

Conclusions

The RRU research model has a deliberate and explicit focus on solution-oriented research, and its organization, program design, along with the practical and scholarly experience and interests of its faculty and students, all situate the university well to address contemporary, real-world problems. This paper proposes an analytical perspective to assess whether and to what degree the promise of the RRU research model (or any transdisciplinary research model) is being realized in practise and to identify current strengths and weaknesses as a way to inform and improve teaching and learning at the university and beyond. To that end, the paper develops a conceptual framework for assessing applied, inter- and transdisciplinary research, with a prototype generic theory of change model for RRU research overall, and a more specific ToC for the RRU research and learning process from an individual researcher perspective. These models identify key steps in the research process and the opportunities for engagement, influence, and leverage for social learning and change. They are intended to provide a basis for discussion within the RRU community and can be improved and

refined to better reflect the range of approaches and intervention strategies employed by RRU researchers. The model will also facilitate evaluation of RRU research by clarifying the conceptual foundations of the research process.

As a first step toward an evaluation of the RRU research model, we conducted a review of the research approach employed in student research projects completed between 2010 and 2015. We found fewer examples than expected of projects that included deliberate and explicit plans for how the project would contribute to social, environmental, organizational, and economic outcomes. This is at least partly due to our selection process which was based on reviewing abstracts that may not have accurately or fully reflected the research approach. The studies that were selected tended to have strong relevance and legitimacy scores, reflecting the strong engagement many RRU student researchers have with the research issues and the contexts of their research projects. They have personal and professional experience with the problems they are seeking to address with their research and they often have direct links with key actors. The review identified scope for improved attention to some research quality issues, such as clarity in identifying research problems and objectives and in linking theory to practice. It also highlighted the need for improved research reporting, including more accurate abstracts and, in some cases, more accessible reporting (e.g., executive summaries). More fundamentally, it is recommended that RRU research instruction and supervision incorporate lessons and approaches from transdisciplinary research, knowledge translation, sustainability science, and other theory and practice that aims to increasing engagement, utilization, and effectiveness of research. The TDR QAF (Belcher et al., 2016) and similar tools (e.g., Mitchell & Willetts, 2009) can be used as checklists for research design. Deliberate and explicit development of theories of change as part of the research design process can help focus research and develop knowledge translation strategies; they also provide a strong basis for subsequent outcomes assessments as part of a systematic analysis of whether and how RRU research is effectively contributing to meaningful outcomes.

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Appendix 1. RRU Student Research Projects

Program	Project	Credits	Course Length
MA Disaster & Emergency Management	Major Research Project	12	11 months
MA Disaster & Emergency Management	Thesis	12	10 months
MA Environmental Education & Communication	Thesis	12	13 months
MA/MSc in Environmental Practice	Research Paper in Environmental Practice	6	6 months
MA in Environment and Management	Master of Arts Thesis	12	12 months
MSc in Environment and Management	Master of Science Thesis	12	12 months
MA in Human Security and Peacebuilding	Major Project	9	10 months
MA in Human Security and Peacebuilding	Thesis	12	10 months
MA in Interdisciplinary Studies	Major Project	12	12 months
MA in Interdisciplinary Studies	Thesis	12	12 months
MA in Leadership	Organizational Leadership Project	12	9 months
MA in Leadership	Thesis	12	9 months
MA in Learning & Technology	Research Paper	6	4.5 months
MA in Learning & Technology	Thesis	12	9 months
MA in Professional Communication	Research Paper	6	6 months
MA in Professional Communication	Thesis	12	6 months
Doctor of Social Sciences	Dissertation	42	24 – 36 months
MA in Conflict Analysis and Management	Major Research Project	8	11 months
MA in Conflict Analysis and Management	Thesis	12	10 months
MA in Intercultural and International Communication	Research Paper	6	6 months
MA in Intercultural and International Communication	Thesis	12	6 months
Master of Business Administration	Major Project	6	10 months
Master of Global Management	Major Project	6	5 months
Master of Global Management	Major Project	6	5 months
MA in Tourism Management	Research Paper	6	6 months

15

The Role of Curriculum Committee Related to the Learning and Teaching Model and Curriculum Development at Royal Roads University

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Abstract

Curriculum Committee at Royal Roads University (RRU) is mandated with ensuring that program and course curricula are of sufficient high academic integrity, are consistent with other academic institutions, are delivered in a manner consistent with program outcomes, and align with the recently adopted Learning and Teaching Model (LTM). Yet, the apparent simplicity of the committee's role is overshadowed by much confusion about what the committee does, how and why it does what it is intended to do, and whether it is effective in fulfilling its mandate. This paper explores the role of Curriculum Committee at RRU regarding the tensions that the committee encounters fulfilling its role. It begins with an historical review of Curriculum Committee, which is followed by a look at some of the factors that influence

decision-making during committee meetings. Next, it examines the tensions posed by trying to strike a balance between form, function, and the context of curriculum proposals. The paper concludes with an observation that Curriculum Committee continues to evolve as it incorporates the lessons learned from ongoing self-reflection and feedback from faculty members and the broader university. Recently approved new terms of reference and pending committee restructuring are evidence of CC's commitment to curriculum excellence, within the context of the LTM, and student success.

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Introduction

At first glance, the role of Curriculum Committee (CC) at Royal Roads University (RRU) seems relatively uncomplicated, even straightforward. As a subcommittee of Academic Council (AC), it operates on the basis of the Curriculum Quality Assurance policy, which provides that curriculum is (1) of an appropriately high academic quality, (2) consistent with standards at other accredited Canadian universities, and (3) designed and delivered in a manner consistent with program outcomes (RRU, 2007). Essentially, and on an operational level, the committee is mandated with reviewing program and course curricula, making suggestions for change, and forwarding approved curricula to Academic Council.

Despite the apparent simplicity of the committee's role, there has been significant criticism from curriculum developers about the committee's approach to the curriculum review process. Perceptions of the committee range from one of annoyance, wherein attending a committee meeting is considered a waste of time, to one of resignation, where the experience is something to be endured before getting on with the real job of teaching. Others typify the committee as a star chamber comprised of members who seek to indict, convict, and punish curriculum developers who stray from the way curriculum is *supposed to be*. In reality, CC has developed a course template that speaks to the needs of curriculum developers regarding the breadth and scope of material required for a proposal (RRU, 2015a). More recently, a rubric was developed by CC for assessing the content of proposals. Yet, the role of the committee has not changed since its inception, nor has its essence. Curriculum Committee exists to ensure that all curricula deliver on the promise of academic quality and standards, and include the Learning and Teaching Model principles at RRU.

Based on conversations with previous committee chairs and the observations of the authors, all of whom have served or are serving on CC, this paper explores the tensions that CC encounters in fulfilling its role. We begin by outlining the history of CC. Next, we look at some of the factors that influence decision-making during committee meetings. We also examine the tensions posed as the committee tries to strike a balance between form, function, and the context of curriculum proposals. We conclude by noting that CC continues to evolve as it incorporates the lessons learned and ongoing self-reflection, and by implementing best practice into the review process. A key aspect to this evolution is to support curriculum developers by instilling a sense of distributed responsibility for curriculum development. Distributed responsibility is meant to lessen the potential isolation experienced by curriculum developers and to provide resources in terms of pedagogical expertise, particularly in the online context. The emerging curriculum development triad—curriculum developers, the committee, and the Learning and Teaching Model (LTM)—share a common goal: delivering

high quality programming at RRU (RRU, 2014b). Whether or not the committee, in its early days, ever dictated what was to be in curriculum, as some thought it did, its current focus is on how any proposed curriculum delivers on the promise of the LTM at RRU. The recent changes in the terms of reference for CC capture the evolution as outlined, emphasising the 'friend not foe' essence of the role of CC at RRU.

In the Beginning

Prior to the establishment of Curriculum Committee (CC) at Royal Roads University in the early 21st century, curriculum proposals were reviewed and approved directly by Academic Council (AC). AC approval of criteria such as learning outcomes and the quality of curriculum was reviewed and assessed by the Program and Research Committee (PRC), which worked at arm's length from AC (RRU, 2015b). Given RRU's status as a special purpose university under the Royal Roads University Act (1996), program and curriculum development were subject to intense scrutiny and assessment by the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education and RRU's Board of Governors. The more traditional establishment of university status based on faculty curriculum vitae, including research and publication record, was supplanted by a desire to ensure the quality of curriculum and program development. In essence, academic units at the university were held responsible for producing the highest quality of curriculum possible within the confines of the very specific mandate of this new institution. Lacking a comprehensive history of program and course development, RRU was at a disadvantage in terms of expertise and resources.

Under the stewardship of a former Academic Vice President, the responsibilities of AC were hived off into three separate entities. In an interview with the first committee chair, S. Grundy, PhD (March, 2014), a professor in the School of Environment and Sustainability and one of the founders of the university, confirmed that CC was the first standing committee of AC to emerge in this new arrangement. Yet, program and curriculum development was not exempt from provincial oversight. Indeed, provincial scrutiny continued for over ten years after the university's inception, and scrutiny from the ministry continued, for example, in the development of new programming. According to previous members, CC was informally tasked with raising the bar of program and curriculum development, demanding more from curriculum developers than would be expected at a more traditional university. In a conversation with Professor D. Hamilton, PhD (March 2010), the second CC chair, he suggested that CC's role as guardian of quality translated into higher expectations for program and course proposals and the corresponding work involved.

It may be argued that the expectations placed on developers resulted in solid, well-planned curriculum design. However, the early years of CC were not without struggles between developers and the committee, for example

between teaching styles, pedagogy, and the guidelines provided in the LTM. A large portion of the apparent friction was the result of RRU's status as a special purpose university. A focus on applied graduate programming and undergraduate degree completion required (and opened up opportunities for) unique approaches to programming and to pedagogy. Not surprisingly, program and curriculum development did not always resemble that of other institutions. Thus, producing proposals that passed the rigours of CC could be and remains a challenge to developers. Producing the highest quality of curriculum possible required that CC establish and maintain credibility with the province and other academic institutions (RRU, 2007, 2014b).

As the university grew in terms of reputation and popularity, the second Chair of CC, Doug Hamilton, started to move the committee towards a model of inclusion rather than gatekeeper, a common perception at the time. Dr. Hamilton commented that this became more possible as the Ministry of Advanced Education, the body tasked with oversight, appeared satisfied that the university had established an effective and efficient curriculum development process. Indeed, as of 2008, new master of arts degrees proposed by the university are exempt from Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) review, indicating that the province was satisfied with the quality of programs being developed by RRU and with the quality assurance process itself (DQAB, 2008).

While this was an informal and perhaps subtle transformation, the emphasis was to be on the shared learning experience of those in the curriculum development process. The committee attempted to offer advice before potential developers submitted proposals, and the Centre for Teaching and Education Technologies (CTET) joined the process, contributing to curriculum design and teaching excellence by incorporating the principles of best practice in the integration of technology into course delivery (RRU, 2015c). Although it could be concluded that this development occurred too late in Dr. Hamilton's term to be fully adopted or accepted by faculty members, it did establish parameters within which his successor would continue to guide the work of CC and which the current chair would recraft and continue to promote.

Curriculum Committee Operations

Curriculum Committee comprises representatives from several units of the university including: six faculty members, with at least two from the Faculty of Management and at least two from the Faculty of Social and Applied Sciences; the deans or designates from those faculties; a representative from the Centre for Teaching and Education Technologies (CTET); the registrar; and a non-voting secretary. While a number of these roles are *ex-officio*, and therefore ongoing, the six faculty members are elected through the Registrar's Office (RRU, 2015c). The committee meets on Tuesdays, twice a month for 2.5 hours. Meetings follow a typical model based on Robert's

Rules of Order and require four voting members for quorum. At the time of writing, however, significant changes will result from the new terms of reference for CC as described below.

Central to the development process was the adoption of a curriculum template in 2012. The template is divided into two parts, A and B, which distinguish between what can be considered immutable course outline material, part A, and more detailed content, part B, which is developed for the course shell in Moodle, the online delivery platform used by RRU. Developers are encouraged to follow the suggestions on the template, and to consult with CTET and the assigned Instructional Designer, and other units in the university such as the Library, Office of Research, and Registrar's Office regarding curriculum design, resources, and delivery as applicable.

Admittedly, the development of course outlines and, to a lesser degree, program proposals are not straightforward or linear processes. It is not possible to outline all of the stages of this process and faculty/school or program specifics, but a few salient points are worth mentioning here. Regarding course outlines, the process follows an iterative model wherein the developer has the outline approved by the program head, who then forwards the proposal to the school director. Once approved at this level, the director forwards it for approval by the appropriate faculty Dean who asks the CC chair to place the proposal on the meeting agenda. At any of these stages the proposal can be returned to the developer for amendment. An editor can be added to the process to reduce the amount of time spent at CC meetings dealing with issues related to presentation, such as grammar, diction and the like. Once a proposal has completed all of the above stages, it will be forwarded for review to the members of Curriculum Committee, who will share their observations in the regular meetings and in conversation with the developer or the development team.

How Decisions are Made

Decision making in CC is based on a vote requiring greater than 50 percent to pass a course program proposal, including changes to programs. In the event of a split, the chair is responsible for casting the tiebreaker vote. Decisions are commonly made in consensus, based on the content of the proposal in terms of alignment with the program, school, faculty, and LTM at RRU. Developers present their outlines or program changes at the meeting and, essentially, the committee uses the proceeding criteria to assess the quality of the proposal. The core components of the LTM (RRU, 2014a) include the following key reference points:

- outcomes-based,
- technology enhanced,
- experiential and authentic,
- learning community,

- team-based,
- integrative,
- applied,
- engaged learning,
- action research,
- supportive, and
- flexible.

Prior to submission to the committee, developers are encouraged to work with CTET's Instructional Designers on curriculum matters, learning outcomes, technology assistance/delivery options, and to have a CTET representative in attendance at the meeting. At the moment, program heads are invited to attend, but their presence is not required. The meeting process is intended to be inclusive and collegial, but the committee recognizes that some developers view the process as somewhat adversarial. It is assumed that the history of CC's role as guardians and gatekeepers of curriculum is responsible for this impression, and CC is looking to improve the reputation it has inherited. CC considers its role as a peer-review process, which is prominently reflected in the new terms of reference and evolving *modus operandi*.

Regarding the LTM, the focus on what is called "authentic learning" at RRU brings with it a broader definition and understanding of what appropriate curriculum looks like. While the 11 components of the LTM strategy broaden the scope of post-secondary education, their prominence also brings ambiguity, which CC must sort through in the curriculum review process. As the committee has discovered, there can be a fine line between innovative program and curriculum development and academic rigour—for example, when video assignments are considered for assessment or audio-visual resources complement required academic readings. It is not the CC's role or desire to prevent or eliminate innovation, but, at the same time, it is important to maintain academic standards that are acceptable to the broader academic community. Finding the right balance is further challenged by the format of the course outline submissions, which often resemble a syllabus or even course minutiae, rather than a simple outline. Many programs have also developed unique and specific approaches, which capture a diversity of interdisciplinary approaches and add to the challenges of CC to respect and acknowledge differences while safeguarding academic rigour and quality.

An Evolving Process and the New Way Forward

Given the move towards an inclusive curriculum development process, begun under the guidance of Doug Hamilton, and the concomitant emphasis on collegiality, the way forward is relatively clear. The development team, consisting of the assigned developer and a supportive CTET representative,

and the curriculum development triad, consisting of the development team, the committee, and the LTM, stands to ensure the continued high standard of curriculum development at RRU (see Figure 1). That said, it behooves the committee to emphasize and practise inclusiveness and collegiality. Curriculum Committee has been working to find ways to reach out to faculty curriculum developers, initially by developing the proposal templates and by adding some helpful notes, and both the current membership of CC and the registrar explicitly support the adoption of additional strategies to engage present and future curriculum developers. This function has been identified more frequently in recent planning workshops as crucial for CC as it works to reimagine its relationship with curriculum developers in supporting innovation alongside its mandate to maintain academic quality and rigour. As well, the ongoing functioning of CC and its continued evolution depends on the willingness of potential committee members to participate, which will presumably be enhanced as its goals and activities become more transparent and widely understood. The evolving process and new way forward also includes a slight shift in the role of CTET in the course development process, as highlighted in Figure 1 and outlined in the following.

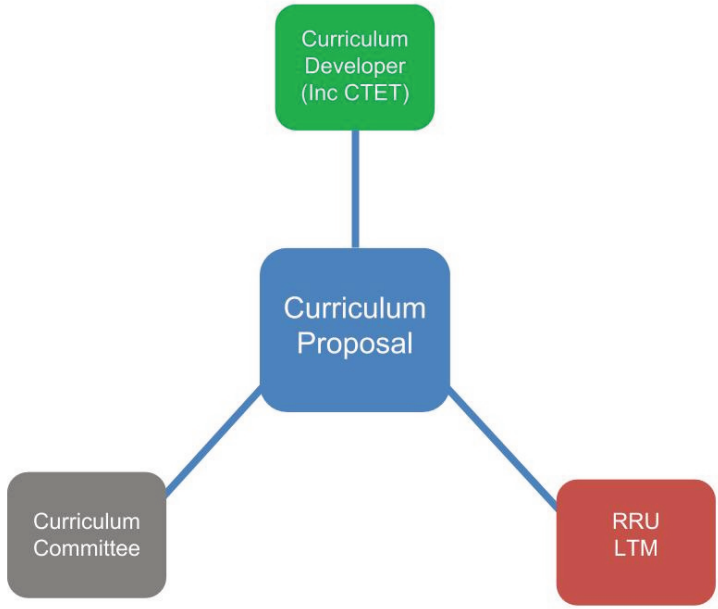

Figure 1. Curriculum Development Triad

Developments in the curriculum review process since the original draft of this paper have significantly changed the role of CC, particularly regarding course development and review. The course template has been modified to shift or reaffirm responsibility and oversight of course development to

programs. A review of course curriculum proposals has occurred at two main levels, generating a new way forward for the role of CC related to LTM.

First, the course template has continued to evolve. The latest version consists of a restructured two-part template: whereas Part A remains immutable and requires CC approval, Part B provides developers with flexibility in terms of content and assessment. Part A covers higher level elements such as a calendar description and learning outcomes with assessment criteria, which is considerably fewer elements than before. Part B contains more syllabus-like elements such as unit descriptions and readings, which are much more likely to change and evolve over time, given changes in the educational context, instructors, or in delivery format (e.g., from blended to online). CTET will play an integral role working with course developers on both Part A and B. However, while CC maintains a role in overseeing course development, the minutiae of course delivery and implementation now rest even more clearly with the program area. In other words, the expectation is that program heads and school directors continue to ensure that future iterations of a course remains consistent with the elements in Part A and the spirit of the elements in Part B. Only when changes to Part A are required or a new course introduced is CC review and approval required.

Second, CC itself has been restructured. This involves the dismantling of the existing committee format and the establishment of a review process and committee structure that more closely follow an editorial board model and peer review process. Academic Council has approved the new terms of reference for CC in December 2015. The CC mandate to review and approve program and course curriculum remains intact, but organization of the committee now includes two bodies: (1) CC Core is responsible for reviewing new and revised course curriculum proposals and minor program revisions, and (2) CC Extended is responsible for reviewing proposals for new programs and any major redesign of existing programs. CC Core is comprised of the committee chair, registrar, and secretary. CC Core is responsible for identifying reviewers of courses submitted to CC, focusing on individuals who have course content and/or pedagogy expertise, as applicable. Normally, reviewers will be core faculty members at RRU. In essence, the process works similar to the review of articles for publication in journals. Meanwhile, CC Extended includes CC Core, deans, school directors, and a representative from the Centre for Teaching and Educational Technologies. On an annual basis and when needed, CC Extended is convened to review new program proposals or course proposals that CC Core determines require additional expertise in the review process.

Overall, the new way forward is expected to facilitate an easier and supportive process for course development, highlighting the role of CC in supporting quality teaching and learning within the context of the LTM at Royal Roads University.

Conclusions

Since its inception, CC has been tasked with overseeing the development of programs and course outlines. Arguably, as a result, course outlines at RRU have been historically subjected to more scrutiny from outside the university than would be experienced at other institutions. This scrutiny has presumably resulted in higher quality program and course curriculum. At this time, the Ministry of Advanced Education seems satisfied with the operation of the university, and outside scrutiny of program and curriculum development has abated. Yet, success on this front has sometimes served to somewhat alienate CC from faculty. The apparent alienation experienced by developers may be due in part to an apparent conflict between traditional notions of academic integrity and freedom and the somewhat prescriptive expectations imposed by the LTM at RRU. That said, in the spirit of collegiality, efforts to include faculty in the curriculum process will continue as CC maintains and emphasizes its role as 'friend, not foe.' It may be argued that the pending changes to CC will improve the development process and result in a more effective and efficient curriculum review process, particularly for course proposals, which constitute the lion's share of CC workload. This is possible providing that program areas continue to work with faculty before proposals come to committee. As well, the continued support of CTET in curriculum design and more communication between the other people and areas involved in curriculum development will ensure more satisfaction for everyone involved in the curriculum development process. In essence, developers will have more latitude in the curriculum process, but success hinges on communication and cooperation in the curriculum development triad. As a result, CC is able to focus on the essence of its role and mandate related to curriculum development at RRU.

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Conclusion

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This book was produced to illuminate faculty, student, and staff perspectives on and experiences with the Royal Roads University Learning and Teaching Model. Our intention was to enable this model to come alive by illustrating its application in various and diverse learning and teaching contexts.

For some of the authors, this writing represents their first opportunity to share their own reflections on their teaching practice with a broader audience. The personal benefits of the process of what the scholarship of teaching and learning literature calls "going public" are well documented. These include an increased understanding of students' learning experiences, greater self-awareness of one's approach to teaching, increased excitement about teaching, enhanced professionalism, and strengthened research expertise (Hamilton, 2014; McKinney, 2007; Savoury, Burnett, & Goodburn, 2007; Weimer, 2006; and Cox, Huber, & Hutchings, 2004). From our perspective, however, the greatest benefit comes from the collective opportunity to engage with other faculty across the university, collaborate in new inquiry, exchange perspectives, grow our institution-wide professional learning community, generate excitement about the work we do together, and build on new knowledge from a cross-disciplinary and a cross-institutional vantage point (Hamilton, 2014; Weimer, 2006; Huber & Hutchings, 2005; Harris & Agger-Gupta, 2014). Hamilton (2014) noted that the organizational structures and dominant dispositions of most higher educational institutions lead to a rather "closed door" purview towards both learning and teaching that is difficult to avoid and overcome. Our desire to continue opening this door via various initiatives was one of the key drivers behind the production and distribution of this current collection of case studies. Providing institutional support structures for both knowledge sharing and knowledge creation, like the aim of producing this volume, are essential if scholarly inquiry is to be viewed as an important vehicle for

enhancing professional expertise and transforming cultures of learning and teaching (Hamilton, 2014; McKinney, 2007; Weimer, 2006).

Given this focus, it seems highly appropriate to be seeking ways to build, develop, and sustain a professional learning community that promotes knowledge sharing and knowledge creation among faculty and staff. Sharing case studies is one strategy that has been identified previously as an important step forward in developing a viable support structure for promoting pedagogical inquiry and scholarly work, and building relationships related to learning and teaching in higher education (Hamilton, 2014; Hamilton, Marquez, and Agger-Gupta, this volume; McKinney, 2007; Savoury, Burnett, & Goodburn, 2007). As observed by Huber and Hutchings (2005), promoting ongoing and sustained collaborative discussion across the university requires ongoing institutional support if the university desires to take advantage of the collective capacity to inquire more deeply into the learning and teaching process, and to enhance further opportunities to innovate beyond the individual classroom. Huber and Hutchings (2005, p. 5) advance this notion by arguing for the development of a "teaching commons"—a conceptual space for faculty and staff to engage in ongoing dialogue, exploration, knowledge exchange, debate, and critique that deepens pedagogical knowledge and provides a springboard for the adaption of further innovative practices.

We view the development of the RRU Learning and Teaching Model (LTM) and the respective sharing of practices via these case studies as cornerstones in the development of our own conceptual teaching commons. The collection of case studies was never intended to be static, but rather, ever evolving and expanding—just like our views about the model itself. This perspective opens the door for us to continue exploring the next iteration of our Learning and Teaching Model and to bring new faculty into the discussion. In our review of the Institutional Educational Frameworks described in chapter one, we noted that there are examples of universities that have been extremely committed to the task of continuously revisiting, revising and, even, re-generating their own institutional models of learning and teaching. Although the processes of doing so remain rather unexplored from a scholarly perspective, the efforts to integrate this kind of intention into the fabric of the institution's pedagogical culture is both noteworthy and laudable. We look to these institutions for our own inspiration to keep our institutional model alive and evolving. As a result, there are already discussions amongst both faculty and administrators of what the next iteration of the model might look like and how we can engage our broad learning community in the model's continuous evolution.

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